

Policy Evaluation Report

Validation of Prior Learning

12.09.2019

This report is a product of the ERASMUS+ Strategic Partnership “Effectiveness of VPL Policies and Programmes – Individual and Employer Perspectives” (EffectVPL) funded from 09/2016 to 09/2019. It is based on a systematic and comparative review of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) policies, programmes and approaches in Denmark, Germany, Poland and Turkey undertaken by the project partners. Against the background of the EU guideline that all EU member states should have VPL methodologies in place by 2018, the report considers, in particular, VPL developments and initiatives that started between 2016 and 2019.

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Executive Summary

This Policy Evaluation Report on validation of prior learning in four countries (Denmark, Germany, Poland and Turkey) covers two main sections. The first section provides the European context in terms of VPL guidelines and implications, and the European Qualifications Framework. The second section of the Report is based on the national policy evaluation country reports. Each country report describes the national background, existing validation approaches, the assessment of effectiveness and the role of employers, and observations and recommendations of the partner countries on the VPL processes.

In the following, some of the highlights from each country report are provided for an overall glimpse into the country reports:

In Denmark, VPL is on the agenda for about 20 years and a legal framework has been in place since 2007. The Danish approach of VPL is decentralized but based on common principles. Every educational institution must offer a validation prior to the corresponding study/education programme. The VPL system in Denmark can (1) enable access to formal education; (2) tailor a study program or award credits for certain classes up to Masters level; or (3) award a Competence Certificate if the participant meets the requirements of fulfilling parts of an educational programme. Furthermore, the Danish validation system includes a “pre-phase” (information, identification, guidance and counselling) which is offered by other bodies such as trade unions, or employers’ associations.

In Germany, although VPL is increasingly receiving attention, the overall impression is that validation is not widely promoted and usually geared to support specific target groups which may include migrants, volunteers, and career break returners. The German system covers three official pathways of VPL: (1) to obtain permission for taking a regular, but external examination; (2) to obtain access to different learning pathways; (3) the recognition of equivalence of prior learning in reference to existing education standards. Besides these official approaches, Germany covers a range of rather uncoordinated regulations, programmes, processes and projects lead by different authorities, mainly due to the challenges of a highly regulated education system focusing on formal qualifications, and highly formalised linkages between school-based and work-based learning.

In Poland, there has been an effort to introduce an Integrated Qualification System and related Register to involve validation into the education system in a systemic way, since 2015. The aim of the Integrated Qualification System is to organize the already existing approaches in order to create more coherence. At the same time, the Integrated Qualification Register comprises all qualifications and degrees in Poland and explicitly covers learning outcomes and not only formal certificates. Initially, the focus was on the development of the validation system. Since January 2018, more attention is devoted to the processes, including the validation process. At this stage, Poland developed numerous implementation projects for the promotion of the Integrated Qualification System.

In Turkey, VPL is a rather new phenomenon. The Vocational Qualification Authority (VQA) was established in 2006 and coordinates VPL-related activities. The VQA examines and certifies processes that are carried out by the organizations that have been accredited in the designated national qualifications and authorized by the VQA. Those who successfully go through the measurement and evaluation processes administered by these Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) are entitled to VQCs. Although the number of Authorized Certification Bodies by VQA has increased from 76 in 2016 to 2005 in 2019, there is still a lack of identification and documentation of validation. Furthermore, the validation tools need to be devel-

oped further since portfolio and interviewing do not yet form part of the ongoing process. In general, VPL is applied only in the vocational and technical sector, whereas the formal education system is not considered.

In a comparative perspective, we perceive a variance with regard to the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the four countries in terms of (1) the possibilities these procedures enable and (2) the focus of the respective validation procedure. As illustrated in table 1, validation in the four countries either enables entrance permission to formal education or identifies existing competencies and qualifications. Especially Denmark defines the validation of non-formal and informal learning in relation to receiving entrance permission to education programs. Germany and Poland, by contrast, offer the validation of non-formal and informal learning as a pathway to formal examinations. At the same time, validation of non-formal and informal learning in Germany comprises a pathway to equivalence assessment of foreign qualifications.

The most comprehensive understanding of validation of non-formal and informal learning in the meaning of a mere assessment of competencies can be found in all four countries. However, they vary with regard to the institutionalization of the validation approaches in the respective education system. The Danish education system was revised legally and explicitly regulates competence-oriented steps towards validation. Turkey has developed a similar competence-oriented approach which only is applicable in specific professions and sectors. Likewise, Germany and Poland facilitate similar validation procedures which legally are not binding and do not have a direct impact on the labour market.

Altogether, the four countries focus first and foremost on the validation of professional competencies and skills, whereas competencies and skills acquired in the reproductive and care works only play a marginal role.

Table 1: Dimensions of validation in the four countries

VALIDATION			
Entrance permission		Assessment of	
Education	Examination	Competences	Qualifications
Denmark	Germany, Poland	Denmark, Turkey, (Germany, Poland)	Germany

General Introduction

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In order to understand the context of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning in European countries, it is necessary to take into account the political context of the European Union and its ideas shaping the landscape of employment and education throughout the member states. Therefore, prior to the national policy reports, we briefly sum up policy developments and understandings that stem from the European level and influence the national level and its implementation.

1 The European Context: VPL Guidelines and Implications

In the context of promoting lifelong learning, which significantly has influenced international as well as national education policies over the past decades, we can observe a change of how learning and its key processes and elements are being understood. The concept of lifelong learning thereby strengthens the idea that a person is learning throughout their entire life and in every context of life. To take account of this multi-dimensionality, education policies started to incorporate strategies, programs and qualification frameworks to support the validation and recognition of competences obtained throughout the lifespan (Bohlinger/Münchhausen 2011).

In 2008, the European Council and the Parliament of the European Union defined recommendations for establishing a European Qualification Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning. This can be regarded as the first step towards more prominently promoting non-formal and informal learning within European policies as well as at the national level. By focusing on knowledge, skills and competence rather than on qualifications, the EQF shifts the focus to learning outcomes. This perspective underpins the idea that qualifications should reflect learning outcomes instead of learning pathways and educational programs (Mikulec 2017).

In order to advance the coordination of education and skilling across European countries and make the EU the most competitive and dynamic economic area of the world (as stated in the Lisbon strategy), developing and adopting the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for lifelong learning in 2008 has been a starting point. Conceptualised as a translation tool, the EQF seeks to make qualifications obtained in the different European countries comparable to enhance labour market mobility across Europe. Accordingly, the member states are required to develop and adjust their National Qualifications Framework (NQF), thereby observing the eight qualification levels that the EQF specifies in terms of the specific knowledge, skills and competence in relation to the defined learning outcomes for each level (EU 2008).

In 2009, the Council passed a conclusion that defined a strategic framework for the cooperation of the European member states in the field of education and vocational education and training. In this document, lifelong learning is to serve as a fundamental principle also for learning that takes place in non-formal and informal contexts (European Commission 2009). As a follow-up, the Council passed a recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in 2012, requiring that all European member states should implement procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in accordance with their national education systems by 2018. This means that in all EU member states individuals should have the possibility to get their competences, skills and abilities gained through non-

formal and informal learning validated. Furthermore, this validation has to be the basis for a full or partial recognition of a qualification (European Commission 2012).

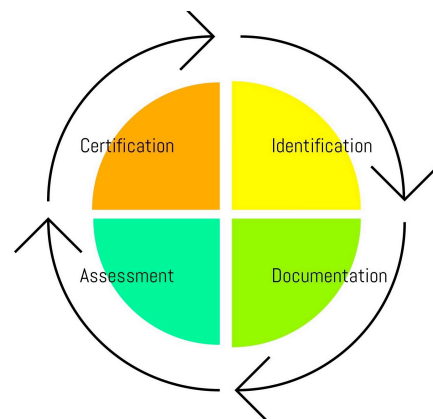
At the European level, lifelong learning is defined along a threefold division: Formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning. Formal learning refers to learning that takes place in an organized and structured educational environment, usually leading to a certificate or a diploma. Non-formal learning takes place in similar contexts, but without resulting in obtaining a formal qualification certificate. Contrasting the former two, informal learning is based on an open, typically non-structured learning process that takes place in relation to practical activities, including work practice. Informal learning thereby is not understood as a single process, but rather as to comprise multiple ways of informal learning. Rogers (2014), for example, defines three kinds of informal learning: self-directed learning, incidental learning and unintentional learning. While self-directed learning is a learning process organized by the learner, constituting a conscious way of learning, incidental learning takes place alongside completing a specific task. The learner typically is not aware of such task-related learning as s/he focuses, in the first place, on successfully completing the task. The related learning takes place as a side effect. Unintentional learning occurs unplanned and through every day experiences (Rogers 2014). In the context of vocational and adult education, informal learning is considered to be as important as formal learning (Severing 2015).

2. The EU's understanding of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning

In order to provide a general understanding of VPL and a coherent strategy which is usable across the different European countries, the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) developed guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. According to these guidelines VPL can be defined as a major tool to make 'visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals' which 'frequently takes place outside formal education and training [...] and is frequently overlooked and ignored' (Cedefop 2015, 14). Based on the Councils' recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning from 2012, the guidelines furthermore define four phases of validation covering the *identification* of learning outcomes, the *documentation* of learning outcomes, the *assessment* of learning outcomes and finally the *certification* of the assessed learning outcomes. These phases can appear in varying intensity across the different approaches in the different countries, sectors or settings. Nevertheless, Cedefop recommend these phases as indispensable for a comprehensive and sustainable validation process.

In addition, Cedefop urges the member states to implement validation procedures that are transparent and clear in order to facilitate the allocation of the individual's demands with the suitable validation procedure (Cedefop 2015, 15). Accordingly, the guidelines underline the necessity to put the individual and their needs at the centre of validation procedures (Cedefop 2015, 19).

Phases of validation



3. References

Bohlinger S & Münchhausen G (2011) 'Recognition and validation of prior learning' In S. Bohlinger & G. Münchhausen (eds) *Validierung von Lernergebnissen – Recognition and Validation of Prior Learning*, pp. 7-26, Bielefeld, Bertelsmann Verlag.

European Commission (2009) *Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020')* No. 2009/C 119/02. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52009XG0528(01)&from=EN). (accessed 12 May 2017)

European Commission (2012) *Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* (2012/C 398/01). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2801%29> (accessed 29 September 2017)

European Council (2017) *Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*. <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cee4d970-518f-11e7-a5ca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> (accessed 12 September 2019)

Mikulec, Borut (2017). Impact of the Europeanisation of education: Qualifications Frameworks in Europe. In: *European Educational Research Journal*, 16, 4, 455-473.

Rogers, A. (2014) *The Base of the Iceberg. Informal Learning and its Impact on Formal and Non-formal Learning*, Opladen, Berlin & Toronto: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Severing, E. (2015) 'Grundlagen der Anerkennung des informellen Lernens' In Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.) *Kompetenzen anerkennen. Was Deutschland von anderen Staaten lernen kann*, Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 17-35.

Denmark: Evaluation Report Validation of Prior Learning

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1 The Danish national context

1.1 Introduction: national background and tradition, contextual information

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has been on the policy agenda in Denmark for about 20 years. It is seen as a key element to promote lifelong learning in Denmark. Competence assessment and the possible outcomes in terms of access, exemption or acquisition of certificates varies among the education and training sectors (VET, higher education and adult education sectors). A legal framework for validation of prior learning based on common principles in the adult education and training sector has been in place since 2007. In Denmark, the validation of prior learning is regulated by laws. According to the Danish law, the assessment of the validation application must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes. Other bodies can be in charge of information, identification, guidance and counselling, in a broader perspective, in the phase leading up to the assessment process, In Denmark often named 'the pre-phase' corresponding to information, identification and documentation.

'Other bodies'¹ include, among others, trade unions, employers' associations, job- centres, unemployment insurance funds, civic education institutions, study committees and 'eVejledning' (online guidance service) and third sector institutions. The implementation of the legislation is decentralized in Denmark.

1.2 Legal framework: legal guidelines, policy framework, legal embedding

In Denmark, the validation of prior learning is regulated by laws, as follows:

- Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007², entitled 'Development of the validation of prior learning in adult education and continuing training', effective from August 2007 gives each individual the right to have his/her prior learning experiences validated in relation to specific goals of adult education and continuing training programmes². Citizens from other EU countries are granted the same rights to undergo validation processes. Act no. 556 includes the following six educational fields as part of adult education:
 - Single course subjects in general adult education (avu);
 - Single course subjects in general upper secondary education;
 - Vocational training programme (AMU);
 - Basic adult education (GVU), which by 2015 has been replaced by the new VET programmes for adults ;
 - Short-cycle post-secondary adult education (VVU); and
 - Medium-cycle post-secondary adult education ('Diploma' programme).

¹ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/r0710.aspx?id=25349>

² In 2001 the further education system for adults was established as a parallel system to the ordinary education system.

<https://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/Om%20uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne.aspx>

According to Danish law, the assessment must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes.

- The legislation for VET³ (2015) for adults aged 25 and above (EUV) includes a general principle of individual competence assessment as a basis for preparation of personal education plans for each individual. The personal education plan is based on an assessment of the pupils' competences and outlines an individual pathway through the VET system.
- Since 2007, legislation⁴ admits individuals to gain access to short-cycle and medium-cycle Higher Education (Bachelor-level degrees) based on an individual competence assessment. The educational institutions are responsible for information, guidance and assessment of the individual.

The Ministry of Education⁵ and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science⁶ are responsible for the legislative framework for assessment of prior learning and for taking national initiatives for implementing the legislation. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects aimed at developing tools, methods and procedures.

The Danish Ministry of Defence has initiated a review of the Danish Veteran Policy for Army Personnel in 2016. The Ministry of Higher Education & Science and The Ministry of Education participate in the review with contributions towards improved validation processes and access to education/training for veterans, including the facilitation of greater awareness of existing opportunities in the field of education/training.

Based on this review, a new initiative, 2017, forms an increased focus on veterans' competences to be included in the assessment of study competences and potential exemptions for relevant education and work experience, when they apply for access within the formal education system.

In 2015, a reform for VET with a special programme for adults, + 25 years, was implemented. It is special for this programme, EUV, that applicants must carry out a compulsory VPL, prior to the education with the aim of identifying, based on VPL, a shortening of the programme. Due to the legislation, the assessment for shortening was determined according to principles for both a standardized and an individual part of the VPL, with the criteria for the standardized part of the validation determined by the Vocational Training Committees for each branch.

Based on an evaluation of the EUV (carried out by The Danish Evaluation Institute, EVA, 2017), which clearly showed that shortening – as much as possible – is not a primary motivation for the adult learners, the criteria for the individual part of VPL were revised. VPL no longer leads to a compulsory shortening of the EUV. Instead, this is optional with the individual learner being able to choose whether they would like to make use of it or not.

Additionally, adult learners, who do not prefer an individual shortening must be offered teaching at a higher level, alternatively other relevant vocational teaching. This adjustment, among others, was brought into effect by 1 January 2018.

³ www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=164802

⁴ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=145524>

⁵ <http://eng.uvm.dk/>

⁶ http://fivu.dk/en?set_language=en&cl=en

1.3 Education system: How does the education system accommodate VPL? Are there any specific mechanisms to support transparency, bridge building and permeability?

In Denmark the educational institutions are responsible for identifying one or more study objectives or admission requirements against which a candidate is to be evaluated, providing the specific counselling and guidance and conducting the assessment.

According to the Act No. 556 of 2007 (the central legislation for VPL), each adult education institution is responsible for organizing the process of validation of prior learning. The institutions can assess and validate prior learning in adult education and continuing training for the following purposes:

- To access formal education, i.e. using non-formal/informal experiences to meet the admission requirements for a given study programme;
- To tailor a study programme or to award credits for certain classes up to Master's level; and
- To award a 'Competence certificate' if the participant meets the requirements of part of an educational programme
- To award an 'Education certificate' if the participant's competences are proven to be the same as those obtained by completing an entire educational programme⁷. The certificates have the same value as the certificates obtained through the respective education programme.

In the Higher Education (HE) sector, validation of prior learning takes place at the Vocational Academy program, (NQR level 5) and the Diploma Programme (NQR, level 6).

The legal framework for VPL does not include the Master level.

The qualifications framework is used to provide criteria for the assessment of the validation application for candidate's admission or for the award of competence certificates. A network has been established between the University Colleges to ensure a common approach to validation.

A development project, set by the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, develops common guidelines and a digital platform for the sector of Vocational Academy institutions and University colleges. The aim is to formalize VPL arrangements in the sector and to support a more transparent and user-friendly approach for VPL applicants. The digital platform with guidelines is finalized by the end of 2020.

The legislation in the VET system on Vocational Education and Training programmes has been changed in August 2015 including new VET programmes for adults 25 years old and beyond (EUV) building on an initial validation of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning and work experience.

The national legislation provides a framework that outlines how the educational institutions have to act, to ensure quality assurance and to ensure evaluation with a view to developing quality systems, methods, etc. The educational institutions are responsible for the quality assurance and evaluation of the validation activities.

An Appeals Board has been established by the Ministry of Education in 2008.

⁷ Certificates of admission can be used for VVU and Diploma programmes. Certificates of competency can be issued for all six education areas, while certificates of education cannot be issued for general adult education and general upper secondary subjects at VUC.

The Three-partite agreement for Adult Vocational Education and CVET (2018-2021) addresses the PIAAC results, 2013, with a high priority for the upskilling of general basic skills (AVU, FVU, OBU) and vocational skills. This priority is specifically supported by a targeted effort to motivate employees and enterprises for a more systematic work on raising employees' basic and vocational skills.

A fund of 400 mio DKR is earmarked for the transformation of skills and competences according to comprehensive labour market changes.

For Adult education and CVET, the use of VPL (RKV) is prioritized with various means and incentives:

For the Adult Vocational Education and Training programme (AMU) there will be a higher taximeter to the VET providers, including also for the VPL. Besides, the wage compensation is raised from 80-100 % of the unemployment benefit. For both users, employers and educational institutions these financial incentives are expected to motivate employers for more Adult Vocational Education and CVET for employees.

Besides the Three-partite agreement on CVET provides changes for the development of VPL according to the following elements:

- The former 13 VEU-centres, which since 2010, has provided a unified gateway to general adult education and vocational adult education and CVET, are closed down by the end of 2018. A new initiative of development is launched to make the social partners responsible for providing institutional neutral Information, advisory and guidance (IAG) to motivate employees and private and public enterprises with a specific focus on the upskilling of short skilled and skilled employees' basic and vocational skills.
- A working group, established by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science will focus on support elements for an increased use of RKV. This includes development of common sector instruments to be used for RKV at academy and diploma levels.
- Funding is raised for adult vocational education to motivate for more use of adult vocational education and CVET, which has been declining since 2010. This is done in terms of a raised taximeter to the educational institutions and in terms of a higher wage compensation to employers.

1.4 How is VPL linked to the National Qualification Framework?

There is a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) in place in Denmark, covering all types and levels of qualification awarded and quality assured by public authorities. The eight-level framework was adopted in 2009 and the NQF was referenced to the EQF in May 2011. Most qualifications in the Danish NQF are accessible /can be acquired on the basis of validation.

It has been considered that the framework may be opened up to qualifications and certificates in the private and non-formal sector, in a second stage of development / implementation⁸. Nevertheless this part of the NQF has still not been developed.

1.5 Future plans and perspectives of VPL: What is the pursued and articulated strategy for VPL at the national and/or regional level?

In 2010, the Ministry of Education made a national action plan on validation of prior learning with four initiatives crossing all relevant adult educational areas:

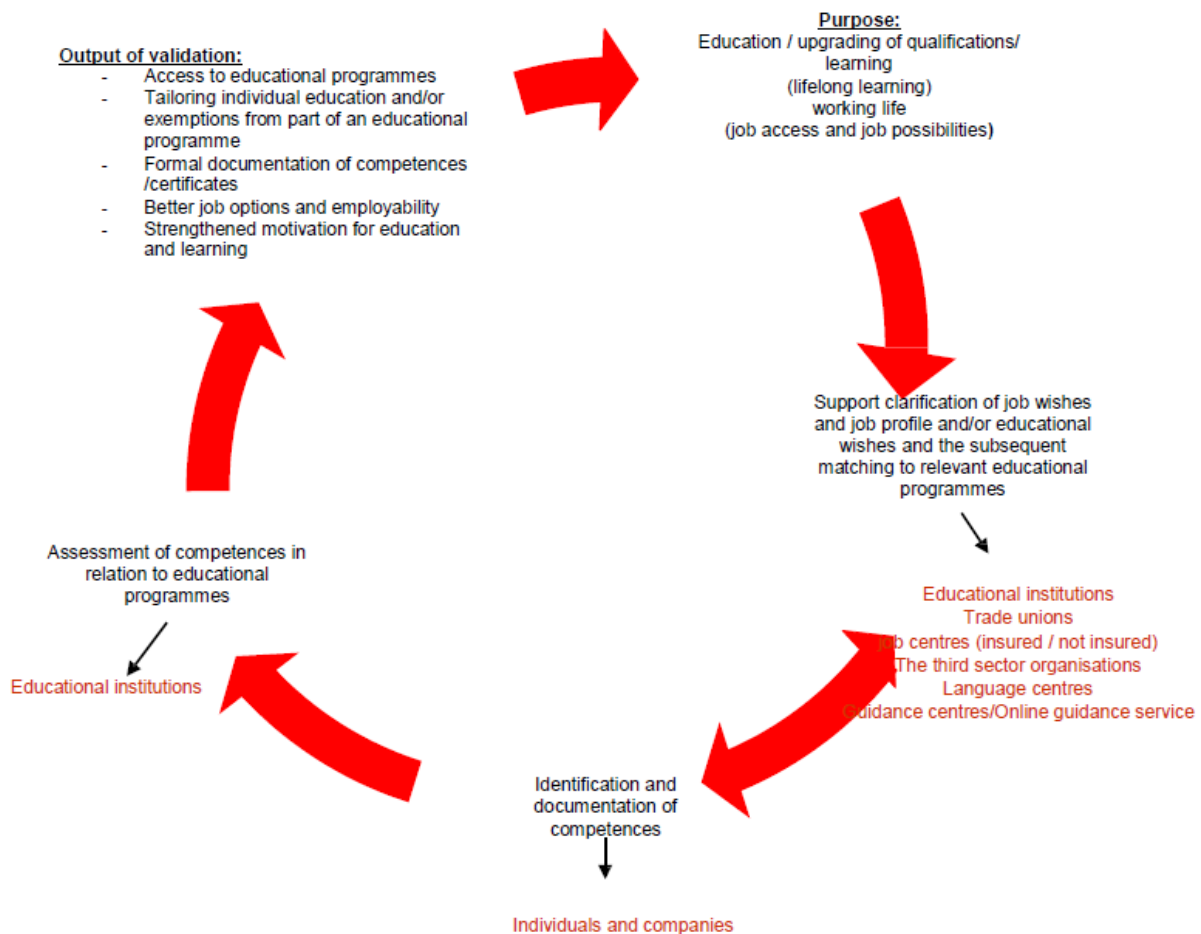
1. Mapping out the players in guidance and counselling,

⁸ European Inventory on NQF 2012: Denmark. Internet:
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/NQF_developments_2012-DENMARK.pdf

2. Examining the possibilities of applying a broader perspective in the VPL- programmes validating in the adult educational system, including a vocational- and employment- perspective,
3. Quality assurance with a special focus on developing a code of conduct for validation of prior learning,
4. A strengthened information effort in order to support a broader implementation of validation of prior learning in all adult educational areas.

In Spring 2011, a committee was established in order to prepare the action plan. In the report of the committee, the model for validation illustrated in Figure 1.1 was described:

Figure 1.1 The process for validation of prior learning in an educational perspective and a Danish context



The model describes a coherent process of four stages including identification, documentation, assessment and certification.

The national action plan from 2010 has still not been renewed.

However, a task force has been set by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, with the terms of reference to perform a critical evaluation of the Danish VPL system (named RKV). The task force is part of the implementation of the Danish Tripartite Agreement, 2018-2021, with the priority to support an increase of participation in VET and CVET based on a VPL. The tripartite Agreement mirrors the overall understanding of future extensive changes in society and labour market and in accordance with this a request for a more flexible system for continuing VET. Upskilling Pathways agenda is highly focused.

At the end of 2019, the task force for VPL (in Danish RKV), set by the Danish Ministry of Higher Education & Science, will conclude their recommendation to the Minister for a more flexible VPL system, including recommendations also for the legal framework.

1.6 A regional action plan on validation of prior learning in Central Region Denmark

Validation of prior learning is an essential tool in the efforts to ensure that businesses in the Central Denmark Region have the work force competencies, which they require at any time. The Regional Action Plan sets out the aspirations for the research and development of validation of prior learning on a regional level⁹.

The purpose of the plan is:

- To intensify activities regarding validation of prior learning and create a higher degree of visibility in the process;
- To enhance the collaboration among key stakeholders (educational institutions, job centres, unemployment insurance funds, trade unions etc);
- To develop a comprehensive perspective for education and employment.

It is meant to form the basis for collaboration among relevant stakeholders in relation to specific initiatives and tasks concerning validation of prior learning. It includes experiences and ongoing activities as well as target setting for future activities in the region. It is not all regions that have an action plan.

2 Validation approaches

2.1 General principles

The following is a description of validation approaches at a general level.

The Danish concept of validation of prior learning is based on common principles. The principles are fundamental to the further political process and agreements amongst stakeholders:

- The individual citizen is able to request an assessment of his or her prior learning; based on the framework and regulations applicable within the individual areas of education.
- The individual has a responsibility for contributing to the documentation of his or her prior learning.
- A user fee may be charged for a competence assessment, except for the low-qualified.
- Competence assessments should always be based on the objectives and admission requirements of the education program.
- The individual's competences should be recognized, irrespective of where and how they were acquired, but without compromising the quality and standards of the education and training programs.
- The methods used must ensure a reliable assessment, ensuring confidence in the outcome.
- The result of the assessment should be documented by issuing a certificate.

⁹ Central Denmark Region is one of five regions in Denmark.

<http://www.centraldenmark.eu/english/centraldenmarkandmidjutland/>

In practice, validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark broadly speaking provides an individual the opportunity:

- to be granted access to formal education and training programmes if they do not meet the formal entry requirements
- to get exemptions for parts of a formal education and training programme and/ or
- to have an individual tailored education and training programmes
- to acquire a 'certificate of competence' leading to access/ exemptions in adult education and training programmes.
- to obtain 'education certificates' for parts of/or a whole education programme on the basis of validation of prior learning.
- to be aware of own skills and competences in a career and work perspective

Practical experience that the National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning (NVR) has gathered (National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning 2012) shows that validation makes sense to the individual under following conditions:

- The applicant must be met with openness and respect.
- Information and counseling about the process must be given.
- The applicant must be given the best opportunity to go over a clarification and an assessment with an outcome that they deem to be meaningful and fair, according to the expectations and motives of the applicant.
- Support and counselling should be provided throughout the process, and the people carrying out the assessment should make as much effort as the applicant to understand what the applicant is seeking.
- The applicant should have access to help to ensure they understand the information on the process and they should be given the opportunity to create an overview of time, methods and requirements.
- Educational institutions should plan clarification and assessment processes by introducing clear and transparent procedures.
- You must have an individual approach in order to meet the individual applicant.
- The applicant should receive continuous counseling based on their needs.

The experience (ibid) also shows that validation makes sense to the workplace under following conditions:

- Manage a critical situation with restructuring, closures and layoffs.
- Adjust to a development in society, within the industry or the profession.
- Generally ensure a higher competence level among employees. At the same time, the workplace has to be able to justify using the formal education system in that situation and find it relevant to have the employees' prior learning assessed. It could be to have:
- Shortened relevant education for employees and thereby save time and money.
- The employees' broad prior learning clarified and documented.
- The employees' formal competences documented in education plans. The plan belongs to the employee, but as a leader you can also have insight into what is in the plan if the employee approves.
- Motivated employees who want to have in-service training and further education through the clarification and assessment process.

Examples (ibid) show that:

- Consideration of the individual and cooperation between employees and the organization is absolutely essential in the use of prior learning assessments, if the employees are not to feel as though they are being forced into an assessment process.
- A clarification phase and employee involvement is greatly important for the employees, so that they feel ownership over the process.
- Close cooperation and a good dialogue between the workplace, the employees and the educational institution is crucial for a positive process.
- The educational institution has to understand the context, the background, the goal and the framework for the use of validation and formal education in the workplace.
- The workplace must also understand the educational framework and terms of validation and formal education.

There are very good possibilities for validation of prior learning in the Danish system, but the possibilities are still too unknown in the public as already mentioned. It remains difficult to measure the relevance and outcomes for the target group and more statistics and research are needed about individual outcomes.

2.2 Methods used

In Denmark there is a variety of assessment methods in use, the educational institutions are using different methods which supplement each other. Some are developing their own methods and are tailoring methods to the context and the experiences of the individuals.

The methods are not standardised and an exchange of experience would be helpful. In some areas of the education system there are established networks which are working to develop a more common approach to ensure credibility and validity in the use of methods.

The method can be a combination of the declarative method, written test, examination, and self-testing. It can be supported by the use of electronic or manual tools. It is common in Denmark to combine different methods in order to secure or strengthen the validation and the reliability in the assessment (triangulation)¹⁰.

Oral assessment or dialogue-based method involves a one-to-one discussion, dialogue or interview between the individual and assessor, according to the pursuers of the oral assessment or dialogue-based method. Sometimes it will take place in the beginning and will be the primary method. Sometimes it will take place after a test, written assignment or the self-assessment and will be a supplement to different methods. It can support the reflection and verification of the individual competences.

Interviews are often combined with tests and exams and practical assignments at AMU and VET. Practical assignments are mostly used at AMU and VET levels in Denmark. Written assignments are often combined with interviews concerning general qualifications.

Concerning the 'diploma' and higher education qualifications, interviews are often combined with a portfolio/CV, self-assessments and written assignments.

Practice-oriented methods (i.e. observation of problem solving in practice in the workplace, solving practical tasks and problems in a simulated workplace and solving real cases) have been to some extent applied for validation of prior learning in Denmark, although they may be difficult to apply. Such methods are therefore often combined with other methods, such

¹⁰ Aagaard, K. & Dahler, A.M. (ed.): *Anerkendelse af realkompetencer – en grundbog* (Validation of Prior Learning – a basic reader.) ViaSystem, Denmark, 2010

as tests, interviews or written assignments on the reflection of the problem solving.

2.3 Evaluation outcomes

In 2010 - 2011 the Ministry of Education carried out an evaluation of the Act, no. 556. The report, "Validation of prior learning within adult education in Denmark. Status report regarding Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007", is the most comprehensive mapping of validation of prior learning within adult education.

The averaging results of the evaluation:

- RPL is still a broadly founded political project supported by relevant stakeholders and the social partners.
- It is still seen as a very important instrument contributing to promote adults participation in adult and continuing training and to improve adults' possibilities on the labor market.
- But there is a potential for development and improvement especially within information about RPL, simplifying, standardization and quality assurance.

In 2018-2019, The Danish Evaluation Institute carried out a renewed evaluation– for the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The evaluation focus was VPL in all the education and training programmes, covered by Act no 556. Based on the evaluation, recommendations were given, among others, to increase competence development of VPL professionals. Furthermore, it was a recommendation to have focus more on the face-face guidance conversation in the VPL process.

3 Assessment of effectiveness and role of employers

This part of the evaluation report will first be filled in in the version 2 and 3 of the report. In Denmark we have not investigated this directly and can't describe this systematically, but the project EffectVPL will cover the question of effectiveness and the role of employers and clarify how validation of prior learning can be described as effectiveness.

The roles of employers has still not been subject to special national investigation. However, there is a general awareness to the potential of increasing employers' insight to VPL and to motivate employers to engage more in VPL for their employees – and also as a key instrument to a more extensive use of VET.

It is a Tripartite initiative (2018-2021) that the social partners will provide direct information to the SME's and short-skilled employees for the aim mentioned above.

4 Observations and recommendations

Barriers to stabilizing and improving VPL in Denmark can be summarized in following statements; continuously discussed by central stakeholders:

- The allocation of resources from the state to the schools could be more secure in making a more solid basis for the VPL-activity. VPL-activity is done in the schools on basis on a business case calculating with economical risks. The resources could be more earmarked to the VPL-activity, instead of full dependency on taximeters.
- The need to linking the VPL-activity for individuals more to the development of
- Job-profiles. This means involving the employers at the workplace-level in a more responsible way for showing the job-perspectives to the employees, potentially having a

VPL.

- In many ways Denmark has a well-functioning education system providing good conditions for VPL. However you could call for more commitment to VPL, from the employers at the firm level, from the social partners and from the responsible actors in the education system. Especially at the VET- and CVET-schools where the social partners are occupying all seats in the boards. There they have a position to make a strategic focus, prioritizing VPL-activity more at their own schools.
- The official statistics ought to be more comprehensive and systematic, covering all VPL-activity, in an updated version.

Following statements can be drawn about the VPL in Denmark:

Strengths:

- Widening access to education and learning and a method for competence development as a strategy for lifelong learning.
- Value for the society, organisations and individuals.
- Improving opportunities for employability and empowerment.

Opportunities:

- A more demand-led labour market.
- A more flexible and tailor made learning culture.
- A lifelong learning approach to optimize different forms of learning.
- To value VPL in respect to society, organisations and individuals.

Weaknesses:

- VPL is not economical sustainable.
- VPL is time-consuming.
- Competences for VPL staff need to be developed.
- The collaboration between stakeholders is too weak and in some degree non existing.
- The VPL is in practice not standardized.
- The collaboration between educational institutions to build common methods is too weak.
- VPL is still too unknown my stakeholders and individuals.

Threats:

- If the economic investment in VPL is reduced because of the economic crisis.
- If the need for competence developments is not a priority.
- If collaboration and synchronizing competence systems in different organisations and educational systems are not developed.
- If the awareness and acknowledgement of major future changes in society and labour market is not turned into action in due time.

The following challenges can be pointed out:

- To develop VPL in a sustainable way.
- To inform and improve knowledge about the possibility of obtaining VPL.
- To build up a national coherent structure for VPL.
- Institutional anchoring.

- Competence development of the professionals.
- Strengthen the collaboration between the sectors and stakeholders.
- Integration of all the elements of the VPL process: Information, clarification, documentation, assessment and formal recognition.
- Quality assurance.

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Germany: Evaluation Report Validation of Prior Learning

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1 National Context

1.1 Introduction: national background and context

In Germany, the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal prior learning (VPL) is increasingly receiving attention in educational research and practice, not least as a response to European lifelong learning strategies, the strive to support the development of skilled labour and the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF). However, the German validation landscape can still be considered sketchy and patchwork, particularly as compared to the situation in many other European countries with less regulated and formalised education and vocational training systems. Hence, the German VPL approaches present a picture of rather uncoordinated regulations, programmes, processes and projects headed by different authorities and with varying outreach. Common guidelines or a common strategy to establish flexible and transparent validation processes do not yet exist (Seidel 2011). Among other reasons, this is due to (i) the highly regulated education system that focuses on formal qualifications and certificates and (ii) the close linkage between school-based and work-based learning in the framework of the formalised and nationally regulated dual system of vocational education and training (Schöpf 2015). While informal and practice-based learning at the workplace is considered important, it is not taken into account in the context of validation, mainly because it takes place outside of the formal education system.

1.2 Legal framework: policy framework and legal embedding

See 2.1

1.3 Education system: How does the education system accommodate VPL? Are there any specific mechanisms to support transparency, bridge building and permeability?

Due to the federal principle, education policy is the responsibility of the Federal States and is hence decentralised in Germany. This includes general education, tertiary education, adult education and lifelong learning and how the different educational sectors are being administered. Only specific parts of the education system are regulated at the national level, including entry regulations for Higher Education, civic education (not covered in the school curricula), the dual vocational training system (i. e. apprenticeships) and also occupational regulations for specific vocational and professional domains (such as lawyers and the caring professions).

Compulsory schooling starts at the age of six with primary education of four or six years respectively.¹¹ Pupils then continue to the first level of secondary education (Sekundarbereich I), which is differentiated into three school types with varying performance levels and indicators (“Hauptschule”, “Realschule”, “Gymnasium”) as well as integrated schools that comprise either two or all three levels. In the integrated schools, pupils can obtain a first school leaving certificate after nine years of schooling or a more advanced certificate after ten years. If they wish to continue, pupils then move on to the second level of secondary schooling (Sekundarbereich II), which comprises both general and vocational schools (KMK 2015) (see Table 2 for details):

- The general schools (“Gymnasium”) as well as the vocational higher education schools prepare for University entry qualification;
- The “Berufsfachschule” and the “Fachoberschule” finish with a certificate to study at the “Fachhochschule” (Higher Education for Applied Sciences);
- Attending a vocational school in combination with work-based training leads to a recognised vocational qualification.

The German **dual apprenticeship training** presents a special case of two, three or three and a half years duration. It combines a smaller part of attending a vocational school and a larger part of work-based training in a company. A formal entry qualification to start an apprenticeship does not exist. However, in practice companies consider the various school leaving certificates when recruiting apprentices. For example, from the cohort that started in 2012, only 2.1% of the apprentices did not have a school leaving certificate, while 31.7% had the lowest and 47.6% a medium level certificate. 18.6% had a certificate to continue to higher education (BIBB Datenreport 2015).

At the **tertiary level**, higher education is offered by Universities or other higher education institutes that deliver vocational study courses. Overall, pupils can obtain a variety of school leaving certificates in Germany, which vary in terms of duration as well as qualification level. Thereby, a high level of permeability exists. In addition, most certificates can be obtained later in life through further learning and adult education courses (KMK 2015).

In 2004, the Federal States and the German Government agreed on a common **Strategy of Lifelong Learning**, emphasising that learning should be supported throughout all life phases and at different learning places. Furthermore, a variety of learning approaches and methodologies should be supported. This strategy explicitly addresses non-formal and informal learning, which should be linked to and, where possible, integrated into formal learning pathways. Learning taking place outside of the school context, such as learning in associations, youth clubs and the company, should be regarded as *complementary*, enforcing the **horizontal linkage** of educational and learning processes. The successful transition from school to vocational training is also seen as an important basis for continuing lifelong learning. It requires the **vertical linkage** of educational institutions, including schools, vocational training institutes, Universities and adult education centres, among others (BLK 2004). Nevertheless, besides this rather symbolic strategy for lifelong learning, the validation of prior non-formal and informal learning is not of relevance for the German education system. Instead, the high degree of standardization and stratification in the German education system impede any flexibilisation towards the validation of prior non-formal and informal learning.

¹¹ In Berlin and Brandenburg, primary education lasts six years, in all other Federal States four years.

1.4 How is VPL linked to the German National Qualifications Framework?

The German Qualifications Framework (DQR) was developed by an expert committee on the basis of the EQF and adopted in May 2013. The major objectives are to improve access to education and training and to enhance the permeability between educational pathways and the labour market.

The eight level matrix developed for the German Qualifications Framework can generally be used for the classification of professional and personal competences acquired in all educational sectors. Within the DQR, the term 'competence' is understood as to refer to an individual's knowledge and skills, their personal, social and methodological abilities and their disposition for individual and social responsibility (see AK DQR, 2011). The focus on competence is crucial when seeking to integrate validation into the DQR as this approach focuses on what a person can and cannot do in relation to learning inputs. Already in 2011, the same expert committee passed a statement regarding the inclusion of informal and non-formal learning in the DQR and emphasized its relevance in the DQR. However, instead of integrating informal and non-formal learning outcomes, the DQR is still focusing on formal qualifications.

2 Validation Approaches

Validation approaches in Germany have to be mirrored against European trends and developments. Here we find that within Europe, two different validation approaches to recognise prior learning can be differentiated: the system-based approach and the competence-based approach.

- The **system-based approach**, followed, for example, in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, seeks to base validation on procedures and methods already existing and available in the education system. Validation is then linked to the formal system.
- The **competence-based approach** develops specific procedures and assessment methods in line with defined competence standards, which are more flexibly linked to the education system. This approach is pursued, for example, in Denmark, Finland, France and the UK.

Both approaches imply a similar, three-step process:

- i. first, individuals compile their portfolio of qualifications, skills, competences and relevant experience;
- ii. then the competences and skills are being compared with qualification demands, which in a third step
- iii. leads to formulating further competence requirements and skilling needs. Each phase is supported by guiding and counselling, which is considered crucial for the successful completion of a validation (see Geldermann et al. 2009).

In German validation practice, procedures usually are geared to address or support specific target groups, who may include migrants, volunteers, people seeking to re-enter the labour market, young people in the orientation phase to decide for a job or vocational training or individuals who are in a transition phase. The objective of validation is also relevant, i.e. whether the major aim is to support an individual's personal development (formative) or whether validation is linked to master concrete tasks and challenges (summative), for example to pass an examination (Annen et al. 2015).

2.1 Validation approaches based on legislative regulations

While in Germany validation is not being widely promoted, several procedures and basic processes towards validation exist, some of which also have a legal basis. According to Seidel (2011), three different types of validation of prior learning with a legal foundation can be distinguished.

- a) Recognition of prior learning to obtain **permission for taking a regular, but external examination** (i. e. an examination that forms part of the formal education system).
 - For **vocational training**, this procedure was already established in the 1960s to give people not formally trained under the dual apprenticeship programme the chance to acquire a formal vocational qualification. According to the national vocational qualification law (§45 (2) BBiG) and regulations set up by the chamber of crafts (§37 (2) HwO), people are allowed to apply for taking the final vocational examination without having attended the vocational training programme if they comply with certain requirements ("Externenprüfung"). These include the proof of relevant work experience covering 1.5 times the duration of the regular training programme. Alternatively, it is also possible to proof that relevant competences have been acquired in other ways. In theory, the possibility to take the final examination also exists for higher education.
- b) Recognition of prior learning to obtain **access to different learning pathways**
 Different procedures and pilot projects (e. g. ANKOM¹²) exist to recognise prior learning, further training and learning certificates for moving between or accessing different learning pathways. The aim is to avoid repetition, shorten educational pathways and increase permeability, also between vocational tracks and higher education. The various approaches are largely decentralised and not regulated at the national level. The most prominent example is **accessing Higher Education without holding a University entry qualification**. This involves specific procedures to allow access to HE for individuals with work experience, but who do not have the formal HE entry qualification. It is also called 'third educational pathway'. More recently, the German Standing Conference of the Educational Ministers (KMK 2009) has started to develop national guidelines on access to HE, while until 2009 these procedures were largely decentralised to the federal level or based on institutional regulations¹³.
- c) Recognition of **equivalence of prior learning** to existing education standards and certificates
 - For vocational training, the **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law (BQFG, also called "Recognition Law")** was introduced in April 2012. It guarantees individuals the right to get foreign qualifications recognised by a competent authority within three months as being equal to the respective national qualification. Although the law focuses on assessing and comparing formal qualifications, informally acquired competences and relevant work experience can be considered when formal certificates are missing or are uncomplete (see BQFG § 3 section 1). The Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law considers specified vocational domains regulated by federal law (currently over 600), thereby differentiating between non-regularised and regularised vocational domains. While for regularised vocational domains specific qualifications need to be recognised, non-regularised domains do not require compulsory qualifications. The recognition process is, in the first place, based on assessing relevant documents such as training certifi-

¹² <http://ankom.his.de/>

¹³ http://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2009/2009_03_06-Hochschulzugang-erful-qualifizierte-Bewerber.pdf

cates, certificates of capability and proofs of relevant domain-specific work experience acquired in a foreign country or in Germany (see § 3 BQFG section 1). Complementary, competence assessment based on practical tests, work proofs and interviews is also possible. When significant skill gaps impede full recognition, a partial recognition is possible that can be supplemented, for example, by further training (see Böse et al. 2014). The applicant must be officially informed about the results of the assessment by an administrative body.

Validation approaches based on legal regulations are available, but not used very much as they are either very time consuming and costly (recognition law) or require a targeted preparation (extramural examination). On the other hand it could be argued, whether and to what extent the presented approaches actually follow the genuine idea of validating prior learning since all three approaches actually imply or lead to a formal qualification.

2.2 Validation approaches beyond the legislative level

In addition to the above examples, a variety of validation instruments have been developed and piloted at various levels during the past years (Seidel 2011). Most of them, however, are not well known and are largely unfamiliar to individuals as well as companies and employers. Two examples are presented below.

a) **Project-based validation of occupational skills and competences**

Valikom – Berufsrelevante Kompetenzen bewerten und zertifizieren (assessment and certification of professionally relevant competencies) is a project run by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and implemented locally by Chambers of Crafts, Chambers of Industry and Commerce, and Chambers of Agriculture. The project duration is from 2015 until 2021. The first three years comprised the development and test phase of the approach, while since 2019 the project is transferred to a broader scope across the country. Currently, the project includes 11 Chambers of Crafts, 17 Chambers of Industry and Commerce, and 2 Chambers of Agriculture. The project addresses people with relevant working experiences, career changers from other professions, migrants, refugees as well as Germans who are at least 25 years old.

In the first phase, the purpose of the project was to develop and test a standardized validation procedure which allows the assessment and certification of professional competencies that have been acquired outside the formal vocational education and training system. In this phase 164 workers could complete a validation procedure.

Since 2018 the follow-up project “**Valikom Transfer**” has the aim to facilitate validation procedures nationwide and in 32 professions in the industrial, handicraft, trade and agriculture sector.

The procedure follows the four phases of validation. In the first step, the participants receive information and consultation about the procedure and their potential reference profession. The second step comprises the documentation of their relevant work experiences based on their curriculum vitae. During this step they do a self-assessment related to the chosen reference profession. The third step covers the assessment by external professional experts. Here, the applicant has to complete practice-oriented tasks that are typical in the reference profession. Finally, in the fourth step, the application receives a certification proving the full/partial or no equivalence to the reference profession.

b) **Instruments of Competence Assessment**

Several instruments to document and assess competences have been developed to

support, in particular, specific target groups including youth who need special support, immigrants, people re-entering the labour market or volunteers.

- The **ProfilPASS** is an instrument of competence assessment for all life phases. It is biographically orientated, considering all forms of prior learning as well as practical experience. It is not outcome orientated, but a rather open tool for self-reflection and identifying personal strength and learning gaps. In particular, the ProfilPASS aims to review, document and assess informally acquired competences regardless of where they have been acquired and in which specific learning context. It is based on user self-assessment supported by professional guidance. The idea is that individuals should be guided to become aware of their competences and the added value through critically reflecting upon their biography. Hence, the key objective, at least at the moment, is not validation, but further personal and professional development. The ProfilPass-model includes quality standards concerning instruments, methods, guidance and documentation. Up to now, no linkage has been created between the DQR and the ProfilPASS.
- The project **AiKo – Recognition of informally acquired skills** was funded by the regional Ministry of Finance and Economy of Baden-Württemberg and had a project period from 2012 to 2015. A follow-up project, *AiKo-ProdLog – recognition of informally acquired competences in the area of near-production logistics*, was implemented from 2016 to 2017. Both projects covered all key areas of the metal and electrical industry in the area of Baden-Württemberg.

The aim of the project was to develop a tool which can be used to document informal and non-formal skills of semi-, unskilled and skilled workers in the metal and electrical industry. The tool is a web-based application, which facilitates the documentation of skills and competencies of workers. Based on a task inventory the individual can choose tasks in order to indicate their individual profile. This profile not only includes professional skills but also skills that have been acquired outside working life. After having completed the questionnaire, the worker can save and print the complete profile and continue to use the results. For instance, the worker can use the profile as a starting point for further professional development but also as an attachment to job applications. Ideally, the process is accompanied by further guidance by supervisors or job counselors.

This project has a small impact with regard to the effectiveness for the individual on the labour market. It is focused on a specific sector and on a small region in Southern Germany but could be transferred to other areas or professions easily. Nevertheless, it has no legal valid in the German labour market or formal education system.

c) **Company-based procedures**

When companies recruit employees, they often revert to non-formal competence assessment approaches to obtain more information beyond the formal certificates. This may include interviews, letters of reference, assessment centres, potential analysis and profiling (see Geldermann et al. 2009). On the other hand, employers also employ unskilled workers or people without formal qualifications. Hence, informally acquired and not certified or validated skills and competences are recognised at the company level for recruitment or internal promotion. However, this recognition typically is not valued outside of the respective institutional context and does not facilitate horizontal or vertical professional mobility.

2.3 Impact and outreach of validation

According to national statistics, the **extramural examination** is mainly taken by (young) adults who do not have a formal vocational qualification. The responsible bodies (such as the Chamber of Crafts or the Chamber of Industry and Commerce) offer preparation courses for individuals who would like to conduct an external examination. In 2014, about 24.300 individuals took the examination of which about 80% passed (BMBF 2016a). The extramural examination, however, does not validate prior learning, but follows the principle of granting access to the formal education system as people take the regular vocational examination. The recognition of prior learning and work experience is used to give people access to the formal system, but does not imply the recognition of equivalence of skills and competences (Schöpf 2015).

The **Vocational Qualifications Assessment Law** comprehensively considers learning outcomes at different levels. However, individuals must have a formal vocational qualification to be granted the recognition of equality to a respective German qualification. Non-formal and informal learning can be considered in a second step if any documentation is missing. In this case, individuals can do a qualification analysis, which comprises a practical proof of their competences. Professional experts assess the competencies of the applicant and prove the equivalence in reference to a German vocational profession. Since the law was enacted, the numbers of individuals seeking guidance has increased steeply: since April 2012, over 55.000 counselling interventions and 44.094 requests for recognition have been registered (Bericht zum Anerkennungsgesetz 2016)¹⁴. In 2014, 77.8% of all vocational qualifications were recognised; in 11.4% of the cases a compensating measure or training activity was required. 7.1% obtained a partial recognition, while only 3.6% were rejected (BMBF 2016b). While the success rate of recognition is rather high, one has to keep in mind that each recognition process involves the provision of intensive guidance services. This suggests that only individuals who already have good chances to have their qualifications recognised actually engage in the process and file a case. Feedback from the chambers of crafts and industry as well as chambers of commerce suggests that the process of recognising relevant work experience is particularly time consuming since it is often not well documented (Böse et al. 2014). Notably, the extramural examination and the recognition law are closely linked as the counsellors often recommend to their clients to use the extramural examination as the road towards recognition.

The **ProfilPASS** aims at creating awareness of all possible skills and competences an individual may possess. The development of a portfolio is linked to a counselling process provided by certified counsellors. Those are the central actors of the ProfilPASS infrastructure as they are in direct contact with the clients. With 2.349 registered counsellors ProfilPASS-guidance service are currently the most used portfolio instrument across Germany. This is further supported by the relatively high numbers of sold ProfilPASS material, which is being channeled via the German book shops. In Germany, the ProfilPASS has been sold 160.000 times since 2006 (Jordanoski 2016). However, numbers of users are estimated to be much higher as the ProfilPASS material is available as free download since 2012. This makes the ProfilPASS the most widely known and used portfolio instrument in Germany and other German-speaking regions across Europe. For adaptation and distribution to other European countries it is also available in English, French and Greek and some other languages. With the launch of the online publication, the demand for the paper copies has been decreasing. This also coincided with the ending of the project funding. Evaluations of the impact of the ProfilPASS and whether it is supporting individuals' labour market mobility and professional development are currently not available.

¹⁴ Data for professions regulated at the federal level are not available and not included.

The project ProfilPASS for industry and companies (2009-2012) had the aim to adapt the portfolio approach to the needs of companies in the context of human resource development. The scientific evaluation of the project underlines that the ProfilPASS is an adequate tool for companies and can be used by employees as well as managers to facilitate communication processes, clarify professional goals and direct further training (Bosche/Seusing 2012).

The project **ValiKom** or **ValiKom Transfer** which has the aim to validate occupational skills and competences is still at the stage of a pilot project. Their approach was developed and tested in the first three years of the project. During this phase 164 workers completed a validation process.

This project shall be a further pathway through the German vocational education and training system. It has the aim to allow for an individual pathway through the validation of prior non-formal and informal competences and is closely linked to the traditional vocational qualifications. Nevertheless, in the end the validation only proves the degree of equivalence of skills and competences with a reference profession which is not equal to a traditional vocational qualification.

In the pilot phase amongst the 160 participants 43,75 % of the validation procedures resulted in full equivalence, 53,12 % resulted in partial equivalence and 3,13 % resulted in no equivalence of skills and competences with the respective reference profession (ValiKom 2018). This shows a rather high success rate of the participants. This can be explained by the comprehensive guidance from the very beginning of the validation procedure which regulates who is doing the validation procedure in which profession and with which chances of success.

Until now, ValiKom Transfer has no legal basis and is thus limited with regard to its validity and usability in the German labour market. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the project has been developed and implemented by a broad alliance of relevant stakeholders in the German vocational education and training system it can be expected to be continued beyond the project period.

3 Future Perspectives and Strategies for VPL

While an overarching legislative framework for recognition and validation of prior learning does not exist in Germany, the national Qualifications Framework (DQR) could, in principle at least, facilitate validation through its learning outcomes approach. In terms of future strategies, three possibilities to integrate outcomes of informal learning into the DQF are currently being discussed, relating either to system-based or competence-based approaches or a combination of both (see Reglin 2012).

- a) *Selective integration into the formal education system (system based)*: Outcomes of informal and non-formal learning are being validated by applying the assessment and certification standards of the formal education system. This means that the certification procedures remain the same and are not being adjusted. This system-based approach is applied, for example, for the extramural examination (see above).
- b) *Development of a parallel system (complementary approach)*: In addition to the existing system-based approach a competence-based validation system is being established, leading to validation and certification of prior learning according to standards that are yet to be defined.

- c) *Moving towards a competence-based system*: This requires the development of new standards and criteria of learning outcomes based on competence, equally accounting for formal and informal learning (see Dehnbostel/Seidel/Stamm-Riemer 2010)

Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages. The system-based approach is already implemented based on legal foundations. However, the whole range of informally acquired competences does not form part of the validation process. This includes, in particular, all competences that typically cannot be assessed by standard examination procedures (Reglin o.J.). Competence-based models, on the other hand, are criticised to threaten the standards of the formal education system and to ultimately undermine the principles of vocational training. While the combination of both approaches could be a compromise that would strengthen the quality of all educational domains, it is not pursued. Another alternative may be incremental innovation, i.e. maintaining the current educational, sector and domain-specific frameworks, but developing them further to accommodate a joint and all-embracing competence-based Qualifications Framework (Dehnbostel et al.).

Similar to the above concepts, Schneeberger, Schlögel and Neubauer (2009) present three types of procedures to assess non-formally and informally acquired competences in relation to the specific objectives of validation and to the formal system. They differentiate between

- 1) Procedures that lead to awarding a certificate of the formal system;
- 2) Procedures that lead to awarding a certificate that does not form part of the formal system;
- 3) Assessment of competences to support further professional development and learning.

In this logic, the first step of a validation would be to clarify whether the aim is a formative or a summative competence assessment. Summative implies that the learning outcomes are being documented and compiled to obtain a validation and/or a certificate. Formative assessment, by contrast, is geared towards directing a developmental process. However, both approaches can also be combined and applied either in a diagnostic or self-reflecting way. Which approach may be the most appropriate depends on the institutional context, the individual's situation and needs, which procedures are more trustworthy to the individual and what goals are ultimately pursued. The following table illustrates the different options.

Table 1: Own illustration based on Gössling/Sloane 2015, p. 334

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Logic	Congruence	Independency	Individual support
Procedures	Examination standards of the formal education system	Development of criteria for assessing individual competences	Self-reflecting procedures and tools to support portfolio development
Certification	Recognition of equality with formal qualifications	Independent certification without reference to the formal system	No certification
Approach	Summative/Formative	Summative	Formative
System of reference	Formal education system	Informal and non-formal education and learning	Formal, non-formal and informal learning
Recognition	Through the formal education system (formal certificates)	Varies according to the standards and quality of methods used	None, but can be used as preparation for subsequent validation
Learning out-	Forming part of the cur-	Starting point to develop	Property of the individual

comes are understood as	riculum	testing methods	
Examples	Extramural examination; third educational pathway (ANKOM); Recognition law (BQFG)	Qualifications Framework based on diagnostic approaches (e.g. QFC in UK)	ProfilPASS; Bilán de competence; Job navigator

In Germany, most validation procedures are geared towards obtaining a formal qualification that forms part of the formal system (type 1). Formative approaches like the ProfilPASS are either seen as a preparation for validation as part of a formal qualification or as merely supporting the personal development. Procedures that relate to type 2, by contrast, are hardly developed or available (Gössling/Sloane 2015). Initial approaches corresponding with type 2 can be seen in the pilot project ValiKom which specifically includes non-formal and informal learning experiences in relation to vocational professions in the formal education system. Unlike in the UK, for example, where this type was introduced in the context of establishing the National Qualifications Framework, placing the individual at the centre of the validation and not the curricula. The main aim then is to describe individual competences. However, as Gössling and Sloane (2015, p. 336) point out it can be criticised that only narrowly defined competences are being assessed by testing and examination questions. When using a broader or more holistic understanding of competence as it is usually the case in Germany (see KMK 2011), the competence assessment becomes more difficult as self-reflecting competence, problem-solving in a complex situation, ethical judgement, motivation and empathy should equally be assessed. To account for these dimensions by means of a test or examination question is very challenging, moreover when these competences have been acquired informally.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

A variety of methods and instruments to assess non-formal and informal learning are available in Germany. However, most tools are lacking a binding linkage to validation and recognition. As a result, validation procedures that lead to a formal recognition of informally acquired competences are rare and not wide reaching (Gaylor et al. 2015). Reasons include lack of an overarching legal framework and VPL strategy, lack of commitment to invest in the resources needed and partly lack of credibility. Furthermore, it is still an open question to what extent system-based validation approaches, which represent the dominant stream to address and implement VPL in Germany, can be realised in practice to lead to a successful validation. What is available in Germany thus far does not really address – and also does not give answers to – the key challenges of validation. This means that while a variety of uncoordinated instruments are available to assess competences based on informal and non-formal learning, conclusions concerning the usefulness of the different tools for labour market mobility and individual benefits cannot yet be drawn. One problem is that thus far validation procedures have mostly been piloted on a project basis and are not integrated into an overarching framework. Some outcomes (e. g. of the APEL-procedure¹⁵), however, could be used for formally establishing validation processes and also linking them to the DQR. Here it is important to keep in mind that the certification of competences and informal learning have to be matched by recognition to foster individuals' professional development and positioning on the labour market.

¹⁵ Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), see Hill/Merrill (2003).

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Deskriptoren zur Beschreibung der Niveaus des Europäischen Qualifikationsrahmens (EQR)

Jedes der acht Niveaus wird durch eine Reihe von Deskriptoren definiert, die die Lernergebnisse beschreiben, die für die Erlangung der diesem Niveau entsprechenden Qualifikationen in allen Qualifikationssystemen erforderlich sind			
	Kenntnisse	Fertigkeiten	Kompetenz
	Im Zusammenhang mit dem EQR werden Kenntnisse als Theorie- und/oder Faktenwissen beschrieben	Im Zusammenhang mit dem EQR werden Fertigkeiten als kognitive Fertigkeiten (unter Einsatz logischen, intuitiven und kreativen Denkens) und praktische Fertigkeiten (Geschicklichkeit und Verwendung von Methoden, Materialien, Werkzeugen und Instrumenten) beschrieben	Im Zusammenhang mit dem EQR wird Kompetenz im Sinne der Übernahme von Verantwortung und Selbstständigkeit beschrieben
Niveau 1 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 1 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	grundlegendes Allgemeinwissen	grundlegende Fertigkeiten, die zur Ausführung einfacher Aufgaben erforderlich sind	Arbeiten oder Lernen unter direkter Anleitung in einem vorstrukturierten Kontext
Niveau 2 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 2 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	grundlegendes Faktenwissen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich	grundlegende kognitive und praktische Fertigkeiten, die zur Nutzung relevanter Informationen erforderlich sind, um Aufgaben auszuführen und Routineprobleme unter Verwendung einfacher Regeln und Werkzeuge zu lösen	Arbeiten oder Lernen unter Anleitung mit einem gewissen Maß an Selbstständigkeit
Niveau 3 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 3 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	Kenntnisse von Fakten, Grundsätzen, Verfahren und allgemeinen Begriffen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich	eine Reihe kognitiver und praktischer Fertigkeiten zur Erledigung von Aufgaben und zur Lösung von Problemen, wobei grundlegende Methoden, Werkzeuge, Materialien und Informationen ausgewählt und angewandt werden	Verantwortung für die Erledigung von Arbeits- oder Lernaufgaben übernehmen bei der Lösung von Problemen das eigene Verhalten an die jeweiligen Umstände anpassen
Niveau 4 Zur Erreichung von Niveau 4 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	breites Spektrum an Theorie- und Faktenwissen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich	eine Reihe kognitiver und praktischer Fertigkeiten, die erforderlich sind, um Lösungen für spezielle Probleme in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich zu finden	selbstständiges Tätigwerden innerhalb der Handlungsparameter von Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten, die in der Regel bekannt sind, sich jedoch ändern können Beaufsichtigung der Routinearbeit anderer Personen, wobei eine gewisse Verantwortung für die Bewertung und Verbesserung der Arbeits- oder Lernaktivitäten übernommen wird
Niveau 5 ⁽¹⁾ Zur Erreichung von Niveau 5 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	umfassendes, spezialisiertes Theorie- und Faktenwissen in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich sowie Bewusstsein für die Grenzen dieser Kenntnisse	umfassende kognitive und praktische Fertigkeiten, die erforderlich sind, um kreative Lösungen für abstrakte Probleme zu erarbeiten	Leiten und Beaufsichtigen in Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten, in denen nicht vorhersehbare Änderungen auftreten Überprüfung und Entwicklung der eigenen Leistung und der Leistung anderer Personen
Niveau 6 ⁽²⁾ Zur Erreichung von Niveau 6 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	fortgeschrittene Kenntnisse in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich unter Einsatz eines kritischen Verständnisses von Theorien und Grundsätzen	fortgeschrittene Fertigkeiten, die die Beherrschung des Faches sowie Innovationsfähigkeit erkennen lassen, und zur Lösung komplexer und nicht vorhersehbarer Probleme in einem spezialisierten Arbeits- oder Lernbereich nötig sind	Leitung komplexer fachlicher oder beruflicher Tätigkeiten oder Projekte und Übernahme von Entscheidungsverantwortung in nicht vorhersehbaren Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten Übernahme der Verantwortung für die berufliche Entwicklung von Einzelpersonen und Gruppen
Niveau 7 ⁽³⁾ Zur Erreichung von Niveau 7 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	hoch spezialisiertes Wissen, das zum Teil an neueste Erkenntnisse in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich anknüpft, als Grundlage für innovative Denkansätze und/oder Forschung kritisches Bewusstsein für Wissensfragen in einem Bereich und an der Schnittstelle zwischen verschiedenen Bereichen	spezialisierte Problemlösungsfertigkeiten im Bereich Forschung und/oder Innovation, um neue Kenntnisse zu gewinnen und neue Verfahren zu entwickeln sowie um Wissen aus verschiedenen Bereichen zu integrieren	Leitung und Gestaltung komplexer, unvorhersehbarer Arbeits- oder Lernkontexte, die neue strategische Ansätze erfordern Übernahme von Verantwortung für Beiträge zum Fachwissen und zur Berufspraxis und/oder für die Überprüfung der strategischen Leistung von Teams
Niveau 8 ⁽⁴⁾ Zur Erreichung von Niveau 8 erforderliche Lernergebnisse	Spitzenkenntnisse in einem Arbeits- oder Lernbereich und an der Schnittstelle zwischen verschiedenen Bereichen	weitest fortgeschrittene und spezialisierte Fertigkeiten und Methoden, einschließlich Synthese und Evaluierung, zur Lösung zentraler Fragestellungen in den Bereichen Forschung und/oder Innovation und zur Erweiterung oder Neudefinition vorhandener Kenntnisse oder beruflicher Praxis	fachliche Autorität, Innovationsfähigkeit, Selbstständigkeit, wissenschaftliche und berufliche Integrität und nachhaltiges Engagement bei der Entwicklung neuer Ideen oder Verfahren in führenden Arbeits- oder Lernkontexten, einschließlich der Forschung



Poland: Evaluation Report Validation of Prior Learning

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Introduction

This is the third Evaluation Report. In the first we showed historical perspective on validation and legal acts binding in our country. In the second, we focused on the ongoing projects related to the VPL and good practices. Still, the presented view of policy was rather dead letter which is full of fine procedures which are not used in the real life. Integrated Qualification System, which operates validation procedures, developed vastly over the last year¹⁶. This system is still quite new and in the process of modifying (introduced by the legal act in 2015¹⁷). Since in the first report we were able to present formal regulations with no practical accomplishment, now we would rather present changes in the way the system is functioning in its practical reveal: present its crucial elements with definitions and graphs to show the logic of the system and the actual numbers up to date to present the scale of VPL processes in Poland in 2019.

The second part of the report is dedicated to the research projects related to labour market. Both of them are exploring in a way the role of non formal and informal qualification of adults and importance of lifelong learning perspective on the labour market. Additionally, this perspective shows a room for validation procedures in Poland. Plenty of adults develop their skills in lifelong learning perspective; they are driven by labour market demands. We anticipate the results of these two projects, increasing role of VPL processes in the next years in Poland. To sum up, the third evaluation report consists of three parts:

1. Changes in the IQS system in Poland during the last year;
2. *BKL project* on skill mismatch by people of working age to the needs of the labour market
3. Overview of labour market demands in Poland – “Professions Barometer” survey 2019;

1 National context: changes in the IQS system in Poland during the last year

1.1. Market qualifications

Market qualifications are one of the most innovative elements of the Polish Integrated Qualification System, as it was stated in previous reports. Initially, IQS was populated with full and partial qualifications from the formal education system, while data on market qualifications was meant to be gradually included later on. Market qualifications are those which are used

¹⁶ See: Gmaj I., Grzeszczak J., Kwiatosz, K., Pierwieniecka R., Walicka S. (2019). *The validation of non-formal and informal learning in Poland. Implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation*.

¹⁷ Act of 22th December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System (Dziennik Ustaw Official Journal of Laws of 2016 item 64)

in the labour market, but are not necessarily offered within the formal education system. All qualifications in the system are described with learning outcomes and so market qualifications are. Besides that, qualifications might be full or partial. Full qualifications are those, from formal education listed in the educational legal act, such as leaving school certificates. All other qualifications are partial. Finally, there are categories describing qualifications, several of formal education, regulated qualification and two types of market qualification: market qualification and craft related market qualification.

Chart 1 Market qualification definition via Little Encyclopedia of IQS

Market qualifications are not legally binding in the provisions of generally applicable law. These are qualifications developed by various environments (social organizations, associations, corporations or other entities) based on the experiences they have accumulated. The market term means in this case that these qualifications were created and operate on the "free market" of qualifications. Market qualifications may refer to strictly professional activities, but also to various areas of social activity, including educational and caring activities, as well as recreational activities. They were broadcast on the basis of internally varied regulations, set by individual professional corporations, industry associations, training institutions, organizations, etc. Examples of such qualifications are software producer certificates (Microsoft, SAS), ECDL B2 certificate (concerns computer skills) and the European Banking Cooperative Certificate EFCB. Another example of market qualifications are the instructor grades acquired in the scouting organization. Market qualifications after meeting the conditions specified in the Act may be included in the IQS.

Source: Sławinski, S., *Little Encyclopedia of IQS*, Warszawa, 2017, p. 57

1.2. Market qualifications introduced in the system during last year

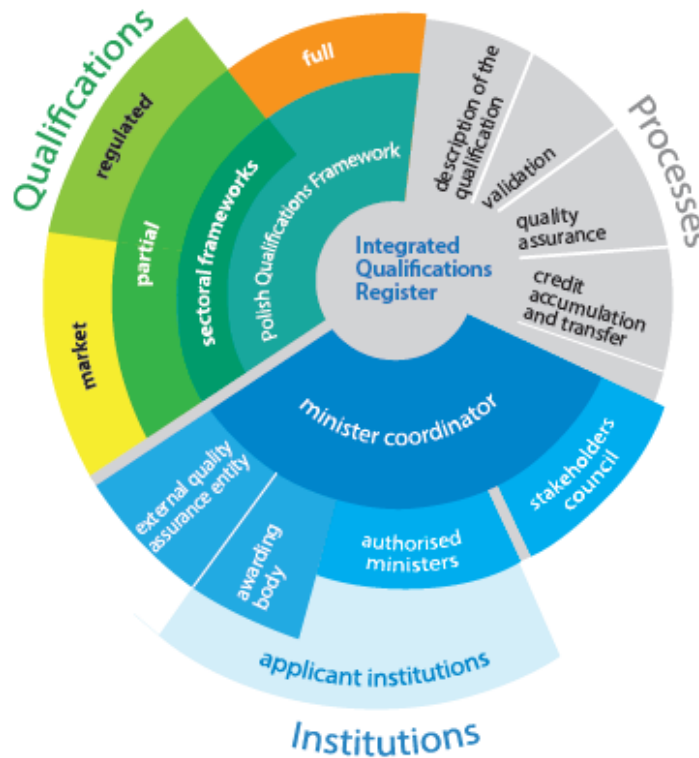
Since the last year report we have noticed huge progress in the area of registering qualifications and validation processes. Last year this time Integrated Qualification Register, which is 'a separate part of the National Qualifications System, in which the standards of describing qualifications and assigning the level of the Polish Qualification Framework to qualifications, the rules for including qualifications into the Integrated Qualification System and their recording in the Integrated Qualifications Register as well as the principles and standards for certifying qualifications and quality assurance of broadcasting are in force. qualifications.'¹⁸, contained just two market qualifications. Now there are 23 market qualifications and 18 craft related market qualifications.

All of THE market qualifications joined to the Register are partial qualifications and they are representing Polish Qualification Framework level between 3 to 5 for craft related market qualifications and between 2 to 7 for market qualifications. Each market qualification within its description has also a date of publication and inclusion to the IQS as well as typical possibilities of using qualification, requirements for individuals who want to be validated, demands regarding validation process and validating institutions, such as: validation methods, composition of the validation committee, stages of validation process (if applicable) etc. Each qualification has also description of learning outcomes with indicated PQF level, number of working / learning hours predicted to obtain the learning outcome and synthesized description of all learning outcomes for this particular qualification. In the Register there IS also available

¹⁸ Act of 22th December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System (Dziennik Ustaw Official Journal of Laws of 2016 item 64), art 2, point 25;

information on who applied for this qualification to be incorporated and which Ministry is responsible for the process of including qualification into IQR. Finally, there is information on what are validating institutions as well as external quality assurance institutions for this qualification.

Graph 1 Elements of the Integrated Qualification System in Poland



Source: Gmaj I., Grzeszczak J., Kwiatosz, K., Pierwieniecka R., Walicka S. (2019). *The validation of non-formal and informal learning in Poland. Implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation*, p. 6.

Unfortunately, IQR works only in Polish ALthough BEZ PRZECINKOW the way it is constructed is very transparent. We decided to put in the References A link to both the list of the market qualifications and a detailed description, just to show the way it is organized (see References). The table below (Table 1) present some of the market and craft related market qualifications, as they are presented in IQR crawler.

Integrated Qualification Register is already filled with market qualifications and new ones are processing to become the part of the system. This is the first visible sign of IQS being alive. What is more important from the point of view of our project and evaluation validation policies is that validation, which is written into this system, had been just a theoretical process (a possibility) before market qualification actually were in the system. By this time almost 40 validation processes took place in Poland, most of them – 36 in the year 2019. In most of those validation processes, pupils of vocational schools took part. Those were young people who had this opportunity to get additional qualifications and went through validation process during the school or just after finishing school. There are although already single cases of adults, not school leaving graduates, who initiated validation process.

Table 1 IQR crawler results for market and craft related market qualifications (selection)

No.	Name of qualification	Category	Type	PQF Level
1	Diagnosis and psycho-oncological help for people with oncological diseases, people after cancer and their families and surroundings – Psycho-oncologist	Market	Partial	6
2	Certificate of computer skills - basic level	Market	Partial	2
3	Service of mixed drinks and spirits	Market	Partial	4
4	Beautician – a journeyman diploma	Craft related market	Partial	4
5	Tiler - master diploma	Craft related market	Partial	5
6	Tiler - a journeyman certificate	Craft related market	Partial	3

Source: <https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/frontend/index.php?r=kwalifikacja%2Findex&Itemid=102>,
<https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/frontend/index.php?r=kwalifikacja%2Findex&Itemid=102> [21.06.2019]

Although it is not very popular in HE sector, it is also possible for universities to offer VPL processes. One of them already has an offer of a quasi or partly VPL process. It is one of the best universities in Poland, Warsaw University. On the website platform THE University offers e-portfolio where individuals can gather data on previous education and experiences, create portfolio and consciously choose on further development. The platform is available online: <https://eportfolio.peu.uw.edu.pl/>.

The other element of the IQS worth mentioning is an example of a socially useful market qualification. Especially within our project, which is concentrated on individual perspective and biographical approach PRZECINEK which means that there is need of highly qualified career guides. In 2018, the market qualification 'running a competency balancing process' by a team of vocational counsellors from V LO in Kraków and partners, Representatives of the Cracow University of Technology / Centre for Psychology and Pedagogy, was developed. The description was developed in cooperation with the Institute for Educational Research. The market qualification has been accepted by the Ministries of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

'Running a competency balancing process' is a qualification which can be described as a meta -qualification and a socially qualified qualification is addressed to the specialists in the field of HR advisors, specialists in competition development, coaches, trainers, and people who are experienced in the diagnosis and balance of competence, identification and documentation of learning outcomes.

Chart 2. Market qualification 'Running a competency balancing process' description

Market qualifications are not legally binding in the provisions of generally applicable law. These are qualifications developed by various environments (social organizations, associations, corporations or other entities) based on the experiences they have accumulated. The market term means in this case that these qualifications were created and operate on the "free market" of qualifications. Market qualifications may refer to strictly professional activities, but also to various areas of social activity, including educational and caring activities, as well as recreational activities. They were broadcast on the basis of internally varied regulations, set by individual professional corporations, industry associations, training institutions, organizations, etc. Examples of such qualifications are software producer certificates (Microsoft, SAS), ECDL B2 certificate (concerns computer skills) and the European Banking Cooperative Certificate EFCB. Another example of market qualifications are the instructor grades acquired in the scouting organization. Market qualifications after meeting the conditions specified in the Act may be included in the IQS.

Source: Regional Labour Office in Krakow

2 BKL project on skill mismatch by people of working age to the needs of the labour market

Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego (BKL) project is a project realized by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) in cooperation with researcher from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (UJ). This long-term project is dedicated to the mismatch of competences of people active on the labour market and the needs of this market. On the PARP website the project is described as follows:

The Balance of Human Capital (BKL) is one of the largest European research projects in the areas of competency, employment and the labour market. The BKL is primarily aimed at defining areas of skill mismatch by people of working age to the needs of the labour market. The research results will be the basis for formulating recommendations for public policies in such areas as: science and education, labour market, and entrepreneurship development. The BKL is also part of the competence council system, which will enable entrepreneurs to influence educational and development service providers, both in the sphere of formal and non-formal education, and to build the right partnership between enterprises and labour market institutions, which will enable reliable data on the qualifications needed in individual sectors. It will also help increase the effectiveness of activities in the field of job placement and career guidance.¹⁹

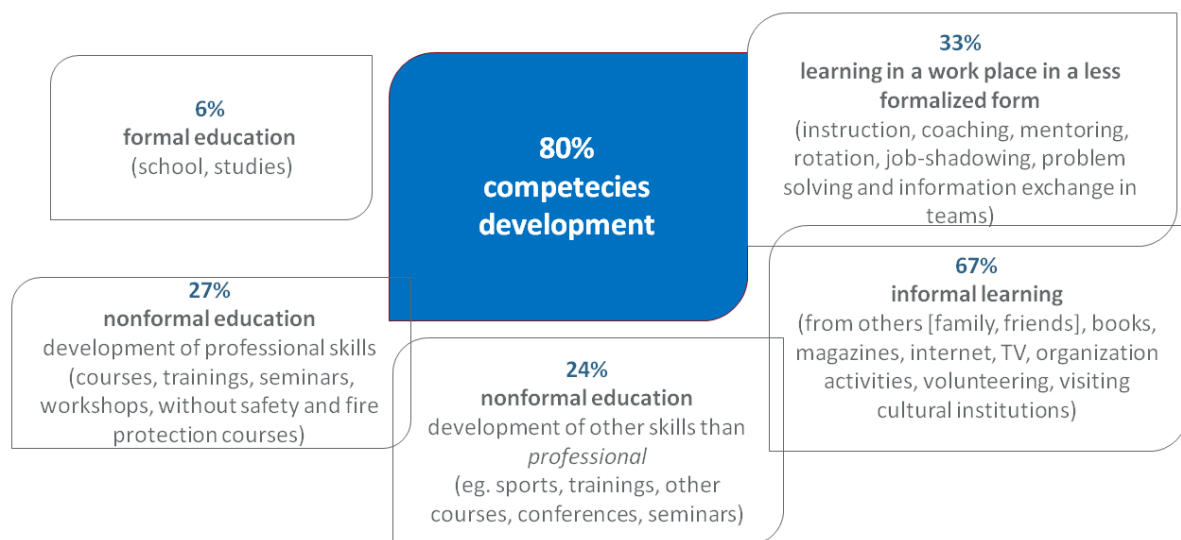
As much as having market qualification in the IQS, it is crucial to follow changes in adults competencies development, especially in non-formal and informal learning. These two forms of development might be recognized and validated in the VPL processes, so perhaps incorporated in the IQS system in the future. Research conducted since 2010 shows that 80% of adults active on the labour market (age 25 - 64) were developing somehow during a year their competencies. The Graph 2 on the next page shows in percentage how they choose to develop.

Among 80% of adults who developed somehow their competencies during the period of a year only 6 % choose to go back to school or studies (formal education). In the same period 51% adults active on the labour market choose non-formal education: from which 27%

¹⁹ <https://www.parp.gov.pl/component/site/site/sektorowe-rady-ds-kompetencji#bkl> [20.06.2019]

choose to develop their professional skills. Even more, 67% people aged 25 to 64, choose the form of informal learning to obtain new skills during a year. One third of the sample group was developing skills in the work place in a less formal ways, such as job-shadowing, coaching, mentoring or information exchange in teams. For all those skills developing informal ways there are not only unproven certificates, but any.

Graph 2. According to the BKL II, over ¾ of Poles aged 25-64 developed their competences in the last year



Source: Worek, B. "(Not) learning society? Participation of adult Poles in education and training and its measuring", Krakow, 2019

On the other hand, from the same research, it is seen that over 20% of people of working age, are not interested in developing their skills in any way at all. Researchers asked them why they had not decided on developing any skills in any way. The majority pointed to the lack of necessity to self-developing for work. It shows how much lifelong learning and decisions on adults' development are correlated with labour market, employment and job situation. The chart (Chart 1) with full scope of answers is presented in the end of the report.

3 Overview of labour market demands in Poland – "Professions Barometer" survey 2019 for Małopolska region

The last part of this report presents the project and this year results for our region of the 'Professions Barometer'. This is A qualitative research aimed on anticipation which professions will be more and which less "wanted" on the labour market in the regional perspective. There are two interesting aspects of this survey. First of all, it shows the heterogeneous picture of labour market. Secondly, it pointed to the qualifications of the workers who decide on their situation as employees and as job seekers.

To introduce the idea of the research, its main objectives and, very briefly, the methodology, we use the description from the website:

The Occupational Barometer is a one-year forecast of situation in occupations. The Barometer qualifies jobs into three groups: deficit, balance and surplus. Deficit occupations are those in which it should not be difficult to find a job in the coming year since the demand from employers will be high, combined with a low supply of labour willing to take up employment and

having the right qualifications, Balanced occupations are those in which the number of vacancies will be close to the number of people capable of and interested in taking up employment in the occupation concerned (the supply and demand sides will be balanced), Surplus occupations are those in which it might be more difficult to find a job because of the low demand and numerous candidates willing to take up employment and meeting the employers' requirements. Barometer shows demand for occupations for each county. It is also available at regional level.²⁰

There are many challenges on the labour market, as we could see from the case studies conducted for Manual II. Other surveys confirmed those challenges and shows that there is a room for VPL, for instance in looking for employers among migrants, in a gray zone and among own employees. According to experts involved in the Occupational Barometer, the demand for employees will not be able to fill the needs of the unemployed registered in employment offices. The unemployment rate fell to a record low - in October 2018 it amounted to 5,7%. people who have remained in the registers, although they are looking for a formal job, are often not interested in taking up the job due to poor health, lack of appropriate qualifications (or lack of documents confirming their possession), but also because of working in the gray zone.²¹

The answer to this lack of documents confirming possessions of appropriate qualifications might be the validation procedures within Integrated Qualification System. Still the system in the phase of development. Furthermore it is not well-known, though it is recognized much better than even a year ago, and great efforts are put into getting to both individuals and institutions to use IQR as a useful tool on a labour and educational market and combine them together.

On the other hand, this survey shows the necessity of developing more than one skill or profession. The results presented in the most recent report indicated that employers are increasingly looking for employees who have more than one qualification, eg. locksmiths with welding skills, welders working in various technologies. This is another argument for increasing role of validation. While being a locksmith one might have a vocational school leaving certificate, there is no need to have two certificates now, just a craft related market qualification which will proof on welders skills too, for instance.

4 Conclusions

Policy reports, we presented each year we wanted to present 1. current situation in Poland and 2. track the most important events, changes, project etc. which influenced VPL development in Poland. This time we would like to look further, in the future. We have our legal acts since 2015 and the system settled on its basis is not just 'only on paper'. It is still a baby system but it is beginning to flourish, having more and more market qualifications and what is more important – validation processes. Looking on the labour market demands and the learning habits of professionally active Poles, we believe the role of the validation processes in Poland will increase and more and more stable system will held a more important role.

Our task within the policy report was also the preparation of recommendations. During the three years of the project implementation, the VPL system in Poland has become significantly established and that is the reason for joy and further intensified work. Our recommendations have not changed though: more effort is needed to put into the visibility of the system,

²⁰ <https://barometrzwodow.pl/home/about-survey> [21.06.2019]

²¹ The Occupational Barometer. 2019 Report for Malopolska.

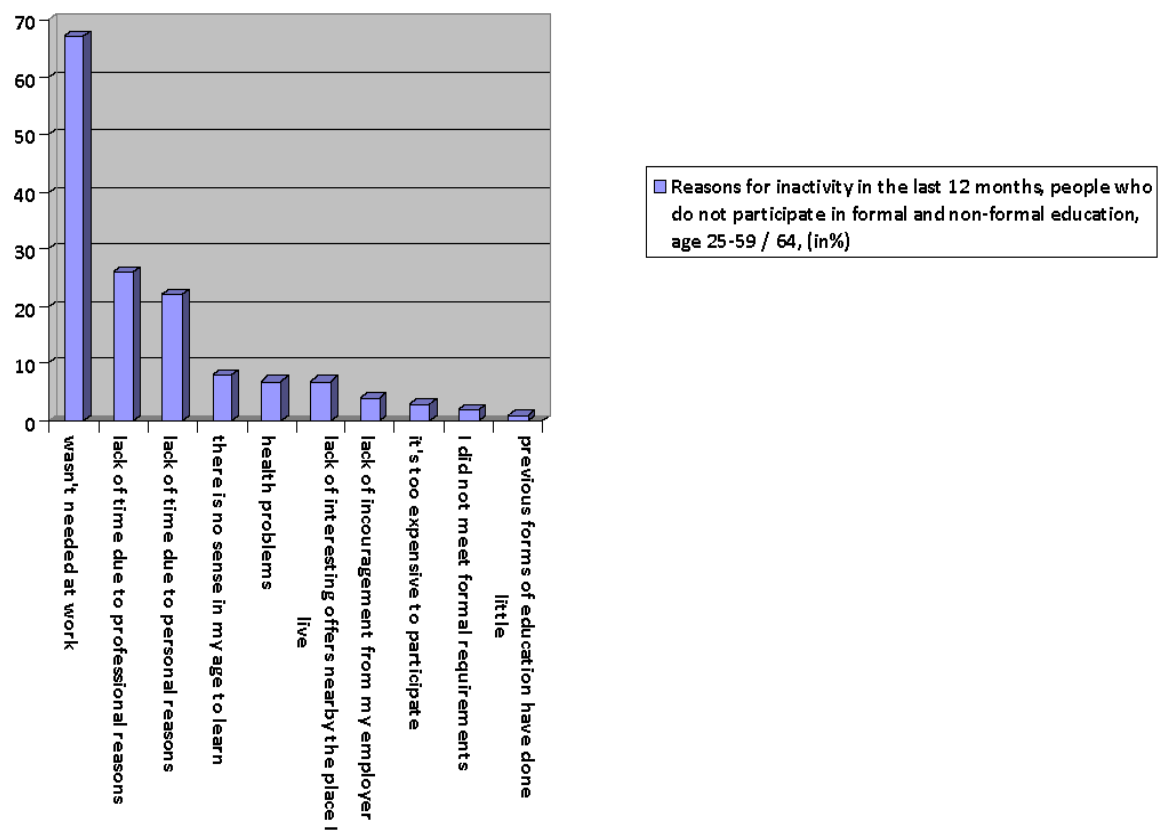
more support to the practitioners would be appreciated, as well as support for the beneficiaries and still improvements to the system.

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 - f. <https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/frontend/index.php?r=kwalifikacja%2Fview&id=12647> (Market qualification detailed description: PQF 7: Diagnosis and psycho-oncological help for people with oncological diseases, people after cancer and their families and surroundings – Psychoonkologist)
 - g. <https://eportfolio.peu.uw.edu.pl/>
6. Legal acts:

Act of 22th December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System (Dziennik Ustaw Official Journal of Laws of 2016 item 64)

Chart 1. Reasons for inactivity in the last 12 months, people who do not participate in formal and non-formal education, age 25-59 / 64, (in%)



Source: The BKL 2017



Turkey: Evaluation Report Validation of Prior Learning

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1 National Context

1.1 Introduction: national background and context

In Turkey, validation of non-formal and informal learning is a new phenomenon. In the country, validation of prior learning (VPL) is carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA). The VQA, established in 2006, is responsible for validation-related activities in Turkey. In addition, there are many other public organisations involved in validation activities. They include, among others, the MoNE, the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) and the Turkish Employment Agency. The private sector is involved in validation activities as well. The Lifelong Learning Directorate General (LLL DG) of the MoNE conducts several projects to contribute to the development of the validation system in Turkey.

In Turkey, validation is applied only to the vocational and technical sector, not to the formal education sector. This means that the certificates received from validation of non-formal and informal learning are treated differently than those obtained through formal learning and do not provide access to the formal education system.²²



Source: Report by an expert at the Vocational Qualification Authority, figures are for 2016.

The research we conducted to understand validation in Turkey and the telephone interviews we made with experts from the VQA indicate that awareness for validation has increased

²² European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014): European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Turkey.

during the last years, but that the current knowledge does not push for a rapid development in the field.

Akkök (2016) reports that the 2014-2018 Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper and the MoNE are strongly focused on validation processes and encouraged the use of validation in a comprehensive way. However, at the level of higher education validation is only at the beginning. Overall, there has been considerable development concerning validation in Turkey in recent years, particularly in the last three years.

The number of Authorized Certification Bodies increased to 2,005 as of June 2019 (VQA website) and Measurement, evaluation and certification activities are carried out in a total of 287 National Qualifications (Eurydice, 2019).

1.2 Legal framework: policy framework and legal embedding

The Yağcı (2014) and Akkök (2016) reports both contain the following information on the legal framework for VPL in Turkey:

“In the vocational sector, the Basic Education Law on National Education No.1739 arranges non-formal and formal education in a way to complement each other and the Vocational Training Law No. 33083 arranges vocational and technical training. According to the Vocational Training Law, within the context of validation in relation to qualifications which have been developed based on occupational standards, the assessment of prior informal and non-formal competences, as well as of competences gained during vocational training, are defined by the relevant rules and regulations. Law No. 5544 determines the principles for national qualifications in the technical and vocational fields with regard to auditing, assessment, and evaluation, and certification for formal and non-formal learning. The Laws also set up the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA). The VQA regulates and coordinates evaluation and certification activities for the validation of formal and non-formal qualifications. The VQA functions at the national level and covers the validation of vocational qualifications in all sectors, except the professions of medical doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, veterinaries, engineers and architects as well as any other professions requiring education on a graduate level as a minimum, for which conditions for inception of respective professions are regulated by law.”

The Communiqué on the Vocational Qualifications Authority Vocational Qualification Certificate Obligations Obtained was published in the Official Gazette dated 25 May 2015 and numbered 29,366. It entered into force. The purpose is to identify and release the professions that are mandated by the Vocational Qualifications Authority certificate for employees and dangerous jobs such as natural gas infrastructure construction control staff, steel welder and industrial pipe installer²³. In this context, VQA Vocational Qualification Certificate has become compulsory for the occupations specified in the Communiqué. People, who do not have a VQA Vocational Qualification Certificate twelve months after the publication date of the Communiqué cannot be employed in these professions.²⁴

²³ <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2015/05/20150525-4.htm>.

²⁴ <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/haberler/36-departman3/2005-40-meslekte-myk-mesleki-yeterlilik-be>.

1.3 Education system: How does the education system accommodate VPL? Are there any specific mechanisms to support transparency, bridge building and permeability?

While the MoNE's 2014-2018 lifelong learning strategy focuses on the validation process, Higher Education is at an early stage in this respect. Validation of prior learning, with the amendment made in Article 44(b) of Law No. 2547, legally entered the Turkish higher education system in 2011. However, the CoHE has not issued any guidelines to guide higher education-based institutions. According to Article 44(b), after the decree of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) principles developed by the CoHE, Senate members of higher education institutions will determine their own regulations on VNFIL.

An administrative distinction exists between vocational education and training (VET) and other qualifications in Turkey. The MoNE is responsible for the competences of non-formal, formal basic and secondary education (general and vocational education). Non-formal education is carried out by the MoNE in public education and vocational training centres. While the CoHE focuses on the qualifications of higher education, the Vocational Qualifications Authority coordinates the qualifications determined by Law No. 5544.

For higher education, validation is a new concept. Some universities have started to establish institutional arrangements authorised by their Senates. The CoHE is authorised to issue a directive for approval in its 2547 Code. In addition, there is no specific strategy for the validation of learning through open educational resources.

The most comprehensive arrangements at the national level for quality assurance of non-formal and informal learning are provided by the Vocational Qualifications Authority. As the other national authority in this area, the MoNE General Directorate of Lifelong Learning will work closely with the VQA for the sake of transparency and accountability of the validation processes. Moreover, considerable attention is directed to ensure that higher education institutions' approach and the CoHE's approach for developing and updating the policy are compatible with the approaches of the other two national authorities, namely MoNE and VQA.

Regarding the relation of standards with education, vocational and technical education programmes are updated based on published standards and new education programmes are developed accordingly. In order to have the same point of reference, education and training standards for non-formal learning programmes are being made compatible with the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF). When modules, programmes and curriculum are structured, learning outcomes need to be taken as a basis. This is an on-going process and legislation is a driving force in this regard. Since the standards of the formal education and training programmes of the MoNE and the occupational standards in the economic sectors are currently divergent, they are being made compatible with the TQF. At the moment, the contents of the curriculum have been redesigned for 19 occupations, while 14 more were planned for 2017. The MoNE establishes 160 occupational standards according to the curriculum. There are now 633 national professional standards. This means that approximately 25% of the standards have been made compatible with the curriculum in question. Those with a qualification based on occupational standards have a better chance on the job market.

According to the Law No. 3308 (Article 35, with amendments made in 2/12/2016) the graduates of secondary education institutions, and journeymen and masters who have completed the compensatory and supplementary vocational education and training are awarded the diploma of the profession they completed. Professional qualifications for prior learning are determined by examination based on occupational standards and levels. The procedures and principles regarding recognition of prior learning and equivalence are regulated by a regulation issued by the Ministry. Therefore, with the amendments made in Vocational Education Law No. 3308 in 2016, legal justification was created.

Within this scope, in 2017 the Directive on the Procedures and Principles Regarding Recognition of Prior Learning and Assessment and Evaluation has been put into force within MoNE

Vocational and Technical Education. Within the scope of the Directive, Skill Exams to be held in Vocational Training Centres became possible. In 2019, the e-exam pilot application of the theoretical exams started within the scope of the related directive. It is planned to determine the appropriate examination areas in each province and to establish test centers for the journeyman and mastership skill exams held in vocational training centres. Also, amendments are made in April 2019 to the directive. According to this directive, the learning gains acquired by the individual through formal/non-formal education or informal learning would be evaluated and considered as prior learning in accessing the journeymanship and mastership certificates. Also, according to this directive documents such as VQA certificate, various education certificates national or international, work experience if documented would be considered in the validation of prior learning process.

1.4 How is VPL linked to the National Qualifications Framework?

One of Turkey's most important developments since 2014 concerning validation is the development and acceptance of the TQF. The TQF is the essence of the establishment of the validation system and responsible for clarifying the duties and responsibilities of the authorised bodies that implement validation of informal and non-formal learning. The TQF supports the validation processes and clarifies the meaning of qualifications and the learning outcomes necessary for the achievement of qualifications. Thus, in order to build an environment in which VNFIL regulations are available for all qualifications in the TQF, it is important to support validation processes. The TQF is developed with the collaboration among the TQF: the VQA, the MoNE, the CoHE, Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS) and other related ministries and public institutions, chambers of industry and trade, labour and trade associations, organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academics. The VQA, which carries out the certification process, approves and distributes vocational qualification certificates based on the national Qualifications Framework. The qualification certificate awarded by the VQA is valid at both national and international level.

The validation processes within lifelong learning (LLL) aim to identify all the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning contexts at all TQF levels. So, the TQF is formed to make it possible to certify the qualifications obtained as a result of learning in a non-formal and informal learning environment. Qualifications and the relevant VNFIL infrastructure describe the most common practice for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Turkey.

The TQF Board prepares the procedures and principles for the recognition of prior learning and quality assurance and the TQF Coordination Board approves them. These principles and procedures should address the ways of achieving a qualification and the right to enter a test or education programme or to be exempted from certain programme requirements to obtain the qualification. After such procedures and principles are published, the responsible bodies have to announce the procedures concerning how they will be implemented within their mandate.

Occupational Level Criteria compatible with the European Qualifications Framework

LEVEL 1: (routine) Occupations that continue to the same template with small changes. (Primary education or first stage of basic education)
LEVEL 2: Occupations that include more than one variable and complexity and that may include collaboration activities with other employees in the work process. (Certificate, second stage of basic education)
LEVEL 3: Occupations with complex and non-routine activities. (Certificate, general secondary)
LEVEL 4: Occupations that include highly complex, technical or professional skills. (Certificate, VET)
LEVEL 5: Occupations that require an advanced level of complex activities and strategic management instructions and contents that frequently cannot be determined in advance. (Post-secondary VET)
LEVEL 6: Design engineer, Computer Engineer, Textile Technology Specialist, Work Study Specialist, Production Planner, etc. (B.A.)
LEVEL 7: Department Manager, Lawyer, Deputy Manager, Accounting Chief, Economist, etc. (M.A., expert)
LEVEL 8: Managing Director, General Director, Accounting Director, Engineer (Ph.D.)

Source: SVET webpage (<http://svet.meb.gov.tr/>), and NQF webpage (<http://www.myk.gov.tr>)

1.5 Future plans and perspectives of VPL: What is the pursued and articulated strategy for VPL for the future at the national and/or regional level?

The 2014-2018 Lifelong Learning Strategy Document addresses the development of the validation system. Preparatory work on the establishment of the system of recognition of prior learning is carried out by the MoNE and the VQA. The MoNE has conducted pilot studies in three professions and the Vocational Qualifications Authority has started to establish vocational knowledge and skill examination and certification centres. The report states that consultation, measurement and evaluation services for recognition of prior learning and certification, recognition and validation processes will continue, non-formal and informal learning will be evaluated within the context of TQF and the system of recognition of prior learning will be established while the process will be promoted.²⁵

The following principles reflect the design and foreseen implementation of VPL. International experiences, the European Union guidelines and the Lifelong Learning Strategy in Turkey were considered when developing the principles:²⁶

- *Clear and Transparent:* Every effort will be made to ensure that the procedures are clear and easy to understand for candidates.
- *Inclusive and Equitable:* Equal access and fair treatment will be provided to all individuals. Disadvantaged people will be taken care of. VPL practices will be culturally appropriate and sensitive to the social conditions of candidates.

²⁵ <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/07/20140716-8-1.pdf>.

²⁶ https://hboqm.meb.gov.tr/mardin_konferansi/RPL_FRAMEWORK_F%C4%B0NAL_PRNTED_TR.pdf.

- *Based on Adult Learning Principles:* VPL aims at helping adults achieve their development goals.
- *Based on Voluntariness:* The decision to do a validation is left to the individual.
- *Private and Confidential:* Throughout the process, the rights of the individual and the privacy of their personal information will be protected.
- *Affordable:* The validation must be affordable and reasonable for all candidates.
- *Integrated:* The success depends on broad policy objectives such as standards and learning outcomes based on a mutual development relationship. The VPL is not a separate or 'personal' process.
- *Progressive:* The validation will be developed step by step and the best practices and experience-based learning will be used.
- *Equivalence:* The MoNE qualifications obtained through VPL will be equivalent to qualifications acquired through formal and non-formal education. The qualifications obtained through validation will be expanded by adding them to the qualifications of MoNE in the TQF.
- *Based on Collaboration:* Partnerships between the public and private sector and non-governmental organisations are required for VPL. Applications will be developed based on previous partnerships and contribute to the increasing interaction.
- *Inquisitiveness:* As applications evolve, new insight will be gained in terms of 'equivalence'. VPL needs to have a research dimension linked to national, EU and international practitioner research forums.

2 Validation Approaches

2.1 Main validation programmes

For VPL in Turkey, the examination and certification processes generally operate in the following way²⁷:

The examination and certification processes are carried out by the institutions/organisations that have been accredited for the designated national qualifications and authorised by the VQA. All the necessary procedures for documentation are carried out by the authorised certification body (ACB) under the supervision of the VQA. With the approval of the VQA Board of Directors, the VQA Vocational Qualification documents are given to those who are to be certified as the result of the measurement and evaluation performed by the ACB.

The requirements for obtaining the Vocational Qualification Certificate are determined by the National Qualifications developed for each profession. Accordingly, candidates who wish to receive the VQA Vocational Qualification Certificate apply to one of the relevant qualified certification bodies. The details of the transactions carried out are determined by the Vocational Qualification, Examination and Documentation Regulation issued by the VQA. On the VQA's website, 76 institutions are authorised by the VQA, seven of which are universities. In the following, we will present examples from some of these organisations' validation applications.

İstanbul Aydın University Certification Unit offers vocational qualification certificates on the following programmes: computer hardware staff (levels 4 and 5) and network technicians

²⁷ <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/skca-sorulan-sorular#Soru25>.

(levels 4 and 5)²⁸. The total examination fee for qualification varies between 750-900 Turkish liras²⁹ (approximately 193 to 232 EUR).

Anadolu University (Eskişehir) programmes offered by the university's Certification Unit are IT support staff, service officer, transfer staff, front line manager and business and vocational consultant. The total examination fee for qualification varies between 400-690 Turkish liras (approx. 103 to 178 EUR). The Unit ensures that the following activities are carried out in a transparent and fair way within the scope of examination and certification services:

- Formation and announcement of the annual examination schedule;
- Acquisition and evaluation of the applications;
- The organisation of the examination and the application of the examinations;
- Taking the certification decision and issuing the documents;
- Inspection of certified personnel and re-certification;
- Changing the scope of the document, submission of documents and submission of services for cancellation.³⁰

Some of the programmes offered by Meybem are concreter, metal sheet processor, steel welder and heat insulator. The total examination fee for qualification varies between 350-1200 Turkish liras³¹ (between 90-309 EUR according to InforEuro). In Meybem, the documentation process work as follows:

- Candidates must successfully complete the theoretical, performance and/or interview exams of the qualification units to obtain the vocational qualification certificate.
- Conditions for success in exams are explained in the national qualifications.
- Theoretical exams are carried out through tests; practical exams are carried out in the workshop, laboratory or real working environment. Interview is another examination method.³²

2.2 Target groups

Anyone who wishes to certify their vocational qualification according to the national qualifications published by the VQA may apply to the responsible authorised certification bodies to obtain the VQA Vocational Qualification Certificate. All professions except for the ones that are in the fields of natural medicine, dentistry, nursing, midwifery, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, engineering and architecture and require at least undergraduate level education and whose entrance conditions are regulated by law are covered by the VQA Law No. 5544.³³

There is an exam fee but there have been some changes over the years about who pays the fees. The exams, which are 100% government subsidized until the end of 2017, are 50% subsidized throughout 2018 and 2019. Each candidate is entitled to two exams and the fee is paid back to the candidate who passed the exam. In case of recruitment of employees with Vocational Qualification Certificate, SSK premiums of the enterprises that meet certain criteria are paid by the State for a period of 48 months.

²⁸ <http://www.aydin.edu.tr/tr-tr/arastirma/arastirmamerkezleri/meslekiyeterlilik/Pages/default.aspx>

²⁹ http://portal.myk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_kurulus_ara&view=kurulus_ara&layout=kurulus_tarife&kurid=7061

³⁰ <http://anaper.anadolu.edu.tr/v1/s/genel/14>

³¹ http://portal.myk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_kurulus_ara&view=kurulus_ara&layout=kurulus_tarife&kurid=7061

³² http://www.meybem.com.tr/menu_goster.php?id=10

³³ <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/snav-ve-belgelendirme/1936-kimler-myk-mesleki-yeterlilik-belgesi-alabilir>

2.3 Description of the validation process

Individual Level

The process of validation consists of six consecutive steps:³⁴

Step 1: Review

The individual realises that, through Web Portal or other promotional mediums, validation is a process that can be beneficial. The individual applies to the Lifelong Learning Coordination Unit to discuss the VPL with the staff who is working under the management of the IT Manager.

Step 2: Referral (Informing the individual about VPL and applying for VPL)

An IT staff member who is in charge of explaining the validation process and conducting the screening meets with the individual. As a preliminary step in understanding whether the candidate is eligible for a validation, the candidate is encouraged to compare and self-assess the qualification he/she wishes to obtain based on his/her knowledge, skills and competence. If the individual is eligible and wishes to continue, the individual is registered as a VPL candidate for a specific MoNE qualification. Following the registration, a VPL advisor is assigned to guide the candidate and an agreement is signed between the candidate and the VPL Manager (representing the institution).

Step 3: Guidance (Collection of Evidence & Preparation of a Portfolio)

The candidate meets with the VPL advisor to demonstrate business and life experiences, receive career counselling, make diagnostic assessments, identify potentials and interests, make choices about future trends and create a portfolio. The VPL advisor and the candidate make an action plan together. The candidate (with the help of the advisor) creates a portfolio that includes the following:

- a) Evidence of experience and competence based on the person's own documentation and approved by an expert
- b) Explanatory resume
- c) Work samples or photographs approved by an expert
- d) Performance evaluations
- e) References of current and past employers, supervisors and colleagues
- f) Non-formal learning and/or education certificates
- g) Any document of formal and informal education

Step 4: Evaluation of the portfolio

For the candidate, a VPL evaluator is identified to evaluate the candidate's portfolio. The evaluator prepares a VPL Action Plan that includes the following topics:

- Which units are eligible based on the front portfolio.
- Required additional assessments and evaluations (in general observations, simulations, written exams or interviews)
- Required additional education – in case the individual does not have all necessary knowledge, skills and competences enough for the qualification.

Step 5: Assessment & Internal Verification

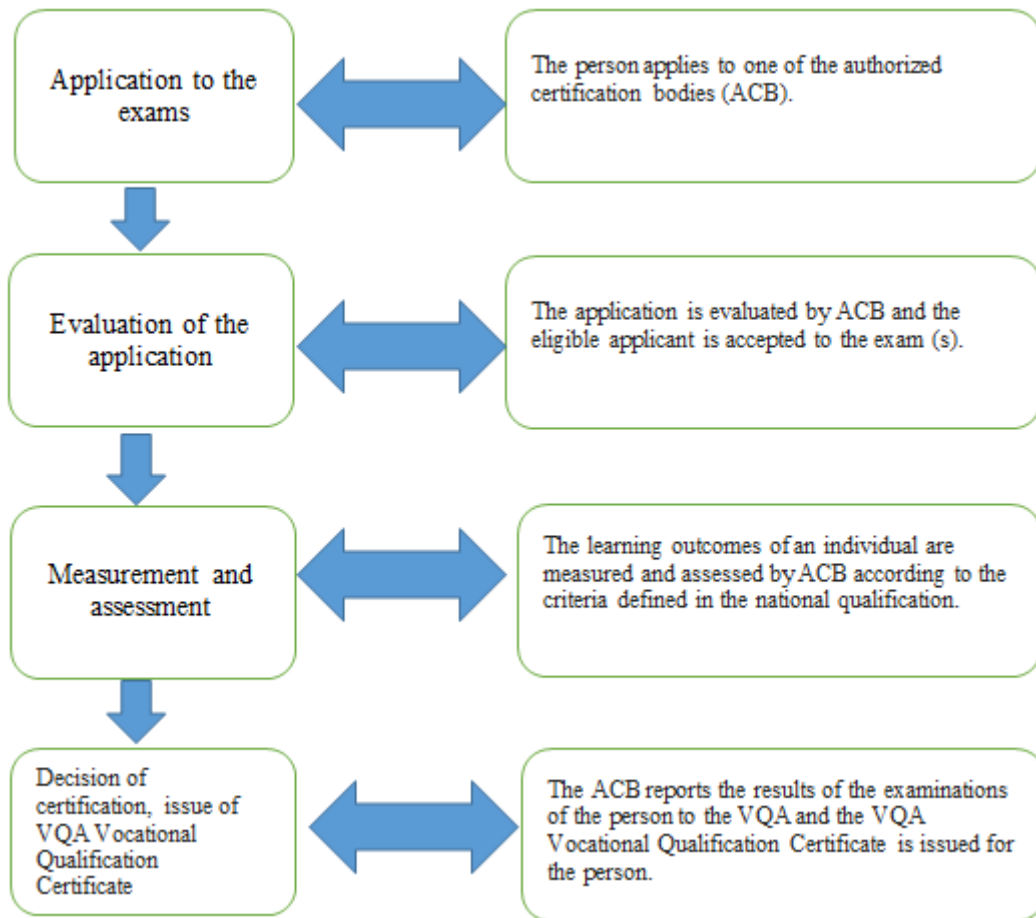
Based on the VPL Action Plan, the candidate is subjected to the evaluation process by the Evaluation Commission. The evaluation committee members must not be involved in the process of Step 4 (evaluation of the portfolio).

Step 6: Certification

Based on the final assessment and decision, the individual's learning achievements are certified and, as a result, full competence or unit competence is awarded.

³⁴ https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/mardin_konferansi/RPL_FRAMEWORK_F%C4%B0NAL_PRNTED_TR.pdf.

In order to understand whether the VPL process for individuals works as written above, we talked to an expert from the VQA. In implementation, the process works as below for a person who wants to be certified:³⁵



To gain a better understanding of the role of authorised certification bodies in the validation process, we contacted several bodies. All of them said that they are only in charge of conducting the exams for individuals who want to be certified.

Institutional Level

Organisations wanting to have a role in the validation process (performance testing and certification activities based on their national qualifications) must be authorised by the VQA. The certification bodies which have an authorisation status are stated in Article 6 of the “Vocational Qualifications Authority Examination, Measurement, Evaluation and Documentation Regulation” published in the Official Gazette dated October 15, 2015 and numbered 29503. They are found in the application for authorization by VQA.

As a result of the examination and evaluation made by the VQA, the “Authorization Pre-Agreement” is signed with the institutions eligible for preliminary application. Contracting entities must be accredited in accordance with the international staff certification standard for the national qualifications under the contract to gain the right to apply for authorisation.

³⁵ Taken from a report written by an expert (Yaşar Tuna Zorlu) at VQA.

Organisations that have completed the accreditation process are entitled to be eligible for authorisation by the VQA. At the end of the inspection, audit and evaluation processes conducted by the VQA, an “Authorization Agreement” is signed. Accredited certification bodies carry out testing and certification activities in accordance with FMC legislation and national qualifications.³⁶

2.4 Evaluation and adjustments of validation programmes

Thus far there is not enough information available on evaluations or evaluation outcomes. However, as Akkök (2016) stated, monitoring and evaluation are on the agenda for the near future. The development of VPL and adjustments made in the last years is also based on Akkök (2016).³⁷

- The development and approval of the TQF is one of the most important developments for validation made since 2014.

The regulation on developing national occupational standards and qualifications was amended in 2015. Another legislative development is the regulation on assessment and certification. There is also a new declaration of 25 May 2015 stating that in 40 occupations workers without a VQA qualification certificate cannot continue to work or be hired. The organisations needed to make adjustments by 26 May 2016. With the Communiqué on the necessity of VQA Vocational Qualification Certificate issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security on March 24, 2016, 8 more occupations in the Electrical-Electronic and Metal sectors were included in the obligation. As of 25 March 2017, undocumented persons will not be employed in these occupations. With the third communiqué published on 26 September 2017, 33 more professions were included in the scope of the document requirement. Currently, 81 professions are required to document VQA qualification certificate and in the first phase 161 professions will be covered by the obligation, and then all occupations in the dangerous and very dangerous class are expected to be covered.

- The VQA has signed 110 protocols with employer organisations, trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to develop occupational standards and 671 had been developed by June 2016.
- 327 national qualifications have been implemented.
- The vocational and technical education in the country needs to be revised and re-designed according to national occupational standards. The system of assessment, evaluation and certification has been in progress, leading to the establishment of ACBs, 45 in number by June 2016. These centres conduct assessment, evaluation and certification in 159 national qualifications/occupations and VQA occupational qualification certificates are issued for the successful ones; by February 2016 a total of 35 971 had been issued.
- The programmes and modules in education need to be aligned with the occupational standards and the qualifications. This work in the MoNE has been initiated and is in progress. There are two separate processes, one for secondary VET programmes and one for non-formal education.
- Aligning non-formal and apprenticeship programmes with national occupations is in progress within the MoNE.

³⁶ <http://www.myk.gov.tr/index.php/tr/yetkilendirme>.

³⁷ https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_TK.pdf.

3. Assessment of effectiveness and role of employers

As stated in Akkök's report, no data on the assessment of the effectiveness relating to the issue in Turkey is available.

4. Observations and recommendations

According to Akkök (2016), there seems to be a systematic and coordinated approach to validation in Turkey also defining the relationship between verification and qualifications. Harmonising the programmes and modules in education with occupational standards and qualifications still presents a challenge. The identification and documentation of validation methods and tools also need to be improved. While testing and documentation seem more systematic, the portfolio and interviewing do not yet form part of the ongoing process at this time.

Progress needs to be made as concerns the professionalization of validation specialists, including consultants to support the validation process. Quality assurance mechanisms and framework should be implemented. The VPL in higher education is not widespread but follows a course of development.

Wide participatory stakeholder partnerships are necessary for the VPL to be effective. Previous learning (especially common and structured learning) is not exactly compatible with existing structures. For this reason, employers and businesses, public and private providers of technical and vocational education and training, trade unions, local authorities / institutions, municipalities, continuing education and training institutions, and NGO need to collaborate.³⁸

Validation is a new form of documentation for Turkey. Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness and inform the society to encourage the use of the VPL system. A promotional campaign will be conducted to explain what VPL is, how it works, how it can be reached and what kinds of opportunities are offered.

While in principle validation is for everybody, non-certified workers represent the majority undergoing a validation. Disadvantaged groups like refugees also need to be included in the process. Although currently refugees are not entitled to a validation process, the Ministry of Education emphasizes the importance of enhancing this group's employability.

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