



VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN EU AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MACEDONIA

*A comparative analysis of institutional frameworks, procedures
and instruments in validation of non-formal and informal
learning in Europe
&
Recommended solutions in Macedonian context including
utilisation of existing national good practices and lessons learnt*

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| AE | Adult Education |
| AEC | Centre for Adult Education |
| AEM | Association of Employers of Macedonia |
| BMZ | German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| CEDFOP | European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training |
| CBQ | Competence Based Qualification |
| DIC | State Examination Centre |
| DVV International | Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International), Bonn, FR Germany |
| ECM | Economic Chamber of Macedonia |
| ECTS | European Credit Transfer System |
| EQF | European Qualifications Framework |
| ESA | Employment Service Agency of Macedonia |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| ET 2020 | Education and Training 2020 targets |
| EU | European Union |
| FI | Finland |
| IS | Iceland |
| ISQF | Iceland Qualification Framework |
| LLC | Lifelong Learning Centre |
| LLL | Lifelong Learning |
| MLSP | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| MoES | Ministry of Education and Science of Macedonia |
| MQF | Macedonian Qualifications Framework |
| NAEPM | National Agency for European Educational Projects and Mobility |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| SI | Slovenia |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| VNFIL | Validation of non-formal and informal learning |

1. Executive summary

The Republic of Macedonia as an EU candidate country has been making a continuous and significant progress towards aligning its education with the European education policies and standards. This includes a relatively new development, namely the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), a process that is currently designed by the Macedonian Centre for Adult Education (AEC) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in a participatory manner jointly with other relevant stakeholders (as elaborated in Chapter 2. Introduction)

The **purpose of this Analysis** is to contribute to the development of VNFIL process in Macedonia by offering a targeted comparative analysis of common European VNFIL models and practices with focus on three EU countries (Slovenia, Finland, Iceland). It also offers a closer look at the Macedonian validation context with focus on usage of local potentials and a possible role of the Centre for Adult Education (AEC) in this process. (see Chapter 3 - Comparative analysis: the European context and Chapter 4 - The Macedonian Context).

The development of this paper is a result of the cooperation between Macedonian Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) and the Adult Education Centre (AEC), within the framework of the long term support that the LLC has been delivering to the AEC, with support of Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International), Bonn, FR Germany, with financial means of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) from FR Germany.

Based on the analysis of **European models and practices** and local capacities, the following was concluded (see Chapter 6. Conclusions):

An optimal, “correct” or recommended solution for designing national VNFIL processes does not exist. The main principle to be considered is **sustainability and operability** of VNFIL models and solutions. Validation agreements must be fit for the purpose and designated according to their particular operational context. Relevant actions need to be identified that create sustainable solutions.

- **The main difference between advanced and less advanced validation systems** is less related to their structure and more to the clarity of their roles and responsibilities, cooperation between the stakeholders, awareness about and trust into the validation system.
- **European VNFIL models differ** in their main features such as their legal frameworks, existence of a national VNFIL strategy and structure of institutional and operational approaches.
- **Similarities between different European VNFIL models** are usually related to existence of overarching frameworks such as the EQF, quality assurance mechanisms, credit systems and similar.

Related to the **Macedonian context**, the following conclusions were made:

- Following European standards, it is important that Macedonia designs its VNFIL process with due respect to the existing education structures, with realistic planning of resources and optimal usage of local potentials and capacities.
- The main **issues to be addressed** are equivalence of VNFIL certificate to those from formal education, closing the gap between demand and supply of labour, fostering LLL, employment of adults and validation of their employment relevant qualifications.

- Optimal **usage of local capacities and potentials** are of utmost importance for creating sustainable VNFIL solutions in Macedonia. Thereby, the **Adult Education Centre** as a public AE institution has both, strategizing and coordinating capacities and could act as a main hub for validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- Well-designed usage of expertise, capacities and networks of other public and national bodies, chambers, employers' associations, and existing structures will be decisive for setting up sustainable and functional VNFIL solutions for Macedonia.

2. Introduction

The development of this paper is a result of the cooperation between Macedonian Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) and the Adult Education Centre (AEC), within the framework of the long term support that the LLC has been delivering to the AEC.

The purpose of this support is to contribute to the capacity building of the AEC and to an efficient and effective implementation of policies in Adult Education (AE) in Macedonia, with support of Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International), Bonn, FR Germany, with financial means of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) from FR Germany.

2.1. Background

The Republic of Macedonia as a EU candidate country has been making a continuous and significant progress towards aligning its education with the European education policies and standards. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) steers and actively participates in a number of related legislative, strategic and operative initiatives, such as the development of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) and its referencing to the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

The process includes country's efforts to integrate into the European Lifelong Learning (LLL) area, with a vision to empower its citizens to move freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries in pursuit of learning. Thereby, LLL covers all forms of learning from pre-school education until after retirement and encompasses formal, informal and non-formal learning.

Thereby, formal, informal and non-formal learning are understood as follows¹:

Formal learning: Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (such as in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.

Non-formal learning: Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.

Informal learning: Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective.

Whereas formal education is traditionally regulated and commonly recognised by the employers, education providers and the society in general, validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is still a relatively new development. Importantly, it has so far been recognised as an important aspect of the MQF². Furthermore, the MoES and the Macedonian Centre for Adult Education in cooperation with ETF have recently (May 2016) developed a Roadmap for Implementing a System for Validation

¹ CEDEFOP definitions, see <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary>

² EQF Referencing Report of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework and Self-Certification to the QF-EHEA, Ministry of Education and Science of Macedonia, Skopje, 2016

of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (MoES, 2016). Based on the European validation context and local situational analysis, the document sets out a pathway for VNFIL in the MQF context and provides a step-by-step action plan for its preparation, piloting and full implementation by 2020 (AEC, 2016, p. 37). The system development is seen as a participative process guided the VNFIL Steering Committee linked with the NQF Board.

The foreseen design of the Macedonian VNFIL system, as also stipulated in the Roadmap, is fully aligned with the two major European documents guiding the VNFIL process, namely the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012) (CEDEFOP, Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012/C 398/01), 2012) and the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning 2015 (CEDEFOP, European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, 2015).

In this context, validation is understood as “a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard” (Council of the EU, 2012, p 5) with the purpose to

- a) Make visible the often ignored diverse and rich learning of individuals outside formal education and training (for example at home, in the workplace or through leisure time activities and
- b) Attribute value to the learning of individuals, unrespectable of the context in which this learning took place, so that the learner can “exchange” the respective learning outcomes against future learning and employment opportunities (CEDEFOP, 2015).

The Macedonian Roadmap thus emphasizes the foreseen contribution of VNFIL to the Macedonian economy (by contributing to a better matching between labour market supply and demand and enhanced employment), society and education (by providing alternative learning pathways in the LLL context) and individuals (by empowering them to develop and validate knowledge skills and competences necessary to realise their aspirations and ambitions) (AEC, 2016, pp. 9-10).

As a next step, currently the AEC, the ETF and representatives of other relevant stakeholders that are a part of the VNFIL working group are designing details of the Macedonian validation process, including tasks and responsibilities of different institutions, quality assurance procedures and other related procedures and regulations.

Two major documents are currently in elaboration: 1) Outline and concept of the VNFIL Methodology - Information package and 2) Guidance note on VNFIL process. The Guidance note will describe details of the VNFIL process, institutional models and available options and various policy considerations. The local context is characterised by high unemployment rates, a high number of low skilled workers esp. among the vulnerable and disadvantaged, the mismatch between labour demand and supply and is accompanied by a low awareness about and participation in LLL among the adult population that often leaves them feeling “stuck” in an unbeneficial life situation. Validation of their prior learning is an instrument that can give important support to overcome some of these challenges.

2.2. Purpose

The purpose of this Analysis is to contribute to the development of validation of non-formal and informal learning process in Macedonia by analysing the common European validation of non-formal and informal learning models and practices with focus on their institutional frameworks,

- a) quality assurance practices and
- b) validation procedures.

In a next step, those models and practices are observed in the Macedonian context, with focus on possible usage of local potential and a possible role(s) of AEC in this process. Furthermore, the Analysis lays out related good Macedonian practices and lessons learnt that could and should be used in the national validation of non-formal and informal learning process.

The main aim of the Analysis is a specific and pragmatic one - thus this document does not repeat the results documented in the Roadmap (such as VNFIL aims and vision, situational and gap analysis, etc.), but rather aims to supplement and deepen some of the findings documented in the Roadmap. Thus it is to be noted that the general findings, principles, advice and recommendations that a part of the Roadmap will not be repeated here.

In the first phases of implementation, the scope of the system is focused on validation of vocational qualifications/partial qualifications up to VB level of MRK, which is thus also the focus of this Analysis.

2.3. Guiding principles and methodology

The Analysis is guided by major European and Macedonian documents and guidelines related to VNFIL, the main being:

- the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012),
- the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (2015),
- the Roadmap for Implementing a System for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2016)
- and the documents related to MQF.

It furthermore takes into consideration the existing legal, strategic and institutional framework in Macedonia.

The Analysis is developed around the main conditions for introducing high quality and trusted validation agreements as defined in the European guidelines (p. 21-36):

1. information, guidance and counselling
2. stakeholder coordination
3. links to national qualification systems and frameworks
4. standards and learning outcomes
5. quality assurance
6. professional competence of practitioners.

In the analysis and recommendation part, the Analysis is guided by the Guideline principle that “**validation agreements must be fit for purpose and designated according to their particular operational context, so the guidelines do not promote a single ‘correct solution’ but strive to identify relevant actions to create sustainable solutions**” (CEDEFOP, 2015, p. 12). **Sustainability and oper-**

ability of possible models and solutions and the choices that stakeholders face when implementing validation agreements are also in focus of this analysis.

The Analysis is furthermore guided by the challenges identified in the current systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe and strives to offer solutions for Macedonian context, the main overall challenges being (CEDEFOP, Executive summary of European inventory on VNFIL, 2014, p. 8):

- access, awareness and social recognition of VNFIL qualifications,
- fragmentation of VNFIL system,
- financial sustainability of the system,
- coherence of the system, esp. in terms of the quality assurance,
- professionalization of staff dealing with validation,
- data collection and evidence base.

The Analysis considers all four validation contexts (education/training, enterprises, skill audits, volunteering), with a clear focus on the first two.

From the methodological point of view, the Analysis was conducted using a **combination of methods** in the period from October to November 2016:

- A **preliminary briefing** took place on October 27 in Skopje, to clarify the purpose and the scope of the Analysis with the AEC, the LLC as main stakeholders in the field of adult education,
- A **desk analysis** of European and Macedonian documents related to VNFIL during October and November 2016,
- A series of **face-to-face semi-structured interviews** with 9 representatives of key Macedonian stakeholders (see Annex 1 for List of interviewed persons), conducted from October 17 to 20, 2016 in Skopje,
- Based on the results of the desk analysis and the interviews, the Analysis was drafted and sent to feedback to the LLC and AEC. The feedback was discussed in a Skype meeting with the AEC on December 9th, 2016 after which it was integrated into the final version of the Analysis.

3. Comparative analysis: The European context

3.1. Introductory remarks

As mentioned before, a single and generally recommended solution for the institutional VNFIL framework does not exist. The Council Recommendation and the EU guidelines strive to clarify choices and possible step rather than prescribing one single recipe for all. What they do prescribe, however, is a plea for sustainability of whatever solution is chosen along the recommended validation of non-formal and informal learning principles.

The genesis of the validation of non-formal and informal learning system and its institutional framework differs from country to country across Europe. Looking at all its details it can be said that there are as many specific institutional solutions as there are countries. They can be grouped around three main criteria (Cedefop, 2014, pp. 2-3):

- a) the structure of the legal framework (single vs. multiple),
- b) the existence of a national VNNFIL strategy and
- c) the structure of the institutional framework for validation, which this Analysis will use to demonstrate different operational approaches towards validation.

A closer look at the above criteria gives the following picture:

- a) A short overview of the clustering of countries according to their legal frameworks for validation shows that only three countries have a single legal framework for validation. Most countries have multiple frameworks covering different sectors (VET, school, higher education – but not necessarily all sectors are covered) or validation covered by other legal frameworks.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Single legal framework for validation</p> <p>FR, MT, TR</p> | <p>Multiple frameworks in place covering different sectors</p> <p>AT, BE (Flanders & Wallonia), BG, CH, CZ, DK, FI, ES, EE, DE, IT, LT, LV, LU, NL, NO, PL, SE, SI</p> |
| <p>IS (Adult education), IE, HU (HE, Adult education), PT (HE and non-HE), RO, SK</p> <p>Legal framework for other initiatives also covers validation</p> <p>Source: European Inventory 2014</p> | <p>CY, EL, HR, LI, UK (E&NI, Wales, Scotland)</p> <p>No legal framework covering validation</p> |

The advantages and disadvantages of the existence of legal frameworks are:

| Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal security related to entitlements and responsibility for validation • The clarity of procedures, appeals, credits etc. • In absence of a legal framework institutional structures tend to develop “spontaneously” according to the need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A legal framework may require long lasting and demanding procedures for necessary legal changes (as opposed to systems without legal framework that can react quickly), this is particularly the case with countries with multiply legal frameworks and validation / quality assurance processes. |

b) Furthermore, countries differ according to the existence of a comprehensive VNFIL strategy or sectoral strategies. The majority of countries either have a strategy with some elements missing or are in the process of strategy development. Again, only three countries have a comprehensive national strategy in place:

| Comprehensive strategy in place | Strategy in place but some elements missing |
|--|--|
| FI, FR, ES | CZ, DK, EE, IT, IS, LU, LV, NO, NL, PL, RO |
| AT, BE-Flanders, CH, CY, DE, EL, LI, LT, MT, PT, SI, SK,TR | BE-Wallonia, BG, HR, HU, IE, SE, UK- E&NI, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales |
| Strategy is in development | No strategy in place/ in development |

Source: VNFIL Inventory 2014

The general trend is moving towards development of national validation strategy/strategies. However, the mere existence of a strategy does neither imply that the country is on a higher stage of VNFIL development, nor that the strategy is implemented. Furthermore, many countries have sectoral strategies not covering all education fields. On the other side, the existence of the strategy supports clarity and accountability of the validation process, esp. towards the users.

c) The countries can also be clustered according to their institutional validation framework. In a search for a model for the Macedonian institutional structure, this is also the categorisation used in this Analysis to compare different possible solutions.

| | |
|--|--|
| No single coordination body | AT, BE-Flanders, BE-Wallonia, CY, DK, EE, ES, FI, IT, LI, LT, LV, LU, NO, PL, SE, SI, TR |
| A single (or main) coordinating body | CH, CZ, EL, FR, IS, MT, NL, RO, SK, PT |
| No single coordination body or clear national institutional framework | BG, DE, HR, HU, IE, UK-ENI, UK-Scotland, UK-Wales |

Source: VNFIL Inventory 2014

It is however typical that even though the coordinating organisation or organisations exist, their role is mostly to encourage development of validation and coordinate related efforts - rather than to implement validation procedures which in most cases done in a decentralised manner. The instruments to steer the whole validation process are usually the NQF and/or the national LLL strategy.

3.2. Selection of countries

Searching for models that could demonstrate a possible way forward for Macedonia, this Analysis will focus on three countries with

- either one single (or main) coordinating body (Island) or
- with no single coordinating body but with clarified institutional framework (Slovenia and Finland).

The third group of countries without a coordinating body or institutional framework will not be further analysed due to the absence of its potential to positively influence the structuring of the validation process in Macedonia (even though this must not mean that the national validation practices do not exist or are not functioning!).

As agreed with the LLC and AEC, the Analysis presents VNFIL models of three European countries in different stages of VNFIL system development: Slovenia, Finland and Island. The selection of countries is based on several criteria agreed with the AEC, to demonstrate the following:

- the variety of possible VNFIL solutions (i.e. one single coordinating VNFIL body as in case of Island or no single as in case of Finland and Slovenia),
- solutions implemented in
- a country which is geographically and historically close to Macedonia, but is at a more advanced stage of VNFIL development (Slovenia),
- an economically advanced country with far more advanced education and VNFIL system (Finland), as a possible mid- and long term model.

Further factors that need to be taken into considerations when considering the comparability of the countries are their population size, unemployment rate, GDP and the percentage of GDP invested in education, see table below (source: World Bank, 2015)³.

| Country (Bank) | Population | Unemployment | GDP p.c. in USD | Expenditure in education (as % of GDP) |
|----------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|--|
| Macedonia | 2.087.000 | 27,9 | 13.907 | NA |
| Slovenia | 2.064.000 | 9,5 | 31.122 | 5,7 |
| Island | 330.000 | 5 | 46.547 | 5,8 |
| Finland | 5.482.000 | 8,6 | 40.600 | 7,2 |

³ <http://data.worldbank.org/>

As regards the size of the country, countries of different (however not extremely different) population sizes were selected for the purpose of this analysis (Slovenia with similar population size, Finland as a larger country and Island as a smaller country). Thereby, to enable some degree of comparability countries with too large population size were consciously omitted from the analysis (such as i.e. France with almost 47 million inhabitants). Further data (unemployment, GDP and investment in education) are given for orientation purposes.

Country data and information are generated from the latest European Inventory on Validation (2014)⁴, being the last coherent European VNFIL update for 33 countries - summary, thematic and country reports: (Cedefop, European VNFIL Inventory, Country Report Finland, (CEDEFOP, European VNFIL Inventory. Country Report Slovenia, 2014), (Cedefop, European VNFIL Inventory. Country Report Iceland, 2014)). Where needed additional country data were gathered from other sources.

3.3. Analysis of possible institutional frameworks

Below, a short **summary of findings of the comparative analysis of the institutional framework** is given. A more detailed comparison details are provided in the table below.

Overall responsibility for validation policy and implementation

As in most countries, in Slovenia and in Finland the main responsibility for validation is attributed to several (in this case two) national organisations. In Island, the situation is different - the validation process is completely under one Centre and its implementation is centrally steered:

- **Slovenia:** Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
- **Finland:** Ministry of Culture and Education and National Board of Education
- **Island:** Education and Training service centre (ETSC), based on the contract with the Ministry of Education

Responsibility for implementation of validation (including cooperation in validation design and monitoring processes)

In Slovenia and Finland, the validation process is attributed to a variety of different organisations and bodies. In Island, the implementation structure of validation is much simpler as it is allocated to the accredited LLL centres or upper secondary schools. Education and training providers participate in the validation process in all three countries in different manner and to a different extent (and are not mentioned separately in the short overview below). The same is the case with private sector actors and third sector organisations:

- **Slovenia:** It must be noted here that the structure of the state education bodies in Slovenia is historically quite similar to the one in Macedonia. Those bodies also perform relatively similar roles in the validation process. The main of them are: the National Examination Centre, National Institute for VET, the National Employment Service, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and a number of councils and advisory bodies and education and training providers.
- **Finland:** Validation is mainly implemented by education and training providers (both for adults and schools) in close cooperation with the world of work, with involvement of qualifi-

⁴ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

cation committees (with expert members appointed by the National Board of Education), National education and Training Committees (tripartite advisory bodies appointed by the Ministry of Education), and an umbrella adult education institution. Private sector, social partners and third sector organisations are very intensively and practically involved in the process.

- **Island⁵:** The validation infrastructure is much simpler as it is allocated to the accredited LLL centres that lead the full process of approved validation projects. Upper secondary schools are actively involved. Private sector participates in steering groups and is involved in validation procedures related to job standards.

The table below gives a more detailed comparison between the three countries, so as the countries reported it to the VNFIL inventory. The categorisation of institutions according to different topics (left column) is given for orientation and comparison purposes (the countries have very different validation systems).

| | NO SINGLE COORDINATING BODY | | SINGLE COORDINATING BODY |
|--|--|--|--|
| LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY / SECTOR | SLOVENIA | FINLAND | ICELAND |
| OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR VALIDATION POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION | MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND SPORT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads validation policy and implementation (jointly with Ministry of Labour; implementation is spread among different institutions, see below) • Accredits VET programmes/trainings on recommendation from the Council of Experts for VET Association | MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads validation policy and implementation jointly with the National Board of Education (NBE, see below) • Develops a plan on national education priorities, including validation • Develops legislation development on validation • Responsible for qualification structure (inclusion/removal of qualifications) | EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICE CENTRE (ETSC)⁶ <p>through a contract with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops national validation strategy in cooperation with LLL centres, upper secondary schools, labour associations and other sector relevant stakeholders • Promotes quality in the methodology used in projects through working closely with stakeholders when initiating validation in new sectors • Provides overall support in the validation process |

⁵ Data on Iceland compiled from the European Inventory on VNFIL 2014 Iceland Country Report (https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/87063_IS.pdf), ETSC Brochure on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in Iceland (http://www.frae.is/files/B%C3%A6klingur%20enska_1342453022.pdf), the Adult Education Act (<https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-PDF-Althjodlegt/Adult-Education-Act.pdf>), the Adult Education Regulation (<http://www.reglugerdir.is/reglugerdir/allar/nr/1163-2011>), and ETSC and VET Centre web sites (www.frae.is, <http://idan.is/english>)

⁶ ETSC is owned by the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ), the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA), the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB), the Ministry of Finance and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | <p>MINISTRY OF LABOUR, FAMILY, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads validation policy and implementation (jointly with Ministry of Education, implementation is spread among different institutions, see below) • Responsible for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and continuing VET • Coordinates social partners • Assesses and certifies NFIL • Publishes OS • Verifies educational and training institutions • Finances NEC (National Examination Centre) for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning. | <p>NATIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION (NBE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads validation policy and implementation jointly with the Ministry of Education (see above), but has a more executive role • Decides on national qualification requirement for of VET (in coop with work life and training providers) • Develops and distributes guidelines for validation practitioners • Participates in QA of validation • Allocates finances to validation development in many respects (improvement of practices, validation professionals development) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises the organisation of validation process • Trains validation staff • Develops the validation methodology • Obtains reports on validation projects • Collects statistical information • Distributes validation information to stakeholders |
|--|---|--|--|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>SPECIFIC TO EXAMINATIONS</p> | <p>NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS CENTRE (NEC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in relation to all types of qualifications • In charge of development of methodologies and procedures for assessment and certification of NVQs • Refers aspiring assessor candidates to the 3-day training by the Institute for AE • Based on the certificate issued by the Institute for AE, issues licences to members of panels for assessment and certification • Compiles a list of questions and tasks for assessment and certification of NVQs • Develops the network for assessment and certification of NVQs • Keeps a register of providers of procedures for assessment and certification of NVQ • Keeps records for which it is legally authorised • Monitors the work of panels for assessment and certification • Reports yearly to the Minister of Labour | <p>QUALIFICATION COMMITTEES</p> <p>(its members are experts in given field appointed by the NBE (employer organisation, employee organisation, training organisation and unions))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise and monitor quality of competence tests, responsible for organising competence based qualifications (CBQ) • Decide on rectifying an assessment • Receive proposals for validation from tripartite group of assessors • Award qualification certificates based on documentation and recommendation provided by qualification organisers | <p>Accredited LLL centres, s. above</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | <p>NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EXPERTS FOR TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts as interdepartmental body for validation procedures for VET and adult education qualifications | | |
| <p>SPECIFIC TO ADULT EDUCATION</p> | <p>SLOVENIAN INSTITUTE FOR ADULT EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsels individuals and institutions in relation to adult education • Develops work, training and counselling to support the operation of the network of adult education guidance centres involving 14 regional guidance centres with almost sixty dislocated units • Plans and implements national events for the guidance centre network • Develops databases and other professional materials to support the guidance activity in adult education • Develops of new approaches and tools for recognition and validation of the knowledge and experiences of adults • Trains professional staff to work in this field, • Provides a 3 day training for aspiring assessors and issues training certificates that serve as a basis for licensing of assessors by the NEC | <p>OK STUDY CENTRE (A nationwide adult education institution, maintained by an educational NGO /Ass. for Educational Activity/, which acts as an umbrella for 57 member organisations.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trains, guides and motivates associations and NGOs to construct their programmes based on learning outcomes, introduced a badge system for recognition and certification of learning | <p>Accredited LLL centres, s above Upper secondary schools, see below</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperates in the development and implementation of a national system of vocational qualifications, with an emphasis on training the members of commissions for the verification and certification of national vocational qualifications. | | |
| SPECIFIC TO UNEMPLOYED | EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OF SLOVENIA (ESS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts as the main institution for job placement and employment counselling for unemployed. | | Services linked to rehabilitation that support people to return to work may offer guidance and portfolio help |
| SPECIFIC TO VET | NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR VET <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acts as national reference point for national vocational qualifications Responsible for the development and QA of formal VET and NVQ system Develops and updates OS and catalogues of standards of vocational knowledge and skills (NVQ system) and national curriculum for formal VET programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *** | See below |
| EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct validation procedures Actively participates in policy making and preparation of validation measures Provide documentation on education and training | VOCATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING BODIES (CBQ PROVIDERS- competence based qualification) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work side by side with working life Participate in tripartite assessment of the competence tests (i.e. | ACCREDITED LIFELONG LEARNING CENTRES⁷ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage validation processes Advertise the validation project Provide information to participants Conduct a screening interview with career counsellors |

⁴ i.e. a center for certified trades in a given area of the country

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| | | <p>jointly with employer and employee representatives), that usually take place in authentic work environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange preparatory training and guidance for candidates (or outsource them to other organisations) • Train working life assessors and tutors (on qualification requirements, guidance and assessment and assessment criteria), seeing guidance as integral part of all stages of the validation process <p>IVET - INITIAL VET (school based)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some VET providers have systematic validation procedures and assessment of INFL throughout the process in cooperation with working life and the others only recognise prior formal learning. • Provide feedback on progress to students • Design, implement and assess skills in cooperation with representatives of the world of work within the framework of the national qualification requirements (where possible as part of the on-the-job learning periods in school or company) • Awards certificates to students on skills demonstrations (which | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide career guidance throughout the validation project • Undertake assessments • Document results • Cooperate with upper secondary school providing the relevant education and training after validation • Sets up a steering group of social partners to secure their involvement and responsibility Report to ETSC <p>UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the results of the validation process for each participant formally, by registering the results into the credit system database • Provides large part of assessors in validation • Provide or should provide flexible schedules and learning methods for groups of adults who want to complete their studies often alongside work • Can provide tailor made training for validation beneficiaries to complete their training • Career counsellors can support individuals to continue education after validation is completed |
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| | | <p>is a part of qualification certificate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain one or more bodies for vocational skills demonstrations and have field-specific local advisory councils that include world of work. | |
| <p>PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS INCLUDING SOCIAL PARTNERS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide informal learning (practice, internships), but the documentation is weak and here are no common forms for reporting on experiential learning • Prior learning certificates are not widely accepted by companies (but SQF promotion should improve this) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate in both CBO and IVET systems in a strong and practical manner, by being involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing competence tests - Quality assurance and supervision of competence-based tests as members of Qualification committees - Quality assurance and skills demonstrations through participation in a tripartite body appointed by the school - Planning and development of VET (through participation in committees) - Provision of workplace learning opportunities - Many encourage employees to validate their prior learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in steering groups when projects are initiated and developed (i.e. trade unions and employer organisations) • Are involved or act as assessors in projects with focus on validation against job standards • Private companies often motivate employers to participate in validation |

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|---|--|--|---|
| <p>THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public sector employers are more inclined to validation of prior learning due to stricter legislation Youth organisations put efforts in promoting validation and recognition of youth non formal education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform target groups on CBQ and possibilities for validation (i.e. associations for immigrants) Some provide validation services and tools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May offer portfolio development and career guidance (city service centres, employment services) |
| <p>COORDINATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation practice often does not include coordination between stakeholders due to lack of time and resources (validation depends to a large extent the level of experience of the validator and the type of validation committee (ad hoc or stationary, see below) Post-secondary and HE level are usually characterised by ad hoc coordination and cooperation (but differs from case to case) Vocational level is characterised by a more intense cooperation as the VET Centre has stronger relationships with employers and sector organisations (such as chambers) Adult education / acquisition of professional qualifications: there is a coordination group of responsible ministries (representatives from all national institutes which cover different levels and fields of education, employment service, Education and Labour ministries, Chambers and VET providers). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validation is embedded in formal education system Wide national coordination according to laws and policies Effective national coordination contributing to quality of the validation procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficient cooperation between ETSCC and the accredited LLL centres when reaching out to the target group External pressure from social partners who own the ETSC and LLL centres on the formal school system to take part in conducting validation |

To sum up:

One single and “correct” solution for the institutional framework of the validation process does not exist. The presented models have a different historical origin and partly also serve to different purposes (i.e. well established, wide spread, well known and much used validation by all target groups as in Finland vs. focus of validation on people with little formal education above 23 and with three years of relevant work experience as in Island).

The main principle when thinking about the institutional framework solutions for Macedonia should be the sustainability and operability of the validation system (see Recommendations below).

3.4. Phases of the validation process

The four common phases of the validation (variations are possible from country to country) as defined in the European VNFIL guidelines are:

1. Identification
2. Documentation
3. Assessment
4. Certification.

The design of the phases (e.g. stakeholders involved, instruments used) varies not only from county to country but is also dependent on the purpose of evaluation (e.g. full or partial qualification, education level and field, target group and formality of the qualification) and sometimes also the institutions involved.

As the validation process is meant to produce a proof of learning (knowledge, skills and competences) in order for the candidate to be able to “exchange” it for further education or work opportunities, the key issue to be addressed by it is gaining the trust of the “receivers” of VNFIL certificates - namely stakeholders such as employers, education institutions, etc., but also the candidates themselves. That is why the question of quality assurance arrangements in general and a proper design of the VNFIL process in particular are of crucial importance for the validation process.

This chapter offers a closer look at the validation process in several other countries looking at the design and characteristics of the process with **focus on validation of vocational qualifications of adults**, carrying in mind the principle of an individualised approach.

The basic features and principles of the four phases have been sufficiently described other documents such as EC Recommendations and the Roadmap and need not be repeated here.

Slovenia⁸ -

Slovenia does not have one single overarching national system or standard for validation. It also does not have a single overarching legal framework for VNFIL, however its LLL policy has a clear commitment to validation. Education is regulated by sectoral acts which also regulate the possibility and right to validation of prior knowledge, but do not address validation directly (such as Law on National Vocational Qualifications, National Professional Qualifications Act 2010, Post-secondary Vocational Education Act 2004, and Vocational Education Act 2006). Also the National Programme for Youth 2013-2022 sets the goal of preparing a systematic solution for keeping track and recognising non-formal education of youth.

In Slovenia, each institution applies its own validation processes and methods, in accordance with the respective legislation, which do however have some commonalities across different education / qualification levels. There is a tendency towards establishing a common validation framework.

The overarching systems encompassing non-formal and informal learning are the Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF) and the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ, established before the SQF as the national qualifications framework to cover all professions and fields).

VET Qualifications can be acquired through the formal school system (here validation can also be used to shorten education time for adult students), or through recognition of non-formal learning through the NVQ system. They are connected through the NVQ act which sets the learning outcomes for each VET qualification that can be obtained in Slovenia.

The costs of validation are distributed between institutions performing the validation procedure and the individual applicants. Funding is available for groups at risk (such as long-term unemployed, marginalized groups, minorities etc.) through the Slovenian Employment Service.

The example below illustrates the NVQ validation system, which is only aimed at adults of 18 and over, and which is regulated by the National Professional Qualification Act 2000. The NVQ validation aims at formal recognition (certification) of qualifications in accordance with European VNFIL guidelines, and it is based on occupational standards. The knowledge validated can be acquired through any kind of learning. At the end of the process, a formally recognised certificate is obtained (in a formal system, candidates obtain a certificate or diploma). A NVQ can be obtained by both formal schooling and validation methods.

The overview of instruments used is given further below.

⁸ As reported in the Cedefop VNFIL Country Report Slovenia 2014, Vinko Logaj et al.: Final Report on Referencing the Slovenian Qualifications Framework to the EQF for LLL and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, Slovenia, Ljubljana, Institute of Republic of Slovenia for vocational Education and Training, 2014

| Phase | Description | Stakeholders involved |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| 0. Awareness rising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Internet is the main media and recruiting tool, also newsletters and leaflets • Awareness raising is often project-based and dependent on funding/priorities (e.g. ESF funded) • Employment Service often organises recruitment seminars and workshops in the vocational field • NGOs are active in informing individuals on validation • Awareness of the private sector needs improvement • An example of good practice is a private company (student work provider) that developed a tool for validation and recognition of working experience gained by student work in form of a digital or paper certificate of work experience) • Seminars, conferences and workshops for professionals and practitioners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public stakeholders (ministries, governmental agencies, education providers) • NGOs • Private sector (to a lesser extent) |
| 1. Identification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, depending on a project or initiative • Every candidate is provided with advice and guidance by a counsellor that informs the candidate on the validation procedure, the requirements, advises on suitable qualifications to be obtained and gives advice on possibilities of additional training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited accessing bodies - Providers of procedures for identifying and validating NQF entered in a register of providers at the National Examination centre⁹ • Other stakeholders |

⁹ This can be chambers, schools, adult education providers, business education centers, institutions, societies and other legal entities complying with assessment criteria. They must hold a written statement issued by the National Examination Centre.

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| <p>2. Documentation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to candidates to prepare a portfolio in accordance with the adopted occupational standard and other requirements by counsellors • Support to candidates to understand and document special occupational requirements as in catalogue of standards and fill in the application adequately (the portfolio contains a validation appeal for a full qualification or a qualification module, a CV and certificates and other attestations of all kinds of learning) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsellors • Accredited accessing bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providers of procedures for identifying and validating NQF entered in a register of providers at the National Examination centre |
| <p>3. Assessment</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for assessment panel (by assessing bodies) to the National Examination Centre, approval by the National Examination centre • Discussion of applications and portfolios on individual basis • Individual evaluation of candidates' portfolios against the occupational standard on the basis of criteria for evaluation of proofs, and the catalogues of standards of vocational knowledge and skills • Consultation of a further expert from the field in case of unclear identification or discrepancies in validation opinion. • If applicable: request to the candidate to submit additional certificates of competences, or demonstration of candidates' skills and knowledge directly to the assessment committee (usually using a combination of methods, as defined in the catalogue of standards of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited accessing bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providers of procedures for identifying and validating NQF entered in a register of providers at the National Examination centre • Validators - a three member committee appointed by the National Examination Centre NEC (NEC - licenced experts in the work field) |

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| | <p>vocational knowledge and skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate and decision on a) fulfilment of conditions that leads directly to certification or b) direction of candidates not meeting the conditions to further steps leading to certification, specifying the contents and instructions for validation on individual basis. | |
| 4. Certification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of proposal for recognition • The responsible body issues a formal resolution (as a recognised qualification or part of qualification) - NVQ certificate (or written statement in case that NVQ certificate cannot be issued) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers of procedures for identifying and validating NQF entered in a register of providers at the National Examination centre |

Finland – Competence Based Qualification validation system (Vocational adult education and training)

The Finish Competence Based Qualification (CBQ) system is the only systematic approach to validation in Finland which is used nationally and by all education providers. It is regulated by the Vocational Adult Education Act (631/1998) (Cedefop, European VNFIL Inventory, Country Report Finland, 2014, p. 5), and consists of three main phases as described below.

CBQ validation is fully embedded in formal qualification structures (that are based on learning outcomes) and the certificates are the same as and equal to certificates obtained from formal education. They are well recognised by the labour market.

National qualification requirements are developed in close cooperation with working life and educational authorities.

There are three levels of competence based qualifications¹⁰:

- Vocational qualifications indicate competence to enter employment in the field
- Further vocational qualifications indicate the vocational skills required of skilled workers in the field.
- Specialist vocational qualifications indicate a command of the most demanding tasks in the field.

A more detailed description of the phases and stakeholders involved is given in the table below. The tools used for each of the phases are listed further below.

¹⁰ http://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/competence_based_qualifications_for_adults

| Phase | Description | Stakeholders involved |
|--|--|---|
| <p>0. Awareness rising</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation is not advertised in Finland as such. Instead, the public authorities and the social partners are actively involved in raising awareness about the competence based qualification system in which validation is embedded as a central feature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public authorities • Social partners |
| <p>1. Application (=Identification)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, initial guidance for candidates • Details on possible options of training programmes, validation procedures, options for learning methods (with focus on individual needs / career / learning) • Evaluation of documentation provided by the candidate (by the Qualification Committee) • Identification of candidate's skills and prior learning • Identification of needs for additional training / learning • Identification of possible needs for further guidance and support during the entire validation process (including candidate's rights and obligations, learning methods, introduction into study/learning environment, compilation of individual learning paths). <p>(Note: Qualification requirements are the same for formal education and validation)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training organisations (CBQ providers and VET schools) • Qualification Committees (sector specific tripartite bodies that oversee the quality of the CBQ provision; its members are experts in given field appointed by the NBE / employer organisation, employee organisation, training organisation and unions). |

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| 2. Competence test phase (=Assessment) | Depending on the results of phase 1 and qualification specific requirements, one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation of some or all CBQ modules without testing (in case of sufficient evidence on prior skills in the previous phase) • Competence test in a suitable working environment in line with CBQ requirements • Monitoring of competence tests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training organisations • Counsellors, advisors • Planning the individualised test jointly with work place representatives • Implementation of test is planned jointly (candidate, advisor/trainer), the plan states method, place and time of the test) • Qualification Committees (monitoring) |
| Completing vocational skill | If preparatory training is required to complete the vocational skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of learning needs • Provision of individualised and flexible learning options / methods / learning environments (taking into consideration the candidate's life and work situation, learning needs and cultural and linguistic background) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training organisation |
| 3. Documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of each phase (for follow-up and QA purposes, not as a proof of competences) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training organisations |
| 4. Certification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award of certificates (full qualification, qualification unit) in line with national qualification requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification Committee |

Iceland

Iceland's validation of non-formal and informal learning is based on a National validation of non-formal and informal learning strategy, and regulated by the Adult Education Law (2010), Adult Education Act (2010) and the Regulation for adult education (2011). They stipulate individuals' entitlement to validation of non-formal and informal learning towards credits/units at upper secondary level. The target group of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Iceland are persons with short formal education (persons who have not completed upper secondary education, with at least three years of work experience and minimum 23 years of age) and the focus is on shortening their study time. The final aim of the validation process is usually the official recognition of recognised credit values ("units") and their registration in the official database / participant's educational record. The registration is done by the formal education providers. Competences are assessed based on curriculum subjects and those units carry a specific unit value, which is calculated in recognised credits. Obtaining a

full qualification is possible in some sectors. However, usually only partial (subject-based) qualification is recognised and a completion of journeyman’s exam is required for obtaining a full qualification. The other possibility is validation against specific job standards (jointly with companies), however this kind of recognition has not yet been formally linked to a credit system or modularised structure of qualifications.

The approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning is individualised.

The country’s validation of non-formal and informal learning has been developed through various pilot projects in close cooperation with stakeholders and through feedback from end-users. validation of non-formal and informal learning is still based on validation projects for specific target groups. The target groups for the projects are defined by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Approved validation projects in the area of upper secondary qualifications are fully funded by the Education and Training fund (including counselling), whereas validation against specific job standards are co-founded by labour market partners. For individuals, the validation is free of charge, but they are expected to invest time into the process.

A more detailed description of the phases and stakeholders involved is given in the table below. The tools used for each of the phases are listed further below.

| Phase | Description | Stakeholders involved |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 0. Awareness rising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of recruitment methods for each project, depending on the sector • Usually: local and national newspapers, brochures distributed among companies and sector stakeholders, educational providers • Visit to companies by LLL centre career counsellors • Screening, individual interviews and guidance for potential candidates prior to the start of the validation process by career counsellors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LLL centres and the steering group • LLL centre career counsellors |
| 1. Identification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, initial guidance for candidates¹¹ (on e.g. validation goal, role of the assessors, possible outcome, candidate’s rights) • Interview with a career counsellor • Possible initiation of preparation of portfolio | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited LLL centres • Career counsellor (in LLL centres) |

¹¹ Usually the validation process is carried out with groups of 11 - 20 individuals aspiring the same qualification

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible initiation of self-assessment • Motivation of candidates throughout the process | |
| 2. Documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of knowledge, skills and competences in a portfolio (supported by career counsellor) • Self-assessment against relevant modules / standards / qualification or job requirements, preferably with a checklist (supported by career counsellor and assessor) • Motivation of candidates throughout the process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited LLL centres • Career counsellor (in LLL centres) • Assessor |
| 3. Assessment | <p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of assessment methods • (Mostly interview) on competences declared in the portfolio and in the self-assessment form • Joint decision of candidate and assessor on whether the competence fulfils full or partial qualification requirements and if it is sufficient for validation. • If the competence is sufficient, the candidate obtains a certificate. If not, further steps are planned (method and timeline) and a joint validation plan agreed on. <p>Confirmation (based on joint validation plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of competence vs. required standards, taking into consideration individual needs. Possible methods: • Case example on a suitable qualification level (problem solving by candidates) • Performing tasks with tools (simulation and evidence extracted from work) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited LLL centres • Assessor(s) - main role • Career counsellors often attend assessment to support the interviews and monitor the assessment quality. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If result unclear: scheduling of another meeting with focus on simulation, evidence extracted from work and observation • If result insufficient: identification of missing proofs or competences, or missing competences, whether the individual wants to acquire them or if the confirmation process should be repeated. • Motivation of candidates throughout the process | |
| <p>4. Certification</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award of recognised credit value / units / (possibly also) full qualification and their registration in the official database / candidate's educational record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed by LLL centre • Official recognition by formal education providers |

3.5. Profile of validation practitioners

Validation practitioners can be teachers, qualification specialists, guidance staff, employee and employer representatives as well as private practitioners, and certified validators / assessors.

This chapter is focused on job description and requirements for counsellors / advisers and assessors in the validation process.

COUNSELLOR / ADVISOR

Job description

General

- Provides information, initial guidance and advice for individual candidates
- Informs the candidate on the validation procedure, the requirements, advises on suitable qualifications to be obtained and gives advice on possibilities of additional training
- Support to candidates to prepare a portfolio in accordance with the adopted occupational standard and other requirements by counsellors
- Support to candidates to understand and document special occupational requirements as in catalogue of standards and fill in the application adequately

Additional information for Slovenia

- = can be employees in institutions / associations where validation take place (depending on education sector/level/field)

Additional information for Finland

- = guidance staff at different responsible institutions

- Identification of candidate's skills and prior learning
- Additional focus is on further training / learning: Provides details on possible options of training programmes, validation procedures, options for learning methods (with focus on individual needs / career / learning)
- Identification of possible needs for further guidance and support during the entire validation process (including candidate's rights and obligations, learning methods, introduction into study/learning environment, compilation of individual learning paths).

Additionally information for Island

- = Guidance practitioner in LLL centres
- Assists individuals to identify competences. gives individual interviews, reviews data and discusses items like: strength, educational approach, educational goals and circumstances
- Gives support throughout the validation process
- Looks after individuals' interests
- Provides guidance and support through individual interviews and group work

Qualification and / or training

Slovenia

- A relevant university degree
- and
- For NVQ advisors: attendance of a training for advisors carried out by the National Institute for Adult Education

Finland

- Experienced in own specific professional field
- Good understanding of validation process
- Understanding of CBQ system, qualification requirements and assessment criteria

Island

- Diploma or MA in Educational and Vocational Counselling
- and
- 2-day ETSC training course on validation concept and practices for counsellors and assessors

Assessor

Job description

- Discussion of applications and portfolios on individual basis
- Individual evaluation of candidates' portfolios against the valid standard and criteria
- Analysis of candidates' application

- Decision on fulfilment of standards and certification or the need for further certificates / training or assessment (test)
- Determination of assessment methods
- Assessment of the candidate and decision on assessment result

Qualification and/or work experience and/or training

Slovenia

- Must be licensed by the National Examination Centre¹².
- Professional involvement in LLL or education as teachers or researchers or administration workers in the field, often teachers or academics with personal interest towards it.
- For National Professional Qualifications - professionals in the field (practitioners in companies or teachers with proven professional background and practical experience in occupation)
- (Optional) attendance of seminars for existing and aspiring evaluators (which include validation of prior learning to a very small extent, focus is on experience sharing)
- For assessors in the system of national professional qualification (optional) - attendance of 4-day training on portfolio assessment, preparation of practical assessment to test skills performance
- In each case, assessors have to comply to legal and other regulated criteria, the respective qualification system.

Finland

- Certified assessor is a profession requiring a compulsory specialised 25 ECTS “Specialist in CBQ” training provided by universities of applied sciences - or acquired through validation (focus is on planning CBQ, organising CBQ according to an individualised process and quality assurance in CBQ)
- Further training for updating the competences

Iceland

- Specialist for the profession at hand
- Teacher (upper secondary) or professionals (from working life) or a senior trainer / vocational instructor (outside the workplace) or expert (e.g. within a trade association)
- Required also: positive mind set towards validation, good communication skills, experience and knowledge of evaluation methods and training, credibility, impartiality, experience as an assessor, ability to assess aptitude
- Required training: 2-day ETSC training course on validation concept and practices for counsellors and assessors

¹² For the explanation of the licensing procedure by NIC, please refer to http://www.ric.si/mma/licenca_how%20to%20qualify%20as%20an%20nvq%20assessor_shema_ang/2009010809273166/

3.6. Basic characteristics of qualification systems, standards and quality assurance frameworks overarching the validation process

Slovenia

There is no overarching validation standard in Slovenia.

The **qualification system** is defined by the Slovenian Qualifications Framework (SQF) and the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NQF). The SQF includes databases on vocational standards, catalogues on subjects of specialisation for assessment and procedures for assessment of national vocational qualifications. The SQF consists of ten levels and includes all types of qualifications. For VET, the SQF and NQF are connected by the National Professional Qualification Act by introducing occupational standards which are learning outcome standards for each VET qualification.

Learning outcomes have been introduced gradually since at least 1996. They are defined in occupational standards and catalogues of standards of vocational knowledge and skills, and are verified in accordance with regulations.

The **credit systems** used for VET are credit points (1 credit point being 25 hours of learning), which are compatible with ECVET. For post-secondary and tertiary level European Credit Transfer System is used (ECTS).

As regards **quality assurance** mechanisms, each educational level has its own QA framework for institutional and programme evaluation and accreditation and VNFIL is a part of these frameworks. QA is regulated by the Act for the respective field of education, which is aligned with European requirements and standards.

NVQ verification and validation providers are externally evaluated and accredited by the National Examination Centre.

Finland

The **qualification system** is defined by the Finnish NQF (Framework for Qualifications and Other Learning), which introduces eight levels and is compatible with EQF.

The validation is fully embedded in the formal qualification system and the requirements are the same for formal education and validation procedures. National qualification requirements are described in learning outcomes and include assessment targets, criteria and methods. Thus the learning outcomes are one of the cornerstones of the Finnish QA in VET.

The **credit systems** in use are ECVET for the VET field; its implementation is facilitated through the modular qualification structure. Practically all qualifications can be obtained partially and/or fully through validation. In Higher Education, ECTS credits are used.

In Finland, **quality assurance** procedures applying for the formal qualification system are also valid for validation (validation does not have a specific QA mechanism as it is embedded in the formal education system). The Educational Evaluation Council is an expert network that evaluates education and learning. There is also no national QA body for VNFIL. Decentralisation of education in Finland also means that individual providers have a great deal of freedom to apply the legislative framework. Cooperation with partners from labour market is seen as crucial for assuring assessment quality and matching with labour market demands.

The CBQ QA mechanisms are well developed and extensive. They are based on national qualification requirements that determine the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria. Qualification Committees monitor and supervise validation procedures and support the work of CBQ organisers. They perform external audits to CBQ organisers with the aim to improve and support validation procedures and the cooperation with the working life.

Iceland

The **qualification system** is regulated by the National Qualification Framework of Iceland (ISQF) which encompasses all education and training offered in the country. It expresses competency requirement in terms of Los, provides transparency of standards, and promotes a more open mind-set towards validation of non-formal and informal learning. The focus is on learning outcomes that connect validation process with the ISQF.

The **credit system** is a unit-based one, often used to define validated partial qualification and shorten the time the individual is required to study at upper secondary level (also full qualification can be acquired in some sectors). Each curriculum subject has a specific unit value, defined by recognised credits. National curriculum standards for upper secondary level are also used in validation. They are adjusted by stakeholders for particular projects so that competences can be measured flexibly and individually.

In terms of **quality assurance mechanisms**, validation and related career counselling can only be executed by accredited educational providers that provide services based on the Adult education act and the standards set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. The ETSC has a contract with the BSI (certified accreditation body), and the BSI evaluates the centres.

Before every validation project, a steering committee is set consisting of all relevant stakeholders linked to the profession. The steering committee reviews the curriculum standards (from the formal school system) and occupational standards (developed by the occupational councils). The steering committee reviews and adjusts the standard to the validation process, often making them more practical, transparent and based on Learning Outcomes.

3.7. Validation methods/instruments

Validation methods and instruments in Europe are largely shared with those used in the formal education system, whereas their combination varies from country to country.

For validation of non-formal and informal learning, most countries use multiple validation methods and/or a combination of several methods, which also include traditional validation instruments from formal education (such as texts and examinations). Assessment of learning outcomes and validation of labour market relevant and generic skills has generally become more important in the validation process (but also in formal assessment). (CEDEFOP, Thematic report: validation methods. European inventory on VNFIL, 2014)

The portfolio is the most widely used and accepted instrument for validation of non-formal and informal learning, followed by interviews, tests, and examinations, debates and presentations. Self-assessment and usage of e-tools are widely accepted in validation of non-formal and informal learning. In some countries, validation candidates have the possibility to co-determine the appropriate validation method. (ibid)

The table below offers an overview of validation methods used in the three countries subject to this comparative analysis¹³.

¹³ As reported in Cedefop VNFIL country reports 2014.

| Validation phase | 1. Identification | | | 2. Documentation | | | 3. Assessment | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|----|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| Дава | SI | FI | IS | SI | FI | IS | SI | FI | IS |
| Debate | x | | | | | | x | | x |
| Declarative methods | x | x | | x | | | x | x | x |
| Interview | | x | x | | | | x | | x |
| Observation | | x | | | | | x | x | x |
| Portfolio | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| Presentation | | | | | | | x | x | |
| Simulation and evidence extracted from work | x | x | | | x | | | x | x |
| Tests and examinations | | x | | | x | | x | x | |
| Other (e.g. e-learning) | (FI, IS) self-assessment | | | (FI, IS) self-assessment e-tools that produce documentation | | | (FI, IS) self-assessment tools, (IS) case studies | | |

4. The Macedonian Context

After a comparative analysis of some European examples, this chapter offers a closer look at the Macedonian context, with focus on institutional or project related good practices that can be of use for the development and implementation of VNFIL process of the country.

As already noted in the introductory part of this paper, the findings and recommendations elaborated in the Roadmap for implementing a VNFIL system in Macedonia will not be repeated here. The goal is rather to illustrate paths for possible VNFIL solutions in Macedonia and illustrate lessons learned through already implemented projects or initiatives - with the final aim to possibly integrate them into the future VNFIL process in Macedonia.

The ideas on possible Macedonian solutions certainly also take into consideration the European context including the examples illustrated in the above comparative analysis. Furthermore, the chapter explores the infrastructure that could offer initial guidance to validation candidates (such as school career centres, project based career centres, municipalities, local offices of the Chamber of Economy and similar).

The contents of the chapter is primarily based on the results of the interviews with focus on VNFIL with the Macedonian stakeholders¹⁴ (see Annex 1) listed below:

- Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)
- Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC)
- Adult Education Centre (AEC)
- Centre for VET (CVET)
- State Examination Centre (DIC)
- Economic Chamber (ECM)
- Association of Employers of Macedonian (AE)
- National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility (NAEPPM)

The interviewed representatives of above institutions were asked to provide relevant inputs for the VNFIL process in Macedonia from their perspective. The focus was on the potential role in this process, examples of good practice that can be used, instruments and tools they can offer to support this process and lessons learnt to be considered in VNFIL.

The related findings of the Analysis are to be combined with findings, discussions and conclusions of other VNFIL related processes in which the stakeholders are represented.

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)

The MoES is the main policy maker in the field of education in Macedonia. One of the major recent developments in the sector of its work is the development of the Macedonian Qualification Framework and its referencing to the EQF, which is, as mentioned above, one of the key preconditions for an integrated approach to VNFIL. In this sense, the MQF includes provisions for validation and a MQF Roadmap (currently in development) that foresees:

¹⁴ The Employment Service Agency (ESA) was not available for the interview. Nevertheless some recommendations based on information available without the interview are included here.

- The development of systems, procedures and guidelines,
- Capacity building of various actors according to their role and
- Implementation of VNFIL.

Some of the main challenges related to VNFIL that are to be addressed are:

- Elaboration on how will MQF reflect non-formal and informal learning and
- More elaborated explanation of the way how qualifications will be acquired and on the validation process.

From the standpoint of the working group working on the NQF referencing report, these are the VNFIL related challenges that need to be addressed in the upcoming period¹⁵:

1. There is a gap between the demand and supply of adult education which is conditioned first of all by the lack of information about at least mid-term and long-term needs of the Labour, moreover, the system of communication about the short-term needs is also ineffective.
2. Low awareness of population about adult education opportunities and benefits results in low motivation of adults to participate in lifelong learning, another reason of which is absence of system for Validation of non-formal and informal learning
3. Not only companies are lacking awareness about privileges from implementing Work-based learning, practical training or internship but also workers are not sufficiently aware about their educational rights and duties.
4. There is no comprehensive system of adult education funding in the country, while employers also do not enjoy any financial incentives to invest in adults' education and learning.
5. In general, the level of cooperation with different stakeholders (e.g. with local economic and social councils) is low, there are serious difficulties with participation of business community in designing adults learning programmes, particularly in terms of learning outcomes.
6. Programmes targeted to elimination of adults' illiteracy have rather limited coverage in parallel with complete absence of system for completing secondary education by adults.
7. There is no system of collecting and processing of statistical data, evidences and analysis on adult education.
8. Quality control of adult education implementation by the certified providers remains insufficient.

From the standpoint of the MoES, the following recommendations need to be considered in VNFIL in Macedonia:

¹⁵ Abstract from the feedback of the working group to the NQF referencing report, as received from the MoES

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ensure equivalence of VNFIL certificates** with certificates obtained from formal education. Some of the major criteria therefore are **quality assurance procedures and usage of learning outcomes** in all VNFIL procedures, as well as well elaborated and transparent VNFIL process.
- **Include sectoral commissions** in the VNFIL process e.g. in the **elaboration of validation criteria**.
- **Include focus** on elementary education of adults and validation of other employment relevant qualifications of adults into VNFIL priorities.
- **Make use of the results of the Build Up Skills project** (see below)

Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC)

The LLC is a leading promoter of adult education and LLL in the Republic of Macedonia. It works as trainers', consultants' and resource centre and is a holder of the network providers of adult education in Macedonia.

It accomplishes its vision through implementation of projects, networking, training of trainers, consulting, research, publications, promotions, transfer of knowledge and lobbying.

Based on its capacities, the LLC

- Contributes to the development and setting up of a functional system for VNFIL through project measures aimed at delivering support to the AEC, with financial support of DVV International. The support is agreed bilaterally among the LLC and the AEC, with measures defined on annual basis and are part of a Memorandum of cooperation.
- Actively promotes VNFIL within the LLL in Macedonia (e.g. through annual "LLL days", an event held throughout the country).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use capacities (expertise, projects, experts, local and international networks, events etc.) of the LLC** to set up a functional system for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Adult Education Centre (AEC)

AEC is a public institution for adult education with the mission to promote a system of adult education that will be functional, modern and in line with EU standards.

The AEC contributes to the fulfilment of socio-economic needs of Macedonia in order to meet the needs of the labour market and assist individuals in their personal development.

The AEC harmonizes and integrates public interests and interests of social partners in adult education and coordinates the cooperation with international institutions and organisations in AE.

Furthermore, it is aimed at providing quality education system for adults in accordance with European standards and practices through the establishments of standards and criteria that will provide formal and informal AE and creating high quality and competitive workforce in the labour market with support of social partnership.

As a public body for adult education with a clear mission that includes VNFIL, the AEC is a hub that already partly leads and coordinates the emerging VNFIL process in Macedonia. Jointly with the ETF, and other Macedonian stakeholders, it currently actively works on the outline and concept of the VNFIL methodology and a guidance note of VNFIL.

Based on its current capacities, the AEC is interested to be included in the VNFIL process as follows:

- Acts as a main partner of ministries in policy, legislation and strategy development related to VNFIL,
- Participates in definition of VNFIL priorities to be financed through international funds,
- Coordinates the VNFIL process in Macedonia in line with European standards (division of individual roles and tasks of stakeholders are currently being elaborated in a participative manner),
- Participates, jointly with MoES, in VNFIL quality assurance in line with the requirements of the Ministry and standards set
- Supports MoES in verification of validation providers and keeps a database of registered VNFIL providers,
- Acts as a public information hub related to VNFIL processes (offers information, guidance and templates on its web site, develops and distributes flyers and information material),
- Works closely with verified validation providers,
- Coordinates the establishment of validation commission
- Recruits counsellors and assessors on request of providers / publishes calls for assessors and participates in the selection process
- Organizes training for assessors and counsellors (career centres, NGOs, education providers) on VNFIL issues
- Verifies assessors (if needed also counsellors)
- Keeps, regularly updates and coordinates a register of licensed assessors (possibly also counsellors)
- If needed and possible in terms of available capacities, can participate in the appeal appeals from validation providers and keeps a database
- Ensures that validation certificates are adequately integrated into the qualification system according to set standards at the system level
- Actively cooperates with all involved stakeholders (ministries, agencies, private sector, education providers, chambers, NGOs, etc.) in planning and implementation of the validation process

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use above specified capacities of AEC to set up a sustainable and operational VNFIL system.**

Centre for Vocational Education and Training (CVET)

The CVET is a public institution for integration of public interest and the interest of social partners in vocational education and training. Among other responsibilities, CVET coordinates the development of the NQF qualifications for VET, and participates in the development of NQF related legislation. It is responsible for the development and approval of occupational standards CVET participates in the VNFIL working group.

The CVET is responsible for formal VET, but not for adults (responsibility for adult education is with the AEC). The only exception is the responsibility of CVET for NQF level 5b.

The CVET can provide valuable inputs and templates that are also to be used in the validation process (see annexes 2-4).

Based on its capacities, the CVET sees its **potential role** in the VNFIL process as follows:

- Further participation in the VNFIL process development
- Development/approval of occupational standards¹⁶ as a basis for the validation process (see Annex 2 for the updated occupational standard template)
- Development of qualifications based on occupational standards (see Annex 3 for the updated qualification template)¹⁷
- Development of learning outcomes and exam catalogues based on those learning outcomes (See annex 4 for exam catalogue examples)
- Participation in verification of validation institutions
- Where applicable, member of validation committee
- Support to process through career centres of VET schools
- Support and mentoring to teachers involved in VNFIL.

As regards the **VNFIL** process, the Centre sees its **potential** in addressing the following:

- **Simplification and shortening of certification of qualifications** of professionally experienced adults (currently, adults need to attend consultations pass all exams from the formal school system even though they do not need to attend the full school programme. This is quite difficult for many, e.g. due to literacy problems. Furthermore it might not be necessary for experienced professionals to pass all formal exams in order to be able to officially perform their occupation. One exception is the certification of craftsmen, which is under the Chamber of Crafts).
- Support and mainstream the use of **learning outcomes** in the VNFIL process and enable external assessment of learning outcomes of validation candidates. It is also recommended to adapt the current AEC and certificate / diploma templates to include learning outcomes.

¹⁶ Currently, around 100 occupational standards were approved. Further occupational standards are in development.

¹⁷ It is expected that legislation on qualifications will be developed. The currently existing qualifications for 17 3-year VET occupations developed within a previous project are still not recognized due to lack of relevant legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Closely cooperate** with the VET centre in all phases of VNFIL planning and implementation, esp. with regard to e.g. occupational standards, qualifications, learning outcomes, exam catalogues and career centres. Involve CVET in external quality assurance on all levels (e.g. verification of validation providers, as member of validation committee). Use already developed templates of occupational standards, qualifications and exam catalogues.
- **Use learning outcomes** in all exam catalogues and certificate/diploma.
- **Ensure external validation of learning outcomes.**
- **Enable a simpler validation path** for work experienced adults, without necessarily linking it to passing all exams from formal education.
- **Use school based career centres** to raise awareness on validation and reach potential validation candidates (e.g. parents), also to **provide initial guidance for candidates**. Use school teachers and infrastructure to support initial guidance and offer advice on validation.

State Examination Centre (DIC)

The DIC is, among its other tasks, also responsible for state Matura exams, external exams, training and exams for school directors, as well as for Macedonians participation in international exams such as Pisa.

The experience of this centre for VNFIL in Macedonia is particularly valuable in the following fields:

- Appointing examination committees
- Training for external examiners
- Design of question catalogues and tests and assessment methodology

Based on its capacities the DIC itself sees its **potential role** in supporting the successful start of the VNFIL process as follows:

- Provision of training / train the trainer for designing exam catalogues and test questions; structural and technical feedback of question items
- Advice on selection and appointment of validation commissions / validators
- Training for validators
- Possible participation in the validation commissions in the piloting phase to share experiences (a more extensive participation in the future VNFIL process is not possible with current capacities).

With this regard, DIC can offer the **experiences from the state Matura** that could support shaping of the validation process (see also www.matura.gov.mk for further details on the state Matura):

- The state Matura is standardised for both general and VET education and leads to access to higher education. The state Matura consists of three external and one school based exam, in addition a project work is required.
- DIC centrally coordinates and leads the Matura process.

- An **external commission** with 3-5 (usually 3-4) members is appointed to oversee and evaluate Matura exams. The president of the exam commission is a university professor, and its members are teachers and practitioners. The continuity of the work of the commission is crucial, thus it is recommended not to change more than one member of the commission annually, if at all.
- The responsible DIC employees and members of external commissions received intensive **training** before the state Matura system started in 2008. The trainings included design of exam items, their alignment with the goals of exams, structuring of tests, data analysis, feedback, reliability and validation of testing. New members of external commissions undergo a two-day training held by DIC.
- The general **exam structure / exam catalogues**¹⁸ were elaborated by a larger team in 2006 and are constantly updated. One DIC employee coordinates one or more subjects and elaborates a test structure that indicates the weight of every part of the exam (e.g. 50% of scoring for part a of the test, 15% for part b, etc.). The exam structure can be multiple choice or an essay. One independent test reader, usually a university professor (but not the same person as the president of the examination commission) examines the test question one more time before they are finally approved.
- **Open exams** need to be evaluated by at least two assessors, who need to agree on the result. In case of disagreement, the open exam s is given to the leader of all assessors.

DIC experiences from **external examination** could also to a certain extent be of use for VNFIL.

- Here, all **exam questions** are multiply choice, and they are developed by the Bureau for Development of Education and the VETC for all subjects. There are three task levels: basic, middle and complex (complex tasks usually include questions related to a certain situation) and a case study. As in the case of state Matura, one independent reader (university or school teacher) checks the contents of all questions. The questions are publicly available.
- **Feedback** is gladly received and integrated based on the opinion of the commission.
- The **training** includes training for exam developers held by DIC (trained in design of multiply choice questions, Blooms taxonomy, and technical task preparation).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Closely cooperate with DIC** in the VNFIL process to make sure that their experiences and lessons learnt are integrated in VNFIL.
- **Cooperate with DIC in training** validation commissions and exam developers (however make sure that the VNFIL process is individualised, flexible and usually at least partly practical whereas Matura and external examinations are collective, formalised and based on formal examination methods only).
- **Integrate the business community and chambers** in VNFIL implementation to ensure that their interests are represented and that they recognise the validation certificates.

¹⁸ see <http://www.matura.gov.mk/documents.aspx?language=MK&page=O6dtQQpiV3o=>

Economic Chamber (ECM)

The ECM is the largest Macedonian Economic Chamber with around 15.000 members, mostly small and medium enterprises.

It is fully supportive of the VNFIL process and partly already included in its development. Validation of prior learning is seen by the Chamber as one of the key instruments for supporting its member companies in finding qualified work force for occupations in deficit, and thus also reducing unemployment in Macedonia.

The ECM sees its role as a partner in the VNFIL process which enables a direct and a structured link towards numerous companies in Macedonia that can serve different purposes: from general involvement of employers in VNFIL planning or implementation, awareness raising, recruitment of validation candidates all the way to the recruitment of counsellors and validators to be involved in advising and assessment procedures, to name just the main ones.

In this context, the ECM has been a partner in a EU financed project that has for the very first (and only time) basically piloted (among its other achievements) the validation of non-formal learning in Macedonia: the project **Build Up Skills**¹⁹.

The project Build Up Skills addressed the skill mismatch between labour demand and supply in the Macedonian building sector, with the special aim to contribute to the national energy efficiency targets. Thus it:

- Defined and quantified the needs and possibilities of the Macedonian building sector to contribute to the national energy efficiency targets and
- Defined the necessary workforce and skills for construction of nearly zero-energy buildings.

Build up skills thus also focused on identifying and improving the skills of the construction workers in the related fields, and defining new qualifications and skills in this field.

A part of the project was devoted to **validation²⁰ of non-formal learning of construction workers**.

Thus, the project basically pioneered VNFIL in Macedonia during its duration between 2012 and 2014. The interview with the ECM offered an interesting insight into achievements and lessons learnt, that is shortly elaborated below. Please also refer to the project web site (www.buildupskills.mk) for further information.

Below, a short description of main elements and related lessons learnt of the piloted validation process from the experience and perspective of the ECM is given. The final result was formal validation of non-formal learning of construction workers in five occupations which resulted in around **1000 workers obtaining qualification certificates**:

1. The **call for candidates** was advertised in public. However, the recruitment was a difficult process and it was difficult to reach the candidates. Most of the candidates were reached through companies. (Here ECM was of significant help!)

¹⁹ <http://www.buildupskills.mk/>

²⁰ Even though this term might partly deviate from the definition of validation used in this paper, it will be used here for the purpose of demonstrating the project achievements as an example of good practice.

2. The **validation committee** was nominated that consisted of members from the related faculty, ECM and AEC. At least a part of selected members had to have a background relevant for the validated competences. The commission attended a validation course offered by the project. It participated in a consultative process on validation organised within the project.
3. The **application process** included preparation of a kind of portfolio by the workers that would demonstrate their knowledge, skills and competences (mainly comprised from certificates of formal education and certificates of professional knowledge and skills obtained outside the formal education system). Many of the workers were partly or fully illiterate. It was crucial to offer them the possibility to work with a mentor that supported this process.
4. The **comparability of applications** was difficult, as the documents submitted were different between the candidates. Thus, there was a realistic risk of subjective approach by the validation committee members. From this perspective, it is crucial to develop and use templates for assessment of incomparable portfolio documents.
5. The **level of knowledge**, skills and competences was also partly difficult to compare. Thus, it is recommended to use some competency levels, e.g. aligned to the levels from NQF/formal education (such as e.g. basic, medium and advanced).
6. It was further noted that the **validation system** needs to be and remain **flexible to respond to the needs of the labour market and its candidates**. An overregulation might lead to a too high level of formality which would end up in a rather school based validation process.
7. The existing **legal framework** does not directly regulate validation²¹. Direct and flexible access to validation is currently not possible, and candidates have to pass exams from the formal school system (with some mentorship offered). This is often not of advantage for working adults or those seeking employment, as their prior learning is not recognised. The Chamber of Crafts is legally allowed to validate craftsmen but this is valid for crafts only.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use the network of the Economic Chamber** of Macedonia and other chambers to recruit candidates through their member companies and to nominate validation professionals. The ECM works with human resource managers in companies and is already included in the NQF development on all except basic education levels.
- **Seek for flexible VNFIL solutions** rather than overregulated procedures.
- **Appoint flexible validation commissions** consisting of several members with background relevant for the validated occupation.
- **Appoint mentors to support the candidates**, esp. those with low literacy levels.
- **Use validation templates** prepared beforehand on the basis of required standards to facilitate comparability of the certificates, also to support objectivity of the commission members.
- **Use levels** to describe the level of knowledge, skills and competences that are compatible with general education framework of the country.
- **Adapt legal framework** to enable access to validation without the need to attend unnecessary training.
- **Use piloted procedures and lessons learnt from Build Up Skills process** to shape the future VNFIL in Macedonia.

²¹ The VNFIL Roadmap foresees the development of the relevant legal and financial basis for VNFIL implementation

With regard to the **initial guidance of candidates** through the **ECM** network, it was noted that the network of 16 regional ECM centres can only be used to a very limited extent due to limited capacities (only one employee per regional centre).

Also the **municipal capacities** can be used to a limited extent as usually only one person is responsible for both education and local economic development. Additional capacities and capacity development would be needed to enable municipalities to support the initial guidance process.

Association of Employers of Macedonia (AEM)

The Employers Association is the only employers association in Macedonia and a social partner involved in the National socio-economic council (the body strategizing the economic development and employment), the collective agreements and local self-governance (11 socio-economic councils for local development). It has an intensive and excellent cooperation with the national employment agency and participates in its steering board. Every year, the AEM reports to the Ministry of Labour and the Employment agency on the needs of the labour market. It is financed by the membership fees and largely supported by the International Labour Organisation.

The AE can register private providers and be an education provider itself.

The AE is on behalf of its members - the employers - more than interested to support the VNFIL process, esp. related to validation of much demanded occupations (such as those from the textile industry, tourism, construction, food and vine, etc.). It works with human resource managers in all 17 economic sectors and is well informed about the local economic structure. It can offer a direct access to its members - the employers. Particularly valuable is the access to large companies with over 500 employees (this is 1% of total companies in Macedonia that employ 20% of total workers in Macedonia). However, with only two permanent employees, the AEM participation is fully dependent on potential funding. Its local offices are in all major cities but based on the work of volunteers.

The **potential role** of the AE in the VNFIL process is in:

Contact to employers for awareness raising and recruitment of validation candidates, also for recruitment of assessors/practitioners (also through its local offices).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Cooperate with the Association** to integrate employers' interests in the VNFIL and recruit validation candidates and practitioners (in case that).

National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility (NAEPPM)

The NAEPPM is a public institution with the aim to promote and implement the European educational programs in Macedonia. It contributes to development of knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and bigger social cohesion, with focus exchange, collaboration and mobility into the areas of education and training.

The Agency already actively participates in working groups for NQF and the LLL strategy. It closely collaborates with the ministries of economy and labour and Employment Agency and the education providers.

It sees its **potential role** in the Macedonian VNFIL especially in the field of motivating education providers and career centres it cooperates with to actively support the validation process (awareness rising, counselling).

One of the priorities of the Erasmus+ project implemented by the Agency is also the **validation of informal and non-formal learning**, with focus on the validation of working experience (as a part of one of the three key actions of Erasmus+). Among other actions, Erasmus+ grants of the Agency supported VET schools in Macedonia to certify practical work of students conducted in companies abroad (usually 2 week internships)- with certificates being recognised by the Macedonian employers, which is certainly an example of good Macedonian practice.

The tasks of the Agency also include awareness rising and the promotion of instruments which contribute to Europe-wide transparency of individual knowledge, skills and competences that are also an integral part of the validation process (here the Agency either acts on its own or it works jointly with ministries, the Employment Agency, AEC, the education providers and similar). The main of those instruments are the following:

- **Europass** (see <http://europass.mk/>), as a standardised European CV template that helps present skills and qualifications effectively and clearly
- **Youthpass** (see <https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/about/>), as an Europe-wide validation instrument for non-formal learning in the youth field that leads to social recognition of youth work. Individuals can use it to reflect personal non-formal learning process and outcomes (for example through participation in a project), and it helps describe activities conducted and competencies acquired during the work/project²².
- **Certificate supplement** that contain learning outcomes (in addition to the standard Macedonian learning certificates that are based on a template not containing learning outcomes). The supplements are issued by the Agency based on the requirement of the candidate.
- **Euroguidance**, as a new network in Macedonia, with the aim to provide support in the areas of learning mobility and lifelong guidance development within education, training and employment (see <http://euroguidance.eu/>). So far, the focus of the Euroguidance related work in Macedonia has been on the work with **career centres** at higher education institutions (higher education institutions are legally obliged to establish career centres that focus on advising related to career guidance, preparation of CVs, job search and scholarships), but also elementary and secondary schools. Within these activities, the Agency has in 2015 visited all 54 VET school career centres in Macedonia, out of which around more than 30% (around 20 career centres) function very well according to the opinion of the agency.
- **EQAVET** promotion - EQUAVET being a community of practice bringing together Member States, Social Partners and the European Commission to promote European collaboration in developing and improving quality assurance in VET by using the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (see <http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx>).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Use knowledge and experience of the Agency** and instruments promoted by it to raise awareness on VNFIL, provide initial information, advice and counselling to potential candidates.

²² A recent survey conducted by the Agency has shown that the youth and youth organizations in Macedonia are familiar with the Youthpass system and actively require that it is used, whereas further awareness rising and promotion is needed among the employers (promotion events for the Agency with employers are planned for 2017).

5. Recommendations

Previous chapters elaborated the European VNFIL standards, structure and organisation of the VNFIL process in three selected European countries and a targeted insight in the Macedonian validation context and some good practices that might become a part of the validation process.

Based on the previously said, this chapter offers some tailor-made solutions for the VNFIL system and process in Macedonia. Thereby, it is to be reminded that in the European context,

- One single and “correct” validation solution does not exist and
- The main VNFIL principle should be sustainability and operability of the validation system.

It is to be noted that these recommendations are intended as help and support to the ongoing VNFIL process in Macedonia.

With this in mind, the following can be recommended:

5.1. Usage of existing local capacities

The previous comparative analysis of the VNFIL systems of three selected European countries (Slovenia, Finland and Iceland) has shown that these countries have embraced very different validation solutions, and that they are at different stages of the VNFIL development.

A short reminder:

Slovenia, due to historical similarities, has similar education system as Macedonia and does not have one central coordinating VNFIL body - the validation tasks are distributed between two ministries, agencies and a variety of education providers, depending on the sector and the education level. However, also the advanced Finnish VNFIL system involves a variety of stakeholders, with the big advantage of full embedment of validation into the formal education system which generates validity and trust. In case of Iceland, the structure is very simple and focused around one single coordinating body under the contract with the Education Ministry whereas all other work is provided by the accredited LLL centres and partly upper secondary schools.

The general difference between advanced and less advanced validation systems are thus not necessarily related to their structure, but rather to the clarity of roles and responsibilities, cooperation between the stakeholders, general awareness about and trust into the validation system that is achieved through standardisation, objectivity and quality assurance arrangements. Clearly, more advanced systems have a much larger involvement of the private sector and third sector organisations - a further goal to strive to.

For Macedonia, it is important to respect the existing education structures, but also to clearly and transparently share roles and responsibilities among the stakeholders and support and facilitate their communication. Please also note that the Roadmap suggests the establishment of a VNFIL Steering committee consisting of all major stakeholders to govern the system.

For the establishment of a sustainable and functional VNFIL system, local capacities should be optimally used.

Based on the previously elaborated, and with the aim to support the optimisation of the Macedonian VNFIL process, the text below briefly summarizes existing capacities of Macedonian stakeholders to support or to participate in the country's VNFIL process (see above for more details). The summary is based on the desk research and interviews with stakeholder representatives and can serve as a source of information for further discussions, whereas functional and sustainable planning needs to take into account real resources of stakeholders (human, financial and others).

These capacities are divided into:

- **general** (such as capacities to coordinate or support VNFIL structures and processes, or capacities in terms of existing networks, events and expertise),
- **capacities related to potential VNFIL information offices**²³ (e.g. structures already offering related guidance and information, such as agencies and NGOs),
- **Capacities related to potential VNFIL career centres** (e.g. existing career centres in VET schools or within projects/NGOs).

Note:

Legislation and strategic issues are within the responsibility of ministries (MoES and MLSP):

- MoES is legally responsible for VNFIL related legislation and strategy, NQF and QA in general, as well as the verification of education providers, including LLL providers;
- MLSP is legally responsible for employment, social policy and adult education.

An inter-ministerial cooperation mechanism for VNFIL such as a commission or a council should coordinate the work of the two ministries.

5.1.1. *General stakeholder capacities*

Lifelong learning Centre

The capacities of the LLC that can be used in the VNFIL process are certainly its long tradition and **expertise** in adult education, its **network** of local and international experts and institutions, as well as its **projects** and **events**.

In addition to those capacities, the LLC is clearly strategically dedicated to the support of the VNFIL and AEC, with financial support of DVV International.

An example of good practice are the well-known "**LLL Days**" in Macedonia, which have been organised by the LLC for a number of years.

Adult Education Centre

The capacities AEC as a leading public adult education institution of the country are in the field of VNFIL strategizing and coordination, jointly with other stakeholders and within the scope of resources available.

²³ The information summarized here was obtained in the interviews conducted within this Analysis. It is strongly recommended to conduct a full Macedonia-wide separate research of existing capacities related to existing information offices / career centers (to also include those made available e.g. through NGOs or projects).

The **strategizing capacities** include cooperation with and support to the ministries to develop related policies, legislation, strategic documents, setting VNFIL priorities and develop VNFIL procedures - all in coordination with other relevant stakeholders.

The **coordinating capacities** of the AEC include public information on VNFIL, recruiting counsellors and assessors / validation commissions, keeping and updating registers of validation providers, counsellors and assessors, coordinating capacity development of counsellors / assessors and their verification, and partly the coordination of stakeholders.

The Centre for Vocational Education and Training

The CVET as a public institution responsible for formal VET (up to NQF level VB) can provide valuable **expertise, inputs and templates** that can and should be used also to be used in the validation process (see Annexes 2-4).

This includes e.g. advice and support to development of validation methodology and procedures, quality standards and assessment documents, support and mentoring to teachers involved in VNFIL as well as the support to ensuring of full integration of VET based VNFIL into the formal system. Furthermore, existing responsibilities of VETC are at the same time of utmost strategic importance for the VNFIL process - such as development / approval of occupational standards, qualifications, learning outcomes and exam catalogues.

State Examination Centre

The DIC currently has very limited capacities to participate in the VNFIL process. However, within its long-lasting and vast experience with Matura and external exams, its expertise and experience could offer **valuable advice** related to development of validation methodology, training for assessors and appointing examination committees, and design of / feedback to question catalogues and tests.

The DIC has also offered to participate in validation commissions in the piloting phase with the aim to share experiences (participation beyond the pilot phase is not possible within the current organisational capacities).

When learning from DIC expertise, it is however important to ensure that all VNFIL procedures are individualised (rather than same for all as e.g. in case of Matura exams).

Economic Chamber of Macedonia

As the largest Macedonian Economic Chamber with around 15.000 members the Chamber has a direct link to a vast employer **network** that it would put at the disposal of VNFIL process. The contacts can be used for different purposes: from general involvement of employers in VNFIL planning, implementation, awareness raising, recruitment of validation candidates all the way to the recruitment of counsellors and validators to be involved in advising and assessment procedures, to name just the main ones.

The ECM participated an EU financed project that piloted the validation of non-formal learning in Macedonia: the project **Build Up Skills**²⁴ - certainly an example of good practice in Macedonia.

Association of Employers

Similar to the Chamber of Commerce, the AE has a **direct link to numerous employers** that can be used for awareness raising and recruitment of validation candidates, as well as for the recruitment of assessors/practitioners (also through its local offices).

²⁴ <http://www.buildupskills.mk/>

However, the AE has only two permanent employers and a network of local offices led by volunteers exclusively. Thus, its capacities to support VNFIL would require further resources.

National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility (NAEPM)

Within its current projects and activities, the Agency has numerous potentials to support VNFIL in Macedonia, especially in the field of awareness rising, provision of initial information, advice and counselling for potential candidates within its ongoing events throughout Macedonia..

VNFIL, with focus on validation of working experience, is one of three key actions of Erasmus+ project implemented by the Agency and thus already among the Agency's strategic priorities.

The tasks of the Agency also include awareness rising and the promotion of instruments which contribute to Europe-wide transparency of individual knowledge, skills and competences that are also an integral part of the validation process, such as Europass, Youthpass, Certificate supplement (that contains learning outcomes), Euroguidance network, and EQAVET.

An example of good practice are e.g. Erasmus+ grants of the Agency supported VET schools in Macedonia to certify practical work of students conducted in companies abroad - with certificates being recognised by the Macedonian employers.

5.1.2. Capacities related to potential information offices for validation of non-formal and informal learning

The capacities of interviewed stakeholders related to initial guidance, advice and counselling of VNFIL candidates can be summarized as follows:

- Existing VET school based career centres could be used to raise awareness on validation and reach potential validation candidates (e.g. parents), and also to provide initial guidance for candidates (as advised by the VETC).
- Project activities of NAEPM are held throughout the country and are very often thematically related to VNFIL. Active cooperation with NAEPM should be sought in order to create synergies and enable provision of initial guidance, advice and counselling through the activities of this agency. A possibility for a more targeted and active support of the Agency / EU funds to support the establishment and the work of information offices should be explored.
- The Chamber of Economy of Macedonia and the Association of Employers with their vast employer networks could be used as a hub to reach validation candidates, which is often also in the interest of employers (here the experiences from the Build Up Skills project should be used). Both organisations are interested in this kind of support to VNFIL.
- The Chamber of Economy has 16 regional centres with one employee each and would need additional capacities if they would act as information offices.
- The Association of Employers has local offices in all major cities that are run by volunteers only and would need additional resources to act as information offices.
- Also municipalities would need additional capacities to take over information and counselling on VNFIL as currently usually only one person per municipality is responsible for both education and economic development.

5.1.3. Capacities related to potential career centres for validation of non-formal and informal learning

Selected existing career centres of VET schools could with appropriate capacity development take over the VNFIL related advice (e.g. support the documentation phase). This was advised by both, the VETC and the NAEPPM.

Some employers might be interested to establish temporary career centres for validation projects related to their workers.

Local offices of the Chamber of Economy, Employers' Association and municipalities, do not have the capacities to act as local career centres. Their involvement would require additional resources.

Career centres established through international projects should be further researched. For example, the USAID YES project re-established the job-club in each of the local ESA employment centres in the 6 municipalities outside of Skopje, and established Career Centres in 25 secondary schools.

5.2. Phases of the validation process

The previous analysis shows that the common phases of the validation process are

1. Identification
2. Documentation
3. Assessment
4. Certification.

This is also the structure of the planned validation process in Macedonia.

The comparative analysis above gives a detailed description of how the validation phases are organised in the three selected countries (contents and responsibility).

Based on the European standards, Roadmap recommendations and the elements of current VNFIL model for Macedonia (currently in development), the phases of the Macedonian validation process could look as illustrated in the table below. Thereby, methodology and lessons learnt from the project Build Up Skills (described above) should be used to the extent possible. As a reminder, this project strongly recommends to equip the validation process with intensive mentorship of candidates with lower literacy levels, templates and instruments for an easier comparison of different validation documents and a scheme for knowledge levels (low, middle, advanced) in the validation process.

| Phase | Description | Stakeholders involved |
|---|---|---|
| <p>0. Awareness rising and initial information (“info offices”</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing the public on validation possibilities / initiatives • Promoting the positive image of validation, its quality and promotion of trust in validation (through leaflets, newspapers, brochures) • Seminars, conferences and workshops for professionals, practitioners and wider public • Visits to companies | <p>Note: all stakeholders should if possible actively participate in the awareness raising process</p> <p>The function of “info offices” should be geographically distributed using the existing structures, based on their capacities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoES, MLSP, AEC and LLC as main actors to design and initiate awareness raising, the process should be supported by • Other public stakeholders (municipalities, governmental agencies, education providers) • Chambers and social partners • NGOS • NAEPM • other as applicable |
| <p>1. Identification</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of advice and guidance to candidates • Information on validation procedure, the requirements, duration, costs and possibilities • Initial evaluation of provided documentation • Identification of needs for additional training/learning • Possible initiation of portfolio preparation • Identification of possible needs for further guidance and support during the entire validation process (for example, for candidates with literacy problems) • Motivation of candidates | <p>For approved validation initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained counsellors and advisors at verified validation providers play the main role in the identification process, and at the Employment agency which needs to focus on the target group of unemployed • Trained advisors / counsellors in career centres, NGOs, municipalities throughout the country should support this process (depending on their resources) |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>2. Documentation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to candidates to prepare application and portfolio in line with the requirements • Support to candidates to understand and document occupational requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained counsellors, advisors in verified validation providers and the Employment agency • Trained advisors / counsellors in career centres, NGOs, municipalities throughout the country should support this process (depending on their resources) |
| <p>3. Assessment</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for validation committee to the AEC • Discussion of application on individual bases • Evaluation of application / portfolio against the requirements • Consultation of further experts if needed • If needed, request to candidate to submit further documentation • Debate and decision on validation decision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verified validation providers through appointed validation committees with licensed validators • Overall support (also for recruitment of validators) by VETC, AEC, Sector Councils |
| <p>4. Certification</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of recognition proposal • Issuing a formal decision • Issuing qualification certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation providers to AEC based on the recommendation of validation committee |

5.3. Profile of validation practitioners

As described in Chapter 3.7., the main validation practitioners are usually counsellors/advisors and assessors/validators.

Even though their job descriptions are quite similar in the analysed countries (see 3.7.), the qualification and training requirements differ from country to country, but it is obvious that all practitioners undergo some kind of initial training. Whereas a short training can be sufficient for counsellors/advisors, a more standardised training is required for the profession of assessor / validator. Usually, it is necessary that a validator is licensed by the body responsible after he/she has attended the training (varying from short trainings in Slovenia and Finland to obligatory 25 ECTS specialisation in Finland).

In general, it is recommended that:

- **Advisors / counsellors** receive at least a 2-4 day training on information and guidance of validation candidates, validation procedures and requirements, portfolio preparation, initial self-assessment of candidates, etc. For persons offering initial guidance (“info-offices”), this training can be reduced to the basics.

- **Validators/assessors** can only be persons that obtain a licence from the responsible body and are registered in the official database of validators (run by AEC) after they receive a comprehensive training on validation concept, practices and quality assurance, portfolio assessment, preparation and implementation of assessment, etc. To enhance the participation of the private sector, the training for practitioners can be reduced in order not to overuse their readiness for cooperation.

5.4. Qualification system, standards and quality assurance

It is crucial that the validation procedures are fully aligned with the MQF, and based on learning outcomes and occupational standards verified by the VET Centre.

Existing qualifications and exam catalogues should be used when shaping the individual validation processes.

5.5. Validation methods and instruments

Chapter 3.7. elaborates on common validation methods and instruments used in Europe in general, and in the three selected countries in particular.

It is recommended that Macedonian validation system relies on these common practices. It is to be noted that a focus needs to be on validation / assessment of learning outcomes rather than on inputs of learning. It is also recommended to use a combination of methods that suit the validation context rather than focusing on traditional methods only (such as tests), and to use simulation in real work environment in particular to assess occupational competences.

6. Conclusions

General conclusions

- **An optimal, “correct” or recommended solution for designing national VNFIL processes does not exist.** The main principle to be considered is **sustainability and operability** of VNFIL models and solutions. Validation agreements must be fit for the purpose and designated according to their particular operational context. Relevant actions need to be identified that create sustainable solutions.
- **The main difference between advanced and less advanced validation systems** is less related to their structure and more to the clarity of their roles and responsibilities, cooperation between the stakeholders, awareness about and trust into the validation system that is achieved through standardisation, objectivity and quality assurance mechanisms. Advanced systems are characterised by a more intensive involvement of the private sector and third sector organisations.
- The **main conditions** for introducing high quality and trusted validation agreements as are clear, sustainable and functional solutions related to:
 - information, guidance and counselling
 - stakeholder coordination
 - links to national qualification systems and frameworks
 - standards and learning outcomes
 - quality assurance
 - professional competence of practitioners.
- **European VNFIL models differ** in their main features such as:
 - the structure of their **legal frameworks** (single vs. multiple - both with particular advantages and disadvantages),
 - the existence of a **national VNFIL strategy** (which however does not indicate the state of the country’s VNFIL development, although there is a clear trend towards development of national strategies),
 - the structure of the **institutional framework for validation with different operational approaches** towards validation (different from country to country).
- **Similarities between different European VNFIL models** are usually related to:
 - VNFIL **qualifications** being embedded in the overall national qualification systems, guided by the EQF and national vocational qualifications,
 - **Quality assurance mechanisms** that include licensing of validation providers, training and licensing of assessors, and issuing of certificates based on occupational standards and learning outcomes,
 - A **credit system** enabling allocation of credit points (usually ECVET) towards the learning contents,
 - **Individual approach** towards validation and validation methods and enabling validation methods and instruments,

- **Validation phases** grouped around identification, documentation, assessment and certification, varying not only from county to country but also depending on the purpose of evaluation (e.g. full or partial qualification, education level and field, target group and formality of the qualification) and sometimes also the institutions involved.
- As the validation process is meant to produce a proof of learning (knowledge, skills and competences) in order for the candidate to be able to “exchange” it for further education or work opportunities, the key issue to be addressed by it is gaining the **trust of the “receivers”** of VNFIL certificates - namely stakeholders such as employers, education institutions, etc., but also the candidates themselves (leading again to the necessity of quality assurance arrangements).

Specific to Macedonian context of validation of non-formal and informal learning

- Macedonia is steadily progressing towards **aligning its education with the European standards and guidelines**. It has completed the process of referencing its National Qualifications Framework to the EQF and has started the process of participatory design of **VNFIL** that is led by the AEC and the ETF and fully based on European guidelines and standards.
- Following European standards, it is important that Macedonia designs its VNFIL process with due respect to the existing education structures, with realistic planning of resources and optimal usage of local potentials and capacities.
- The main **issues to be addressed** are closing the gap between demand and supply of labour, fostering LLL, employment of adults and validation of their employment relevant qualifications.
- It is crucial to ensure **equivalence of VNFIL certificates** with those obtained from formal education, based on transparent quality assurance procedures and usage of learning outcomes in all VNFIL procedures, and a transparent and well elaborated VNFIL process.
- Optimal **usage of local capacities and potentials** will be crucial for creating sustainable VNFIL solutions in Macedonia. Thereby,
 - the **Adult Education Centre** as a public AE institution has both, strategizing and coordinating capacities and could act as a main hub for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The AEC has interest and capacities to act a main VNFIL promoter in the country, recruit and coordinate capacity development of counsellors, assessors and validation commissions, keep and update registers of validation providers, counsellors and assessors, and significantly contribute to stakeholder coordination,
 - **other public bodies** (Centre for VET, State Examination Centre) have capacities to share their vast experiences to support the validation process (networks, experiences, procedures, templates),
 - **Economic Chambers and Association of Employers** have capacities to enable contact with employers for validation purposes,
 - **other national bodies** (National LLL Centre, National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility) have capacities to actively support the VNFIL development and implementation through their projects, networks, events and expertise,
 - **VNFIL** information offices could partly use structures already offering related guidance and information, such as agencies and NGOs, and
 - **VNFIL career centres** should lean on existing career centres in VET schools or within projects/NGOs.

7. Annexes

Annex 1: List of interviewed persons

Annex 2: Template for occupational standard

Annex 2.1.: Writing guidance occupational standard

Annex 3: Template for Qualification

Annex 3.1. Writing guidance qualification

Annex 4: (4.1., 4.2., 4.3.): Examples of exam catalogues / achievement standards

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Links

EU

<http://euroguidance.eu/>
<http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx>
<http://europass.mk/>
<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/about/>

Slovenia

<http://www.nok.si/en/>
http://www.acs.si/guidance_and_validation
<http://www.cpi.si/en>
http://www.ric.si/national_vocational_qualifications/assessment/
http://www.nrpslo.org/en/noq/partners/centre_of_the_republic_of_slovenia_for_vocational_education_and_training.aspx

Finland

<http://ostu.ok-opintokeskus.fi/>

Iceland

<http://www.frae.is/um-okkur/about-us/>
http://www.frae.is/files/B%C3%A6klingur%20enska_1342453022.pdf
<http://www.reglugerd.is/reglugerdir/allar/nr/1163-2011>
http://www.frae.is/files/745-Alm%20baekl%202013-ensk_369202187.pdf
<http://www.infonet-ae.eu/country-overviews/iceland>
 s. bookmarked links

Macedonia

<http://www.buildupskills.mk/>
<http://www.csoo.edu.mk/>
www.matura.gov.mk
<http://www.mchamber.mk/>
<http://www.na.org.mk/index.php/en/en-home.html>
www.europass.mk
[buildupskills.mk](http://www.buildupskills.mk)
[lifelonglearning.mk](http://www.lifelonglearning.mk)
[cov.gov.mk](http://www.cov.gov.mk)
<https://www.usaid.gov/macedonia/fact-sheets/youth-employability-skills-yes-network>
http://mrk.mk/?page_id=443&lang=en

Other:

<http://data.worldbank.org/>
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary>