

Valorize NFIL across Europe



I.O.1 Study report

Validation as a tool for social inclusion

April 2019

By: CEC, Comité Européen de Coordination

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Introduction

Imagine...there is an easy way to get your knowledge and skills recognized in every single country, no matter where and how they are achieved and that these are accepted by employers and training centres all over Europe...

Our diploma represents just a fraction of what we learn in life. Everything that we learn outside the formal educational system, like during work, travelling, in leisure time, courses or workshops is as much important, but often not captured in tangible proofs. However, these acquired competences are a valuable indication of someone's personality and what someone is really capable of in a professional context.

This calls for an approach where European member states are supported by good methods to validate skills and competences of people. It also calls for a strong collaboration between enterprises and VET centres to provide quality education and training for every individual.

But let's face the facts.

The "dream" as stated above and the principle that "Learning takes place in all contexts" is the major foundation of the Recommendation for Non-Formal and Informal learning. The Recommendation was adopted by the Member states in 2012. However, the implementation in practice shows different results...

It is not only a matter of putting in place systems and instruments. There is more needed.

It requires another way of thinking about education and training and lifelong learning in particular. Learning doesn't longer take place in one school and/or in one country, but learning takes place everywhere. There should be more "trust" in the competences that are not captured in a certificate or diploma but achieved via validation arrangements. Validation of skills and competences contribute to the inclusion of people in the society and contribute to solutions to the emerging need for skilled workforce on short and longer term.

A good functioning arrangement for validation should take into consideration the national, regional, sectoral and/or local needs and characteristics. It should fit the needs of the target group. At the same time, systems should be open for individuals from abroad. This



means that systems should be easily accessible, understandable, transparent and attractive to enter for an individual coming from abroad.

Validations arrangements should also be in line with the principles as stated in the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012). This is our reference.

Although actions are visible and although the validation of migrants is indirectly included in the general policy for NFIL, there are still many improvements to make.

This study reports gives a glance of the validation arrangements in the partner countries of the Validation of NFIL across Europe project. The results, including a SWOT analysis, provide insight in the opportunities for validation of skills and competences of migrants. Recommendations and results will be taken into account when carrying out the other activities of the project.



Part A

A shared framework on NFIL across Europe

1.1 Why a study report on validation arrangements across Europe?

For people moving from one place to another in Europe, it seems difficult to know where they have to be to get more information on the opportunities for validating their skills and competences. Information is in some countries available at central level, in other countries at decentral level, often only available in national language or it is simply not clear where people can find information. In other words: more clarity is needed in the working and opportunities of validation arrangements for migrants across Europe.

The main target group identified by the project for validation are migrants, in the broadest sense. So not only refugees or migrants from outside Europe, but also people that move to other countries within the European Union and who want to validate their skills and competences. There are little or no information, results and practices known for this target group. However, even in the context of existing practices and European developments and tools, there are opportunities for the validation of migrants. It is the objective to put these practices and opportunities in the spotlights.

This framework is developed within the project “valorize NFIL across Europe”. The framework gives the partners in the project more insight in current validation arrangements makes visible the opportunities for the validation of migrants and disadvantaged groups per country. To compare validation arrangements, it is important to make sure that validations arrangements are in line with the principles as stated in the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012).

It is not about designing a new system for validation of non-formal and informal learning, but about making visible current possibilities in the partner countries to make use of validation arrangements for all. For a more detailed description of how the validation processes work in practice, Cedefop has developed a guideline on the validation of non-formal and informal learning¹. The main elements of these guidelines are used and described in this study report. The study report provides a general focus on the validation arrangements and pays attention to the different scenarios, the different target groups

¹ Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union



and examples and practices in the partner countries. A SWOT analyses is made to make visible the strengths and opportunities of good functioning systems. These can help to overcome weaknesses and threats and strengthen current systems for validation.

1.2 The need for validation arrangements

The last decade, Europe is confronted with a serious economic crisis, leading to a shortage of jobs on the labour market. In these times of economic depression is utmost important to make sure that people have the right skills and competences to find and to keep a job. Besides, the right skills and competences are necessary to navigate easier on the international labour market, making people less vulnerable. In this perspective, the validation of non-formal and informal learning has been of great value as it enabled people to get their skills and competences, no matter where they were achieved, recognized and validated. This is also underlined by the New skills agenda for Europe², where 10 actions are formulated to enable people make better career choices and improve their life chances.

But the validation of non-formal and informal learning is not only important in times of economic depression. This is illustrated in the example below. We see now that the economic situation in Europe is slowly recovering, leading a strong demand for skilled workforce in certain sectors. Especially in the construction, logistics, health care and hospitality sector.

In the Netherlands, during the crisis, more than 75.000 people lost their job in the construction sector. By the end of 2018 they had a shortage of 48.000 people in the construction sector³. It seems very difficult to fill in all the vacancies, as fewer young people choose for a VET programme in the construction sector and older people are still less attractive to hire for employers than young people. We see now that businesses in the construction sector are setting up special educational programmes (often in close collaboration with VET schools) to (re)train migrants and educate young people with no qualification.

This evolution calls for an approach where enterprises are supported by good methods to validate skills and competences of people and for a strong collaboration with VET centres to provide quality education and training for these people. And there are more evolutions that call for a strong approach and European wide collaboration in the field of the

² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. (2016). A new skills agenda for Europe. *Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness*. COM/2016/0381 final

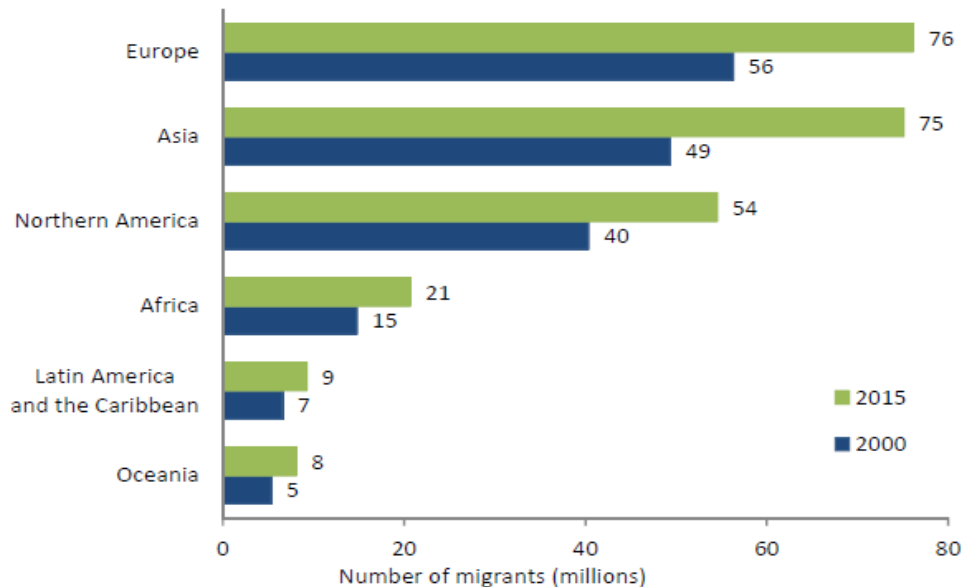
³ Source: www.cobouw.nl article of 29 March 2018



validation of non-formal and informal learning. Think about demographic evolutions and the augmenting migration in the next coming decades.

The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly, reaching 244 Million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000⁴. Figure 1 shows that Europe and Asia and in particular the higher income countries have absorbed most of the recent growth in the global population of international migrants.

Number of international migrants by major area of destination, 2000 and 2015



Source: United Nations 2016⁴

Concerning the demographics, the figure below shows that Africa is the fastest-growing major area. More than half of global population growth between now and 2050 is expected in Africa. In sharp contrast, the population of Europa is expected to decrease between now and 2015. As well, the life expectancy globally is a fact. Globally, life expectancy at birth is projected to rise from 70 years in 2010-2015 to 77 years in 2045-2050 and to 83 years to 2095-2100⁴

Taking into account that in certain parts of the world, the number of population will increase and in other decrease, it seems that there is sufficient evidence to expect more migration at global level.

⁴United Nations, New York (2016), International Migration report 2015, Highlights, Highlights key facts, P6,. Publication United Nations 2016.



Especially high-income societies such as most countries in Europe and Northern America are expected to receive more migrants in the future. With the fact that the population in Europe is ageing and that the need for skilled workforce remains, it is very likely that migrants and refugees will be necessary to fulfill the vacancies. These evolutions strongly influence the rate of mobility, migration and the labour market.

TABLE 1. POPULATION OF THE WORLD AND MAJOR AREAS, 2015, 2030, 2050 AND 2100, ACCORDING TO THE MEDIUM-VARIANT PROJECTION

Major area	Population (millions)			
	2015	2030	2050	2100
World	7 349	8 501	9 725	11 213
Africa	1 186	1 679	2 478	4 387
Asia	4 393	4 923	5 267	4 889
Europe	738	734	707	646
Latin America and the Caribbean	634	721	784	721
Northern America	358	396	433	500
Oceania	39	47	57	71

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*. New York: United Nations.

Source: United Nations 2015, summary and key findings⁵

This evolution calls for another way of thinking about education and training and lifelong learning in particular. Learning doesn't longer take place in one school and/or in one country, but learning takes place everywhere. Setting up arrangements for validations will contribute to reach the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy⁶. It is a tool for better matching skills available and needed on the labour market. It can support mobility across sectors and combat social exclusion.

1.3 The Council Recommendation on the validation of NFIL

The Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning is one of the European reference tools designed to facilitate lifelong development.

On the 20st of December 2012, the council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning is adopted by the Council of the European Union⁷. The Recommendation states that every European member state, should have in place, no later

⁵ United Nations, New York (2015), World population prospects, the 2015 revision. Key Findings and advance tables, p1-11 Publication United nations 2016

⁶ Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)

⁷ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), Official Journal of the European Union



than 2018, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which makes it possible to validate knowledge, skills and competences which are acquired outside the formal educational context. Eventually leading to the achievement of a formal qualification or part of it. Member States should promote the coordination in the member states in general and the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the process of development and implementation in particular.

The Recommendation describes several principles and themes. A good functioning arrangement for validation should take into consideration the national, regional, sectoral and/or local needs and characteristic. However, the basic principles of a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning should apply the following principles (taken from the Recommendation, 2012):

- There is a link with the national qualifications framework, in line with the EQF;
- There is information, advice and guidance on benefits, opportunities and procedures;
- Disadvantaged groups are able to benefit from the validation arrangement;
- Individuals who are unemployed or at risk have the opportunity to undergo a skills audit in a reasonable period of time (within 6 months if an identified need);
- There is appropriate and accessible guidance and counselling;
- There are transparent quality assurance measures in line with existing QA frameworks, that support credible and valid assessments;
- Provisions are made for the development of professional competences of staff involved in the validation process;
- There is a compliance with standards equivalent to qualifications obtained through formal education programs;
- There is a synergy between the validation system and ECVET/ECTS;
- European transparency tools such as Europass are promoted in order to facilitate documentation.

These are the starting point for the grid in part B and serves to collect and present data from the partner countries. The idea is to make the NFIL principles more transparent and therewith more comparable across Europe.

1.4 Other European tools to support Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning and the access to the educational system and labour market *for all* is high at the priority list of the European Commission. But what is done for so far and what



are the most relevant developments to take into account when dealing with NFIL of migrants? This is a central question in this study report.

The European cooperation on vocational education and training (launched in Copenhagen in 2002) has been further enhanced by the 2010 Bruges Communiqué and the 2015 Riga Conclusions. The EU, candidate countries, European Economic Area countries, EU social partners, the European Commission and European VET providers agreed on a set of deliverables for the period 2015-2020⁸ :

1. Promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.
2. Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework EQAVET recommendation (see Section below) and, as part of quality assurance systems, establish continuous information and feedback loops in I-VET and C-VET systems based on learning outcomes.
3. Enhance the access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible and permeable systems, notably by offering efficient and integrated guidance services and the making validation of non-formal and informal learning possible.
4. Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula and provide more effective opportunities to acquire or develop those skills through I-VET and C-VET.
5. Introduce systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school- and work-based settings.

While not explicitly mentioned above, the deliverables offer space for the integration of migrants and other vulnerable groups in the society and labour market. For example, when quality assurance measures are put in place, it contributes to mutual trust when assessing and validating learning outcomes of migrants. Also, when workbased learning is accepted as a way of achieving learning outcomes (and not only the formal schoolbased routes), it means that the recognition of working experiences will be more important as well. The deliverables also result in systems to be more flexible and open for individuals outside the educational systems. Individuals can enter the educational system at their level via good systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

One of the many initiatives to make qualifications and learning outcomes more comparable throughout Europe is the development of the European reference tools, which help to promote the member states in setting up strategies for Lifelong Learning.

⁸ European Commission (website). Education and Training. *EU policy in the field of vocational education and training.*
https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-vocational-education-and-training-vet_en



The European reference tools are connected. They can be used separately, but the effect is stronger when used in synergy. The Recommendations of the European reference tools also refer to each other, with the aim to foster the connection.

The reference tools mostly relevant for the context of migrants and vulnerable groups are the following:

1.4.1 EQF: The European Qualifications Framework

The EQF is a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. It has two principal aims: to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning.⁹

The EQF includes 8 levels, which correspond to all levels of education, from basic education to advanced level and described in terms of learning outcomes and not in terms of training input. This means that these levels are often well recognized by the labour market as well. The focus on learning outcomes will make it easier to assess whether learning outcomes acquired in different settings are equivalent in content and relevance to formal qualifications. In this way it gives an educational institute and/or employer insight in the level of competences.

This is exactly where the strength of the EQF is: it is open for all learning outcomes, no matter how and where they are achieved.

The EQF should benefit individuals by increasing access to, and participation in, lifelong learning. By establishing a common reference point, the EQF will indicate how learning outcomes may be combined from different settings, for example formal study or work, and from different countries. The EQF can support individuals with extensive experience from work or other fields of activity by facilitating validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The Recommendation clearly states that the development and recognition of citizens' knowledge, skills and competence are crucial for the development of individuals, competitiveness, employment and social cohesion in the Community. Such development and recognition should facilitate transnational mobility for workers and learners and contribute to meeting the requirements of supply and demand in the European labour market. The EQF should also facilitate access to and participation in lifelong learning for

⁹ European Communities (2008). Brochure European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.



all, including disadvantaged people, and the use of qualifications should therefore be promoted and improved at national and Community level.¹⁰

1.4.2 EQAVET: The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) is a reference instrument designed to help EU countries promote and monitor the continuous improvement of their VET systems on the basis of commonly agreed references¹¹.

The EQAVET framework is based on the principles of the PDCA quality cycle, which include a phase in the planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement. These principles are applicable to many contexts and situations. Both at macro level at the level of validation arrangements, but also at the micro level of the assessment of learning outcomes.

The framework can support lifelong learning strategies, further European labour market integration and the implementation of the EQF and promote a culture of quality improvement at all levels. It supports modernization of education and training systems, improving the effectiveness of training by seeking to ensure that people do not leave without qualifications, building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning and expanding the awarding of qualifications on the basis of experience acquired.

Quality assurance measures are a crucial element in the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as they largely contribute to the mutual trust between partners involved. If partners have trust in the way learning outcomes are assessed and validated, the larger the chance on recognition by the labour market and other partners involved.

1.4.3 ECVET: The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training

ECVET's purpose is to enable the accumulation and recognition of learners' achievements during periods of mobility¹². The basic idea is that an individual is able to achieve and accumulate learning outcomes in different contexts and countries, in a way that these learning outcomes are recognized in the country of origin. Where and how learning outcomes are achieved is not the starting point. It is all about the results of learning: the learning outcomes.

¹⁰ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF).

¹¹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

¹² ECVET European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. Leaflet, (2009). NC-80-09-607-EN-D



It is a misunderstanding that ECVET is only used in the context of student mobility in formal training. ECVET has a strong focus on Lifelong Learning and can be very valuable when used in combination with EQF, EQAVET and the validation of NFIL. ECVET is an instrument that can be used in formal, but also in a non-formal and informal learning context, because learning outcomes are the starting point and not learning input.

The ECVET Recommendation dates from June 2009¹³ doesn't explicitly mention the target groups as migrants and disadvantaged groups, but there are several statements that give opportunities for these target groups as well.

The Recommendation states that there should be participation in borderless lifelong learning for all, and transfer, recognition and accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes achieved in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, should therefore be promoted and improved at the Community level.

Besides, the Recommendations underlines that the validation of non-formal and informal learning not only the competitiveness of the European economy and fulfilment of the needs of the labour market promotes, but also social cohesion, equality and the participation and involvement of citizens.

The Recommendation contributes to the wider objectives of promoting lifelong learning and increasing the employability, openness to mobility and social inclusion of workers and learning. It particularly facilitates the development of flexible and individualized pathways and also the recognition of those learning outcomes which are acquired through non formal and informal learning. Linked to validation systems, a qualification framework and supported by quality assurance measures, it can be a valuable tool to support the recognition of the learning outcomes of migrants.

¹³ Recommendation of the European Parliament and the of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)



1.4.4 ECTS: The European Credit and Transfer System

The inventory of Cedefop¹⁴ shows that validation arrangements are most commonly found in the CVET, but closely followed by the IVET and higher education sector.

The European Credit and Transfer System is developed to make courses and training programmes in the higher education area more transparent, leading to better courses and higher quality. It enables also students to accumulate workload of training courses and workbased learning, by recognizing learning achievements. ECTS makes use of credits, which are equivalent to workload (study hours) and are allocated to educational components, such as course units. In contrast with ECVET, ECTS credits are more focused on learning input (study hours), whereas ECVET is focused on learning outcomes.

The validation in higher education area is improved. Whereas in 2014 there were limited examples of awarding full qualifications as a result of validation of non-formal and informal learning. One of the reasons for lacking behind in validation might have been the principles of taking learning input as the starting point in the credit system rather than learning output. Also, higher education institutes are much more autonomous and determine the scope and possibilities for validation on their own¹⁵.

The Bologna process has put some pressure on creating methods and possibilities for validation of non-formal and informal learning and also the shift to a more learning outcome-based approach linked to the EQF might have improved the validation in higher education as well. Although there is a shift to a more learning outcome-based approach in higher education, it is still recommended to make ECTS more learning outcomes and EQF proof. Only in this way ECTS can easily be linked to validation arrangements as well.

1.4.5 ESCO: European classification of Skills, Competences and Occupations

ESCO is a multilingual classification system covering skills, competences, qualifications and occupations. Its common reference terminology can help make the European labour market more effective and integrated and enable the worlds of work and education/training to communicate more effectively with each other¹⁶.

¹⁴ Cedefop (2017). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, *2016 update, Synthesis report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁵ Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

¹⁶ European Commission (website), Employment, social affairs and inclusion. European Skills/ competences, Qualifications and Occupations. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1326&langId=en#navItem-2>



For job seekers (including migrants and disadvantaged people) it means that they can document and describe their knowledge/skills/competences to match better with jobs and vacancies on the labour market in a more accurate way. For education and training institutions, this means that they can use ESCO as a reference to describe learning outcomes of their qualifications, making qualifications more transparent and tuned to the needs of the labour market. For employers it means that with ESCO they can more precisely describe the skills and competences that they expect from employees.

In combination with the 8 levels of the EQF, with ECVET, EQVET and the validation of NFIL, a valuable synergy can be created to make education and labour market more accessible for special target groups as well.

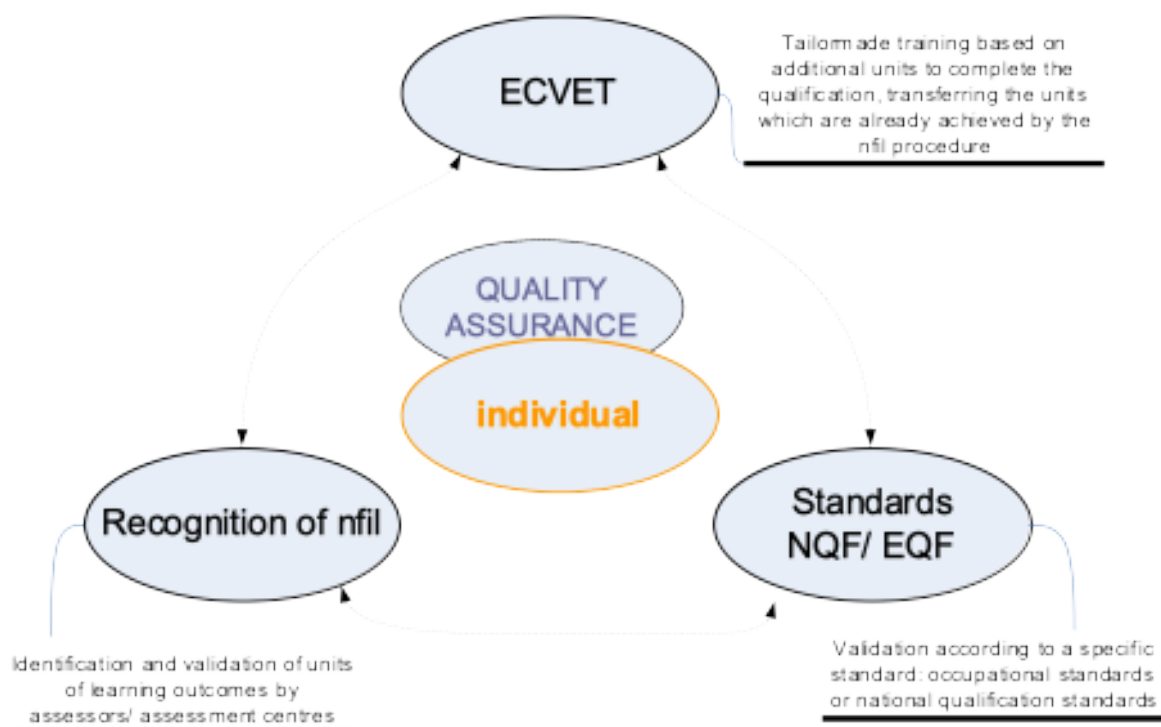
The recommendation is that European initiatives have to be tuned to each other and have a scope of lifelong learning, rather than only formal education or labour market. In this way, it can help all individuals in their journey of getting their competences recognized, no matter where and how they are achieved. With this basis, both the educational system as the labour market is open for special target groups as well.

1.4.6 How the European tools can support Lifelong Learning

The strengths of the European reference tools lie in the connection and synergies between them. The figure below illustrates the connection between ESCO, ECVET, EQAVET, EQF and the validation of NFIL.

The individual is at the centre of the attention. Especially when a person is not enrolled in education or training, nor in the labour market, like migrants, it is extremely important to provide tailor made solutions and put the individual in the centre.





A possible scenario is the following:

1. The individual wants to validate the skills and competences that he/she has acquired during working and training in own country. The purpose is to find out what his competences are worth in the country of destination. For example, to enter the labour market, to enter the educational system or to follow an extra training in order to obtain a formal certificate or diploma.
2. The individual is guided by an institution responsible for the validation of NFIL. They apply for the whole procedure a standard that is linked to the NQF and EQF. A formal reference is used that is linked to the classification of ESCO. The result is that the individual knows what he already achieves in terms of learning outcomes and what he should do in a vocational centre in order to get a formal diploma or certificate. In this route, a collaboration is set up with VET centres, who can provide this (tailor made) training.
3. This is where ECVET comes in. Units of learning outcomes are defined in a way that single units can be followed rather than a whole training course.
4. The whole process is supported by quality assurance measures. As several stakeholders and organization are involved it is very important to create mutual trust at the beginning and setting up quality assurance measures are a first step.



Think about using accepted standards, using trained assessors, transparency in procedures etc.

1.5 How the validation of NFIL works

The validation of non-formal and informal learning is all about making visible and recognizing the learning of an individual. When this learning has taken place in formal education, the assessments and certification takes place in the formal educational institution. However, it seems that more frequently learning takes place outside the formal context. For example, at work, during travelling, in leisure time, courses or workshops etc. The skills and competences that are acquired are very valuable as well, but often ignored and difficult to measure. Validation arrangements should facilitate the process in a way that individuals can communicate in a better and transparent way about their skills and competences.

Cedefop has developed European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, which are a reviewed version of the guidelines published in 2009. An important principle of the guidelines is, that any solution regarding validation arrangements must be a fit for purpose¹⁷. The arrangements must be designed to the context in which they are used taking into account national, regional, sectoral and other specific needs.

Validation arrangements in place can only be successful when they generate trust by all parties involved. This argues for a strong involvement of the right stakeholders in the process of development and implementation.

1.5.1 *The purpose and beneficiaries*

Lifelong learning for all is the basic underlying principle of the validation. This implies that validation of non-formal and informal learning is not limited to a specific target group, institution or learning context. The outcome can vary from a formal qualification, to branch certificate, to enterprise proofs or other types of proofs. The individual produces proofs for his/her learning with the aim to access the educational system or labour market. Depending on the aim, the validation can be carried out by other institutions than only educational institutes, for example labour market authorities.

However, despite the fact that the validation arrangements should be accessible for every individual in the society, the question is how to reach the individual. Workers who want to change career are quite easy to reach via the company. But how to reach the individual who doesn't know that validation arrangements exist? How to make sure that the person

¹⁷ Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.



who wants to enter the labour market or educational system again gets the right information and support? This shows that national support and guidance as a first step should not be underestimated.

But the question is, if the validation arrangements are really accessible by every individual.

1.5.2 Identification, documentation, assessment and certification

The guidelines follow the themes as described in the Recommendation of 2012: IDENTIFICATION, DOCUMENTATION, ASSESSMENT and CERTIFICATION¹⁸. Individuals should be able to take advantage of these elements, either individually or in combination.

In every validation arrangement these four phases are present. However, depending the aim of the validation they are balanced in a different way. For example, when the validation should lead to a formal qualification, more weight is put on the credibility and quality assurance of the assessment and certification. Where an individual is more interested in mapping own competences, in personal development and to carry out a self-assessment, then there will be more focus on the identification and the documentation of the learning outcomes.

Below the four steps as described in the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning¹⁹.

Identification: many people are totally not aware of what they achieved during work, leisure time and voluntary activities. The first step of identification starts with identifying the needs and the expectations of the individual and the explanation of the process, the costs, the duration and standards that will be used. For the individual it is important to know in advance how the procedure will work and if there are standardized tools to use. For example, when it comes to a formal validation the end, it might be possible that the individual has to use a certain format or tool. This structured method requires often more guidance and it will also restrict the creativity of the individual. An open format allows the individual to express their own identity and creativity and it allows an individual to be open for the unexpected, but it might be more difficult to guide and to assess.

Documentation: the purpose of this phase is to make visible individual`s experiences. Individuals collect in this stage relevant evidences to show their learning achievements. A portfolio is a common way to collect the evidence. The evidence can have many different

¹⁸ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). Official Journal of the European Union

¹⁹ Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.



forms. From written, to video, pictures etc. It is important that each evidence provides insight in the achievement of the learning.

There are several criteria for admitting evidence in a portfolio. For example:

- **Authenticity:** Is the evidence from the individual itself? Does it show the learning of the individual?
- **Actuality:** Does the evidence give insight in the *current level* of performance?
- **Relevance:** Is the evidence relevant for the learning process and the learning outcomes?
- **Quantity:** is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate the learning outcomes?
- **Variety:** Are there different types of evidence? Does the evidence contribute to the demonstration of the learning?

Assessment: in this phase, the experiences are compared to a specific reference or standard. For a validation process that has to lead to a formal qualification, formal qualification standards are the reference point. For access to labour market or voluntary work, a reference of the sector can be used as well. This phase is crucial in the overall credibility of the validation. Many of the tools used for assessment are also used in formal education and training. Often a combination of assessment tools and methods are used. This can be an interview or evaluation eventually in combination with a practical demonstration. To improve the trust in this phase, quality assurance measures are crucial. Not only in terms of transparency in processes, standards and tools, but also in terms of the professional capacity of the assessors and the involvement of relevant parties.

Certification of the results of the assessments which may lead to a partial or full qualification. In enterprises it may result in a license or certificate that the individual is allowed and capable to carry out specific tasks or to apply for another function in the company. In all cases, this phase implies a summative assessment by an official authority or organization. It is strongly recommended to link the outcome to the national qualification structure, in order to avoid that the validation of non-formal and informal learning will result in a sort of second ranking value.

1.6 Critical success factors

There is no solution for one single validation system. Important is that the validation system fits the needs of the individuals and that it is in line with the national, regional, sector and local needs. However, there are some critical factors for success, i.e. when these elements are taken into account, there is a certain guarantee for success.



It seems that all good functioning validation arrangements, offering quality services (in which all parties trust) include arrangements including at least the following elements:

- Quality assurance systems are implemented
- Active involvement of relevant stakeholders
- Good counselling services are put in place, coordinated at national level
- Professional actors are competent, supported by a national strategy
- There is a clear link (and integration) with the national qualification systems
- The outcomes of the validation are accepted by educational institutions and labour market.

These factors for success are also included in the principles of the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal (2012), as described in chapter 1.3.1.

Below the factors of success are described more in detail and illustrated with the results of the partners.

1.6.1 quality assurance

Quality assurance should be based on the PDCA cycle. The cycle has to be applied at meta level, but also at individual level. This means at the level of validation arrangements as such, but also at the level of the different phases of identification, documentation, assessment and certification. If choices are made in the planning about the purpose of the validation, this has to have consequences for the rest of the process. For example, the purpose determines the choice of standards, institutions involved, methods of assessment etc.

Important for a quality validation arrangement is that the validation process must be reliable. The individual and stakeholders should have trust in the process and rely on the outcome.

1.6.2 stakeholder's involvement

As stated earlier, the outcomes of the validation have to be accepted by the various stakeholders in order to be successful. This means that stakeholders' involvement of different relevant stakeholders and in different phases of the validation is essential. However, this is often a complex situation. Besides, depending on the purpose of the validation, different stakeholders may be involved. Here a central coordination of stakeholders' involvement is important to make sure that there is coherence in the validation arrangements in the different sectors.



1.6.3 *the importance of a good counselling service*

Relevant information should be available, accessible and provided at any stage in the validation process. Especially for migrants and disadvantaged groups, as these target groups are far more difficult to reach than workers. Individuals should be informed about the process of validation, the costs, the timeframe, the support during the process, the way of presenting evidence, the outcomes and the standards.

Guidance and the provision of information of validation arrangements can be done by existing guiding and counselling organizations.

The Cedefop guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning²⁰ describe different approaches of guidance and counselling, each of them with their own strengths and weaknesses:

- One central organization at national level
- Coordinated networks, involving relevant organisations in guidance, employment, training centers
- Sectoral guidance and counselling services (offered by chambers for example)
- Guidance and counselling centers from the voluntary sector

Countries often have a combination of the above. It is recommended, especially in the context of a national approach and policy, that there is an overall coordination at national level. This doesn't mean that there should be one organization responsible for everything, but that there is a strong overall coordination at national level.

1.6.4 *competence development of professionals*

Trust is one of the key words in validation arrangements. Not only in the outcomes, standards and procedures, but it seems that to a large extent trust is encouraged by the practitioners who are directly involved in the execution of the different steps. This means that people who provide the counselling, carrying out the assessments and guide the individual in the process of documentation have to be competent. This is an essential element, but often looked over. Is there for example a national strategy on professionalization of practitioners in the validation arrangements? And if yes? What kind of knowledge, skills and competences should they have? These are questions that have to be answered when designing and implementing validation arrangements.

²⁰ Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union



1.6.5 Link to national qualification systems

It is important that validation arrangements are linked and integrated in national qualification systems. In this way, the validation becomes more transparent, the outcomes are more accepted by the different stakeholders, the access to education and training becomes easier and the outcomes get a legal status. However, this implies that national qualifications are open to different ways of achieving a qualification besides the formal way in educational institutes. From the sides of educational institutes, it requires that educational programmes are open and flexible. Tailored made solutions should be an option for individuals who need to achieve only a part of a qualification to receive a formal qualification. A learning outcomes-based approach is one of the answers.

1.6.6 transfer to education and labour market is possible (standards and references)

Standards for validations are often based on occupational and/or educational standards. In the first the occupation is taken as the starting point. When educational standards are used, based on teaching input, it might cause difficulties when using them as a reference for outcomes that are not achieved in an educational context. Preferably using standards which are outcome based and which have a good balance between a narrow and wider description. It is therefore recommended to use feedback from validation experiences to review standards in education and training to ensure an optimal connection between education and labour market.

Part B

NFIL across the partner countries

2.1 The Cedefop study

In 2016, Cedefop has carried out an inventory on the validation of NFIL in the European Members States. This inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning is done to support the implementation the 2012 Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The recommendation asks Member States to establish validation arrangements by 2018, allowing individuals to identify, document, assess and certify their skills to obtain a qualification (or parts of it). The inventory is closely linked to the European guidelines on validation.



The 2016 update of the inventory provides a record of how validation is being used at national, regional and local levels in Europe. It examines the current situation and developments for 33 European countries since the 2014 update. These reports aim to encourage more dialogue between the different stakeholders in developing and implementing validation in Europe.

In this study report, some results of the synthesis report of Cedefop²¹ are highlighted. In part C, a field research is carried out among the partner countries. The results of the field research, together with the results of the country reports of Cedefop, should contribute to more transparent and visible validation arrangements for migrants in the partner countries of this project.

2.2 Most common scenarios for the validation of NFIL

There are different scenarios for validation, divided in three sectors: education sector, private sector and third sector. Validation in the education sector focusses on the achievement of (a part of) a formal qualification or on continuous training or entering the educational system at a higher level. The validation in the private sector is focused on career development. For example, people who would like to switch career or job seekers who want to enter the labour market. Validation in the third sector is primarily focused on volunteer work and the validation of non-formal learning offered by third sector organisations. This third sector is also the sector in which different target groups are supported which are often excluded and/or with a disability and migrants.

An approach that covers all sectors seems ideal and complete but needs also a coordination across these sectors in order to create consistency among the sectors and to promote the validation in other sectors as well. This means that more actors are involved in this cross sectoral approach. This is a point of attention, especially when in a country regions or/and sectors have more autonomy and responsibility.

The Cedefop inventory shows also that the priority of validation systems is often focused on the education sector. Mostly in the framework of creating upskilling pathways for people with no or a low-level qualification. Among the countries of the project partners, we see that approaches for the third sector are becoming more widespread, allowing young people and people from special target groups to enter the labour market. But even then, the main users are adults, volunteers and young people and not migrants and disadvantaged people.

²¹ Cedefop (2017). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. *Update 2016, Synthesis report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union



All over Europe, it seems that the main users for validation arrangements are still adult learners, workers and low qualified individuals. Special target groups, including migrants and refugees are users of validation in less than 17 % of the countries in Europe. More effort is needed to include special target groups in validation arrangements.

Awareness raising campaigns, an approach that is integrated in national strategies and the involvement of organizations that are concerned with this target group are necessary.



Part C

The collection of partner data

3.1 The working method

An important part of the “Valorize NFIL across Europe” project is to get insight in possibilities for improving the validation arrangements for migrants and other disadvantaged groups. Both in terms of quantity as in quality. But what is already happening in the partner countries? Are there practices visible? or is it included in the policies, but with no further actions? And are there any good examples to build further on? In other words, it is good to get insight in the functioning of the validation arrangements of the partner countries. In this way we can define priorities and actions for improvement to focus on during the testing phase in the project.

Qualitative data are collected in the partner countries via questionnaires. The data collection consists of two parts:

1. A questionnaire on the implementation of process of validation arrangements in the partner counties. The questionnaire on the implementation process include the principles of the NFIL as described in the Recommendation. However, some of the questions go more in detail for the special target groups of disadvantaged people under which migrants and refugees. In this way it is possible to get more insight in the strengths and opportunities of each system and how they could be used to open up validation systems for these specific target groups. (table in chapter 3.1.1)
2. A grid about the functioning of the validation arrangements, visualizing the partners involved, the tools and standards used. It goes more in detail in the real functioning of the system (table in chapter 3.1.2)

Part D of the study reports includes the analysis of the partner data. A SWOT analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats provides an overview of what the opportunities are for good functioning validation arrangements, including migrants and other disadvantaged groups.



3.1.1 Questionnaire

Principle	Status	Description	Status of implementation			
			0	not foreseen		
There is a policy on validation systems.	0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is this policy? Is NFIL seen as a normal route to qualifications? 	1	planned, but no actions		
The validation arrangements are focused on an individual approach.			0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the validation arrangements fully flexible? Are they tailored made? 	2	strategy/policy is developed
There is priority for migrants/ disadvantaged groups.					3	results are available/visible
Validation of migrants and refugees takes place. A skills audit takes place for job seekers takes place.	0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there special attention paid to migrants and disadvantaged groups? 	4	fully implemented		
Validation of migrants and refugees takes place. A skills audit takes place for job seekers takes place.			0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the purpose, standard, outcome? When does it takes place? What are the standards and outcomes? 		
There is a link between the validation system and national qualification systems.	0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does this link look like? 				
The outcomes of the validation refer to same/equivalent standards in formal education.			0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are standards focused on input (educational)? Are standards focused on outcome (occupational)? 		
Individuals/migrants can access an educational program after the validation.					0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the conditions? What are the standards?
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for individuals/ migrants are foreseen.	0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At central and/or decentral level? How do institutions collaborate with each other? 				
There is a central coordination of relevant stakeholders.			0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any networking or platform for stakeholders? 		
Professional development of validation practitioners takes place.	0/1/2/3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is responsible? Who initiates? Is there a link or website? What are the main quality criteria? Who is involved? ECVET, EQF, EQAVET, Europass, Skills profile tool... 				
There is a community of practice of users and practitioners						
Quality assurance measures are put in place						
There is a correspondence with the European reference tools.			0/1/2/3/4			



3.1.2 The grid on the functioning of validation arrangements

Elements:	Step in the validation:			
	identification	documentation	assessment	Certification
guidance	<i>Is there guidance in this step? By whom?</i>	<i>Is there guidance in this step? By whom?</i>	<i>Is there guidance in this step? By whom?</i>	<i>Is there guidance in this step? By whom?</i>
responsible actors	<i>Who is responsible for this step?</i>	<i>Who is responsible for this step?</i>	<i>Who is responsible for this step?</i>	<i>Who is responsible for this step?</i>
stakeholders	<i>Who else is involved in this step?</i>	<i>Who else is involved in this step?</i>	<i>Who else is involved in this step?</i>	<i>Who else is involved in this step?</i>
standards	<i>What standards are used?</i>	<i>What standards are used?</i>	<i>What standards are used?</i>	<i>What standards are used?</i>
outcome	<i>What is the outcome of this step?</i>	<i>What is the outcome of this step?</i>	<i>What is the outcome of this step?</i>	<i>What is the outcome of this step?</i>
tools	<i>What are the tools used in this step?</i>	<i>What are the tools used in this step?</i>	<i>What are the tools used in this step?</i>	<i>What are the tools used in this step?</i>
funding	<i>Who/how is this step funded?</i>	<i>Who/how is this step funded?</i>	<i>Who/how is this step funded?</i>	<i>Who/how is this step funded?</i>
quality assurance	<i>How is quality assured?</i>	<i>How is quality assured?</i>	<i>How is quality assured?</i>	<i>How is quality assured?</i>
critical issues	<i>What are the challenges?</i>	<i>What are the challenges?</i>	<i>What are the challenges?</i>	<i>What are the challenges?</i>



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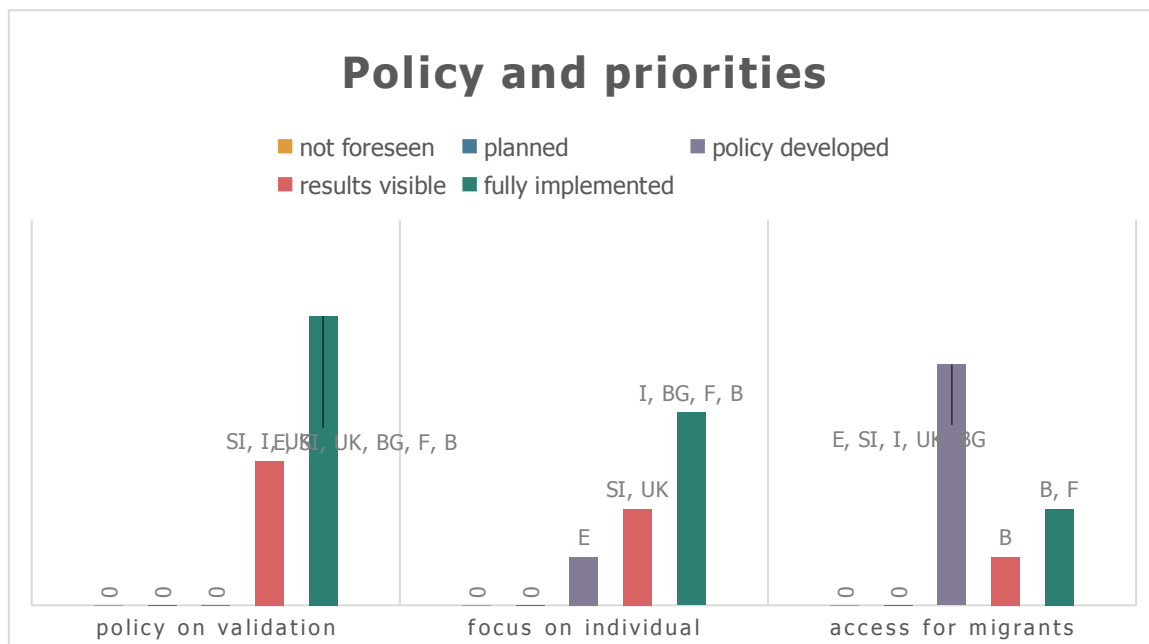
Part D

Results of the partner data and SWOT analysis

4.1 The principles related to the Recommendation

Below a synthesis of the results of the questionnaire and the grid from part C. The analysis is carried out with the principles of the Recommendation as a reference. It is not the aim to give an as detailed as possible overview of the validation arrangements that are put in place, but to get insight in openings for the improvement of validation arrangements for migrants. The graphics show the results of the partners on the questionnaire shown in chapter 3.1.1.

4.1.1 Policy and priorities



The partner data show that in most of the countries a general policy on validation of non-formal and informal learning is implemented, or that at least results are visible. In the UK, the qualifications regulation allows recognition of non/informal learning in its general



conditions within the QCF (Qualifications and Credit Framework). Whereas the previous NVQ in the UK did not carry any obligations for the recognition of prior learning, the new QCF does.

In the partner countries, the overall policy for validation already implies an individual approach and therewith the inclusion of target groups as migrants and refugees and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. These target groups are not explicitly mentioned and the tools and procedures are the same for every target group. This is the case in Italy, Bulgaria, the UK, Belgium and Spain. In Slovenia the Commission for the Verification and Validation of National Vocational Qualifications is in the position to adapt the form and duration of the validation for people with special needs. However, at national level in Slovenia, the system is incapable of setting up individual evaluation structures.

In none of the countries there is a specific policy for the validation of disadvantaged people. However, some local and smaller initiatives show results:

- In Italy, there are no specific procedures for migrants and they are difficult to reach and to inform as all information and services are all in national language. Good results are achieved with special projects that focus primarily on the validation of migrants.
- In France, *everybody* (including people with another nationality), with at least one year experience directly related to the certification in question is eligible for the validation of NFIL. Experience has to be proved by a formal document, but special support is foreseen for refugees who want to participate in the validation process.
- In Spain, an individual has to have the Spanish nationality, certificate of citizenship or a residence and work in Spain under the Spanish immigration regulations.
- In the UK, there is Migration Advisory Committee, a non-departmental public organisations, that provides advice to the UK government on skills shortages and skills gaps in the UK. With research a list of occupations is compiled that can be used for the recruitment of migrants.
- In Bulgaria, an individual has to have at least 6 months of proven relevant working experience, or an educational level. At regional and municipal level there are supports for facilitated access for young people to primary and secondary education.
- In Slovenia special procedures are under development for people who are not able to prove their educational background through formal documents.
- In Belgium, the target group of disadvantaged people is explicitly mentioned as a priority. One of the axes in the strategic policy is to make the offer more effective



and dynamic to the target group and demand. Often more effective and efficient approaches are first tested in pilot projects.

Reflection towards the Recommendation:

Reference to the Recommendation:

- Disadvantaged groups are able to benefit from the validation arrangement;

The validation of individuals and disadvantaged groups is implicit in the general policy for validation. The consequence of such general policies is that a fully flexible and tailored made approach for individuals is often not possible as they target a general public. This means that information and assessments are only available in the own language.

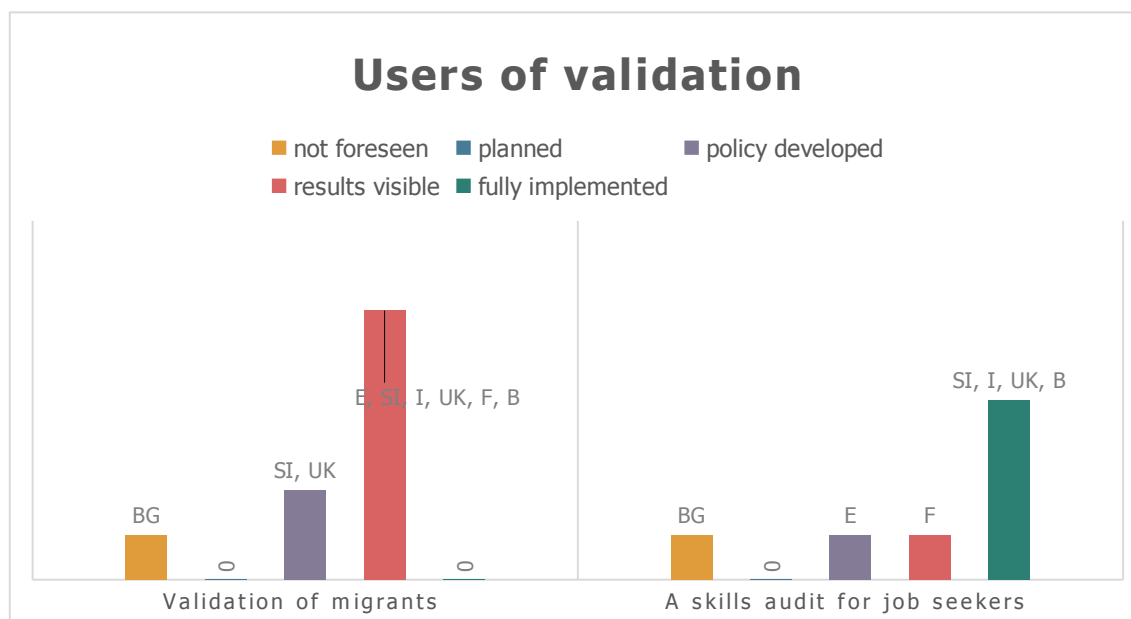
In some of the countries, attempts are made to make the validation for migrants and other disadvantaged target groups easier. For example, via specific projects (I, B), special Committees (UK), procedures for people who are not able to show a formal document (SI), via facilitated access to secondary education (BG) or extra support during validation arrangements (F, B).

Despite the fact that the validation is considered by many countries as a tool for social inclusion and supporting peoples career opportunities, it is often used solely as an alternative educational based route to formal qualifications. Validation practices in Belgium show a very strong focus on the labour market and facilitating career pathways and not on formal education.

Although actions are visible and although the validation of migrants is indirectly included in the general policy for NFIL, there are still many improvements to make. To start with the general acceptance, permeability of in/non formally achieved qualifications and with the culture for NFIL in general. For example, in Slovenia the transparency of qualification acquired outside the formal system is still questioned. In Italy, there is no culture for NFIL resulting in only a few people who go deliberately to this service. In the UK there are institutional and attitudinal barriers and a need for more reliability, respectability and sustainability of NFIL procedures.



4.1.2 Users of validation



But what happens in practice? Are competences of migrants being validated? And what about the skills audit? Are there any practices we can use for the validation of migrants? In almost all the countries we see that there is no special validation procedure for migrants or other disadvantaged groups. If they comply with the criteria for application (if there are any), they have the same rights as other citizens and follow the same procedure with the same instruments. However, in some countries, there is a possibility for extra support and guidance during this process (SI, F, B).

If validation of NFIL is only focused on making visible skills and competences to get easier access to the labour market, or to get insight in career opportunities, then a skills passport or attest of skills and competences can be acquired. These procedures are not focused on getting a formal qualification and diploma and are often easier and faster. In this case, validation can be done against sector standards or occupational profiles (with or without a link to the NQF). This procedure is often on the initiative of the companies and individual. We see practices in SI, I, F, B and in the UK.

Some examples from the partner countries:

In the UK, a needs analysis for skills gaps indicates professions with good job opportunities for migrants and refugees. Especially for health professionals, there are good opportunities at this moment, and migrants and refugees with such background are supported in the preparation for the validation process. Another option for job seekers is



the skills passports that have been developed at sector level. These skills passports provide employees a transferable record of their qualifications and experiences. They can easily be assessed by employers at any time.

In Spain the validation takes place for every individual who complies with the criteria for application. This means that when a migrant and refugee has a residence and work in Spain, under the terms established in the immigration regulations, he/she is able to access the validation procedure as well. Job seekers in Spain have a professional assessor on their side that guide them in the process. During this process, the assessor will help the candidate with career opportunities and possibilities. It is not a special procedure, but a service during the validation process.

Also in Bulgaria, there is no separate procedure, nor a skills audit for job seekers and migrants exists. The difficulty in Bulgaria is, that guidance and assessments are all in Bulgarian language. So even if migrants can theoretically access the validation arrangements, they simply won't because of the language barrier.

Similar as in Spain, migrants in Slovenia have to comply with specific criteria to access the process of validation. This can be a limitation. For example, when they have to show a diploma of educational level that they have achieved in their country of origin and learning the Slovenian language to go through the procedure. If they comply, they can make use of the validation arrangements as well. Validation for the purpose of the labour market is tested, but not yet widely seen. The private sector is becoming more aware of the importance and a shift towards valuing competences, rather than formal education certificates is observed but not yet widespread. It is on the initiative of the company and/or internal needs within a company.

Also in Italy the procedure for migrants is the same for every target group. However, migrants are able to make use of more appropriate tools. Besides, funds are available on specific projects targeted to this audience. Also, in Bulgaria and in the UK there are project targeted to migrants. For job seekers in Italy, it is not common that they undergo a skills audit, but there is also a procedure that helps to make visible skills and competences for employers. It is on request of the person and carried out by a regional authority. Like in the UK, the result is not a formal qualification but an identification of skills and competences, like a certificate or attest. It can also lead to credits for entering the educational system at the indicated level.

We see a similar approach in France. Refugees and migrants have the same rights for validation as the French citizens and also for them, the purpose is to provide them a



French certificate or diploma after validation. In addition, for the purpose of work, job seekers can acquire a comparability certificate to give employers an overview of competences covered by the diploma obtained in their country of origin.

In Belgium the validation arrangements are strongly focused on entering the labour market. All individuals above 18 can make use of the system, including migrants. The majority of the individuals are job seekers and via a practical assessment they receive one or more 'titres de compétence'. There is no separate skills audit, as the procedure is already fully focused on entering the labour market as quick as possible and is efficient and effective in procedure.

Reflection towards the Recommendation:

Reference to the Recommendation:

- Individuals who are unemployed or at risk have the opportunity to undergo a skills audit in a reasonable period of time (within 6 months if there is an identified need);

The problem often with validation procedures and skills audits is the time that it takes to undergo the entire procedure. It is time consuming and therewith costly. This is also underlined by the partners who notice a high dropout rate in the documentation phase, due to high requirements and bureaucratic processes. Especially for people who are looking for a job and for migrants, a faster procedure is desirable. Furthermore, it seems that documentation from migrants is also difficult to analyze on reliability and content. Language and lack of knowledge and transparency about educational systems in other countries is here an issue as well.

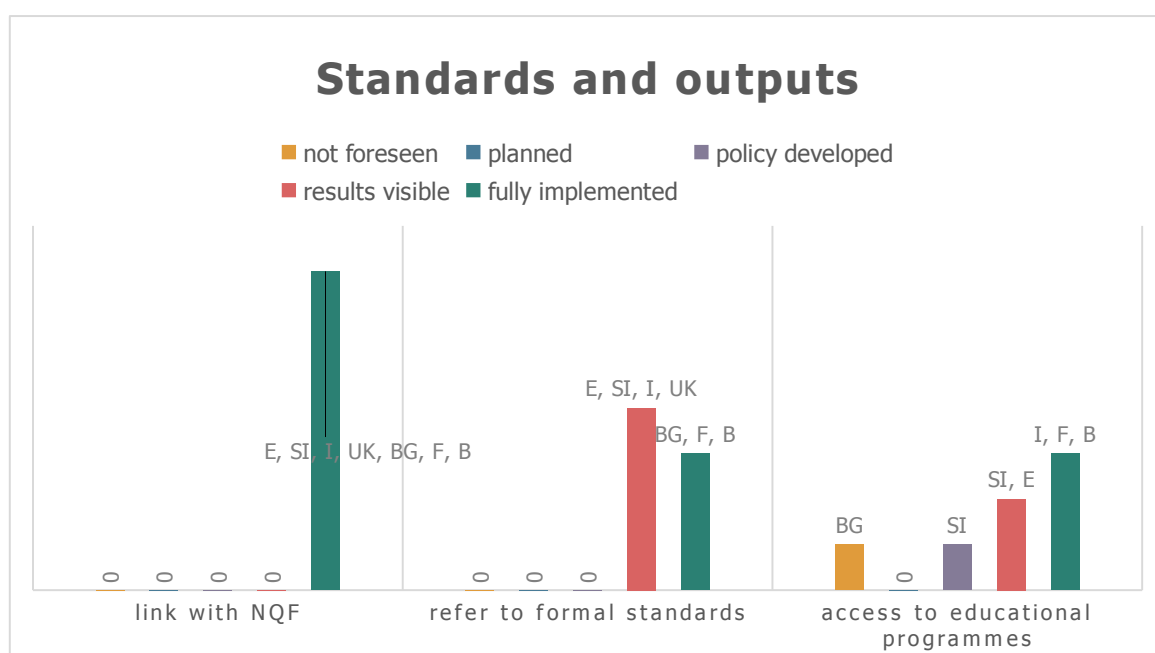
The principle of a skills passport or attest, which is a transcript of record of the individual, can help to make procedures easier. This is the case when validation is for the purpose of the labour market and not for entering the formal educational system or for the achievement of a formal qualification. It is meant to help jobseekers to find a suitable job as fast as possible. In many countries there are practices, but it is not in every country widespread, except in Belgium where the validation system is based on this principle. Using validation of NFIL for the purpose of the labour market, rather than only for the achievement of a formal qualification or entering the educational system is being tested and implemented in some of the countries. It is interesting to find out if these practices can be of use for the validation of migrants.



The fact that there is no special procedure for migrants is on one hand positive, as it means that everybody can make use of the services. However, the partners experience the lack of a special procedure as a disadvantage. The general procedures, requirements and standards are often not fit for purpose for the target group of migrants. Procedures are in national language, there is a high amount of documentation required and information that is not tuned to the target group are examples of barriers.

It seems that special funded projects can help to target the migrants in the validation process. Besides it is an opportunity to gain experiences in working with this target group and build from here towards an approach for this target group.

4.1.3 Standards and outputs



The results of these questions relate to the purpose of validation.

The results show that in all the partner countries, the standards used for the validation of NFIL are linked to national qualifications. The validation leads to the acquisition of formal qualifications or parts of it, to skills passports and/or to the achievement of training credits to enter the educational system at their level.

The type standards that are used differ. In some countries only educational standards based on input are used for the validation process (BG). In other countries, the standards are fully outcome based and based on occupational standards (F, UK, B). In Slovenia both educational (SQF) as occupational standards (NPK) are used, depending on the purpose of the validation. One single framework in Slovenia is not yet adopted.



In most of the countries, there is a possibility for an individual to enter the (vocational) educational system after the validation process. This is also the case for migrants. Once an individual has followed the validation process, there is no exception or discrimination in the outputs and possibilities for migrants. Often for primary and secondary education, cases are processed individually following the rules of the school. This is the case in Slovenia. In some countries it is possible to enter the vocational education system after validation, but not the higher educational sector or universities. They have their own autonomy (I).

In Bulgaria and Slovenia the situation for migrants entering the educational system is more difficult. In Bulgaria the purpose of the validation is to achieve a qualification and/or to lead people to the labour market and not for continuous training. Besides, the language barrier in these countries are preventing migrants to enter the educational system as a certain level of the national language is required to complete national qualifications.

In Belgium individuals receive as a proof of their competences for each unit a 'titre de compétence'. These titles are fully supported by the French government of Belgium and by the labour market. It gives also the right to enter a training programme in one of the training centres where the validation has taken place. These are public centres for continuous vocational training. Individuals can follow the units that they are missing. However, the majority of the individuals participate in the validation process to enter the labour market.

Reflection towards the Recommendation:

Reference to the Recommendation:

- There is a link with the national qualification's framework, in line with the EQF;
- There is a compliance with standards equivalent to qualifications obtained through formal education programs;

In the partner countries, standards in the validation arrangements are linked/ built upon the national qualification systems. This facilitates the transfer towards and within educational systems.

The validation becomes easier when the standards used for validation are based upon the occupational standards and described in terms of learning outcomes. Especially when the objective of the validation system is to facilitate access to the labour market and/or to broaden peoples career perspectives. The learning outcomes-based approach supports

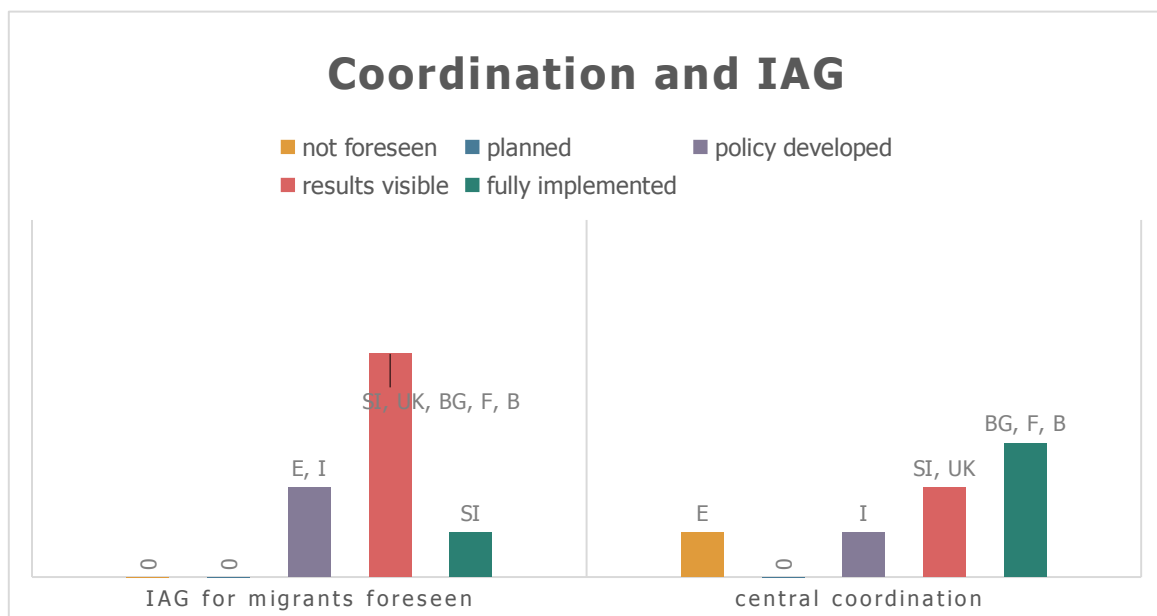


also the synergy between credit systems as ECTS and ECVET and therewith the movement within and between educational sectors.

Where validation is (partially) based upon the proof of educational level via formal documents (certificates, diploma`s), this might be a threshold for migrants. Not only because of the language, but also because they simply don`t have them.

The fact that an individual is able to enter the educational system after validation, is an indication that non-formal and informal learning is generally accepted as a way to achieve a qualification besides the formal educational pathways. However, practices show different results. The culture for NFIL is still not widespread and a lack of transparency or permeability of the outcomes can lead to severe barriers towards a full implementation.

4.1.4 Coordination and IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance)



In some of the countries, there is no specific IAG for migrants on the procedures for validation. This is the case in Italy. However, in Italy there are local sized projects that target this particular target group in which tools and information is developed and in which the aim is to include migrants in the labour market. In Slovenia there is a special counselling for migrants by the Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the care and Integration of Migrants. A plan is prepared for the migrants, including language learning, education, employment and work opportunities. People with a protection status are equal in terms of education and training as Slovenian citizens. In



Belgium the consortium for validation collaborates with institutions for reintegration on the labour market. They can provide extra support as well.

Most of the countries have a structure of central coordination at national central level and an execution and implementation of validation arrangements at decentral level. This is the case in France, Bulgaria, the UK, Belgium and partially in Italy. Depending on the country, there is a more central or more decentral approach. Also in Slovenia there is a central coordination, but not by one single institution. Roles and responsibilities are distributed among different organisations.

In Italy and Spain there is no central coordination of activities. The regions have their own responsibility and autonomy for the management of policies of work and training. In Italy the regions are partially coordinated by the Migrant Integration Portal, managed by the Ministry of Labour, Interior and Education. In Spain each (regional) Autonomous Committee is able to open official calls for participants. Local VET centres in these regions are contacted to carry out the process of validation.

In Belgium there is a French speaking part and a Flemish part. Both have their own validation system. So there is a central coordination in both parts, but not overall at national level. The activities are carried out by training centres at decentral level.

Both the central as decentral approach has its advantages and disadvantages. In Slovenia the highly central approach and the scattering of roles between institutions results in a slow process of validation and recognition. In Spain leads the decentral approach of the IAG to different types of information, or lack of information provided. In the UK the implementation of the validation by local education and training providers leads to a random variety of opportunities for people.

The organizations involved are mainly existing organizations, which means that existing infrastructures of communication and existing networks are used to reach the target groups. It mostly consists of a network of organizations, coordinated at national level by ministries or directly linked to ministries (national agencies, migrant offices etc.). There are licensed organization at decentral level for the practical implementation and execution of the validation. Organizations at decentral level are mostly training centres, public employment services etc.



Reflection towards the Recommendation:

Reference to the Recommendation:

- There is appropriate and accessible guidance and counselling;
- There is information, advice and guidance on benefits, opportunities and procedures;

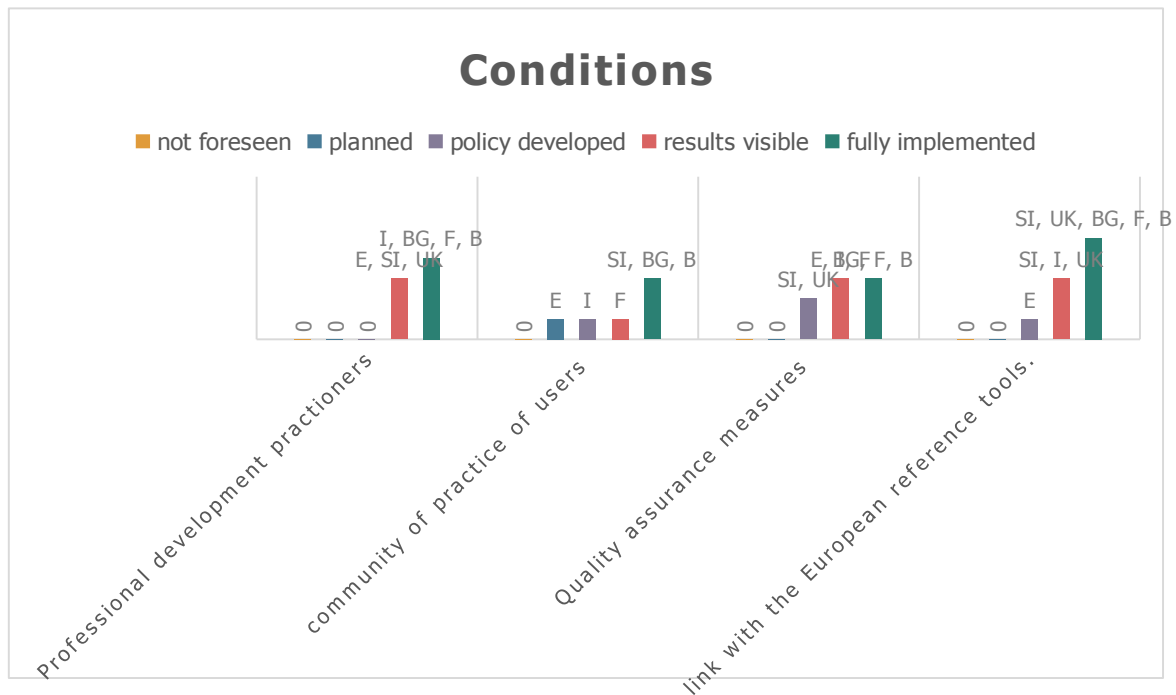
There is Information, Advice and Guidance, but not always specifically focused on migrants. It is included in the general provision of IAG. In most countries, information is provided centrally and the validation itself and the guidance is taken care of at local level.

Reaching the disadvantaged target groups is difficult. Especially when information and guidance is arranged and coordinated at national level. Individuals are easier to reach at decentral level. In many countries, there are no tailor-made services in multiple languages. Especially when there are no specific measures to reach and inform the target group of migrants, the use of the services remain low. Information is provided in national language and even if the information is provided in English or French, the assessments are still in national language.

Local targeted projects can contribute to a solution. They can also support the development of regional and/or national policies, based on the good practices. In these projects, we see that migrant offices are involved, information and procedures are tuned to the target group of migrants. For the execution, they make use of organizations that are also involved in the regular validation arrangements (for example training centres).



4.1.5 Conditions



There are conditions or measures that can put in place to support the validation arrangements. Some of them are the professional development of practitioners and quality assurance measures. They are not the solely factor for success, but they can clearly contribute to a well-functioning system.

Professional developments:

In all the countries we see that practitioners like advisors, consultants and assessors are trained and licensed. There is no special qualification developed, as these persons carry out these activities as a task within their job. Training and examination activities are set up at national or local level to ensure the quality of the practitioners involved.

Some examples from the partner countries:

In Spain there are requirements set up to become a professional assessor. Besides the fact that this person should have at least 4 years of educational experience, this person should follow a training course for assessors. This is similar in Italy, where each region provides training and exam for the practitioners, that they have to pass. The region also provides updates for the practitioners in the form of seminars and conferences for practitioners. In Bulgaria, practitioners participate also in activities that are focused on professional development. These are supported by the National Agency for Vocational



Education and Training. In France, training sessions are organized in various locations for the members of the examination boards. This is also the case for the advisors and accompanying persons. In Belgium, practitioners follow a basic course. The practitioners are technical experts (trainers) working in the training centre and they get a training for the transversal and methodological elements in the process. They get also a follow up training to keep up their technical competences.

In the UK, the assessors are practitioners that work in an educational environment. They are assumed to be competent to carry out the assessments. There are no formal requirements in terms of skills or qualifications for practitioners and there is no obligation to follow a training course. This is partially similar in Slovenia, where being an assessor is not seen as a job, but as a task of a daily job. This means that assessors are already working in the educational field. They participate in activities focused on how to deal with practical and portfolio assessments. This training is mandatory by law and they are being licensed.

Community of practice of users:

The idea of a community of practice is that practitioners and/or users can learn from each other's experiences and that challenges can be dealt with in common. As the execution and implementation is often decentral, a certain national coordination should be necessary to coordinate activities and to make sure that activities are carried conform standards and quality procedures. A community of practice can be part of this central coordination structure.

Some concrete examples of how this looks like in the partner countries:

- In Spain, this has the form of a static website where information from each autonomous community is posted.
- In Italy, there is only a community of Practice at institutional level. However, activities are set up this year to increase the exchange of experiences. Some examples are the Bi-annual that was held in Brussels and the first Italian bi-annual on validation, which was held in Florence last year, where almost all regions participated.
- In Bulgaria there is a network of all VET centres that are brought together in a register. Here are also all the validation experts visible as well.
- In France, exchange of experiences take place within the certifying bodies they are depending from. Besides, there are regular meetings of the practitioners and static information circulates via newsletters.



- In Slovenia, there is a central coordination and strong link with the organizations that are responsible for the implementation of the validation arrangements.
- In the French part of Belgium, the structure consists of a consortium of Public training centres for continuous vocational training. This is in fact a community of practice. They operate at local level but communicate at regional (French part of Belgium) level.

Quality assurance:

In general, quality assurance is ensured by the standards and procedures implemented in each responsible organization. There are no overarching QA systems. In some countries, there is a national monitoring of these institutions by law by the ministry, inspectorate or other national body (I, BG, SI).

In order to make sure that qualifications and certificates are provided on a legal basis, many countries are in this process under supervision of inspectorates and/or ministries and/or auditing institutions. Especially in phase of certification in the validation process, the quality assurance is of high importance. The quality of the outcome of this phase highly depends on how the process is carried out by the organization.

In France and Belgium there are quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the outcomes of the validation arrangements. Measures for improvements can be taken at national level and/or decentral level. Yearly reports of the results are drafted and facts and figures are public.

Link with EU reference tools:

The European reference tools, as ECVET, EQF, EQAVET and Europass are developed to create more transparency and movement across educational sectors through more flexible and permeable systems. They are developed to enhance Lifelong Learning.

As seen in the beginning of the analysis, all the partner countries use standards that are linked to the NQF and EQF.

In Spain there is a reference with the Europass CV. This is compulsory document to be filled in by the participants in the application phase. This is also the case in Italy, where the Europass CV is used in the evaluation of the documentation. Experimental projects in Italy are ongoing with the Skills Profile Tools and ESCO.

In the UK, also the ECVET principles are used. This is visible in the fact that the standards are outcome based and defined in units of learning outcomes. This means that an



individual with no qualification but with working experiences can be easily assessed towards the outcomebased standards and enter the educational system.

In Bulgaria, there is a strong link with the European reference tools, as the organizations that are national coordination and contact points (of ECVET, EQF and EQAVET) are directly involved in the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In the French part of Belgium, the validation system is ECVET based. There are units that are the starting point for the validation. An individual also gets a 'titre de compétence' based on a unit and not for an entire profession. This enables an individual to collect units and to follow only the missing units via a training.

Reflection towards the Recommendation:

Reference to the Recommendation:

- Provisions are made for the development of professional competences of staff involved in the validation process;
- There are transparent quality assurance measures in line with existing QA frameworks, that support credible and valid assessments;
- There is a synergy between the validation system and ECVET/ECTS;
- European transparency tools such as Europass are promoted in order to facilitate documentation.

In all countries (except in the UK), training of assessors and practitioners is an obligation. Updates are often organized in form of conferences and/or activities. The role of the practitioners is often not seen as a separate job but is seen as a task in one's current job, there are no special requirements in terms of qualifications. During the training of professionals there is no special attention to migrants and disadvantaged groups.

The training of practitioners is as such a way of quality assurance. Furthermore, we see that quality of assessments is ensured by the standards used for assessments. The process is controlled by internal quality assurance systems as ISO. In some cases, there is a national monitoring of these institutions by law by the ministry of education. The lack of national evaluation of process and outputs in many countries can lead to insufficient overview about the functioning and quality at national level. This calls for a quality assurance system that is overarching.

A validation system such as used in France can help to provide feedback at both national as decentral level in a qualitative and quantitative way.



EQF/NQF are in the countries used as a reference for the standards. In some countries ECVET principles are implemented to make the validation outcome more transparent, to enhance permeability and to facilitate the entrance in the educational system. When qualifications are built in units for assessment, it is easier for the individual to accumulate different units, rather than achieve an entire qualification. The Europass CV is often used as a document to facilitate the documentation in the application and evaluation phase.

The community of practice is not a requirement conform the Recommendation. However, it can be of value when setting up activities for migrants. Experiences can be exchanged, as tools and methods as well. A community of practitioners can have many forms and there is not one solely solution. Looking at the purpose (what do we want to achieve?), a static or more dynamic platform can valuable.



4.1.6 Roles and responsibilities in the validation process

	Identification	documentation	assessment	certification
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – OAF (trained operator) at regional level; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – OAF (trained operator) at regional level; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The OAF is the users' reference in this step; – Assessment responsible (ETC) – Assessment technical/sector expert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expert in certification techniques (ETC) – Examination boards at decentral level under the responsibility of the Entitling body (third part certification rules)
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – network of advisors at national level for guidance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Network of advisors at national level; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Examination boards at decentral level under the responsibility of the certifying bodies; – Mix of trainers and professionals are assessors at decentral level; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ministry of education, employment, youth, agriculture, professional branches (depending) for the recognition.
B G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Licensed VET centres at decentral level; – The national agency for VET monitors at national level; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Licensed VET centres; – The national agency for VET monitors at national level; – Sometimes involvement of consultants/ career centres; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Licensed VET centres carry out the assessments; – Trainers, in company instructors are assessors; – The national agency for VET monitors; – The regional inspectorate of ministry of education controls; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Licensed VET centres; – The national agency for VET monitors at national level; – The regional inspectorate of ministry of education controls;
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awarding bodies; – Monitored by regulatory bodies; – Involvement of employers org. (incl sector skills councils); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awarding bodies; – Monitored by regulatory bodies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awarding bodies; – Monitored by regulatory bodies; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Awarding bodies; – Monitored by regulatory bodies;
SI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trained NPK consultant (from different public/private contractors); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trained and registered NPK consultant, hired by the employed institutions; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3-member commission in the organisation, appointed by the national/state examination centre – Technical experts; – For VET: commission appointed by the director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 3-member commission in the organisation, appointed by the national/state examination centre RIC;
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Autonomous communities open the call; – Competent administration bodies (training centres) provide information; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Competent administration bodies (training centres); – Guidance by a professional; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Professional assessors; – Evaluation commission, selected by competent administration bodies (training centres); – 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Evaluation commission (evaluates), – competent administration body (validates); – Labour and Educational Administration of each autonomous community (recognizes)
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Responsible person in the competence centre (part of the consortium) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Responsible person in the training centre – Trained evaluator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In licensed competence centres which are part of the consortium; – By the trained evaluator and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jury in the competence centre: – The trained evaluator – The independent observer



Identification	documentation	assessment	certification
		- Individual independent observer	- The responsible person of the competence centre

4.1.7 Outputs and used standards in the validation process

	Identification	documentation	assessment	certification
I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of certification targeted at regional level, with help of EU CV; - The reference standard is the national standard; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio development with evidence of practice and evaluation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tools and instruments are defined at regional level; - The (practical) assessments leads to a validated dossier; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Granting of qualifications is defined by each region; - The results can be a competence certification (part), a qualification or training credits
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of certification targeted; - The reference standard is the national competence reference framework; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio development with evidence of practice and evaluation; - Additional training can be provided to fill the skills gap for the qualification; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview, followed by a practical assessment or simulation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A qualification can be obtained fully or partially; - The result can be a diploma (full), or certificate (partially);
BG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of certification targeted; - The standards are State Educational standards for occupations; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio development with evidence of practice and evaluation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a recommendation to proceed the state exam, a part of it or to enroll in an educational programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A qualification can be obtained fully or partially; - The result can be a diploma (full), or certificate (partially);
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of certification targeted; - The reference standard is the national standard QCF (qualifications and Credits Framework); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Credits are recorded in electronic personal learning record, regardless of how they are achieved; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of learning outcomes, fit for purpose; - Similar as any other assessment; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The award of credits achieved in RPL is not different than any other credits achieved in the QCF.
SI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of certification targeted; - For access to educational system: educational standards; - For the labour market, national NPK (occupations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collecting evidence in a personal portfolio; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluation of portfolio and if necessary additional assessment; - Validators prepare a proposal for expert for approval; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A qualification can be obtained fully or partially; - The result can be a diploma (full), or certificate (partially); - Or training credits (exempt);
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Candidates apply for the call; - Definition of certification targeted; - Reference standards are the national 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Documentation and self-assessment; - Supported with individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional makes a report of the file and gives advice to access the evaluation; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report is assessed by the evaluation commission; - Result is certificate, recognized by the



	Identification	documentation	assessment	certification
	standards conform the decree;	guidance;	– Assessments in form of exams and simulations;	Labour and Educational Administration of each autonomous community;
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Candidates apply for the call; – Definition of units targeted – Reference are occupational standards related to the national standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is no documentation. Only a practical assessment. There is an intake with the candidate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Practical assessment for the units in the competence centres. – Evaluator assesses and observer monitors the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Titre de compétence for every part/unit that is achieved. – Fully accepted by the labour market and government and gives right to enter training programme in the competence centres.



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4.2 SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS of current validation arrangements

- Validation systems are open for migrants and disadvantaged groups. It is included in the general validation policy (also weakness as there is no special focus on this target group);
- Validation arrangements are set up within existing structures and organisations. No new organisations are set up (also weakness as the focus might be too general);
- National standards are used for validation;
- Practitioners involved are trained (and licensed);
- Involvement of migrants' offices show good practices;
- Strong link with European reference tools as EQF and ECVET;
- Focus on labour market, but with the possibility to enter the educational system;

WEAKNESSES of current validation arrangements

- Services are only provided in national language (I, BG)
- Lack of a special procedure for migrants and disadvantaged target groups (BG)
- Time consuming procedures lead to drop out during the documentation phase (F, E)
- Costly procedures, not affordable for individuals (UK)
- Validation arrangements are designed for obtaining a qualification, not for continuous training (BG)
- High threshold to access the validation arrangements (E)
- Lack of flexibility in procedures for individuals and in access to formal learning (SI, UK)
- Lack of overall quality assurance systems (UK, SI)
- The local/ regional approach leads also to a random variety in opportunities (UK, E, B)
- The highly central approach leads to low flexibility and slow process (SI)
- No standardization and coordination in the process (SI, I)

OPPORTUNITIES for validation of migrants

- Provide information and services and extra services for migrants in more languages for migrants;
- Make use of decentral (existing) portals to reach the target group and to provide a first service and information point;
- Use of common standards, based on learning outcomes;
- Use of units for validation to facilitate transfer (ECVET);
- Funding via projects or with support of employers show good results;
- Use of method of skills passport, where certification per unit is possible and with the focus on the labour market;
- Use good practices from validation practices in the labour market;
- Focus on special target groups in training for practitioners;
- Setting up a community of practitioners to share results and practices.

THREATS for validation of migrants

- Difficult to have proof of educational background from country of origin (I, BG, E)
- Recognition of informal learning difficult. Victims are those with low level qualification (UK, I)
- NFIL is under used by unemployed candidates, as target group is difficult to reach (F)
- For the assessment, often more sessions with the examination board are necessary (F)
- Quality of the outcomes highly depends on how the process is carried out (SI)
- Judgements of the examination board are not always justified in a good way (F)
- Institutional and attitudinal barriers at level of training centres and training staff (UK)
- Lack of reliability, respectability and sustainability for validation services (UK, SI)
- No culture of NFIL (I)
- Lack of knowledge about the possibilities and procedure (E, I)
- Lack of mutual trust in qualifications acquired outside the formal system (SI)
- Policy makers fail to implement national laws in practical policies (SI)
- Waiting lists (B)



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Part E

Conclusions and recommendations

What can we learn from the practices in the partner countries in making life long developing a reality in Europe? And moreover: how can we reach the group of migrants and how can we make sure that validation arrangements are open and accessible for this specific target group as well? Despite the fact that there were little or no information, results and practices known specifically known for the target group of migrants, there are some indications in current systems that allow opportunities for the validation of migrants.

It seems that in the partner countries, the validation of individuals and migrants is implicit in the general policy for validation. So theoretically, validations systems are open for every single individual. In practice, it seems that the consequence of such general policies is that a fully flexible and tailored made approach for individuals and migrants is often not possible as they target a general public.

Reaching migrants is also difficult. Especially when information and guidance is arranged and coordinated at national level and only available in national language. Individuals are easier to reach at decentral level. For example, via offices that provide services and support for migrants. In many countries, there are no tailor-made services in multiple languages.

The problem often with validation procedures and skills audits is the time that it takes to undergo the entire procedure. It is time consuming and therewith costly. The principle of a skills passport or attest, which is a transcript of record of the individual, can help to make procedures easier. This is the case when validation is for the purpose of the labour market and not for entering the formal educational system or for the achievement of a formal qualification. It is meant to help jobseekers to find a suitable job as fast as possible.

The validation becomes also easier when the standards used for validation are based upon the occupational standards and linked to the EQF/NQF and are classified according to the ESCO principles. Standards should also be described in terms of learning outcomes.

The community of practice is not a requirement conform the Recommendation. However, it can be of value when setting up activities for migrants. Experiences can be exchanged, as tools and methods as well. A community of practitioners can have many forms and there is not one solely solution.



Another recommendation is to include the communication with migrants in the training for practitioners and to involve the most relevant stakeholders in reaching this target group. If a reintegration centre or centre for career guidance is familiar with the opportunities, they can forward people to the right place.

Although actions are visible and although the validation of migrants is indirectly included in the general policy for NFIL, there are still many improvements to make. To start with the general acceptance, permeability of in/non formally achieved qualifications and with the culture for NFIL in general. Followed by transparent and accessible arrangements for validation for everybody. Making use of organizations that have directly contact with target groups as migrants and disadvantaged target groups can help in this perspective as well



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