



**Annual National Review (ANaR) on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNF-IFL)  
on the national context**

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**Please note that the new updated information for 2010 has been added in blue.**

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## I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
<p><b>1. National strategy:</b> is there one? <b>What</b> is in place re the VNF-IFL, at <b>which level</b>? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies?  <i>Any reference or URL links to official documents, Websites?</i></p>	<p>Since 1993, Belgium is a federal state. Consequently, some competences (like employment policy) are handled by the federal institutions whereas decentralised communities are in charge of other policy matters. The apportionment of competences between the decentralised institutions is founded on the one hand on a linguistic criterion and on the other hand on a territorial basis. The decentralised institutions based on the first criterion (Flemish Community, French Community and German Community) handle education, cultural matters, etc. Those based on the second criterion (Flemish Region, Brussellian Region and Walloon Region) manage competences relative to land settlement matters and socio-economic development, which includes e. g. vocational training. In the north, this institutional complexity is reduced by the fact that the Flemish Community and Region are merged together and their competences ruled by a single government.</p> <p>The federal structure of Belgium explains why regional strategies concerning VNF-IFL grow at different rates and apply distinct logics. Indeed, VNF-IFL can be considered as a key issue in the framework of the qualification practices and debates<sup>1</sup>. As such it is central for education, training and employment policies as well as for the social partners' strategies. These policies and strategies are conducted by institutions acting at different levels of decision. The right for every individual to the <i>bilan de compétences/ Competentiebilan</i> (professional competence assessment) has been established by a federal law (30th December 2001). Likewise the social partners' strategies and the guidelines of the employment policies are mainly established at the federal level. But a non negligible part of their translation in operational objectives and implementation are conducted at the regional level under the authority of the Regions (Flemish, Walloon and Brussellian Region). Moreover, whereas vocational training policy is within the competence of these last three institutions, education is ruled by the other type of decentralised authorities: the Flemish Community (as mentioned before, in practice this one has been merged with the Flemish Region), the French Community and the German Community.</p> <p>This context gives a lot of autonomy to the actors in acting at a regional and/or interorganizational level. Since 2000, VNF-IFL has been the driving force of various initiatives. In the French community, these initiatives result</p>

<sup>1</sup> Qualification is defined by Naville as "a complex relationship between technical operations and the estimate of their social value" (translated from NAVILLE P. (1956), *Essai sur la qualification du travail*, Paris, Marcel Rivière.

from the progressive setting of networks proper to certain sectors of education or training:

- One of them is led since 2003 by the public operators of vocational training in partnership with the social partners (the “Validation des compétences” project<sup>2</sup>). It’s main goals are the assessment and recognition of professional competences whenever these result from on-the-job learning or vocational training;
- Another one is conducted by the universities and has been boosted by the implementation of the Bologna process in 2006: the “Valorisation des Acquis de l’Expérience” project<sup>3</sup> aims for sharing university practices on recognition of prior experiential learning in admission and/or partial exemption procedures ;
- The non university higher education institutions”, pursuing a similar objective in their sector, have also [in September 2009](#) created their own “Plate-forme”;
- Moreover, an experimental initiative has been launched under the name of “Thésée project”<sup>4</sup> by some providers of training and some work integration social organisations.

In Flanders, the development of VNF-IFL seems also to originate in a sectoral organisation of initiatives:

- Some are implemented by the social partners: the development of titles of professional skills i.e. *titels van beroepsbekwaamheid*<sup>5</sup> which can be obtained by individuals via an assessment procedure (*ervaringsbewijs*);
- Whereas university and non university higher education institutions develop the recognition of previously developed competencies (‘EVC’ (*Eerder Verworven Competenties*) and ‘EVK’ (*Eerder Verworven Kwalificaties*)) in the framework of the Bologna process and the consequent flexibilization

<sup>2</sup> Based on COMMUNAUTE FRANÇAISE (2003), Décret portant assentiment à l’accord de coopération du 24 juillet 2003 relatif à la validation des compétences dans le champ de la formation professionnelle continue, conclu entre la Communauté française, la Région wallonne et la Commission communautaire française, 22/10/2003, [M.B. 31/12/2003].

<sup>3</sup> Based on the so-called “Bologna Decree”: COMMUNAUTE FRANÇAISE (2004), Décret définissant l’enseignement supérieur, favorisant son intégration dans l’espace européen de l’enseignement supérieur et refinançant les universités, 31/03/2004 [M.B. 18/06/2004].

<sup>4</sup> Thésée (projet européen Equal) (2008), *Le guide méthodologique des filières et des Passerelles*, février ; Thésée (projet européen Equal) (2007), *Le vademecum des filières et des passerelles*, décembre.

<sup>5</sup> See VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP (2005), Decreet betreffende het verwerven van een titel van beroepsbekwaamheid, 30/04/2004, [M.B. 26/11/2004] and VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP (2004), Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot uitvoering van het Decreet betreffende het verwerven van een titel van beroepsbekwaamheid, 23/09/2005, [M.B. 30/11/2005].

<sup>6</sup> See VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP (2004), Decreet van het Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap betreffende de flexibilisering van het hoger onderwijs in Vlaanderen en houdende dringende hogeronderwijsmaatregelen, 30/04/2004 [M.B. 12/10/2004].

<sup>7</sup> VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP (2007), Decreet betreffende het volwassenenonderwijs, 15/06/2007 [M.B. 31/08/2007].

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.serv.be/uitgaven/1162.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> VAN DE POELE L., JANSSENS K. and DEBUSSCHER M. (2008), *Kennisnetwerk en kwaliteitsbewaking van EVC in Vlaanderen. Praktijkondersteunende studieopdracht voor Vlaams ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, departement Onderwijs en Vorming, project Strategisch Onderwijs- en Vormingsbeleid*, Universiteit Gent-Cesor.

	<p>of higher education<sup>6</sup>;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the adult education and training sector a decree<sup>7</sup> was adopted in order to facilitate the individual learning paths between the numerous providers of training and work integration social organisations.</li> </ul> <p>However, this wide range of initiatives is in fact coordinated at a regional level and underlain by a true voluntarism of the Flemish government in the matter of qualification. Indeed, in the Flemish part of the country a “<i>Competentieagenda 2010</i>”<sup>8</sup> has been established in 2007 by this authority and the social partners (<i>Sociaal-Economische Raad van Vlaanderen (SERV)</i>). This agenda states 10 priorities in which inter-organizational recognition of NF-IFL plays a central role. The debate on VNF-IFL (and more particularly on the quality of VNF-IFL) is also supported by the setting of a network (the VAN DE POELE, JANSSENS and DEBUSSCHER report on quality in EVC (2008)<sup>9</sup> stress on the importance of face-to-face relationships) assembling experts in this domain and actors <a href="#">_working in different sectors as higher education, adult education, assessment centres for the certification of work experience, continuing vocational training, the cultural sector, youth and sports sector.</a> The so called “<i>Knowledge Network on EVC</i>” has been officially launched in february 2010. The aim of it is to support and enhance the quality of RAC (recognition of acquired competences) procedures, and support RAC providers. The Knowledge Network also gives input to the Project Team on RAC. Indeed, in september 2010 the government will start up this Project Team to elaborate an integrated vision on RAC in Flanders. This project team consists of members from the ministries of work and social economy, education &amp; training and culture, youth and sports.</p>
<p><b>2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Who</b> has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL? Which ministry (ies), which institution (s), organisation or body (ies)? <b>Who</b> gives the main impetus and direction?</li> <li><b>Who</b> regulates, monitors and assesses practices and pilots new initiatives?</li> <li><b>Or</b> are they local, regional, sectoral, institutional initiatives?</li> </ul>	<p>In the French-speaking part of Belgium, depending on their principal activities and public, the organisations active in the qualification issue - and consequently the VNF-IFL - fall under the responsibility of one or more of three governments (the Walloon government, the French Community government and the French Community commission in Bruxelles (<i>COCOF</i>)) and several ministries: the Ministry for Compulsory Education (<i>Ministère de l’Enseignement obligatoire</i>), the Ministry for Higher Education (<i>Ministère de l’enseignement supérieur</i>), the Ministry for Vocational Training (<i>Ministère de la formation</i>), the Ministry for Adult Education (<i>Ministère de l’enseignement de promotion sociale</i>) and the Ministry for Employment (<i>Ministère de l’emploi</i>).</p> <p>The French-speaking institutions are among others counselled by the “<i>Conseil économique et social de la Région wallonne</i>” (CESRW) and the “<i>Conseil économique et social de la Région bruxelloise</i>” (CESRB) which represent the social partners’ positions and the “<i>Conseil de l’éducation et de la formation</i>” (CEF) which is compound of the different actors of education and vocational training:</p> <p>In the vocational training area the main impetus and direction is given by the “<i>Consortium de validation des compétences</i>”. This one gathers the main public providers of vocational training: Forem-formation, Bruxelles-formation, the « <i>Enseignement de promotion sociale</i> », the Walloonian “<i>Institut de formation des petites et moyennes entreprises</i>” (IFAPME) and the Brussellian “<i>Espace formation pour les petites et moyennes entreprises</i>”. Except for the “<i>Enseignement de promotion sociale</i>” the education sector is not part of the device. Collaborating with the employment public services and the social partners this <i>Consortium</i> developed in the five last years a system to validate occupational competencies acquired by non formal and informal learning. The training centers of this public operators may apply to be accredited as <i>Centres de validation</i> and</p>

therefore to organize the validation trials<sup>10</sup>. The social partners are part of this process in three different ways: 1) in the intersectoral *Commission consultative et d'agrément* which prioritize the professions to be dealt with and monitor the assessment process, and 2) on a sectoral base, in the *Commissions de référentiels* which are the working groups in charge of describing the profession (the *référentiel métier*), translating it in modules of competences to be validated and creation of trials, 3) more generally they are asked to develop negotiated effects for the *Titres de compétences* delivered in sectoral conventions. Furthermore - given the pressures for implementing the EQF (European qualification framework) in national frameworks - the Consortium plays an active role in the *Service francophone des métiers et qualifications*. Created in September 2009, this new organ of dialogue has been charged to build links between the referentials of competences developed by the social partners and the referentials of training developed by the vocational training sector and the vocational secondary education sector.

In the higher education area the universities are the main actors for VNF-IFL. In some universities there is a long tradition of adult education and various practices regarding the integration of non formal and informal learning in the curriculum. These practices are traditionally different from university to university. However in the last years (following the "Bologna decree" (2004/04/31)) the universities developed a dialogue on the so-called *valorisation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE) and different projects inside of the CIUF (*Conseil interuniversitaire francophone*). The "éducation tout au long de la vie" (ETALV) Commission has been charged by the rectors of the university to develop adequate procedures in this view. A preliminary project has been led in 2005-2006 in order to define a common framework for the VAE process and to identify the barriers for the VAE implementation. Since september 2008, a platform called the 'Plateforme VAE-Université' - University VAE platform, gathers together all the French speaking universities to promote VAE in the large public, to harmonize the process of VAE in the universities, to share the good practices, to guarantee the right to VAE in French Community in Belgium. This platform involves the members of the ETALV commission, a VAE coordinator and the VAE counselors. The VAE counselors have been hired thanks to an ESF (European social fund) funding by the Academia to guide the VAE candidates to promote and negotiate the VAE procedures within the different faculties, to receive the candidates to valorisation, to assist them in the preparation of their valorisation forms, to introduce their case to the jury, to verify the administrative validity of the decision, and to take part in any intern (and sometimes extern) meeting concerned by this problematic.

In the Flemish Community, the VNF-IFL is linked to the Ministry of education and training, to the Ministry of employment and to the Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media; they are members of the Flemish government. They are counselled among others by the VLOR (*Vlaamse Onderwijsraad*, Council for Education) and by the SERV (*Sociaal economische raad van Vlaanderen*) which is the Flemish equivalent for the CESRW/CESRB (social partners).

Indeed, the Flemish Government launched in 2006 a system to validate occupational competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning. The SERV and the social partners and the Departement of

<sup>10</sup> In fact any other training center can apply to be "Centre de validation" under the condition to be funded by public funds at minimum 50%.

	<p>Employment and Social Economy are responsible for this device (VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP (2005)) and share responsibilities. The SERV and the social partners propose the professions for which a certificate for vocational experience will be useful. They are accepted by the Flemish Government. After this acceptance, the SERV and the social partners define the assessment standards on the basis of profession descriptions. The assessment can then be organized by any organisation (“beoordelingsinstantie”). Quality conditions are defined by the Flemish government and accredited by the Minister of Employment.</p> <p>In the higher education area the assessment of NF-IFL in comparison to the expected learning outcomes of a given program of study are realised by the <i>associaties</i><sup>11</sup> or an external organ created by them. The <i>flexibilisering</i> Decree stress on the assessment applicants’ support by an independent and competent person. It authorizes also several ways to proof the competences (e.g. structured conversation, direct observation of behaviours and accomplishments, building a portfolio, etc.).</p> <p>The decree on adult education sets out an approach to assessment and certification of acquired competences in Adult education.</p> <p>In the Sports sector the Flemish Trainers School focuses on volunteers who are active in sport clubs. Training courses offer support for further training to qualify as coach or trainer. The trainers school recognizes acquired competences and qualifications</p>
<p><b>3. Sectors: where, which sectors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does VNF-IFL apply to all educational sectors? Or to specific ones (vocational education &amp; training, Further Educ. Colleges, universities, adult education etc....)</li> <li>• Or/ and does it apply to other sectors: 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, private sector</li> </ul> <p>Name some examples or references to examples (websites, documents etc....?)</p>	<p>In the French Community mainly two sectors are currently involved in VNF-IFL: the universities (<a href="http://www.ciuf.be/cms/etalv">http://www.ciuf.be/cms/etalv</a>) and the public vocational training sector (the Consortium de validation des competences, <a href="http://www.cvdc.be">http://www.cvdc.be</a>). The “Validation des competences” device is currently developing some experimental partnerships with certain local agencies for employment (notably the Missions régionales pour l’Emploi) and some local public employers (i.e. some Centres publics d’aide sociale) for improving the use and recognition of the <i>Titres de competences</i>. The strong involvement of the <i>Consortium de validation des competences</i> into the <i>Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications</i> (see 2.) is another important factor for networking the validation des competences and the rest of the vocational training/education system. Furthermore, in the framework of the “Thésée” project, Forem-formation and Bruxelles-formation (public vocational training sector) developed with two social organisations involved in work integration (the AID (Action Intégrée de Développement) network and the Centre de Formation 2mille) some guidelines<sup>12</sup> to facilitate the individual path inside of the third sector (more specifically the “Entreprises de formation pour le travail” and “Organismes d’insertion socio-professionnelle) and between these associations and the public training providers. Those guidelines are among others based on the system of reference of the “Consortium de validation des competences”. In addition to that, the non university higher education sector created in 2009 its</p>

<sup>11</sup> “An association [associatie] is an official entity regulating the cooperation of a university and one or more university colleges [non academic higher education organisations]. The partners may transfer their powers regarding education, scientific research and social society services to this association” (LEYBAERT W. (2008), *Higher Education in Flanders*, Brussel, Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education and Study Grants (Web reference: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/publicaties/eDocs/pdf/298.pdf>)).

<sup>12</sup> Thésée (projet européen Equal) (2008), *Le guide méthodologique des filières et des Passerelles*, février ; Thésée (projet européen Equal) (2007), *Le vademecum des filières et des passerelles*, décembre.

	<p>own <i>Cellule inter réseaux</i> in charge of developing a common system of valorisation of personal and professional practices. 2010 has been aimed as a year of internal dialogue by this sector: the <i>Cellule inter réseaux</i> has been charged of putting forward the dialogue between the high schools and between their superior authorities and the other actors of VNF-IFL in the French Community. In the framework of the Roundtable for higher education (<i>Tables rondes de l'enseignement supérieur</i>) launched in 2010 by the Ministry, the lifelong learning has been identified as one of the key issue to guarantee the higher education's openness to the society. The specificity of the <i>valorisation</i> process promoted in higher education in comparison to the <i>validation</i> project (see below) has been reaffirmed as well as the need for partnership in student guidance and methodological tools between valorisation devices developed by the non university and those developed by the university higher education institutions.</p> <p>As mentioned before, the Flemish qualification system seems to be more integrated than its neighbour. The fact that a single government is in charge of education and vocational training competences as well as of cultural and sportive matters can be considered as an important factor of integration. In addition to the "<i>Competentieagenda 2010</i>", the Knowledge Network on EVC and the Project Team on RAC, several indices of this process can be underlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In higher education, the non academic higher education institutions (the <i>University Colleges</i>) are part of the above-mentioned <i>Associations</i> which are responsible for VNF-IFL.</li> <li>• In vocational qualification the schools can apply to be accredited as assessment centres for VNF-IFL practices.</li> </ul> <p>The decree on adult education and the projects led in the field of the sport sector (see 2.) testify of the Flemish government's intention of getting these actors into the process of VNF-IFL. However, the adult education and socio-cultural adult work sector is very heterogeneous and "although the sector is enthusiastic about the possibilities of evaluating the skills that people develop in the non-formal and informal activities of socio-cultural adult work, one is not convinced that it is the task of this sector to formally accredit the results of this learning process" (Janssens 2007, p. 6). The Support point for Socio-Cultural Adult Work (Socius, <a href="http://www.socius.be">www.socius.be</a>) is one location where the reflexion on this subject is led. The portfolio project "Oscar" (<a href="http://www.oscaronline.be/">http://www.oscaronline.be/</a>) was set up in 2009 by SoCiuS and Steunpunt Jeugd with the financial support of the Flemish government. It is an instrument mainly for organisations and participants from social-cultural work for youths and adults. This portfolio has been designed as a tool for the validation of lifelong learning for personal development and social participation on the one hand and as a contribution to educational and professional development on the other.</p>
<p><b>4. Terminology:</b> Is there a <b>common definition</b> of VNF-IFL, or are there <b>specific terms</b> used by different institutions implementing VNF-IFL? What would be the best way to translate it / them into English?</p>	<p><i>Validation</i> and <i>certification</i> are two very different concepts in the French Community of Belgium. The second is an exclusivity of the education sector and provides legal effects. The legislator restrained the fieldwork of the "Consortium de validation des competences" to the first concept:</p> <p>"2° Validation de compétences professionnelles : le processus organisé par les signataires de l'accord et visant à vérifier la maîtrise effective par un individu de compétences décrites dans un référentiel qui en précise également le mode d'évaluation. Ce processus aboutit à la délivrance d'un titre légal qui ne développe pas les effets de droit liés à la certification de la Communauté</p>

française.

3° Certification : le processus organisé par la Communauté française et menant à la délivrance du certificat. Cette délivrance correspond à la reconnaissance par le ministère de l'Éducation, de la maîtrise par un individu de compétences décrites dans un programme d'enseignement. Cette reconnaissance, réservée à l'enseignement, produit les effets de droit de la Communauté française : ouvrir un accès à une profession réglementée ou à un emploi subsidié, autoriser une équivalence avec d'autres diplômes ou intervenir dans la fixation d'un niveau barémique de la Fonction publique. » (Decree 31/12/2003)

The *validation* is then characterized by the triptych “visibility effects-specific and individual competence-partial trial” as the *certification* refers to “legal effects-generalist competences-comprehensive trial”.

The decree for universities (Bologna decree [1]) specifies that the VNF-IFL could be used for master admission or dispensation at all degrees (bachelor and master). The universities developed therefore their own concept: the “*valorisation des acquis de l'expérience*” to distinguish it of the French “*validation*”<sup>13</sup>. No degree can be directly delivered as a result of a « valorisation » process but these can only result in the admission of a student in a given higher education program (Masters or Continuing Education programs) or the dispensation of part of this program.

Flanders makes also a distinction between *beroepskwalificaties* (professional qualifications) and *onderwijskwalificaties* (educational qualifications) in its *kwalificatiestructuur* (Qualification framework). Only schools can deliver the seconds but both of them refer to a comprehensive set of competences and to the same 8 grades-scale of the Flemish Qualification Framework<sup>14</sup>.

In Flemish higher education the proof that you can be partially or even totally exempted of a study program on the basis of your EVC or EVK (see 1.) in order to be graduated from it is called “bewijs van bekwaamheid” (proof of skills).

The concept of APEL is also used in decrees and defined as “*the complex of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes acquired through learning processes for which no diploma was awarded*” (Vlaams Parlement 2004)<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore the debate about the position of the adult education and socio-cultural adult work sector on VNF-IFL resulted in a terminological distinction between *erkenning* (accreditation of) competences and *herkenning* (recognition of) prior learning. The first term refers to the objective of assessing competences in order to “facilitate access to formal education and enhance job possibilities in the labour market” (Janssens 2007, p. 6). The second term refers to the “formative function to APEL, aimed at social participation and personal development” (*Ibidem*). Recognition (*herkenning*) of prior learning can be seen as valuing learning (by means

<sup>13</sup> Viron F. (de) et A. Salmon (s. d.), *La Valorisation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE) en Communauté française. Dossier de presse*.

<sup>14</sup> See art. 8 and 9 of VLAAMSE GEMEENSCHAP (2009), Decreet betreffende de kwalificatiestructuur, 30/04/2009, [M.B. 16/07/2009].

<sup>15</sup> Translated from the Flemish by Karine Janssens, excerpt from Janssens K. (2007), “Different tracks to the same goal: the accreditation of prior experiential learning in Flanders”, in *Validation and Recognition of Experiential Learning. Final Book of the REACTION Project*, pp. 79-90.

	<p>of self evaluation or peer evaluation, feedback, coaching, ...) with goals like empowerment, self awareness, training needs, ... An assessment is not necessarily part of this process. Accreditation (<i>erkenning</i>) would then be used for those competences that actually have been assessed by an independent assessor towards a given standard and are certified by a recognised body. This distinction was made in the VAN DE POELE, JANSSENS and DEBUSSCHER report on quality in EVC (2008)<sup>16</sup> since the authors noticed that especially in the sector of socio-cultural adult education and youth work the discussion on APL had a totally different approach than in higher education and labour market. By introducing these two definitions the discussion between the different sectors has been more transparent. It also gave room for the youth sector, for example, to define their position in the debate more clearly and to decide that their interest is in <i>herkenning</i> and not directly in EVC.</p>
<p><b>5. National Qualification Framework:</b>  How do VNF-IFL practices or initiatives relate to NQF in place or in construction, if they do? If not, why not?  Brief description of the NQF (diagram etc)?  Reference to docs or website?</p>	<p>The thinking about NQF is still in progress in French Community. The authorities give a lot of autonomy to the actors but until now, there is no official common strategy on VNF-IFL. Yet, the Conseil de l'éducation et de la formation (CEF/Recommendation 106) advocates for a French Community Qualification Framework in 2012. During the Roundtable for higher education, the actors acknowledged the importance of it but asked for distinguishing the translation of course programs in <i>learning outcomes</i> and the notion of <i>competence</i> which is considered as proper to job referentials.</p> <p>In Flanders the Flemish Parliament decided to develop a Flemish qualifications framework, inspired by the EQF and forming the basis for a Flemish qualifications structure. The Parliament Act on the Flemish qualifications structure was approved by the Flemish Parliament at the end of april 2009. In time, the Flemish Qualifications structure will develop into a classification of qualifications recognized by the Flemish Government. In this framework, qualification is defined as a comprehensive set of competences leading to a recognized certificate granted by the Flemish Community, indicating the competences relevant to exercise a profession or a social function of which are required for further education. Providers of education and training and assessment centers take recognized qualifications as a starting point to develop assessments for the recognition of acquired competences. Thus assessors will judge individual competences basing themselves on the same framework, independent of the organisation on which these individuals call or the ultimate objective of the procedure. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training is responsible for organizing the monitoring of the quality of the pathways leading to recognized qualifications. The goal of the device is to boost confidence in procedures of recognition of acquired competences and encourage their further development.</p>

<sup>16</sup> VAN DE POELE L., JANSSENS K. and DEBUSSCHER M. (2008), *Kennisnetwerk en kwaliteitsbewaking van EVC in Vlaanderen. Praktijkondersteunende studieopdracht voor Vlaams ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming, departement Onderwijs en Vorming, project Strategisch Onderwijs- en Vormingsbeleid*, Universiteit Gent-Cesor.

## II. Impact of Validation

### 6. Impact on individuals

- What impact has VNF-IFL had on **individuals**?  
**On whom**, in your opinion, has it had the most impact:  
Validation candidates/ learners, practitioners, teachers/ academics/ tutors/facilitators in adult education, careers advisers, human resource managers...any more?
- **In what way** has it had an impact:
- in the actors/ stakeholders' **attitudes, practices** and methodologies, **interaction** with each others, **understanding** of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc...?
- Do you have evidence whether **it is felt** as a **positive, negative, problematic impact**?

*Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?*

In the French Community, from September 2005 to September 2008, 1,402 trials had been organised in the framework of the Consortium de validation des competences (amongst which up to 850 in 2008). 25,1% of the applicants were workers and the others were job seekers. 11,4% were involved in a training program<sup>17</sup>. The annual report of activity<sup>14</sup> states that the validation system is still unknown from the general public, from the enterprises and from the public services. Therefore the Consortium considers that improving the institutional and public recognition of the device will be one of its main targets.

In the universities, in 2008, 66 applicants benefited of a support to valorise their experience, **181 had been confronted to a jury and 138 were registered as applicants. 19 briefing meetings to the academics had been organised and 91 persons had been informed of the project<sup>18</sup>. Between January 2009 and October 2009, close to 400 persons have been admitted by a jury.**

In the Flemish Community, recognition of non-formal and informal learning for vocational experience (*ervaringsbewijzen*) focuses on 48 occupations at 27 different assessment centres. 1721 certificates for vocational experience have been awarded until now. 2939 candidates have registered and are currently in the process of receiving guidance, undergoing assessment or have just gone through the process.

The figures in higher education are summarised in the following table:

	Ass. Antwerp (AUHA)			Ass. Brussels (UAB)			Ass. Ghent (AUGent)			Ass. Leuven (K.U.Leuven)			Ass. Limburg (AUHL)		
	05-06	06-07	07-08	05-06	06-07	07-08	05-06	06-07	07-08	05-06	06-07	07-08	05-06	06-07	07-08
Started files	49	14	32	30	10	35	67	71	121	506	405	222	11	2	2
Files with positive outcome	40	9	26	22	9	34	67	47	40	423	306	202	7	2	2
Files with negative outcome	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	71	82	14	4	0	0
Withdrawal	9	5	6	8	0	1	0	21	81	12	17	6	0	0	0

Source: Departement Onderwijs en Vorming – Afdeling Hoger Onderwijs (2010)

	<p>The APL procedure in HE in Flanders is unknown to most learners. The higher education institutions won't make much publicity, since the (financial) costs of guiding and assessing the learners in an APL process are not subsidized by government, nor paid by the learner.</p>
<p><b>7. structural and institutional impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has it had an impact on <b>education and training (or lifelong learning) policies</b>?</li> <li>• <b>On other</b> legislation, official/ governmental organisations, bodies, institutions?</li> <li>• On the negotiations between <b>social partners</b> (who are those anyway in your country?)</li> <li>• On <b>human resource management</b> in the private sector?</li> <li>• On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector?</li> <li>• On <b>building bridges</b> (of communication, working partnerships...) between different systems of certification, sectors etc?</li> </ul>	<p>The diverse processes of VNF-IFL are still at the beginning of their implementation. Their main achievements are the building of networks and confidence between partners. Concerning the Consortium de validation des competences, until now, the impacts on the training programs of the operators (see 2) seems to be relatively marginal. Both the social partners and the training public operators involved themselves to develop the impacts of the "titres de competences". Their registering in corporate or sectoral conventions are then planned in the future. Until now there is a lack of representative measure of the impact of validation on the job market. The same statements can be done about the higher education procedures of "valorisation".</p> <p>The creation of a <i>Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications</i><sup>19</sup> can be considered as a prolongation of the validation's project of unifying different spheres of qualification. However, the bridges between vocational training qualification and higher education certification seems still difficult to build.</p> <p>In Flanders, the Flemish Qualification Framework appears to be an important basis for comparison between the educational qualifications and the professional ones. A study on the experience of the impact from the certificate for vocational experience was done. More than 300 candidates and 50 employers participated on the survey. All the candidates were very positive on the certificate (especially a boost in their selfconfidence and self-knowledge). Also the employers were optimistic, but only a few employers already used the certificate for selection.</p>

### III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

<p><b>8. Stakeholders' engagement:</b> how would you rate the <b>stakeholders' level of interest</b> in your country regarding the VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which stakeholders in particular are very interested?</li> <li>• Which ones are not so/ not at all interested?</li> </ul>	<p>In French Community as well as in Flemish Community, the VNF-IFL procedures are still unknown to most workers, job seekers, and employers. Trade unions, employment public services, public operators of vocational training and higher education organisations are institutionally involved in these procedures but the persons in charge of promoting and developing it have to use intensive persuasion inside of their own organisations to convince people (e.g. academics in universities, trainers in vocational training, etc.). The involvement of employers' representatives seems to be</p>
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<p><b>Why</b> is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons? <i>Reference to examples, documents?</i></p>	<p>variable according to the economic sector.</p> <p>Furthermore, as mentioned in 1., the Flemish community work on a knowledge network for EVC: all the relevant stakeholders from Education, Work and Culture, Youth and Sports are united in the network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- associations Higher Education</li> <li>- institutions for Adult Education</li> <li>- assessment centers for certificate of experience</li> <li>- stakeholders from the policy fields of Culture, Youth and Sports</li> <li>- public training institutions</li> </ul> <p>Currently all the stakeholders are willing to participate</p>
<p><b>9. Debates-discussions:</b> Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has it stimulated discussion on <b>specific issues</b> (social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants...)</li> <li>• On the <b>nature</b> of assessment, knowledge...?</li> <li>• <b>Between which stakeholders</b> mainly/ or <b>within which sector</b> mainly?</li> </ul> <p><i>Any evidence or references to those?</i></p>	<p>The above-mentioned discussion between certification and qualification (4.) refers to some debates on the education systems prerogatives on diplomas (justified by their pretention to form comprehensive citizens) and on the pretensions of training public operators to deliver an official proof of learning outcomes (justified by their objective to give the learner an official recognition of its real competences and to provide the job market with some assessment tools). The distinction between <i>erkennen</i> and <i>herkennen</i> competences in Flanders is also symptomatic of the claim for a less instrumental point of view on learning and its recognition.</p> <p>The debate is both Communities is also going on several subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discussion about quality assurance: important for credibility</li> <li>- discussion about comparability of qualifications certificates</li> <li>- recognition of recognition of acquired competences within the government: discussion about diploma as necessity for admission to jobs within the government</li> <li>- discussions about terminology</li> <li>- discussions about the cost of VNF-IFL and the apportionment of it between stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10. Research and VNF-IFL:</b> Does <b>research</b> feed these debates? <i>Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc...?</i></p>	<p>The first PhD thesis on <i>validation of competences</i> has been presented at the UCL<sup>20</sup> by Céline Mahieu (Centre interuniversitaire de formation permanente/ Facultés universitaires catholiques de Mons) in March 2010.</p> <p>The Bureau d'Ingénierie en Éducation et en Formation (BIEF), created and led by UCL professors, developed research about how to use the "competences" in education, administration, NGOs and firms. They were involved in the shaping of the methodology used by the Consortium de validation des compétences.</p> <p>The association ADMEE (Association pour le Développement des Méthodologies d'Évaluation en Éducation en Europe) organise biannually a conference on evaluation in learning assembling among others the different actors of the French-speaking projects of VNF-IFL (the Consortium, the leaders</p>

	<p>of the university projects, etc.).</p> <p>Flanders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- OECD thematic review on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal learning, 2007.</li> <li>- Ugent &amp; bvba Cesor, Kennisnetwerk en kwaliteitsbewaking van EVC in Vlaanderen, 2008.</li> <li>- W. Meeus &amp; E. Struyf, Inventarisatie en analyse van portfolio's in Vlaanderen, 2008.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any emerging? If so <b>which</b> ones? <b>What</b> type? (strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc...)</li> </ul> <p>Is there <b>resistance</b> appearing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>At which</b> level?</li> <li>• <b>In which</b> sector in particular?</li> <li>• <b>From which</b> category of actors/ stakeholders?</li> </ul> <p><i>Evidence available? Some examples?</i></p>	<p>We can mention here the above-mentioned resistance of the education system to a VNF-IFL that could merge diplomas and proofs of trained learning outcomes. These resistances are based on the defence of their prerogatives but also on the thinking that the independence of the schools from the productive sphere is a necessary condition to form comprehensive citizens and workers, which condition is threaten by a merging of the framework of qualification via VNF-IFL.</p> <p>In the policy fields of culture and youth, VNF-IFL should not lead to formalisation.</p> <p>The social partners need also to be convinced of the utility of the validation project before to take it in account in their sectoral conventions. For the employers, there is the fear to be confronted to new salary and statutory demands from the “validated” workers. Transparency in the different types of certifications is also an important matter to them. For the workers, there is the fear to have to prove their skills continually in order to find or keep their job.</p> <p>The adoption of a common framework of learning assessment arise collaboration but also competition between the training providers implied. Furthermore, there is the fear that validation could compete with training itself by shortening the individual learning paths.</p>

### Any other comments

The Flemish authorities plans the next views and practices for next years:

- realising the qualifications structure: up till now Flanders has a legally acknowledged framework. Now qualifications should be developed to fill the framework up.
- building trust and confidence in VNF-IPL: work at transparency, comparability of standards, criteria & procedures. Quality assurance is then a priority which means guarantee the quality of validation independent of the system that identifies or awards learning outcomes; realize international & national comparability & transparency; create one system of quality assurance for VNF-IPL processes at different levels of qualifications in different context; enhance communication about VNF-IPL.