



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

ANaR Report Year 1 - 2008

Country: Bulgaria

Name:

Date: October 2009- Updated 2010

Please note that all updated information for 2010 has been added in blue

I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
<p>1. National strategy: is there one? What is in place re the VNF-IFL, at which level? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies? <i>Any reference or URL links to official documents, Websites?</i></p>	<p>In Bulgaria there is no specific strategy on VNF-IFL. Nevertheless the political will with regard to the elaboration and implementation of a system for validation of qualification, acquired through non-formal and informal learning is expressed through the main objectives of priority 3 of the Strategy on Continuing Vocational Training 2005-2010 – Ensuring high quality of continuing education and training. Special chapters are devoted to validation of non-formal and informal learning also in the Adult Training Strategy (not officialised yet) and the Lifelong Learning Strategy - 2008-2013. This strategy envisages the validation and certification of learning results on the basis of internal or external evaluation of achievements; elaboration of instruments for measuring the results from non-formal and self-learning; expanding the participation of employers organizations in the elaboration of assessment criteria for learning results; revision of the normative framework in order to define the rights and obligations of stakeholder groups in the process. The respective texts in these papers give the strategic vision for implementation for the next years.</p> <p>On a legislative level – texts in three different laws are related to VNF-IFL. The Law on VET provision, the Law on Employment and the Crafts’ Law.</p> <p>The Law on Vocational Education and Training includes the approved framework program E, which makes possible the validation of transitional vocational training, professional experience or self-acquired competencies. The texts in the VET-law make possible the validation of skills and competences according to national standards even without attending a VET educational programme (validating in this way prior vocational experience – Art. 40).</p> <p>The amendments and alterations to the Law on Employment made in 2007/2008 have expanded the tasks of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and Ministry of education and Science (MES, from 2010 on – Ministry of Education, Youth and Science – MEYS)) by including that of creating possibilities to assess and validate the knowledge and skills of adults, accumulated through non-formal or individual learning. In order to encourage the participation of adults in lifelong learning the amendments envisage the creating of conditions for evaluation and validation of knowledge and skills, acquired through non-formal or informal learning.</p> <p>The Crafts’ law gives the opportunities for recognition of professional experience or validation of learning and knowledge acquired outside of the system of crafts</p> <p><i>The real Validation of Non-Formal and informal experience was supposed to have taken place in Bulgaria within the framework of the Legislation on Crafts, where it has been envisaged for specialists, not being "masters" in the meaning of the law, but possessing some other formal qualification (engineer for example), or previous experience, to may pass the "master's exam and get his/her competences validated Because of</i></p>

various reasons - fears of creating a parallel system to the VET one, low level of elaboration and implementation of the system and other more politically oriented, the regulations of the law have not had much impact on the recognition of competences and the examples of successful recognition of "masters competences" remain far below that which could have been expected.

The working group on Validation, established within the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth (MEYS), has elaborated several proposals (July 2009) on amendments for the legislative base in the field. Either a new chapter in the VET Law, or an Ordinance of the MEYS are proposed, where the whole system of the process of validation should be fixed: obligations of the partners involved, training programme for the experts in validation, model for potential valuating bodies, regulations of the whole validation process, definition of the terms and including them in the whole legislation; elaboration of certificates etc.

Important prerequisite for the establishment of the validation system is the presence of professional standards, directed towards learning results/outcomes. In relation to that in 2006, within a Phare Project, the consultant offered technical support for the elaboration and bringing up to date 80 vocational qualification standards, taking into account best practices in EC member states (according to the PHARE project). Total number of standards is 82 in 11 professional directions – electronics and automation; chemical products and technologies; textile, clothing shoes and leather clothing production; wood product production; food and drink production; the hotel, restaurant and catering business; travel, tourism and leisure time; planting and floriculture; agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Framework requirements for the elaboration of vocational qualification standard in Bulgaria have also been revised.

State education requirements for the acquisition of a profession are now seen as an instrument for validating knowledge and skills, acquired in a non-formal environment. The measure has been successfully implemented in the process of ensuring the application of European instruments in the country. There are sporadic practices for validating adult vocational competencies, acquired through in-company training and concrete jobs- in the centres for vocational training.

There is a common understanding of the importance of validation of knowledge and skills, acquired through non-formal learning, because **66% of the unemployed** registered at the labour offices have no profession or qualification certificates but still might have some skills or knowledge, acquired through experience or non-formal learning.

The time has indeed come to start the establishment of the above mentioned system, not only because most of the European member countries have one, but also because of the labour market needs. Validation has direct effect, because it will assist the increase of the qualified labour force supply, it will attract the inactive persons to the labour market by giving them better chances to find qualified work, and will motivate the unemployed to be more active in looking for a job and it will be beneficial for seniors. It is also expected that

	<p>this process will have impact on certain problem areas in Bulgaria, so as to increase labour productivity, improve mobility of the workforce and direct it from ineffective and non-productive work to better quality work places.</p> <p>Despite the political will regarding the validation issues, expressed by the normative documents, in real practice there is no working mechanism in the system of continuing vocational training to validate the knowledge and skills (competencies) acquired, except in the limited examples of applying the Crafts' law. That is why training on certain topics is organized, although the fact that they have been acquired in a non-formal way in the course of another (training is funded twice). Funding of monitoring and evaluation of competencies faces certain difficulties. There is no methodology for the collection of proof in relation to the requirements defined in the normative framework. Methods and instruments for the evaluation of vocational competencies are also lacking.</p> <p>Concrete validation activities will be addressed after the adoption of the national strategy for lifelong learning for 2008-2013 period.</p> <p>http://www.mon.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/strategies/LLL_strategy_01-10-2008.pdf</p> <p>http://www.mon.bg/opencms/opencms/left_menu/documents/strategies/</p>
<p>2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL? Which ministry (ies), which institution (s), organisation or body (ies)? Who gives the main impetus and direction? • Who regulates, monitors and assesses practices and pilots new initiatives? • Or are they local, regional, sectoral, institutional initiatives? 	<p>The main responsible institutions are the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Employment Agency, National Agency for Vocational Education and Training; National representative employers' organizations.</p> <p>The issue of validating knowledge and skills, acquired through non-formal and individual learning is not new for the institutions.</p> <p>There are a number of positive parameters regarding the validation of competencies, which are applied sporadically and usually through the project principle- in the sectors of construction, economics, tourism /mainly in the hotel business/ and security.</p> <p>There are <i>activities for establishing mechanisms and procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning</i> /within project NP 2003. 2163.8-001 entitled Encouragement of Adult Vocational Training and Employment realized with the support of the Federal government of the Republic of Germany/. In April 2008 the established work group began to work. It is preparing a pilot implementation of the procedures on consulting, identification, evaluation and certification of the acquired vocational competencies in professions from three vocational directions. Within this project in March 2009 also a model of competence validation acquired through non-formal and informal learning will be elaborated and tested with the help of</p>

	<p>international experts. It will focus on the development of a framework describing validation, elements and stages of the procedure and criteria for accreditation of organizations, which will provide validation and elaboration of the relevant documentation. The model will be tested with three popular professions with first qualification level in the field of textile, clothing, shoes and leather clothes production; production of wood products, social activities.</p> <p>In the year 2010 this model can be found on the Web-page of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Science and Sports</p> <p>http://www.mon.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/top_menu/vocational/model_validirane_MOMN.pdf</p> <p>In general the model is including Objectives, Target groups, Activities, Principles, Methodology, Validation methods, Results of the Process of Validation, Organisation and Management, Main Bodies, Resources, Tools, Monitoring and Samples of potential Documents.</p> <p>With this development, a big step has been taken towards a potential future practical implementation of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.</p> <p>Last but not least - research has been carried out regarding the practices in other countries – for example a Ministry of Labour and Social Policy project carried out in cooperation with France entitled Vocational Guidance and Vocational Assessment was focused on learning about the French system for career guidance and vocational validation. The experience of other countries such as the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Italy, in that field has also been studied.</p> <p>Visualisation: In 2006 organized investigation into the practices of different European countries related to the elaboration and implementation of validation began. There is an active column in the Ministry of Education and Science internet site on the topic of Validation of informal learning and European practices, in which material on the European practices regarding validation of competences, acquired through non-formal or self-learning is published. Training seminars with employers' representatives, business sectors and branch representatives from the country; training institutions, regional inspectorates, non-government organizations.</p>
<p>3. Sectors: where, which sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does VNF-IFL apply to all educational sectors? Or to specific ones (vocational education & training, Further Educ. Colleges, universities, adult education etc....) • Or/ and does it apply to other sectors: 3rd 	<p>There are the following forms/ways of recognition of non-formal and informal learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment and recognition of national vocational qualifications in accordance with the VET Law; - assessment or recognition of language knowledge, based on national/international standards - assessment and validation of key competences, based on international certification programmes - recognition of knowledge on the level of tertiary education, carried out by individual faculties in accordance with the Higher Education Act and on the basis of accepted criteria

<p>sector, private sector <i>Name some examples or references to examples (websites, documents etc....?)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- recognition of knowledge at individual ministries on the basis of area acts- recognition of knowledge at chambers and employers. <p>Validation of non-formal and informal learning applies to the following sectors: Vocational education and Training, higher education, Adult education, Private sector, 3rd sector – NGOs.</p> <p>An example of offering general adult education (for completing secondary education) is provided by the School of "Second Chance", again financed by our organisation, DVV-International, Bulgaria/Bulgarian Adult Education Association.</p> <p>In the school years 2006-2008 a group of 20 young adults from the Roma minority have been involved in a semi face-to-face training within a class form for achieving the learning results of the 9-12.grades (the 4 final grades of the Bulgarian school system). Training was provided to them by teachers from the neighbouring formal school. Within 2 years the group successfully covered the learning "standards" for 4 years secondary school education and completed education. The example generally goes to the field of adult education, but as far as by completing the secondary school educational level, not only new knowledge and skills have been evaluated, but also previous formal, informal and non-formal learning experience has been assessed, this information might be relevant also to the field of validation.</p> <p>In the mentioned case the learning and training process takes place in a combined formal-informal environment – teachers and curricula come from the formal sphere, and "recognition", diploma come from the formal one – it is the same as for the pupils in the formal system. This and the general European "Second Chance" good practice example has been taken on board and included in the fiches of the ESF programmes in the field of education.</p> <p>A literacy programme for adults, who had not completed the first level of initial education (4. grade) will start in the year 2010. There the opposite is planned: training will be provided by the institutions from the formal system – the schools. The certification obtained by the end of the short-term training (up to 5 months) will be not the same, but an alternative to the official one from the formal sector, issued for the purposes of these pupils. This will be the first example where learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) on the same level will be validated by two parallel and equally weighted certifications – one for pupils and one for adults. Both are recognised by the formal system as an entrance to further general education, VET and the labour market. If this project is implemented successfully, it will ensure a parallel entrance to a higher level of education and training and thus – will increase access to education also in a later age – one of the main purposes of validation.</p>
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<p>4. Terminology: Is there a common definition of VNF-IFL, or are there specific terms used by different institutions implementing VNF-IFL? What would be the best way to translate it / them into English?</p>	<p>Give the definition (s) and terms used in your own language, and your translation in English Commonly, the term “validirane/priznavanje na kompetentnosti” is used – when it is a matter of validation of non-formal and informal learning. The term “priznavanje” could be translated as “recognition”. Source: Проект на Речник на основните термини в сферата на обучение на възрастни, съобразени с терминологията, използвана от CEDEFOP (Draft Glossary: Terminology in Vocational Education and Training in compliance with the terminology, used by CEDEFOP)</p>
<p>5. National Qualification Framework: How do VNF-IFL practices or initiatives relate to NQF in place or in construction, if they do? If not, why not? <i>Brief description of the NQF (diagram etc)?</i> <i>Reference to docs or website?</i></p>	<p>Both VNF-IFL system and NQF are in a process of development in Bulgaria now. Working groups in both area are considering Bulgarian strategic papers, EU recommendation and tools and good practice examples. NQF is more advanced in the part of the higher education levels and VET, less in the field of general education. Links to sectoral qualifications are also in a process of a discussion and elaboration.</p>

II. Impact of Validation

<p>6. Impact on individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? <i>Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?</i> 	<p>As far as the process of validation in Bulgaria, it only exists on the basis of the strategic papers and opportunities given by the legislation, but not in a well elaborated system with the respective mechanisms; only some examples of its potential impact could be given:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learners: For individuals who decided to undergo the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning the process would mean saving time and money, which is a strong motivation tool. Validation would also mean that individuals gain self-esteem and awareness of their competences and skills. Candidates could also increase their mobility on the labour market - Practitioners: new framework of their work - On institutional and national level the process would also mean reduction of costs for education and optimisation of the educational/training system. Of course there is also the opposite tendency to establish the validation mechanism, the adequate infrastructure, which will mean some investments in the system <p>Social partners will benefit from the final impact of the validation process – i.e. reduction of unemployment rate.</p>
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<p>7. structural and institutional impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it had an impact on education and training (or lifelong learning) policies? • On other legislation, official/ governmental organisations, bodies, institutions? • On the negotiations between social partners (who are those anyway in your country?) • In the private sector, on staff qualification and training strategies within companies? • On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector? • On building bridges (of communication, working partnerships...) between different systems of certification, sectors etc? 	
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III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

<p>8. Stakeholders' engagement: how would you rate the stakeholders' level of interest in your country regarding the VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders in particular are very interested? • Which ones are not so/ not at all interested? <p>Why is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons? <i>Reference to examples, documents?</i></p>	<p>1 to 5: Very Low to High?</p> <p>As far as in Bulgaria the process of validation the outcomes of the non-formal and informal learning has been in development over the last several years, and as far as the development has been observed mainly on the level of strategic papers and pilot projects, a general estimation of the main stakeholders' involvement and engagement can only be indicated, but not clearly and strictly formulated:</p> <p>Employers in many sectors and experts warn that qualifications acquired in educational institutions do not correspond sufficiently to labour market needs and that after finishing formal education individuals are not capable of using the acquired knowledge in practice.</p> <p>On the other hand, representatives of the educational system, and also of the society as a whole, rest sceptical toward quality of qualifications acquired in the process of recognition of non-formal and informal education. In this way some stakeholders play a role of status quo keeper rather than a role of progress promoter or development partner.</p> <p>Individual learners also tend so far towards attending formal provision in order to be sure that they would obtain the desired diploma/certificate as the non-formal way is still not institutionalised.</p> <p>-</p>
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<p>9. Debates-discussions: Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it stimulated discussion on specific issues (social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants...) • On the nature of assessment, knowledge...? • Between which stakeholders mainly/ or within which sector mainly? <p><i>Any evidence or references to those?</i></p>	<p>There is no serious discussion concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning on the national level, neither is there a serious national dialogue on this theme. The discussions took place among experts in order to define the mechanisms.</p>
<p>10. Research and VNF-IFL: Does research feed these debates? <i>Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc...?</i></p>	<p>As Bulgaria was not included in the study of OECD on RNFIL, no unified study has been produced so far. Separate articles and presentations on the validation principles are communicated among the expert's community.</p>
<p>11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any emerging? If so which ones? What type? (strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc...) <p>Is there resistance appearing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At which level? • In which sector in particular? • From which category of actors/ stakeholders? <p><i>Evidence available? Some examples?</i></p>	<p>The following problems/difficulties are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The issue of quality of the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning and toward qualifications acquired in the framework of this system. - Establishment of working mechanisms – as a foundation of the whole system of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. - Including all key stakeholders in the process - Launching a debate in order to raise awareness in the society - Enriching the legislation - The process is hindered by the lack of information and personal motivation among the potential stakeholders employed and unemployed persons, employers, etc./ on the real benefits of validating already acquired vocational competencies and expanding the opportunities for realization on the labour market and building on knowledge and skills for successful career development. In order to overcome the latter hindrance a number of activities have been planned to popularize the opportunities and benefits from validation of non-formal and self-learning results among national organizations of employers and employees.

Any other comments

The information is based on the BG ReferNet-Policy Reporting for the Year 2009; Web-Page of Ministry of Education, Science and Youth, National Strategies, National Legislation, Pilot Projects and Materials, collected during the national seminars within the Lifelong Learning Days , presentations of experts from Ministries, Agencies and experts' groups.