



# **Competences Before Diplomas**

## **Project Result 1**

### **COMPARATIVE RESEARCH**

#### **OF THE STATE-OF-THE-ART IN VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING**

#### **ANNEX**



## PROJECT INFORMATION

**Project acronym:**

CompB4D

**Project title:**

Competences Before Diplomas

**Project Number:**

Project N°: 2021-I-FR01-KA220-ADU-00030141



**Sub-programme or KA:**

KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth

KA2: YOUTH: Increasing quality, innovation and recognition of youth work

**Website:** <https://compb4d.eu/>





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## 1.

## Introduction

As part of the project “Competences Before Diplomas”, Erasmus+ KA2 funded by European Commission under project no. 2021-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-00030141 which aims to identify and develop possible ways of recognition and validation of competences acquired by non-formal and informal settings, especially with left behind adult learners and other disadvantaged target groups; a cross-country comparison was made to identify and assess the different institutions, organisations, measures and arrangements in each of the countries studied : France, Cyprus, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia.

In this annex, a table is provided outlining the different arrangements and rules in place for the validation of prior learning in each country. This table has been compiled according to the information collected and published by the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training.

This annex follows the fifth point of the document entitled "*CompB4D\_PR1-Analysis of European and National Scenario FIRST PART*" : 5. Best Practices. This annex is to be read in conjunction with it.

At last in the annex it is possible to consult the reports of the consultations carried out with professionals in each partner country. They represent a need analysis made on the basis of a exchange of different points of view and experience of the target group involved.





## 2. Comparison of national information about the validation of prior learning - CEDEFOP

<u><a href="#">FRANCE</a></u>	<u><a href="#">CYPRUS</a></u>	<u><a href="#">IRELAND</a></u>	<u><a href="#">ITALY</a></u>	<u><a href="#">PORTUGAL</a></u>	<u><a href="#">ROMANIA</a></u>	<u><a href="#">SLOVAKIA</a></u>
<p>Since the social modernisation act of 17th January 2002, validation of non-formal and informal learning (<i>Validation des acquis de l'expérience</i>) (VAE) has offered a third route to qualifications and vocational certificates, alongside initial education and training and lifelong learning.</p> <p>In order to obtain accreditation, the applicant (self-employed, employees or volunteers) must submit a dossier and potentially undergo an interview with the jury for the relevant qualification, which then decides whether to award the chosen qualification fully or partially. The interview is used to</p>	<p>In 2013, the education ministry set up an interdepartmental committee with the task to develop and monitor the implementation of a comprehensive action plan for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in line with the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). The action plan was successfully developed.</p> <p>The council of ministers on 18 May 2017 ([35 ]) approved the establishment of the national</p>	<p>Under an EU Council recommendation ([30 ]), Member States should have arrangements in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning no later than 2018. Under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland is required to establish policies on recognition of prior learning within the policies and criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression</p>	<p>Italy's legislative framework for the recognition of prior learning was put into place with the Legislative Decree 13/2013 which established the national system of certification of competences and the inter-ministerial decree of June 2015 which defined the operational framework for the recognition of regional qualification at the national level.</p> <p>The Italian regions are the main hub for services for labour and vocational training on the territory and therefore, within the system supporting active labour or vocational training policies, are tackling the issue of the certification and validation of</p>	<p>Recognition of prior learning (recognition, validation and certification of competences process - RVCC) comprises the identification of formal, non-formal and informal competences developed throughout life; through the development of specific activities and the application of a set of appropriate evaluation tools. Adults may start this process at any time at a Qualifica centre ([58 ]).</p> <p>RVCC process has two distinct paths: the education and the professional.</p> <p>To access educational or professional RVCC processes, candidates must be at least 18 years old and possess sufficient knowledge in relation to the key competence and the professional</p>	<p>Validation of prior learning is done through assessment centres. The centres are local private or public bodies authorised to conduct validation procedures, for one or more occupations, developed at national level.</p> <p>Since 2000, legislation on the national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning has been gradually developed and put in place ([59]). The National Authority for Qualifications, through the newly established National Centre for Accreditation, ([60]) coordinates and monitors the validation process. The centre is a specialised structure within the authority responsible for :</p>	<p>There is no genuine and appropriately developed national model for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009) created some preconditions for gradual progress but it in fact refers only to certification of the ability to run a business originally restricted to certificate of apprenticeship holders.</p> <p>The following are data indicating the trend in issuing certificates 'verifying professional competences', entitling people without a certificate of apprenticeship (required by the Trade Licensing Act) to start a business.</p>





<p>complete and clarify the information contained in the application dossier. It allows the jury to check the authenticity of the file, to check the level of proficiency of all the skills required to obtain the (partial) qualification and to discuss the experience and practice acquired in respect of the activities or functions that the applicant has exercised or held.</p> <p>Through VAE, anybody can obtain a full qualification or certificate based on his or her professional experience ([102]).</p> <p>All vocational qualifications registered in the national register of vocational qualifications (RNCP) can also be accessed via validation of non-formal and informal learning. This includes all formal qualifications issued by the State and those recognised by</p>	<p>qualifications authority, with the powers to further enhance the quality assurance systems in education and training, to monitor and integrate the scheme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Cyprus qualifications framework after its completion, to monitor the Cyprus qualifications framework/Euro pean qualifications framework levels on the certificates, diplomas and Europass documents, to further strengthen the legal aspect of the Cyprus qualifications framework and to develop a registry for the Cyprus qualifications framework.</p> <p>The education</p>	<p>(ATP).</p> <p>While the legal basis for the development of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policies was established in the Qualifications Act 1999, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) published principles and operational guidelines in 2005 ([31]). Recognition of prior learning policy is currently being revised by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.</p> <p>Quality and Qualifications Ireland has consulted widely with relevant stakeholders to achieve a more cohesive approach to delivering recognition of prior learning nationally.</p>	<p>competences, contextualising and differentiating tools and approaches.</p> <p>However, different phases of advancement of regional policies and practices on this theme can still be seen, highlighting that now more than ever it is necessary to maintain national legislation and a framework of rules to protect the reliability of procedures and therefore equal opportunities for final beneficiaries. More specifically, the legislative framework, fully outlined in 2015, is a step on a path towards the coordination of regional rules and services for validating and certifying competences.</p> <p>In some cases, these have already been implemented and have been accessible for years to more or less broad categories of</p>	<p>competence framework. 23-years old or younger candidates must also submit proof of a minimum of three years professional experience via a statement issued by the relevant social security office.</p> <p>One of the tools used in the RVCC process to evaluate the candidates is the reflective learning portfolio (portefólio reflexivo). It is a written record of the candidate's competences acquired throughout life; it also presents a critical appraisal of their knowledge, competence development, prior experience, and education. It includes all relevant supporting documentation linked to the different areas of the portfolio. Validation of these competences is done under the referential framework of key competences elaborated by ANQEP ([59]).</p> <p>A jury appointed by a Qualifica Centre does</p>	<p>authorisation of the assessment centres and staff involved in validating non-formal and informal learning of adults;</p> <p>Coordination of assessment centre activities;</p> <p>quality assurance;</p> <p>managing the national register of the authorised centres and national register of evaluators (evaluators of competences, evaluators of external evaluators).</p> <p>The validation procedures consist of well-defined national standards, criteria and guidelines. The assessment centres develop their own assessment instruments, based on national occupational standards and/or training standards, to evaluate the candidates. They are responsible for</p>	<p>Certificates verifying 'professional competence' are not equivalent to those from formal education. They substitute a 'certificate of apprenticeship' for the purpose of starting a business only. These certificate holders are entitled to start a craft regulated by the Trade Licensing Act (455/1991), but they are not allowed to progress within formal education based on these certificates, as they do not certify the respective education level.</p> <p>1</p>
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<sup>1</sup>Source : [CEDEFOP - VET in Europe](#)





<p>the social partners.</p> <p>Since 2016, three IVET qualifications are accessible in adult education for certification through VAE ([103 ]), and can possibly be partly validated in skills set (<i>blocs de compétences</i>). Offering more IVET qualifications in a modular form depends on (high) demand for such qualifications in adult education. An online database for referencing qualifications in skill blocks is in place ([104 ]).</p> <p>For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop’s European database ([105 ]).</p>	<p>ministry coordinates the implementation of the project ‘Establishing a mechanism for the validation of non-formal and informal learning’. The project is co-funded by the European social fund and the Republic of Cyprus.</p> <p>This project has supported a mapping study of the current situation in Cyprus regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Based on the results of the study, an overall national action plane for the establishment of mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus was developed in early 2018. This was put into public consultation in May 2018. In October 2018, the council of</p>	<p>Quality and Qualifications Ireland aims to develop comprehensive policy and operational procedures in line with legislation on the basis of national collaboration, consideration of the current arrangements and identification of best practice nationally and internationally .</p> <p>For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop’s European database ([32 ]).</p>	<p>beneficiaries: in this regard, we should mention the systems already activated in the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Tuscany, Lombardy, Umbria, Aosta Valley and Veneto.</p> <p>Meanwhile, some regions have implemented the indications of the 2015 decree and in 2016 adopted provisions to regulate validation and certification services. These include Abruzzo Basilicata, the autonomous Province of Bolzano, Campania, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Apulia, Sardinia and the autonomous province of Trento. The remaining regions – Abruzzo, Calabria, Marche, Molise and Sicily – are still in the standardisation phase.</p> <p>The 30 June 2015 decree also included measures relating to the functions required for providing</p>	<p>the certification of competences after the evaluation of the candidate. It can include written, oral or practical evaluation, or a combination of the three, that can be organised by key competences areas in the case of the education path, or by professional competences in the case of the professional path.</p> <p>Candidates can obtain a full certification (when they have proven that they possess all the competence units of the standard) or a partial certification. In the education path, a full certification enables the candidate to obtain a certificate of basic education (4, 6 or 9 years of schooling) or upper-secondary education (12 years of schooling) corresponding to EQF levels 1 to 4. In the professional path, a full certification testifies that the candidate holds the competences of specific professional standard at EQF level 2 and 4. Partial certifications allow</p>	<p>providing validation services following specific requests by beneficiaries/candidates who can acquire full or partial qualifications at EQF levels 1, 2 and 3. Certificates of competences are nationally and internationally recognised. As part of the validation process, the centres offer information and counselling to the candidates.</p> <p>Currently, there are 37 fully functioning local assessment centres that can validate prior learning of candidates, mainly in services, construction and agriculture.</p> <p>For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop’s European database ([61 ]).</p>
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	<p>ministers, with Decision No 85.959, dated 16 October 2018, approved the national action plan, which foresees setting up a validation mechanism and its pilot implementation. The first results from the pilot operation of the mechanism in the fields of adult education, youth and volunteering are estimated to be available at the end of 2019.</p> <p>In the system of vocational qualifications a validation procedure consisted of four phases has been developed. The procedure is aligned with the European Recommendation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning ([36]).</p> <p>The four phases are :</p> <p>Identification : at this stage the learning</p>		<p>validation and certification services.</p> <p>More precisely:</p> <p>accompanying and supporting identification of the competences and making them transparent;</p> <p>planning and implementation of assessment activities;</p> <p>implementation of assessment activities on aspects relating to curricula and professional contents.</p> <p>The decree describes the tasks and activities that personnel responsible for providing services for the identification, validation and certification of competences should exercise in the various phases of the process, in other words, access to the service/welcoming, recognition/identification, assessment and certification;</p>	<p>the candidate to attend the remaining training to obtain a qualification.</p> <p>These processes are under the responsibility of the Qualifica Centres, managed by ANQEP. Currently there are around 290 centres spread all over the country.</p> <p>Participation in RVCC processes in 2017 was 11.1% when compared with all adults enrolled in VET offers.</p> <p>For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database ([60]).</p>		
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	<p>outcomes gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning are determined. The identification takes place in approved by Human Resource Development Authority centres for assessment of vocational qualifications. As first step information on the system of vocational qualifications is provided to the candidate and through an interview they are advised to choose a specific qualification standard, relevant to their set of knowledge, skills, competence. The results of this phase are described in the identification and documentation report ;</p> <p>Documentation : This phase entails sufficient proof of the previously identified knowledge, skills, competence. The results are</p>		<p>the European qualifications framework level for each function is also indicated.</p> <p>We should point out that, in their position as awarding bodies, the regions offer a direct guarantee on the criteria and methods adopted for recruitment of personnel entrusted with providing such functions and verification of their professional requisites, in compliance with the principles of collegiality, neutrality, impartiality and independence. In those regions where the regional rules and services system is already accessible, provider competence training has already been planned and implemented, whereas where work is still ongoing to make services operational, the debate on professional resources is part of a more general framework</p>			
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	<p>recorded in the identification and documentation report. If the candidates decide to proceed with the assessment in order to acquire the certificate of the vocational qualification they have to fill and sign an application form. When a group of three candidates is formed the director/manager of the centre for assessment of vocational qualifications submits the application forms and all paperwork to the Human Resource Development Authority for approval; assessment: if the Human Resource Development Authority approves the applications which are examined against the criteria of the system of vocational qualifications the candidates may proceed with assessment. This</p>		<p>regarding system standards.</p> <p>To help develop and raise awareness of the theme, the national institute for public policy analysis has prepared a multimedia training package, which has been designed in an open-source environment (Moodle) and provided on a MOOC (Massive Online Open Courses) platform, to transfer all the information, know-how, methodologies and tools useful for managing the various phases of the process to service providers. For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database ([38 ]).</p>			
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	<p>is carried out by two approved assessors in 2 to 5 meetings and is based on the relevant vocational qualification standard. The results are depicted in the assessment report. The assessors are trained by Human Resource Development Authority;</p> <p>Certification. The assessment reports are submitted to Human Resource Development Authority, the results are validated, and full or partial certification is given.</p> <p>For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database ([37 ])</p>					
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### 3. Consultations with professionals: reports

#### 3.1. France

Partner name	ANI International
Country	France
Contact Person	Marta FORMATO
Number of participants	5
Number of facilitators	1
Date	18/05/2022
Duration	Two hours
Place	Online
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<p>A Consultation through Zoom took place. 6 professionals were involved in the Focus Group. They introduced themselves without hesitations. There was 1 facilitator and 2 assistants to take notes and to assure the organisation. The facilitator introduced the objectives of the project and explained to the participants the framework of the focus group.</p>	
<b>AWARENESS</b>	
<p>What do you know about the validation process in your work field?</p>	
<p>The first participant takes the floor and explains in his field (training) the validation is done through summative evaluations when it is a title, a diploma or a certification.</p> <p>While the sixth participant explained that the process of validation of skills and knowledge is organised by the school through the School Council (SC), according to the indications of the Ministry of Education. The process is known by the students at the beginning of the year. The teacher prepares the students for the tests in all classes where they are scheduled.</p> <p>The second participant took the floor easily and started by elaborating on the context of Erasmus+ projects. He explained that if there are youth workers and NGOs who participate in different trainings under Erasmus+,</p>	





whether it is KA1 training for mobility, they can receive certificates. He added to complete his remarks that they are also students or people who have stopped their studies. To illustrate his point, he gave the example of a person who had stopped at Master 1 level; a person who had studied for 4 years at university (e.g. sociology) but who had stopped. This person has worked for 7-8 years and has a number of certificates such as YouthPass or others given by companies that deal with training. This person can give this file to universities and can receive a Master 2 through the recognition of the acquired skills. But he explains that it depends on the university and that it is not something generalized.

He then added that at local level it might be more or less the same thing but, again according to him, it is necessary to look at it on a case by case basis. According to his experience, the skills acquired in an informal/non-formal way are not necessarily very well known, so people remain rather hesitant. He himself seems rather hesitant, which perhaps reflects the complexity of all these mechanisms.

Another participant, also hesitant, talks about institutional arrangements in the context of support. But he also said that their role in his organisation was not to validate these achievements but to redirect people to actors capable of doing so and to explain and clarify institutional processes, etc. ....

Another participant, on the other hand, explained, with great enthusiasm, that it is necessary to understand and transmit the lack of knowledge that exists in relation to this system. She explicitly states the extreme difficulty of understanding the validation system.

Another participant described the validation processes within his organisation, which works on a voluntary basis to provide French as a Foreign Language courses to refugees. They are free to choose the programmes to transmit, the knowledge to teach. It is up to them to judge where the group of learners is at, and the facilitator says, with a form of disappointment, that it is really not easy. He also says that he does not necessarily want to test them in order to build confidence and create a reassuring atmosphere. The principle of testing can be frightening and participants might feel devalued for some. For example, they have never taken a test and this is where the complexity of the situation lies. In addition, the practitioner explains that, on top of all that, every week they have different learners. The thing they do is to try to get a feel for the level when the participants show up. The practitioner says that there is not really a skills validation pathway and he also reveals that they cannot necessarily judge their progress or whether the participants are satisfied with their learning. Do they manage to progress with them? They find it difficult to know if they are making progress in learning. They found it difficult to find 'nice' tests for them. So the practitioner says that they judge by "feeling". No paperwork, certificates, diplomas, skills or anything else.

The previous participant took the floor again to talk about the importance of valuing participation in these "sessions"/"classes" as well as involvement through a certificate... As proof, they receive feedback from immigrants who are in the process of obtaining papers and these certificates help them in that they prove that they have participated in projects to integrate culturally (particularly language).





How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country?

According to the fourth participant, these validation processes are not well enough known. He said that you have to have a certain level (academic, social, etc.) to know about them. Generally, those with whom he works (undergraduates, school dropouts, etc.) are not informed about these validations. Generally, people are only interested when they have a good level or when they want to change jobs.

The other participants also said that the public is not very familiar with these processes.

While the sixth grader spoke up and explained that through the CE and subject meetings, as well as through the official bulletin of the national education.

ACCESSIBILITY

What relevant information, advice and guidance is available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Timescale to validate
- Different validation providers
- Company validation policies
- Validation fees
- Validation methods and tools

The first participant explained that all information is made available on the Internet, whether it concerns state diplomas or RNCP titles/certifications. For other validation of prior learning, it is the organisations that make their information available on their websites.

The sixth participant, who works as a teacher in a school, explained that students are informed about the whole validation process: the expectations in terms of skills and knowledge; the typologies of tests and the timetable; the deadline for results; the validation methods and too.

The second participant explained that there are difficulties of validation in the framework of Erasmus+. In his organisation, they are organising an event focusing on arts and media in a city in the south-east of France. They have offers for local people to participate. They go with their team and they talk about it and people don't know what it is. He says that they are quite hesitant. The participant added in a humorous way that some people even think it is a cult sometimes and show reluctance and mistrust. Generally, people do not necessarily have the time to take a break from their work, nor the opportunity, as this involves explaining to the boss that they need to take a break for training, which is not always well received, especially if the training is not directly related to the job they are doing at the moment. The boss is therefore not interested and refuses. The participant then also addressed the issue of international training, for which he said that there was also a big





problem with the language barrier. The latter can block learners because they do not necessarily feel comfortable in this international context. They are confused.

The same participant also raised the following question: Where does the difficulty of validation in Erasmus come from? He said that validation is hampered by a lack of people. Sometimes people don't know that certain things exist, such as the YouthPass tool. He insists vehemently on the lack of knowledge, the hesitation, the lack of people.

He then explains with specific examples. In the United States, during a job interview, one of the questions that comes up very frequently is about extracurricular activities (which are highly valued), but this is not always as highly valued in some countries, such as Europe.

An other participant said that even as a trainer they don't necessarily know, they don't know what to tell the participants.

The fourth participant said that she was not very familiar with the tools and resources on this subject because she had never really looked for them. Since it was not a skills validation process, she had not looked for the tools. She imagined that the resources were everywhere online, but she wondered whether, if everyone did their own thing (e.g. language courses and an independent certificate), it would be of real value to the State and to companies. So, we need to be sure that the "certifications" they give out are credible and that they can be legitimised by state structures and employers. It can lose its interest if it is not something official.

What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and non-formal learning?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)
- Portfolio
- Tests and examinations
- Conversational methods of assessment: interviews and discussions
- Simulations: individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competences assessed.
- Evidence extracted from work or other practice
- Europass framework and Youthpass

The first participant explains that in his case, I tend to do formative evaluations throughout the training process to ensure that the skills are acquired.

The second participant said that they focus on and rely on the tools proposed by the European Commission (YouthPass for training, Europass and the Certificates issued by the organisation) but also the letters of recommendation. Even if they have separate projects, there is not really a classic validation tool to turn to. At the level of local projects, they organise informal training (discussion clubs) and this does not necessarily require





a certain validation; it is more for the general culture of the participants. This is not the main purpose of their local projects. So it is a non-formal validation.

The other participant spoke up and said that in the framework of European projects it is different because the projects and the contents and the project structures provide them with methods (pre-questionnaires / post-questionnaires to see the evolution). She says that it is not easy because they don't know the groups, they want to create a space of trust and this kind of questionnaires are not simple at all and moreover, they have to be translated. So they transform them into a rather interactive, playful tool. So they make a transformation from a very formal tool to a rather informal and interactive one. Nevertheless, they know that they lose elements, it is not very obvious to measure or develop such or such skills.

The fourth participant said she had less experience to share. Nevertheless, she said that it is true that if they could find a tool that is fun it would be great for them. It would be a reference to share with other actors. She shared a tool, the EVA tool developed by betagouv, which is a digital project run by the State within the ministries. This project is a tool for all integration professionals who want to assess illiteracy, for example, in a fun way. It would be interesting, according to her, to recover the source code of this project to adapt it for each associative structure.

The fifth participant said that he only has the capacity to orientate the people who come. He also said that the rest is the role of the institutional circuits that exist.

The sixth participant said that the methods are: tests and exams, oral assessment (solo, in pairs or groups of up to 4 people; debates), long-term projects, real-life activities.

Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities)?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Peer support groups
- 1 to 1 meetings
- Multilingual support
- Cultural mediation
- Informative events
- Non-formal approach
- Funding support (transport, exam fees)

The first participant states that he does not have the answer to this question.





The second participant said that no, they are not focused on certain disadvantaged groups. They work mainly with former refugee communities (especially those in the south-east of France: Russian speakers). They give priority to these people for participation. They try to include them more in European projects.

The sixth participant stated that in the school setting all students with difficulties benefit from several meetings with the educational staff in order to put in place the best strategies to meet their needs. The main measures adopted were

- Distance learning for students who are forced to stay at home.
- Use of an online platform to download the course, exercises and class work.
- The implementation of an AP (personalized help) for DYS students or those who have dropped out of school or are ill (third time, dedicated exercise, sheet format, benevolence, technological tools...)
- Presence of specialised personnel in class to help the student achieve the tasks (AVS) - Continuous exchange with families to adapt the devices to the student as best as possible.

The other participants were not aware of this and could not answer the question.

## RECOGNITION

Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Assessment skills
- Communication ability
- Specific knowledge on the topic
- Data analysis
- Practice based skills
- Empathy and active listening skills
- Intercultural competences
- Guidance skills

The first and second participants develop many of the competences they expect from a validation practitioner: skills, knowledges and attitude.

The second participant develops many of the competences they expect from a validation practitioner: skills, knowledge and attitude. They work on this during their training. According to him, the most difficult thing is to change people's attitudes (because for some people they are already quite old). According to him, the first skill is communication in a foreign language and therefore also self-expression in one's mother tongue (broadening vocabulary), technology skills (being able to use the computer, the projector, applications, being able to make a presentation in a room), digital skills therefore; social and civic skills as well as multicultural skills. They try to promote European culture so that people learn a lot of interesting things about other countries and cultures to





become friends with some foreigners and create networks and form projects with other people. The participant also draws a list of skills they expect the learners to gain.

1. Languages and expression
2. Technology
3. Civic and social
4. Entrepreneurship skill: motivate people to be active and be a social responsible citizen (surprised that many people who work or volunteer in associations don't know what the UN SDGs (sustainable development goals) are, which is an important skill for those working in associations but also for the culture to understand the challenges that the planet and humanity is solving)
5. Financial literacy: trying to instil skills on how people can manage their money

The third participant quickly spoke up and talked about developing knowledge of basic everyday words (vocabulary, everyday situations, object panels, administrative procedures) as one of the necessary things to do. She also mentioned the importance of getting them to confide in the practitioners, to communicate their daily habits. This would, among other things, develop their socialisation skills.

The second participant explains that she expects the practitioner to have skills in intercultural communication, identification of necessary resources, development of external resources, self-acceptance....

The third participant took the floor again with great commitment and enthusiasm. As a trainer, they want to be able to try to evaluate, to analyse the students' competence. They also want to be sure to have the right approach, to be sure to do it at the right time (at the right moment, according to their learning curve). In response to this, she mentioned the need for resources to understand the learning curve of a newcomer, with examples on the margins, and also to ensure that the assessment is only implemented in certain cases, at certain specific times: in other words, to know when it is appropriate to administer the test, because too early or too late can be useless and destabilising, and can be of no benefit to the trainer and the person being assessed.

The second participant took the floor again and said that as a trainer she would need to be trained to know with which tool and how to assess the development of all these skills. In general they speak very little language, they can't read. So there is also a need to know how to measure or make visible the development of all these skills.

The fourth participant thinks that a practitioner of skills validation must be very benevolent; must be a good listener; must have a lot of know-how and soft skills. Generally, he said, these people have fixed ideas. You have to be a good listener to be able to identify the right orientation and then be very pedagogical: explain the different stages to go through; listen, be kind. For people with less than a baccalaureate or who are foreigners, they don't speak French well, so if you're not patient/benevolent it doesn't work.

The sixth final adds that all the skills mentioned are necessary in order to perform the role of a teacher in national education.





Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?

None of the participants answered positively to this question, except for the first participant who said yes, with a CFA that recruits from the local missions, and the sixth who said that he never worked there but other colleagues at the school do.

**BARRIERS**

What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Financial issues
- Lack of information
- Lack of time
- Administration issues
- Too bureaucratic
- Language barriers

The first participant said that sometimes there are financial problems, but above all there are complex personal and physical (disability) issues, as well as too much bureaucracy.

According to the second participant, the first and most important barrier is the severe lack of information about the validation of competences. As an immigrant who had validated her psychology degree in France, another barrier is to learn the number of acronyms that some social workers mention without detailing what they are. There is also a lack of information on how and where to validate competences;

How and where to validate competences?

Then the third participant explained that there are many different schemes. There is a wide range of options and it is not always easy to choose. She also deplored a lack of information to guide people. Sometimes even the people who give advice should already be trained beforehand to be able to give correct information, which is sadly not the case today. It's a bit fragmented. There is no real unity today. The third participant echoed the words of the previous speaker; the acronyms are too complicated and too numerous and sometimes not useful. This is a real problem.

The fourth participant regretted that the validation of competences was very or even too formal. In the case of France, we start with the informal and move towards the formal. These are issues that must absolutely be de-dramatised according to him. Language remains one of the biggest obstacles, as well as the non-recognition of foreign skills.





Finally, the sixth participant stated that "Working in a public school with a state contract, the problems mentioned are less frequent. Apart from attention and learning difficulties, the lack of time can affect the quality of learning. Smaller class sizes were needed."

What are the main barriers you face when validating?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Lack of or insufficient regulatory framework
- Lack of or insufficient quality assurance framework
- Lack of support from the stakeholders involved
- Financial issues

According to the sixth participant "There is a big difference between the expectations of the official bulletins and the answers to the tests. Students work on a lot of skills that, in the end, will not be taken into account in the exams".

**SATISFACTION**

What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools and processes? What are your needs to improve your validation process?

The various participants were unable to answer this question either because of lack of information or because they believe that there are no quality assurance frameworks in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools or processes.

Then the sixth participant took the floor and said that the national education system trains the correctors to validate the tests and provides the elements for the corrections.

What are your needs to improve your validation process?

According to the first participant, who remains rather hesitant and who needed time to reflect to answer this question, these tools should be simpler and more user-friendly in the European context because, still according to him, the tools currently in place are a little too bureaucratic for those who are strangers to them. On the other hand, he works in the field, so he knows them by heart because he has been working on them for several years. Those who don't know don't have that affinity. It should be made much more understandable. You have to read, understand and make an effort, but you have to look at the attractiveness of the tools, and also the simplicity. He wants to get this message across, to make the people concerned understand that they will benefit from these tools. We have to show them good examples and good practices so that each time we present it they are convinced.

The second participant cheerfully asserted that she was interested in all the tools that might exist and also spoke of her wish that a space be opened up between trainers so that they could exchange tools, knowledge,



etc. She also affirmed the importance of having knowledge to better support vulnerable people in these validation processes.

The third participant stated that she wanted to have projects with students in sociology, language science, neurology and psychology, at the crossroads of these fields. She said that she was always interested in these projects in order to build up a repository of criteria to know if the person is ready and if it is the right time to take the test. Then this could be turned into simple computer code and shared in open source to all trainers.

So all participants agree that there is a need for bureaucratic flexibility, empathy and listening.

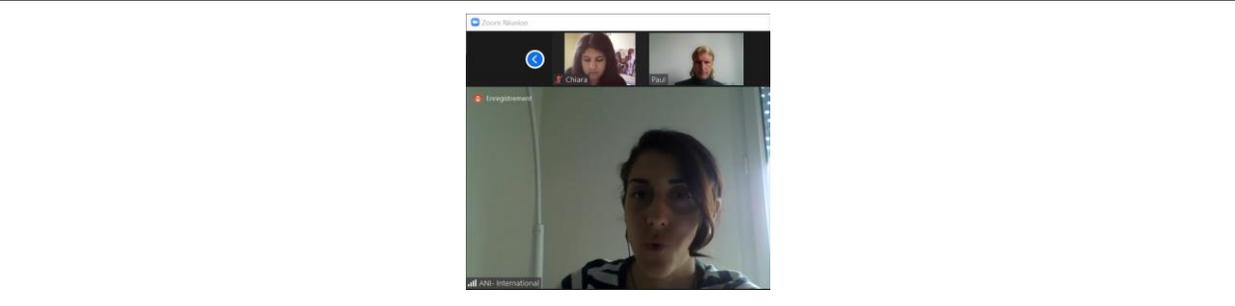
Finally, the sixth participant added that he would like to have clearer guidelines adapted to different learning contexts.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Acknowledgements to the participants. The facilitator explains the various post-focus group procedures (particularly the survey at the end of the focus group). The desire for an exchange at the level of the network project throughout France also emerged.

Overall the discussion was interesting to analyse different perspectives between public and private sectors. But also to understand which kind of barriers and gaps learners have to face in France to recognize and to validate their competences in non formal and informal settings. A productive discussion developed among participants, discovering different professional and personal experiences.

**pictures**



### 3.2. Cyprus





Partner name	Emphasys Centre
Country	Cyprus
Contact Person	Andrianna Georgiou
Number of participants	6
Number of facilitators	1
Date	28/04/2022
Duration	1 hour 30 mins
Place	Online
<b>AWARENESS</b>	
What do you know about the validation process in your work field?	
<p><i>In Cyprus, for validation is the HRDA (Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus). Depending on the course, you attend the course for a specific number of hours to become firstly a certified instructor in order for your organisation to be able to teach and provide certificates to adults (EQF Level5). The certificate is an HRDA certificate, but does not have the gravity that a university degree holds.</i></p> <p><i>Depending on the University, some of those provide trainings and offer certificates (not degrees). With this degree you are a 'Soft Skill Mentor' – not a trainer, but it is still certified.</i></p> <p><i>Additionally, Open Badges are used and can be incorporated on the Europass certificate, for the trainees to show on their CVs and professional profiles such as LinkedIn.</i></p>	
How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country?	
<p><i>Through the HRDA (Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus). You must be a certified instructor by HRDA. In order to do this, you must complete a certain amount of hours (depending on your teaching background) and after you must do a written examination and a presentation of a section of your proposed topic you will be teaching. After your assessed by several examiners from HRDA and are given your certificate. If you pass, you are eligible to teach the course you submitted during the examination and if your students pass, you can award them with a certificate from the HRDA.</i></p>	





## ACCESSIBILITY

What relevant information, advice and guidance is available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?

If necessary, to trigger the debate, you can give some of the following examples:

- Timescale to validate
- Different validation providers
- Company validation policies
- Validation fees
- Validation methods and tools

*The information about the validation is available on the HRDA website. However, the interface is not very user friendly and it is difficult to navigate, so finding the information you are looking for, is not always easy. For long-term unemployed, (registered at the Cyprus unemployment office for a period of 6 months) the HRDA offers free training courses to increase their skills and be better equipped for the job market. HRDA has limited visibility. The courses and opportunities offered are not advertised to the public enough, for them to be aware of the opportunities that are offered. Most of what we know is through word of mouth and what we were informed by others. As mentioned before, navigating the website is difficult.*

What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and no-formal learning?

If necessary, to trigger the debate, you can give some of the following examples:

- International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)
- Portfolio
- Tests and examinations
- Conversational methods of assessment: interviews and debates
- Simulations: individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competences assessed.
- Evidence extracted from work or other practice
- Europass framework and Youthpass

*Our centre has certified instructors who train and prepare their students for the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL), our training centre is also offered as an examination centre in collaboration with the Cyprus Computer Society, who is the official representative in Cyprus.*

*Depending on the training, hands-on practice is also a method of validation, for example if someone is training to be a plumber, a practical exercise is required, not just a written one.*

*Tests and examinations are probably the most popular method everywhere in Cyprus. They are used in schools, colleges, universities and examination centres.*

*Additionally, if the organisation is aware of the Erasmus and Erasmus+, the Europass and Youthpass certificates can also be awarded.*





Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities)?

If necessary, to trigger the debate, you can give some of the following examples:

- Peer support groups
- 1 to 1 meetings
- Multilingual support
- Cultural mediation
- Informative events
- Non-formal approach
- Funding support (transport, exam fees)

*In Cyprus, we have the Multipurpose Municipal Centres. There is one in each city, but the participants emphasised that they were familiar with the one in Nicosia, as it is nearer to them. These centres offer many lessons for elderly (such as exercising, cooking, sewing, educational trips, dancing, educational seminars etc), counselling sessions (by certified psychologists), language lessons for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers and an open school for young people to learn many activities such as climbing, chess, observatory. These activities however do not offer any certificates.*

*The Cyprus Refugee council, has all the information available for what is available for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Cyprus.*

*The HRDA, offers trainings for long-term unemployed (as mentioned earlier) and also for young graduates in order to gain work experience, HRDA offers employers 80% of the graduates' salaries for the first 6 months of their employment and the employer must pay full salaries for the next two months. The companies then decide if they wish to keep the graduate, after those 8 months.*

## RECOGNITION

Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?

If necessary, to trigger the debate, you can give some of the following examples:

- Assessment skills
- Communication ability
- Specific knowledge on the topic
- Data analysis
- Practice based skills
- Empathy and active listening skills
- Intercultural competences
- Guidance skills





*The most popular answer amongst the trainers was communication skills which include language and presentation skills. How the lessons are presented to the learners. How transmitting the course is and the interaction he/she has with the learners.*

*Creativity skills were also mentioned, not as such in the arts, but how creative and interactive the lesson can be taught with different methodologies. This could be by showing videos, getting the learners to participate, engage them in more physical activities (if possible).*

*The trainer should also have empathy and active listening skills, especially for the target groups mentioned. Elderly need constant repetition, speaking loud and slowly as some are too proud to admit they did not understand something the first time. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees also need a lot constant repetition, speaking loud and slowly as their first language is not English and have no knowledge of Greek. So understanding the target group is vital to be able to teach as best as possible.*

*Digital skills are also important. Knowing how to use various software to make your courses interactive and engaging. Especially with the pandemic, we have all enhanced our digital skills.*

Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?

*We have collaborated with HRDA to validate our trainers and we are in the process of continuing our training with the new members of the team.*

*The Cyprus Refugee council in collaboration with the Help Refugees work, announce various job vacancies and trainings that are available for these target groups. We are in contact with these organisations to showcase the trainings we offer in order to inform any refugee, migrant or asylum seeker that might be interested to participate. We do our best to contact various NGOs, but long-term collaborations are difficult, they prefer a one-off educational seminar.*

## BARRIERS

What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?

If necessary, to trigger the debate, you can give some of the following examples:

- Financial issues
- Lack of information
- Lack of time
- Administration issues
- Too bureaucratic
- Language barriers

*The main barrier faced is the lack of information and difficulty of information. As mentioned previously the HRDA website is very hard to navigate and finding the information to inform learners and trainers is hard.*





*A lot of paperwork. There is a large amount of bureaucracy and administration to go through to check if you are eligible and even more after completing the course. There is also a lot of bureaucracy for a centre to be validated in order to offer certified training courses.*

*In general, there is a lack of opportunities in Cyprus as only HRDA and Universities can certify trainers.*

*There should be a higher level of quality monitoring, maybe offering less but better quality trainings and have a higher level of recognition.*

*The global pandemic (Covid-19) delayed a large number of trainings, especially hands-on trainings. A lot of people had low digital skills and could not participate in online trainings so the number of attendees was significantly low.*

What are the main barriers you face when validating?

If necessary, to trigger the debate, you can give some of the following examples:

- Lack of or insufficient regulatory framework
- Lack of or insufficient quality assurance framework
- Lack of support from the stakeholders involved
- Financial issues

*Financial issues are a barrier, as not all courses are subsidised. HRDA course have some funding but they are not fully funded.*

*Due to the global pandemic (Covid-19), there is a large waiting list for the examinations, as many were postponed due to the multiple lockdowns, less people are entitled to enter the examination spaces due to the restrictive measures. This has caused inaccurate timescales. Although there is pressure for the trainees to submit their assessments on time, the results of these arrive very late.*

#### SATISFACTION

What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools and processes?

*To ensure quality assurance, the HRDA only authorises trainers who have been trained via HRDA and maintain their standards. Additionally, the HRDA sends representatives to monitor the trainings offered to the adults in order to ensure that they meet the standards.*

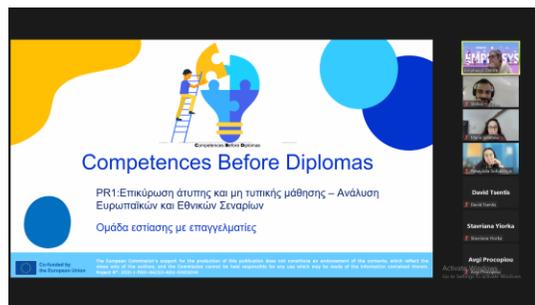
#### Conclusion

*Our focus group during our presentation and discussion seemed to have had in mind the same public and private bodies we have already mentioned in our national report such as HRDA (Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus), the Multipurpose Municipal Centres and provided us with a new organisation that we haven't*



mentioned on our report Cyprus Refugee council. Overall, our focus group seemed to understand and to provide us with a lot of information and personal experiences around the CompB4D topic for informal and non-formal education and gave us their thoughts on barriers while they are validating.

**pictures**



### 3.3. Ireland

Partner name	Redial Partnership
Country	Ireland





Contact Person	Anja Marojevic
Number of participants	5
Number of facilitators	1
Date	24/06/2022
Duration	2.5 hours
Place	Online - Zoom
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<p>The participants introduced themselves before we get started. The facilitator then gave a brief overview of the project and herself. She went over the focus group's structure with the participants. The focus group's facilitator gave an overview of each component, focusing particularly on the first component, awareness raising.</p>	
<b>AWARENESS</b>	
<p>What do you know about the validation process in your work field?</p>	
<p>When it comes to access, programme credits, prizes, and professional accreditation, Ireland's varied sectors do not consistently recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning. Legal restrictions prevent several academic disciplines from recognising informal and non-formal education. It is important to note that because Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) in Ireland is tied to the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), only those using prior learning to obtain formal accreditation in particular fields can use RPL in Ireland. On the one hand, this is very beneficial for any applicant who is successful in getting their prior learning recognised because there will never be any doubt that they do not satisfy the standards of a specific level. On the other hand, the candidate must work really hard and provide a tonne of supporting documentation in order to have their prior learning acknowledged because RPL is tied to the NFQ and standards must be upheld. Candidates who have limited prior experience with the further education system and/or who have not received much formal education must convert their informal or non-formal learning into declarative, decontextualized, procedural knowledge that is applicable to course specific outcomes. Even in circumstances where their personal experience vastly exceeds the information, abilities, and competence specified in the credentials, there is always a potential that they will fail in this. The second effect of RPL's close relationship with the NFQ is that it has resulted in a limited perception of what RPL actually is. RPL is emphasised in Ireland as a "summative" process rather than a "formative" process. RPL is viewed in other nations (such as Scotland) as a process whereby a candidate unearths the experience and knowledge they have accumulated throughout their life and uses it to develop personally, advance professionally, or pursue further education. RPL is not just about "summing up" prior learning in order to obtain a formal qualification. This process may lead to some recognition of the value of the knowledge, skills and competences that the candidate possesses but is not necessarily geared towards formal accreditation in a specific field. In other words, the focus in Ireland is on an RPL candidate 'summing up'</p>	





<p>their prior learning and using it to gain access, exemption, credit or a full award in a specific area, as opposed to being a process whereby adults reflect on their learning and use the new insights gained for personal development purposes, to progress professionally or to pursue further study. This emphasis on RPL as a summative process reflects a broader tendency within the Irish system to view education as a vehicle to get people into jobs that are coming on stream, as opposed to viewing education as a way to foster social inclusion, empowerment, active citizenship etc..</p>
<p>How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country?</p>
<p>Participants reported that professionals from the educational system predominately use the validation procedure, as opposed to similar practitioners in Ireland.</p>
<p>ACCESSIBILITY</p>
<p>What relevant information, advice and guidance are available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?</p> <p>If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timescale to validate</li> <li>• Different validation providers</li> <li>• Company validation policies</li> <li>• Validation fees</li> <li>• Validation methods and tools</li> </ul>
<p>The national organisation in charge of qualifications in Ireland is called Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). QQI advises people with inquiries about receiving recognition through an RPL process to get in touch with their local education and training provider or adult education assistance service. Through regional AEGS offices, the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) provides unbiased adult education information, one-on-one guidance, and group guidance. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) offers materials to help adults with RPL and supports guidance professionals. A community of practise for those involved in and interested in RPL, the RPL Practitioner Network was established in 2015. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) Ireland organises conferences and other gatherings for policymakers and practitioners to discuss the benefits of informal and non-formal learning and to share best practises around RPL. Additionally, ECVET Ireland designates practitioners and decision-makers to participate in peer learning activities on RPL and international training ECVET conferences. RPL is promoted by ECVET Experts, who are recognised experts in the field of vocational education and training and are active in their networks of colleagues. The Adult Literacy Organisers' Association (ALOA), which is supported by Education and Training Boards, offers collective representation for Adult Literacy Organisers (ETBs). The Community Education Facilitators' Association (CEFA) is the organisation that represents community education facilitators professionally. These individuals work for the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), supporting neighbourhood community organisations. The ALOA and CEFA both provide training sessions and conferences that emphasise the importance of informal and non-formal learning and provide advice on RPL.</p>





What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and non-formal learning?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)
- Portfolio
- Tests and examinations
- Conversational methods of assessment: interviews and discussions
- Simulations: individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competences assessed.
- Evidence extracted from work or other practice
- Europass framework and Youthpass

Lifepass is broken up into various components. These sections are accessible through the main page as subfolders. Personal information, professional experience, formal and informal education, informational education, assessment criteria, and self-awareness are some of the subfolders in this folder structure. In order to ensure uniformity of use throughout the various countries, a similar process was utilised with the Lifepass for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Finding the personnel in a profession to test Lifepass in the process of Lifepass validation was the first stage. Thus, the first step was to interview those who wanted their education to be validated. The individual's Lifepass was filled up with assistance from the counsellor or guidance person in the next phase. The counsellor aided the person in locating the proof that these talents had been attained by walking them through the occupational criteria. Lifepass contained many types of proof. The counsellor or guidance person kept a copy of the occupational standards that were to be used for validation for their own records. The actual validation of the individual's learning took place in the third step. Together, the counselor/guidance and one or two assessors went through the Lifepass. The occupational standards were transformed into assessment formats in order to carry out the validation process, enabling the assessors to determine whether or not the knowledge, skill, or competence had been attained. The candidate has to meet all of the knowledge, skill, and competency requirements outlined in the occupational standards in order to receive validation for the standard. The individual did not always complete all the conditions necessary for the validation procedure to be effective. The validation procedure also helped to inform the person of the knowledge, abilities, and competencies that were already present as well as the additional training and education that were required before the person could be certified in accordance with the occupational standard.

Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities)?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Peer support groups
- 1 to 1 meeting
- Multilingual support
- Cultural mediation





<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Informative events</li> <li>● Non-formal approach</li> <li>● Funding support (transport, exam fees)</li> </ul>
<p>One of the main causes mentioned by participants was discrimination. The participants discussed how teachers have shaped their children's educational experiences in schools and they transferred the same rationale to the setting of further education, i.e., how the teacher reacts to comments in class. Participants in the discussion group agreed that a variety of factors can affect learning environments.</p>
<p><b>RECOGNITION</b></p>
<p>Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?</p> <p>If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment skills</li> <li>• Communication ability</li> <li>• Specific knowledge on the topic</li> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Practice-based skills</li> <li>• Empathy and active listening skills</li> <li>• Intercultural competences</li> <li>• Guidance skills</li> </ul>
<p>IT Skills – A level of IT literacy is now required for many positions, and validation tasks are no exception. While the skill set needed varied depending on the job posting, Microsoft Office proficiency was generally included. Results-oriented - Employers describe this skill in a number of ways, including being solutions-focused, having the capacity to prioritise one's own work in accordance with criteria, and upholding project delivery standards. This is less a traditional skill than it is an attitude or an approach, unlike the majority of the other things on the list. However, employers place a high value on it.</p> <p>The ability to prioritise tasks, manage time effectively, and multitask are all examples of soft skills that are included in the talent of organisation.</p> <p>A Preference for Accuracy and Documentation - This skill includes focusing on the minute particulars, working accurately and precisely, and taking great delight in finishing tasks correctly the first time.</p>
<p>Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?</p>
<p><b>BARRIERS</b></p>
<p>What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?</p>





If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Financial issues
- Lack of information
- Lack of time
- Administration issues
- Too bureaucratic
- Language barriers

It can sometimes also be due to the fact that providers are aware that learners might not be familiar with the term 'RPL' and so are more likely to introduce and explain it as an option verbally. Understanding and interpreting learning outcomes and connecting them to earlier learning require a lot of effort and thinking. The terminology and language used in the FETAC learning outcomes can be challenging. Finding informal or non-formal learning and transforming it into something that is comparable to these learning objectives are difficult tasks. It is challenging to determine how much it would roughly cost to support a candidate via RPL because practise has been so restricted. Since there haven't been many people requesting RPL, the suppliers have been able to absorb the costs into core prices or they have had some seed money to try with anything.

What are the main barriers you face when validating?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Lack of or insufficient regulatory framework
- Lack of or insufficient quality assurance framework
- Lack of support from the stakeholders involved
- Financial issues

Although they were concerned that they might not be able to find proof of the courses they had taken in the past, they believed that the process of compiling all the information would be beneficial. The participants recognised a variety of learning styles in addition to "bits and pieces" and earlier certified learning. The information and abilities that the participants identified as having been learned informally. One member, for instance, mentioned raising a family as relevant informal experience, albeit there was discussion within the group about whether FETAC would acknowledge this type of prior learning. In Ireland, RPL is connected to the official accrediting framework. It is extremely difficult (almost impossible) for a candidate to win a significant prize solely on the basis of prior knowledge. It is more likely that a candidate who successfully obtains prior learning recognition through RPL will be granted admission to, credits for, or exemptions from, a major award course. This indicates that in order to receive meaningful accreditation, the candidate may still need to interact with the formal system (they will still have to attend classes, submit coursework etc...).

SATISFACTION





<p>What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools and processes? What are your needs to improve your validation process?</p>
<p>What are your needs to improve your validation process?</p>
<p>The following were identified as possible elements that could increase system accessibility and inclusivity by participants: support for child care is essential, and there should also be flexibility in contact hours, supplemental welfare payments as an incentive, and tailored support for learning. Develop and/or increase access to relevant courses. "People need an awful lot of support."</p>
<p><b>CONCLUSIONS</b></p>
<p>Non-formal and informal learning are not uniformly acknowledged and validated by Ireland's many industries. Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and Recognition of Past Learning (RPL) are linked, and only people who are using past learning to acquire official certification in certain sectors are allowed to use RPL in Ireland. On the one hand, this is quite advantageous for any applicant who is successful in having their past learning acknowledged because there will never be any question that they do not meet the requirements of a certain level. RPL is linked to the NFQ and standards must be kept, thus the applicant must put in a lot of effort and submit a tonne of supporting evidence in order to have their past learning accepted. Quality and Qualifications Ireland is the name of the official agency in charge of qualifications in Ireland (QQI). Contact your local education and training provider or adult education support agency if you have questions about being recognised through an RPL procedure, advises QQI. Today, many jobs demand some amount of IT literacy, and validation activities are no exception.</p>

### 3.4. Italy

Partner name	PROMIMPRESA
Country	Italy
Contact Person	Margherita Angelucci





Number of participants	5
Number of facilitators	1
Date	09/05/2022
Duration	2 hours
Place	Online (Zoom)
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<p>The participants were invited to take part in the focus group through a “<i>Call for participants</i>” which was posted online and through our internal channels of communication.</p> <p>Their experiences and professions were very relevant to the topic discussed and intertwined well with each other as overall the participants came partially from a validation background and partially from a teaching/educational background.</p>	
<b>AWARENESS</b>	
<p><b>What do you know about the validation process in your work field?</b></p> <p>All the participants were well prepared regarding the validation process in Italy, their backgrounds are rooted in education overall and in some cases, specifically related to the validation of competences. As a result, all of the participants were well aware of the validation processes, both from a technical point of view as well as from a more “human-centred” standpoint, (such as teachers and trainers) who deal with learners from various backgrounds on a daily basis.</p> <p>When discussing personal views and opinions regarding the meaning of the term Validation, an important terminology that came about and that was shared among the participants was “To manifest/express oneself”. This definition was particularly impressive especially because it reflected the way the participants understand the concept of competences; natural qualities/talents that are inherent to the individuals and that at times are overlooked.</p>	
<p><b>How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country?</b></p> <p>As regards the National context, the participants believe that the process of validation is indeed inadequate. From a systemic point of view, it frequently fails to meet the needs of the population and not only, even the needs of the workforce itself. In other words, while within the job market there is an increased need for specific competences (such as soft skills), it is still difficult to identify them due to the exiting difficulties related to their assessment and their validation.</p> <p>This causes an apparent diminished availability of such skills and of course a lower likelihood to look for them. The risk therefore is to have a population that might have what it takes, but is unable to prove it, likewise, companies and public bodies may be looking for something that is apparently is missing.</p>	
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	
<p><b>What relevant information, advice and guidance is available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?</b></p> <p>All of the participants unanimously believed and stated that there is little to no information available for those who would like to access the validation processes in Italy. There is still little interaction between the institutions and the potential beneficiaries, which makes the validation process a tool that stands too far from the individual.</p>	





Moreover, the language used in such documents is highly structured and technical, which make the process not only slow but also difficult to understand/ interpret.

This led to the recognition and assertion that this duty is partially also in our hands; the responsibility to reach out to our target groups and to explain how the validation process works, to include and assist citizens who would like to get involved in this process to do so, in an informed, user-friendly way.

#### **What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and non-formal learning?**

In Italy the validation of Informal and Non-formal learning is still relatively backwards, it is something that isn't practiced and isn't yet fully recognised most of all, not homogeneously throughout the country. As a result, the methodologies are far from being official and applied throughout the country and there is a definite lack of them. Having said that however, the methods that the participants use range from:

self-evaluation questionnaire that can be done in an interview context and methods that are mostly conversational. There is a shortage of standardized tools and procedures.

However, it was highlighted by one of the participants that while these tools are often useful, they still need a professional interpretation and a contextualization that is dependent on the individual administering them, that is, the background and of course the trainer. As a result, the practitioners in a way, become the main tool to identify the skills, they become the magnifying glass that perceives a competence and brings it to the surface.

One of the participants, nevertheless, also mentioned a set of questionnaires, adapted from the "Certification System of the Sicilian Region", that assess the skills of an individual; these questionnaires cannot be done on one's own and need to be administered by professionals.

Another interesting and innovative tool is a web-app (*app4up*), created by the certification institute involved in the focus group, that allows the individual to test their cross-disciplinary skills as a way of becoming aware of them. By completing a certain number of tasks, the app will reveal the skills that you own.

Another valuable aspect that came out revolves around the role of trainers, who need to "dig" and actively look for competences within an individual.

Soft Skills for example, often go unnoticed and a big portion of the population is not aware of what they are or how to recognise them/apply them.

Therefore, professionals need to play an important role as "researcher" and almost "identifiers" of competences, help young adults recognise their potentials and bring them to the surface.

#### **Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees, and people with disabilities)?**

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, there very few tools that reach out to potential users.

Governmental and regional entities that have the potential to shed light on this process, are very far from these disadvantaged realities. Furthermore, the documents that explain and set the criteria for these target groups (and not only, but for the population in general), are not user friendly and are not easy to understand. This may result in a lack of interest from the potential beneficiary as well as a complete unperceived existence of these paths to validation.

### RECOGNITION





**Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?**

Practitioners need to be able to enhance the potentials they see or recognise in the individuals they work with or also come across in their professional life.

They need to be able to motivate, to engage individuals and to stimulate their interests and their creativity to think outside the box and to imagine themselves in different perspectives.

Professionals need to be persistent and truly investigate to find and discover what potentials one individual might have - to do so they also need to be aware of the context (cultural, linguistic, and overall educational background) and actively listen and observe.

When working closely with these target groups, the practitioners also need to guide them through the process which, as mentioned above, is not always easy to navigate and very often not well-explained.

Another aspect that is always relevant is also one's personal experience- In this sense, the practitioner can fully relate to the individual and therefore able to understand/predict what difficulties one might encounter.

**Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?**

As stated above some participants work directly with students as teachers and trainer and therefore are not directly connected to adult education centres or stakeholders while some of the participants work and/or manage VET (Vocation Education and Training) centres. As a result, they collaborate with other private and public entities including employment centres and the region of Sicily, nevertheless relationships are not institutionalised since the processes are all being built as they go, so there is no standardized way of communicating or exchanging data.

**BARRIERS**

**What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?**

From the focus group it was found that learners in Italy, since the beginning of their academic lives in public schools, do not receive the necessary guidance that prepares them for the future; this means that they don't receive enough information that allows them to make an informed choice regarding the career path, whether this career may be academic or work related. This shows also after their study and in the field of skills validation- there is very limited access to information and individuals are not encouraged to actively look for the necessary material regarding skills validation. In some cases, the process of skills validation on its own is not made clear to them and therefore this is the initial barrier.

**What are the main barriers you face when validating?**

As mentioned above, skills validation is not widely known/common as there is little effort made to get in touch with individuals and, moreover individuals are often unaware of this possibility and do not have enough knowledge to access this process.

Having said that though, an important issue that was brought up was especially related to migrants, who arrive in Italy with specific qualifications and a vast experience in their fields, but struggle to get these officially recognised and therefore to work in these professions.





As well as related to linguistic skills, migrants who are put through a language course, are not always schooled- this leads to an uneven delivery of classes/lessons.

The validation system is also highly fragmented, and that leads to differences between region and public bodies procedures. There is a lack of communication within the system itself, and this lack of communication seems to have its roots in the school system. As also testified by a participant who works closely within the public school system, the latter does not assist students in identifying nor in testing skills that are not standardised /recognised by the system and that are not part of the school’s curriculum.

On the other hand, however, nowadays more and more businesses are investing and looking for skills that are not always measurable, so doing, professionals that work within the field of validation are at loss as they are unable to verify and quantify one’s knowledge and ability in a profession or more generally in a specific field. In this context, employment agencies and professional training centres are unable to train and to place individuals within a field.

**SATISFACTION**

**What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools, and processes?**

Accrediting bodies throughout the country must have quality certification - that is, procedures that are known and recognized by certifying bodies.

**What are your needs to improve your validation process?**

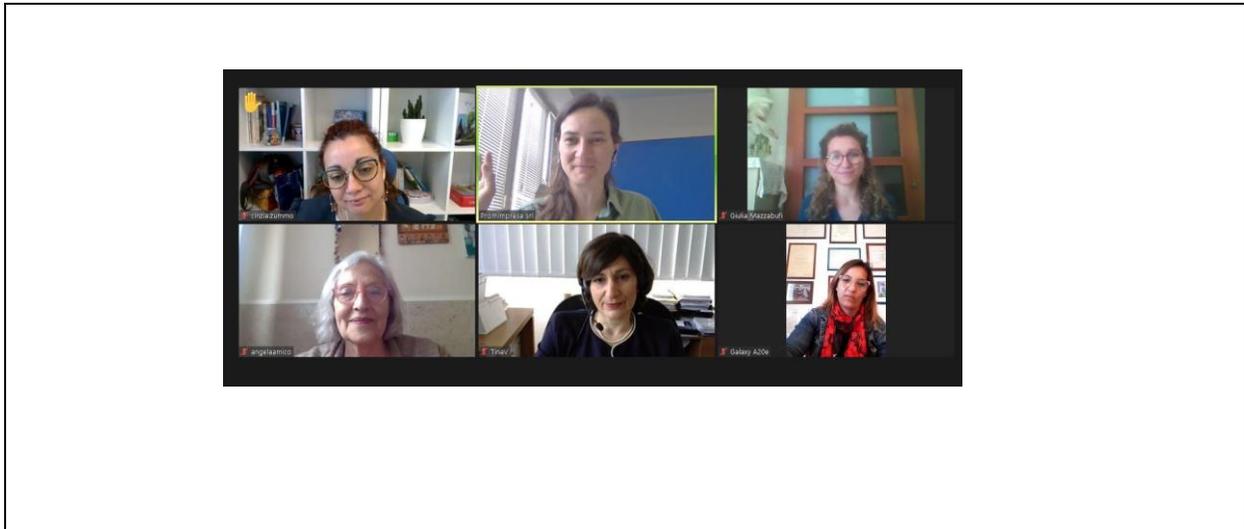
According to the participants in the focus group, the ideal validation process needs to be: dynamic, digital, easy to access and easy to comprehend, smart as well as in line with the business world. The latter would potentially lead to a smoother line of communication and allow the validation process to get in line with the business world therefore opening more doors to a wider number of people who may have the necessary who have numerous capabilities although they are not aware of them.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion it is possible to assume that the validation system of competences on the Italian soil still has considerable distance to go. Certainly, the need is felt for more communication between entities, both public and private, but above all, more reaching out to the main ingredient, namely the individuals who can access these validation processes and who can therefore benefit from them. It is important to keep in mind that the world and especially the world of work is constantly changing and as a result, one must adapt to the needs and demands of a reality that is in fact multifaceted.

**Add pictures**





### 3.5. Portugal

Partner name	Agrupamento de Escolas 2 de Beja
Country	Portugal
Contact Person	Paula Lança





Number of participants	6
Number of facilitators	2
Date	29 <sup>th</sup> April/ 3May 2022
Duration	3:30 hours/minutes
Place	videoconference/ Escola Secundária D. Manuel I

### INTRODUCTION

The focus group procedures were accomplished in 2 sessions, online and in-site. The facilitators presented the objectives and relevant information about the project and this stage to the participants. The discussion was conducted through the questions and the participants spoke freely.

There were 6 participants all within the same region, Alentejo, and all are part of Qualifica Centres teams: 2 are coordinators, 2 are professionals of orientation/guidance, recognition and validation (TORVC); 2 are teachers/educators.

### AWARENESS

#### What do you know about the validation process in your work field?

- Known as the process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC), it recognises and validates the competences acquired throughout life, both academic and professional competences.
- It started in 2008 as the governmental program “Novas Oportunidades” (New Opportunities), later called “Qualifica”, which created the national network of competences centres responsible to implement RVCC processes. From the beginning, educators involved were trained by ANQEP, the National Agency for Qualification and VET. Since then, the coordinator organises and manages the team, composed of guidance/orientation, recognition and certification professionals (TORVC) and trainers/teachers for the different areas, and disseminated training to the team. There is some training and monitoring actions from central services, although not enough.
- The process is targeted to all adults over 23, regardless of their professional situation, (it is accessible to those between 18 and 23 who have a 3-year working experience) because it requires multiple experience and knowledge acquired in personal, professional and social contexts, formal, non-formal and informal. There is no age limit and even retired people can apply. The people who usually seek this process are and were those who have dropped school early, mainly for economic reasons (had to start working to help the family; early pregnancies and marriage, etc.) or simply did not adapt to school. At the beginning these were people in their 50 with lack of qualifications, but the age range has lowered and some entities are enrolling younger people, with less acquired experience and competences.
- The regional features are also very important: Alentejo is a low-populated area, very vast (the biggest region in Portugal), with an average low income. The long distances to travel to school and limited transport contributed to school abandonment, specially among women, whom in certain situations, communities and families, still face some discrimination.





- RVCC is a complex and demanding process. The teams, TORVC and trainers, need to be very knowledgeable about the curricula or key competences framework (“referenciais”), all the procedures, and tools. The new framework, altered according to 2018 EKCLL, recently approved to the basic level, seems even more complex and the requirement of competences in a foreign language at very low levels will put a strain in a population with little contact with foreign languages. The process implies a minimum of 50-hour training in subjects and topics previously assessed as lacking for each candidate. The process can be only focused on schooling general competences or acquired professional skills. There are nationally approved frameworks for different working areas and functions. The professional RVCC implies observation at work for the employed and/or simulated situations and practical exercises for those who are unemployed. Self-assessment and skills audit are the starting point and crucial to plan and adjust the whole process to each adult and the portfolio is the validation tool. During the process, there can be more conventional sessions, as they are called, or practical ones (attending local parliament meetings to promote action within the community, cultural events, etc.). Training teams need to have close connection to make these processes successful.
- Generally, among employers, RVCC is not still very valued as a qualification tool. These do not provide conditions and do not motivate employees to attend. However, the majority of adults undergoing this process comes from protocols/partnerships established between the Qualifica Centres and employers. These partnerships are essential to inform employers and lead them to encourage their workers to enhance qualifications. For adult learners, this enhancement in their qualifications is relevant as long as it ends up as a salary increase or a better working position.

#### How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country?

- Among practitioners it is generally acknowledged as a very valid process to obtain qualification, but the professionals involved struggle with the lack of enough training and support from the authorities.
- It is well structured, with suitable legal framework, tools and methodology and quality control measures. However, it can be complex and lengthy, specially for adults lacking basic competences, for e.g.: digital and language skills.
- The new measure for a financial compensation for every qualification obtained through a recognition, validation and certification process may entice more candidates, but, on the other hand, may cause more misunderstanding towards the process for sceptics.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

#### What relevant information, advice and guidance is available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Timescale to validate
- Different validation providers
- Company validation policies
- Validation fees
- Validation methods and tools





- Centrally, the national agency, ANQEP ([www.anqep.gov.pt](http://www.anqep.gov.pt)), and the “Qualifica” Program ([www.qualifica.gov.pt](http://www.qualifica.gov.pt)) websites provide all the information about the process nationwide: regulations, the centres’ location and services, guidelines and tools, etc. The national qualifications catalogue ([www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt](http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt)) website makes available all the key competences frameworks and curricula to be implemented.
- Dissemination is mainly done locally and regionally by the centres themselves, through social networks, media, and partnerships with local authorities and relevant stakeholders. More investment in national dissemination would be important. Locally, the word-of-mouth, to family, friends and co-workers, is a relevant dissemination strategy.
- Competences centres named “Qualifica” Centres are the providers of RVCC and the professionals are prepared to deliver all the necessary information. Entities who apply to governmental program can be both public (employment centres, schools, municipalities) and private (training centres, professional associations) and usually target different publics. It is important that the providers are evenly scattered in the territories, in order to work together, rather than compete against each other.
- Financial compensation, called Qualifica Booster (Acelerador Qualifica), after the certification and final stage of the RVCC process is now available for adult learners to motivate them to increase their qualifications.

#### **What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and non-formal learning?**

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)
- Portfolio
- Tests and examinations
- Conversational methods of assessment: interviews and discussions
- Simulations: individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competences assessed.
- Evidence extracted from work or other practice
- Europass framework and Youthpass

- Autobiographical approach, outlined by the key competences’ framework and a guided script.
- Digital portfolio as the main validation tool, shared and built by the teaching team and the adult learner, always with regular reflective self-assessment and evidence.
- The process unfolds into recognition sessions and training sessions, according to needs and rhythm of each adult learner. Since pandemics restrictions
- Support material: skills audit, evidence extracted from work observation, support worksheets, demonstrations and simulations, conversational methods such as interviews and discussions to unveil and assess knowledge and competences acquired, talks and seminars, field trips, etc.
- The process depends very much on language competences and written skills, as well as digital competences, which are addressed with support from the teaching team.

**Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities)?**





If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Peer support groups
- 1 to 1 meetings
- Multilingual support
- Cultural mediation
- Informative events
- Non-formal approach
- Funding support (transport, exam fees)

- Informative events.
- RVCC processes require knowledge and skills in Portuguese language, so it is not available for all foreigners.
- For people with disabilities there is a specific key competence framework, addressing varied disabilities, but it does not respond to every need.
- The Qualifica Centres can displace teaching teams to other partner entities when these provide the facilities or at specific requests (e.g.: battered women refugees, prisons, rehabilitation centres).
- Financial compensation after the certification and final stage of the RVCC process.

### RECOGNITION

#### Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Assessment skills
- Communication ability
- Specific knowledge on the topic
- Data analysis
- Practice based skills
- Empathy and active listening skills
- Intercultural competences
- Guidance skills

- Empathy and active listening skills
- Communication ability
- Specific knowledge on the topics
- Flexibility
- Guidance skills
- Social and motivational skills
- Technical skills

Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?

- Qualifica Centres establish partnerships and protocols with local public authorities (local council, municipalities), with public and private employing sectors (hospital, fire department, charities, prisons,





business associations) in order to disseminate the services to the community, address the entity needs for vocational guidance and qualification to their workers, and cooperation in apprenticeship.

- There are also agreements with trade unions and business associations to participate as members of panel juries for certification in professional RVCC.
- Qualifica Centres also establish partnerships with Adult Training Centres as quality control certified entities.

### BARRIERS

#### What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Financial issues
- Lack of information
- Lack of time
- Administration issues
- Too bureaucratic
- Language barriers

- Lack of time or difficulties of time management to address work (e.g.: working in shifts) and family needs.
- Lack of digital equipment and connectivity.
- Long distances and lack of public transport
- Difficulties to cope with the demands of the key competence framework and the process itself.
- Lack of basic key digital and language competences.
- Women tend to drop out more due to social discrimination and pressure.

#### What are the main barriers you face when validating?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Lack of or insufficient regulatory framework
- Lack of or insufficient quality assurance framework
- Lack of support from the stakeholders involved
- Financial issues

- Lack of human resources and enough time to respond to needs.
- Rate of absenteeism or irregular paths among adult learners.
- Managing the process and training with low-skilled adult learners.
- Lack of stability of teaching team members with impact on management and interaction.
- Lack of digital resources.
- Lack of support from some of the stakeholders involved.

### SATISFACTION

#### What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools and processes?





The Qualifica Centres and RVCC process are one of the qualification systems with more quality control measures.

- The Quality Charter for Qualifica Centres.
- Monitoring and assessment actions by the supervising authorities.
- National digital platform (SIGO) to record every step of the process, with monthly assessment of goals and objectives by the supervising authorities.
- Certified key competences framework and training curricula for varied professional sectors.
- Random assessment of portfolios for quality control.

#### What are your needs to improve your validation process?

- Stable teaching teams with enough human resources.
- More time to connect and plan in informal meetings.
- More flexibility and trust from the supervising authorities to address regional features and needs.
- More training and support from the supervising authorities.
- More digital resources and equipment.
- More commitment and acknowledgment from employers.

### CONCLUSIONS

#### The recognition and validation process

The process of recognising and validating prior learning, experience and competences acquired throughout life, in every informal, non-formal and formal context, is a very effective way to enhance qualification, employability, and social welfare.

It requires a common and coherent structure and guidelines, suitable tools and methodologies, and quality assurance measures, but its flexibility allows varied responses.

RVCC or VPL is based on an autobiographical approach, relies on a good diagnosis and it is adaptable to every individual, especially vulnerable publics: displaced, migrants, low-qualified, unemployed or with precarious job situation, incarcerated or institutionalised people.

Target publics: adults over 23, with professional and social competences and skills. The process should take into account profile and features of the individual, regional and cultural characteristics.

- RVCC process still needs to be socially known and acknowledged among employers as a credible way to enhance competences, qualifications and improve workers productivity and employability. The success and satisfaction of adult learners can attract new candidates.
- Establishing partnerships with local entities and employers and networking with peer entities anchors the process and maximises impact and results.
- Pedagogical teams require stability, enough human resources and time to manage the whole process, coherent guidelines, regular training and close support from responsible authorities.



### 3.6. Romania

Partner name	CPIP
Country	Romania
Contact Person	Daiana Iurescu
Number of participants	5





Number of facilitators	1
Date	20.04.2022
Duration	2 hours
Place	Online

**INTRODUCTION**

The focus group activities were placed online over the duration of one session. Based on a partnership with Rahova Penitentiary, Luminita Medelet, Deputy Director of Social Reintegration, who also participated in the focus group, facilitated the participation of 4 professionals with extensive experience in formal and non-formal education. The facilitator gave a brief overview of the project's goals and went over the focus group's structure with the members. Before we began, the participants introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds.

**AWARENESS**

What do you know about the validation process in your work field?

Participants to the focus group were adult educators from the prison system. According to their answers, in their work domain the validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal methods is not an educational concept that is currently being used. One of them mentioned that they are aware of the Romanian Education Law that provides this concept, but so far, they have not seen an application of it.

The validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning for persons at risk of social exclusion, in this case persons deprived of their liberty, is not yet certified at this time. However, participants are aware that this can play an important role in improving post-release insertion capacity. They also mentioned that it has also been observed over time that non-formal and informal education has led to an increase in the motivation for lifelong learning.

How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country?

Participants said that the process of validation is not used among similar practitioners in Romania, but mostly by professionals from the educational system (such as schools). One of them even mentioned that they are convinced that the general population is not aware that much about this concept.

It was discussed that there should be a strong emphasis on certifying professional skills acquired in other ways than formal ones. However, this seems like it is a difficult process, one which should focus on carrying out activities that would increase the independence of persons deprived of their liberty after leaving the prison environment.

One of them said they consider that it is necessary to carry out, mainly, practical activities that can lead to an increase in the degree of independence of people leaving the penitentiary system, as well as an intervention aimed at identifying and developing individual inclinations / abilities that can contribute to obtaining personal successes, in different fields of activity (art, sports, etc.).





Furthermore, the certification of competencies is still at the beginning of the road, even though within the National Strategy for Social Reintegration of persons deprived of liberty 2020-2024, this is an important objective. The unemployment insurance law provides for the activity of certification of professional competencies obtained in other ways than the formal ones for certain categories of persons.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

What relevant information, advice and guidance is available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Timescale to validate
- Different validation providers
- Company validation policies
- Validation fees
- Validation methods and tools

During the focus group we have found out the following relevant information:

- There is a law on the unemployment insurance system and the stimulation of employment, which provides ways for the training of people who want to find a job.
- At the informative level and as a normative landmark, the National Strategy for Social Reintegration of persons deprived of liberty 2020-2024, aims at consolidating the inter-institutional framework of collaboration, in order to operationalize the principles previously promoted, by H.G. no. 389/2015, respectively: continuum of services and individualized assistance, systematic, adapted to the needs, with addressability for the category of persons who have been criminally sanctioned
- The information provided by the representatives of the County Employment Agencies. Unfortunately, they are insufficiently promoted, which prevents the application and development of the concept of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and non-formal learning?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)
- Portfolio
- Tests and examinations
- Conversational methods of assessment: interviews and discussions
- Simulations: individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competences assessed.
- Evidence extracted from work or other practice
- Europass framework and Youthpass

Given that our participants do not use validation of informal and non-formal learning, they discussed more about how the process is generally done in Romania. Thus, we found out that some of them knew that there is only way





through which validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal methods is conducted and that is to take an exam to certify the skills / abilities acquired informally or informally.

Furthermore, they said that there is a collaboration with the National Agency for Employment, which deals with the activity of evaluation and certification of professional skills acquired in other ways than formal ones, other programs aimed at professional qualification.

In the National Strategy for Social Reintegration of persons deprived of liberty 2020-2024 it is mentioned that to ensure the necessary conditions for the professional qualification of detainees by assessing and certifying professional skills acquired in other ways than formal ones, as well as by steps taken to ensure the legal framework for implementing dual education in system units. penitentiary, but also other programs aimed at professional qualification (apprenticeship), and last but not least the development of a Program of National Interest in order to facilitate the social reintegration of criminally sanctioned persons.

Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities)?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Peer support groups
- 1 to 1 meetings
- Multilingual support
- Cultural mediation
- Informative events
- Non-formal approach
- Funding support (transport, exam fees)

At present, the certification of competencies in other ways than formal ones is in its incipient phase. In this pioneering phase, it focuses on certification of professional skills acquired in other ways than formal ones, but also on programs aimed at professional qualification (apprenticeship) through dual education.

## RECOGNITION

Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Assessment skills
- Communication ability
- Specific knowledge on the topic
- Data analysis
- Practice based skills
- Empathy and active listening skills





- Intercultural competences
- Guidance skills

Some of the competences discussed during the focus group are:

- assessment skills
- achievement of objectives
- ability to collaborate
- good evaluation skills
- openness to new and original solutions
- good structuring of approaches

One of the participants mentioned that these competences are those skills that are acquired after practicing an activity either out of necessity or as a passion.

Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?

There is a partnership between the prison institution in which the participants work and The Municipal Agency for Employment, however, the process is difficult and faces a lot of problems. It is also worth mentioning that in penitentiaries, the education provided to adults is carried out according to the Law on the Execution of Sentences of Deprivation of Liberty and the Law on Education.

## BARRIERS

What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Financial issues
- Lack of information
- Lack of time
- Administration issues
- Too bureaucratic
- Language barriers

Some of the barriers discussed during the focus group that learners encounter when trying to validate their skills are:

- Ignorance of the possibility of validating skills / competences acquired informally and non-formally.
- Lack of information on how this validation is accepted on the labor market.
- Lack of information regarding the continuation of the training / formation / improvement steps in the field for which we obtained the validation.
- Lack of vocational training centers, lack of budgetary funds allocated for this purpose.
- Poor certification at the level of local non-governmental partners, lack of budgetary funds allocated for this purpose, weak concern of economic agents regarding the organization of dual education



What are the main barriers you face when validating?

If necessary, to trigger the discussion, you can give some of the following examples:

- Lack of or insufficient regulatory framework
- Lack of or insufficient quality assurance framework
- Lack of support from the stakeholders involved
- Financial issues

Barriers that they encounter regarding the validation process and why they do not currently use it in their practice:

- Lack / precariousness of information about this concept.
- Lack of information on how this validation is accepted on the labor market.
- Lack of information regarding the continuation of the training / formation / improvement steps in the field for which we obtained the validation.
- Lack of good inter-agency cooperation and lack of interest from governmental or non-governmental associations in this regard.
- Weak concern of economic agents regarding the organization of dual education

#### SATISFACTION

What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools and processes?

Overall, participants did not have too much information about this question. The main finding discussed is that from the performed verifications they noticed a weak certification at the level of the local non-governmental / governmental partners.

What are your needs to improve your validation process?

Some of the needs mentioned by participants to improve their validation process were:

- Knowing how the process is actually conducted.
- Knowledge of the areas in which this concept can be used.
- Knowing the validity of validating the acquisition of competencies / skills acquired informally or non-formally or if it is permanent.
- Knowledge of the possibilities for further improvement.
- Having a well-structured system for competency certification.
- The creation of a structured network at Community level on governmental / non-governmental associations that can provide a certification of competences, developing a campaign to encourage the concern of economic agents regarding the organization of dual education

#### CONCLUSIONS





Overall, even though participants were young adult and adult educators, their area of work is focused on the prison system from Romania, in which currently the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning is not used. They were aware of the presence of such techniques, however, they did not have that much information about the topic. They do believe in its usage and consider that it would be helpful to apply such methodologies in the prison system, for the persons deprived of liberty so that it can help with their integration back into society.

### 3.7. Slovakia

Partner name	Institute of European Certification of Personnel
Country	Slovakia
Contact Person	Filipp Sedov
Number of participants	6
Number of facilitators	1
Date	04.05.2022
Duration	1,5 hours
Place	Online





## INTRODUCTION

We managed to gather together some of the best experts in the field from Slovakia. At least for three of them validation of non-formal/informal education and skills is the main focus of their job.

## AWARENESS

### What do you know about the validation process in your work field?

Initially the idea of validation of non-formal/informal education and skills appeared due to the European Commission recommendations for the European Union member states including Slovakia. The recommendations promoted an idea that each resident of the EU should be given a right to have one's abilities recognized and validated. This recognition is supposed to improve one's position on the labour market as well as helping an applicant to enrol educational institutions if one's qualifications meet predefined requirements.

The recommendations suggested that the conditions for the reform must be prepared by the year of 2020, but in many EU countries including Slovakia it didn't happen for a number of reasons. As a result the proposed system of validation of non formal education and skills has not been introduced yet. An expert says that four steps need to be done in order to launch it.

They are:

1. Identification of one's abilities and knowledge
2. Documentation of what one has already gained
3. Overall evaluation
4. Issuing of a document which confirms that one has got certain competencies, skills, and knowledge at a certain level

This qualification system currently is in a stage of preparation by the State Vocational Education Institute, and that is their responsibility to implement it on the territory of the Slovak Republic. Apart from that the results of this project will find its place in the new legislation concerning so-called lifelong education. Another mission of the State Vocational Education Institute is to write an annual official report which covers the topic of validation, and then to share it with entities from other EU countries.

### How is the process of validation known among practitioners in your country

It's hard to say how well the process of validation is known among practitioners in Slovakia simply because there's no research conducted which would cover this matter. However, the respondents agree with the fact that this process is mostly known among practitioners only and some particular employers who require such validation in their work processes.

## ACCESSIBILITY

### What relevant information, advice and guidance is available for learners in order to access validation processes in your country?





There is not much relevant information, advice or guidance available for learners to access validation processes because the target audience is either unemployed people or those who want to change their occupation. Other two bigger groups which request validation of their skills are low-skilled workers as well as migrants. Most of those who belong to the first group didn't graduate from school and as a result they do not have good opportunities to improve their qualifications via the educational system. Due to the ongoing war in neighbouring Ukraine an amount of migrants who would like to have their skills verified increased drastically.

**What are the main validation tools and methodologies you use to validate informal and non-formal learning?**

Some of the validation tools are widely introduced in the Slovak Republic. Among them are portfolios, various tests and examinations, conversational methods of assessment (such as interviews and discussions), and evidence of previous work experience are also common.

Europass has been becoming more popular throughout the last few years as well. Many describe it as an all-in-one user friendly tool which has a high variety of features. Europass is widely used in all EU countries and as a result of that many international companies request it from job seekers instead of regular CVs. Another standardised tool Youthpass is predominately used as an addition to job or study applications.

**Which validation arrangements are in place to reach a wider range of users from disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers/unemployed, and individuals at risk of unemployment, older workers, migrants/refugees and people with disabilities)?**

When it comes to validation arrangements for disadvantaged groups (including low-skilled individuals, early school leavers, jobseekers, individuals at risk of unemployment older workers, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities) the legislation insists that everyone has to have an equal access to the validation tools, and that it's validation providers' responsibility to guarantee such access. More specifically it should be guaranteed that everyone can receive enough information and support when it comes to validation. According to the draft legislation about lifelong education, labour offices will be in charge of that as well. This law is being prepared by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with professionals, who are active in the field of validation of non-formal/informal education and skills.

RECOGNITION

**Which competences would you associate with validation practitioners?**

Whilst the process of validation is not working the way it is written in the law, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic published on its official website approximately 20-30 qualification standards. On their basis so-called "eligible services" for verification of professional competence can be established. These services are authorised to run validation procedures based either on work experience or study experience one has gained earlier. An applicant can sign in for an exam, and in case of successful completion he/she/they will receive a certificate which confirms the applicant's competencies. The price of such a procedure is max. 300€ and it is





predominantly popular among those who work in the beauty industry (hairdressers, cosmetologists etc.). For the next year, the State Vocational Education Institute has a plan to run a public information campaign about the verification opportunities.

It's worth mentioning that the validation process of language skills is organised in a different manner, and generally those who need such recognition have no problem receiving it. Afterwards such confirmation can be used in CV's or for education purposes. Some of the institutions, which are authorised to run validation of language skills, can also issue international standard certificates. Such certificates are internationally recognized. If an applicant does not need an international certificate, he or she can pass a language test or an exam and will receive a confirmation about that within a day.

**Do you work in partnership with any companies, adult education centres, trade unions or any other relevant stakeholder? How does your partnership work?**

Later this year the draft legislation will be discussed by the Slovak government, and gives hope for positive changes. One of the changes the professionals would like to reach is about partnerships among stakeholders. It can make the whole field of validation functions much more efficient.

**BARRIERS**

**What are the main barriers for learners to validate their skills?**

Lack of information is seen as the main barrier for learners to validate their skills. Some of them are not ready to spend time doing so and paying up to 300€ for that. When the new legislation is submitted there will be a risk of the procedure being too bureaucratic. Stakeholders also face some major challenges, such as insufficient regulatory framework, lack of support from stakeholders involved.

**What are the main barriers you face when validating?**

Although the process of validation of non-formal/informal education and skills is not being set properly, the legislation regarding this matter already exists. This legislation includes a list of qualification standards, and they are very certain about what skills can be validated. As a result of that, many so-called soft skills cannot be validated so far. Among them are guidance skills, intercultural competences, empathy and active listening skills.

**SATISFACTION**

**What do you know about quality assurance frameworks that are in place to support valid and credible methodologies, tools and processes? What are your needs to improve your validation process?**

It is hard to estimate the quality of assurance frameworks for validation because of the early-stage of the whole field of validation in the Slovak Republic.

**What are your needs to improve your validation process?**



It's too early to talk about how to improve validation processes. The primary goal for now is to make these processes working in full-scale on the territory of the Slovak Republic. Later we will be able to conduct a research about how it all works and only afterwards we will start thinking how to improve it.

### CONCLUSIONS

The field of validation does not receive enough attention from the state, and what is, perhaps, even more important the general public is not awareded about such procedure. Later this year an international conference will be organised in Bratislava by the Association of Adult Education Institutions in the Slovak Republic, in frames of this upcoming event foreignh experts will have a chance to share their experience. The State Vocational Education Institute is planning to launch an information campaign about validation opportunities in Slovakia, which may help the industry. Also the new legislation can change the current situation for the better, but it is not guaranteed that the draft law will be passed by the Slovak government.

#### Add pictures



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