

"Roadmap 2018 can be applied as a benchmark between countries and their various systems for validation."

Validation and the value of competences

ROAD MAP
2018

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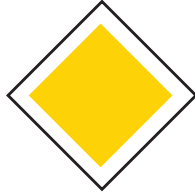
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The value of competences

Nordic countries are characterized by a skills-intensive working life where individuals, businesses, civil society and organizations invest time and resources in developing useful competences. The rapid development of working life also means that competence requirements have to be identified and communicated at an increasing rate. Perspectives such as the individual's lifelong learning, matching competences for labour market and the flexibility of the educational system need to be integrated. The sustainable and inclusive growth of the Nordic region, depends to a great degree on a well-functioning infrastructure for competences - an infrastructure that promotes development, identification, evaluation, communication and matching of competences against the

requirements of the labour market. Global competition in terms of job opportunities, learning environments and social conditions, necessitates modernized competence management.

Roadmap 2018 gives a broad perspective of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) and its purpose is to provide a picture of how VPL functions. VPL does not only include the identification and assessment of competences, but also the communication of results and how they can benefit the individual and society. For this purpose, a supporting infrastructure is required, which, besides benefitting VPL, is of great importance to the educational sector and for matching skills required by the labour market.

THE RIVER OF EQAVET
- SYSTEMATIC
QUALITY ASSURANCE



VET

EQF AND NATIONAL
QUALIFICATION
FRAMEWORK AGENCY



EUROPASS EXPRESS

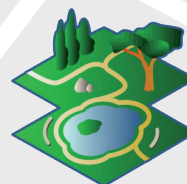


SCHOOLS

FAST TRACK OF COMPETENCE
BASED STANDARDS

EVCEP - THE CITY OF
ACCUMULATION OF
PART QUALIFICATIONS

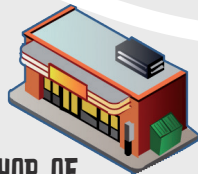
LL GUIDANCE
CENTER



THE GARDEN OF
THE THIRD SECTOR



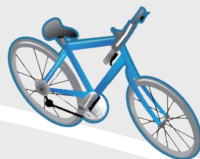
THE HIGH ROAD OF LEARNING OUTCOMES



LITTLE SHOP OF
GAP TRAINING



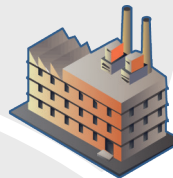
THE ART OF
LIFE LONG LEARNING



WORKING LIFE SOCIETY,
SOCIAL PARTNERS,
STAKEHOLDERS



ESCO - EUROPEAN
SKILLS, COMPETENCES,
QUALIFICATIONS
AND OCCUPATIONS
COORDINATING OFFICE



LIFE LONG
GUIDANCE CENTER





Introduction

In the Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning¹ adopted by the Council of the European Union, by no later than 2018, countries should have in place national arrangements for validation, accessible to citizens that might benefit from it. Formal, non-formal and informal learning are all included in the term validation in the Nordic countries, thus the term VPL (Validation of Prior Learning) is used in this document.

Modern society has an interest in supporting people's learning both in regard of capacity and flexibility. Lifelong learning can be seen from progressive and democratic perspectives that can contribute to improving quality of life, but there are also financial incentives controlled by socio-economic and labour market policy interests. VPL is an important tool in any Lifelong Learning agenda.

NVL, the Nordic Network for Adult Learning²,

has an expert network³ for validation where national representatives from all the Nordic countries, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands discuss the challenges of VPL. This expert network draws up recommendations and support material to contribute to the VPL development in the Nordic region. The network focuses on the key elements that should be in place in order for national systems for VPL to function effectively. This publication targets a number of relevant indicators for the national development of VPL and for the supporting infrastructures. Indicators in this context refer to formulated goals, the clarifying of end results, structures and implementation. The indicators are conclusions of discussions within the expert network and are based on experiences from the Nordic countries. The target group includes policymakers and other players engaged in the development of VPL and lifelong learning, such as education providers and labour market organizations.

1 Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2012/C 398/01: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012H1222\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012H1222(01))
www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/Council_Recommendation_on_the_validation_20th_December_2012.pdf

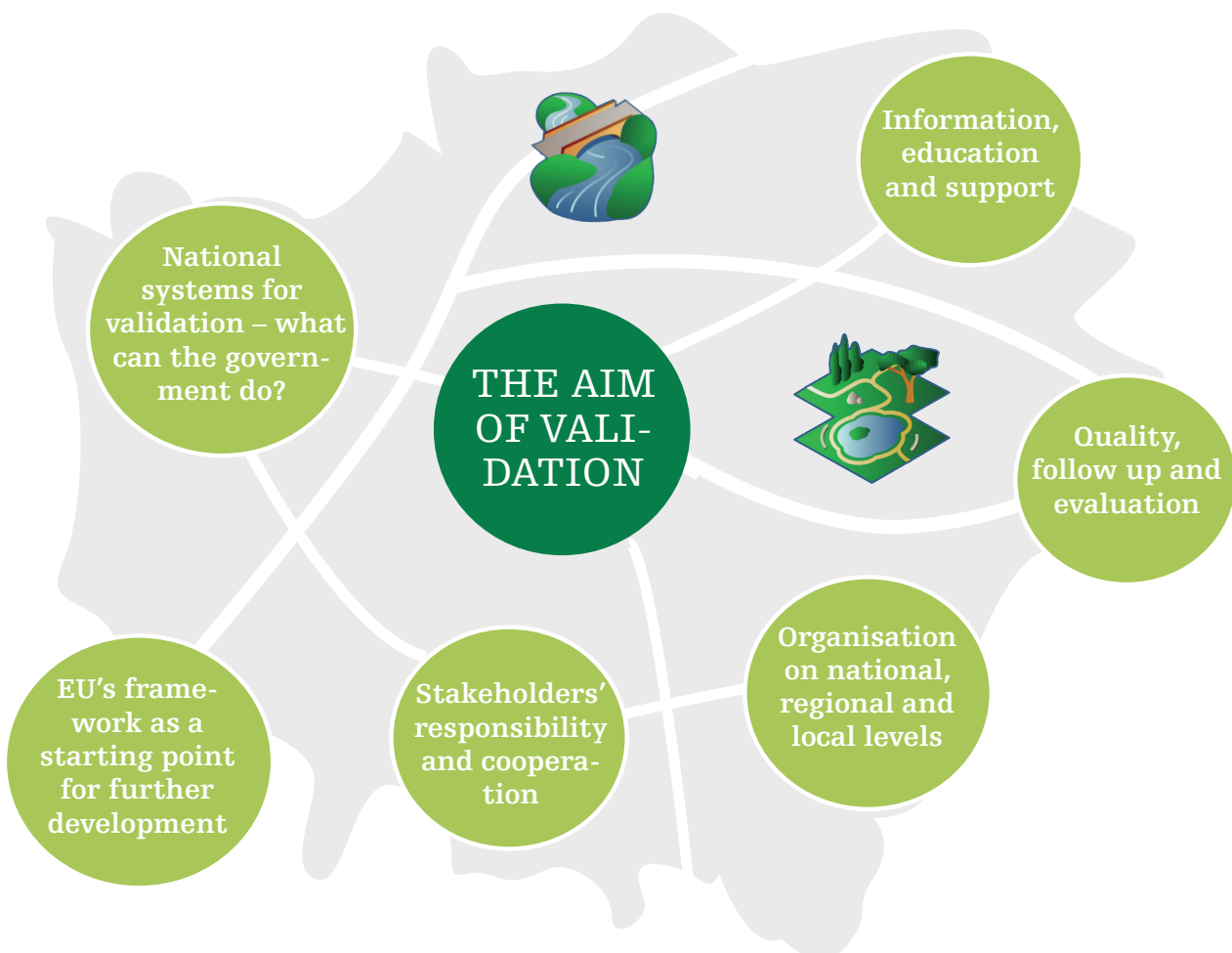
2 NVL is a Nordic Network for Adult Learning, administrated by VOX, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

3 A list of members of the Expert Network is in appendix 1



Manual

Roadmap 2018 can be used as a checklist to shed light on the status of development in individual countries, but it may also be applied as a benchmark between countries and their various systems for validation. It is a formative document that can be applied and adapted in many different ways. The indicators are grouped in different sections – each starts with an introduction followed by a list of indicators and ends with comments or questions for each section supporting the application of the indicators. The following sections are included:





The goal of validation

According to the European Principles,⁴ VPL should be based on individual entitlements and individual needs. VPL should enhance lifelong learning by providing access to learning and adjusting educational offers. On the other hand, VPL should promote better integration to the labour market. In addition, VPL is an important tool to enable the individual to control his or her situation as a citizen and as a participant in democratic processes. Social partners, branch organizations and companies, regional authorities and educational providers share an interest in modernising and enhancing the efficiency and flexibility of the skills supply. The state and society also have their objectives in order to integrate different groups in society and using public resources as effectively as possible.

INDICATORS/OBJECTIVES:

1. The individual decides on validation and on the aspects that serve the individual's purpose the best: identification, documentation, assessment and certification.
2. VPL is implemented in order to strengthen the individual's motivation and opportunities to actively take part in a democratic society (empowerment).
3. The main objectives of VPL are: access to and individualization/personalization of education, and the strengthening of the individual's opportunities on the labour market.
4. VPL is targeted at groups distanced from education and work to prevent exclusion.

⁴ Common European principles on identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (2004)

“ VPL makes learning in the workplace visible

5. VPL is applied in a wider context, such as transitions in the labour market, and is considered an integral part of LLL.
6. VPL is applied in education and working life as a strategic tool to develop and enhance skills supply.
7. VPL makes learning in the workplace visible and thus strengthens the cooperation between working life and the educational sector.

Questions for deeper reflection:

What kind of viewpoints are there regarding VPL and possibilities related to VPL? From a political perspective? How is VPL presented in the media? Is the use of VPL strongly restricted to certain target groups, or is it accessible to anyone who can benefit from it? Is VPL applied as a strategic tool by companies in order to develop and ensure the quality of their operations?



National systems for validation – what can the government do?

The government has a great responsibility to promote the right requirements and incentives for VPL in order to make it an accepted, accessible, legally secured and applied tool. Regardless of a nation's choice to centralize or decentralize the responsibility of VPL, legislation, financing systems, bodies responsible for educating professionals, supervision and eventual authorized coordinating bodies must cooperate in carrying out VPL. The same applies for infrastructures necessary to make the results of VPL transferable. Open national reference systems for qualifications are good examples.

Questions for deeper reflection on legislation: ?

Are there national laws regarding VPL? Is it explicit in the law that the individual has a right to VPL? Are there restrictions and/or special conditions? To what degree is the law implemented, e.g. are there structural obstructions? Do the laws and regulations stipulate on appeals procedures?

INDICATORS FOR LEGISLATION:

1. VPL is a right of the individual (or an obligation of a competent body).
2. VPL is regulated by national legislation.
3. Regulation of VPL covers all levels of education.
4. In case non-formal qualifications are related to the NQF they are included in the regulation of VPL.
5. In case the certification/assessment is carried out by a public authority, the individual should have a right to appeal.

INDICATORS FOR FINANCING:

1. VPL has sustainable funding, which is in accordance with civil rights legislation and quality requirements if applicable.
2. Coordinating bodies are funded on all levels of the educational system in relation to the VPL tasks performed.
3. Funding for validation is not only directed at validation procedures in the formal education, but also at the non-formal sector.
4. The individual is entitled to student loans/grants or other compensation during the validation process.
5. Funding covers any competence development needed to meet the current standard requirements in validation.

INDICATORS FOR THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF VPL PRACTITIONERS:

1. The education of VPL practitioners (e.g. guidance counsellors and teachers) is regulated at a national level and includes mandatory courses in VPL.
2. Competence standards for VPL practitioners are defined and must be met.



Questions for deeper reflection on financing:

Is the model for financing VPL sustainable and does it prevent fragmentation of VPL activities? Does the financing cover all costs for the participating individual? Are there differences in the financing of VPL within or outside the educational system? Are there laws and legislation dealing with financing?



Questions for deeper reflection on practitioners:

Is there a standardized certification system for validation of VPL practitioners? Is it required that VPL practitioners are trained or certified? Are there laws and regulations dealing with the competences of VPL practitioners?

INDICATORS FOR VPL COORDINATING BODIES:

1. National criteria and guidelines obligatory for VPL coordinators are in place.
2. Providers coordinating VPL processes are certified by a national body or are authorized to carry out their activities.
3. The certification of assessors is linked to quality assurance and external review.



Questions for deeper reflection on coordinating bodies:

According to the European Principles and Guidelines, VPL must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest. In case there are validation providers outside the education system, are they accredited? If they are a part of the educational system, are the VPL activities clearly defined and are they regulated in some way? Do VPL practitioners apply a combination of methods in the VPL process?



Questions for deeper reflection on regulated professions:

Within the European Union, the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications regulates the recognition of qualifications acquired in other countries⁵. Sometimes documentation may have disappeared or education may have been terminated - how is this handled? How are qualifications acquired in a third country handled? Are refugees without papers assisted in having their qualifications recognised, thus preventing them from having to go through their entire education again?

INDICATORS FOR REGULATED PROFESSIONS:

1. Competent authorities for regulated professions are encouraged to implement VPL when formal documentation, proving a degree/education from another country, is missing.

⁵ Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information

INDICATORS FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN POLICY AREAS:

1. A national policy for VPL is in place.
2. The roles and coordinated assignments are clearly stated in steering documents for government agencies and regulated activities regarding VPL.
3. Different policy areas are coordinated in respect of VPL (labour, education, finance, etc.)
4. “Gap training” - training to fill identified skills gaps, as well as career guidance is included in the coordination of VPL.

INDICATORS FOR STATISTICS AND FOLLOW UP:

1. Relevant actors are required to deliver data for national statistics regarding VPL.
2. There is a competent body, which is commissioned to follow up and evaluate all activities within VPL on a regular basis.
3. The individual’s right to data security is protected.

INDICATORS FOR THE FRAMEWORK OF EQF⁶, EQAVET⁷, ECVET⁸, EUROPASS⁹, LLG¹⁰, VNFIL¹¹ AND ESCO¹²:

1. All the tools are implemented at the national level.
2. In the implementation, synergies are maintained and there are policies on and awareness of how the tools work together.

Questions for deeper reflection on co-ordination between policy areas: ?

Are there policies at an overall level? Are there policies related to sub-systems (different levels and sub-groups)? Are the policies reviewed? Are the policies revised?

Questions for deeper reflection on statistics and follow up: ?

Are there national/local statistics on validation? Are there laws and regulations dealing with follow-up systems?

Questions for deeper reflection on the EU framework: ?

Is there an intentional, coherent national strategy for the implementation of the framework? Are synergies taken into consideration?

3. The national equivalents to the EQF, ECVET and ESCO are used to create an infrastructure that underpins the VPL, skills matching and competence development.

6 European Qualification Framework

7 European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training

8 European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training

9 Five documents to make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe

10 Life Long Guidance

11 Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

12 European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations



Stakeholders' responsibility and cooperation

The stakeholders carry a responsibility for the legitimacy, quality and standards applied in the VPL process. If the government has the main responsibility for the structures related to VPL, it can be said that the stakeholders are responsible for the content. Questions the stakeholders should work with can, among other things involve standardization, legitimacy, qualifications/partial qualifications/learning outcomes, access to and individualisation of education, cooperation/compatibility between education providers and labour market.

INDICATORS FOR STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION:

1. Relevant networks and infrastructures for cooperation on VPL are in place.
2. Social partners, educational leaders, industries and other stakeholders cooperate in designing VPL standards, learning outcomes and qualifications, etc.
3. Collaboration, e.g. in the form of developing standards for requirements and competence taxonomies, leads to increased consensus and transparency between education and working life.
4. Partial qualifications may be gathered from different contexts of lifelong learning

Questions for deeper reflection on stakeholder participation:

Which stakeholders are involved in discussions, development and operation of the VPL system? How do stakeholders collaborate? Are stakeholders involved in developing standards? How are stakeholders involved in the development of policies in the area of VPL? Who are responsible for the development of relevant methodologies for VPL? Are the methods reliable and valid (e.g. co-assessors)? Are the methods fit for purpose? Are the methods fit for the individual? Are they fit for the field?

- (LLL), because validation has the same legitimacy as education.
5. Stakeholders encourage companies to take responsibility for validation as an integral component in the workplace, both for strengthening strategic skills supply and to document skills of employees.
 6. The social partners have included VPL as an integral part of their agreements.



Organisation on a national, regional and local level

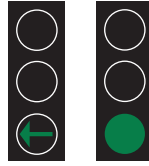
A clear division of responsibility, which should encompass national, regional and local level, is essential for the functionality of national systems in VPL. Coordination of regional actors, local access to VPL and coordination with guidance and counselling are dependent on clear organisation.

INDICATORS FOR ORGANISATION:

1. The national system for VPL clearly describes how roles and responsibilities are delegated.
2. There is an explicit access (“one way in”) to guidance and validation for individuals and professionals.
3. Lifelong Guidance (LLG) and VPL interact and are accessible regionally and locally for all in need of them.
4. The maximum waiting time for a VPL process is no more than six months.
5. VPL is implemented cost-effectively and it is less costly than the corresponding educational offer.
6. The individual has the opportunity to participate in further learning activities, if the need has been identified in the VPL process (e.g. to achieve a certificate or a diploma).

Questions for deeper reflection on organization: ?

Is the system project-based or incorporated in regular systems? Is it embedded in the qualifications system? Is guidance an integral part of the validation system? Is the system impartial to stakeholders? Who is responsible for VPL? How is the VPL related to the educational system and the labor market? Is it cost-effective? Is the system accessible in terms of geography and different target groups?



Information, education and support

Public and corporate awareness of VPL is a critical factor if VPL is to become as natural a choice as education, both in terms of the individual's lifelong learning and a strategic skills supply method in businesses. A clear conceptual framework, clear guidelines, easily accessible information, open educational resources, opportunities for developing skills in the VPL area are all important elements in the implementation of national VPL systems.

INDICATORS INFORMATION:

1. Definitions, concepts and criteria are unambiguous and part of a national framework for VPL.
2. There are nationally accepted guidelines for the execution of VPL.
3. Criteria and guidelines for VPL are communicated in all relevant contexts.
4. Open courses in VPL are available, i.e. via open e-learning resources.
5. Expertise in VPL can be validated and recognized by independent/quality assured bodies.
6. Continuous training for practitioners working with VPL is available (e.g. for career counsellors, teachers and officers at employment agencies).
7. Relevant peer learning networks are established.



Questions for deeper reflection on information:

Do the professionals have access to support networks? How are support networks organized? How are individuals and stakeholders informed about the VPL system? Where do you find information about the VPL system? Is the system transparent? Is the goal of the VPL process clear? Is it transparent as to who is involved in the process? Are the standards known and legitimate?



Quality, follow-up and evaluation

If validation is to gain acceptance and to be applied as a means to a qualification, which is equal to education, it is essential to focus on quality issues. In order to achieve these goals, quality standards set for VPL will initially be stricter than for education. In addition, politicians need a relevant basis for necessary investments, in the form of statistics, impact studies and research, etc. National registers must be established, monitoring and evaluation studies as well as research need to be initiated. A fundamental criterion for VPL is that the documentation belongs to the individual. It is therefore important that only the end result of a VPL activity is archived by an authority, i.e. documents that refer to what is approved by a relevant authority and is beneficial for the individual.

QUALITY, FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION INDICATORS:

1. Qualifications, both formal and others, obtained via VPL, are registered and retained to enable authentication.
2. Statistics and data, that enable monitoring and evaluation, are collected.
3. Studies to evaluate the effects of VPL are carried out to obtain relevant evidence for policy decisions and prioritizing in VPL.
4. Resources are allocated to carry out research on VPL and results are published.
5. National quality criteria for VPL are defined.
6. Relevant authorities are commissioned to supervise and monitor VPL.
7. VPL for qualifications outside the formal education system are subject to the same quality criteria and are quality-assured correspondingly.

Questions for deeper reflection on quality:

Is there a quality assurance system? Is there a competent body overseeing VPL? Are there laws and regulations dealing with follow-up systems? Are there laws and regulations dealing with documentation/certification? Are VPL professionals assessed? How are they assessed?



EU framework as a basis for further development

The European efforts to promote mobility, transparency and lifelong learning, have, among other things, led to the development of a number of tools and principles such as the EQF, EQAVET, ECVET, Europass, LLG, VNFIL and ESCO. Individually, these tools have a minor effect, but together they form a framework that in a very real way may support both lifelong learning and skills supply for the labour market. Individual countries may implement EU tools in different ways and there may as well be other indicators that are fit for purpose for some countries, depending on national decisions. However the framework can work as a basis for further development and for reforming vocational training systems.

EQF INDICATORS:

1. A National Qualification Framework (NQF) is implemented.
2. Qualifications linked to the framework are based on learning outcomes
3. Qualifications linked to the framework can be obtained via VPL, both in full and partial qualifications.
4. The qualification framework also includes non-formal qualifications.
5. The upper levels of the qualification framework are open to qualifications outside higher education.



Questions for deeper reflection on EQF:

Is the national qualification framework used to bring about a change and development towards a more refined outcome-perspective? Is it the education and training provider or the quality assurance process, which provides learning its legitimacy?

” How are ECVET points valued in academia?

ECVET INDICATORS:

1. There is a national policy on how ECVET should be applied for mobility.
2. The national policy for ECVET also includes the perspective of LLL.
3. The link to the NQF and VPL is clear (i.e. to support the accumulation of partial qualifications from formal, non-formal and informal learning).
4. There is transparency between ECTS¹³ and ECVET for better compatibility between higher education and vocational education and training.

EQAVET INDICATORS:

1. Application of EQAVET also includes validation procedures.
2. The validation process is supervised and external audits are performed.
3. Non-formal qualifications are also subject to systematic quality assurance.

?

Questions for deeper reflection on ECVET:

Is ECVET primarily a tool for mobility within formal education, or has it expanded to support individuals in accumulating partial qualifications even from non-formal and informal learning? How are ECVET points valued in academia?

?

Questions for deeper reflection on EQAVET:

A qualification can be seen as a set of learning outcomes that can be achieved and verified in various ways, for example through education or VPL. Is the general quality assurance model, that EQAVET describes, applied both to education and VPL regarding formal qualifications? Is the same systematic quality assurance process also applied for education and VPL regarding non-formal qualification?

LLG INDICATORS:

1. Impartial career guidance is available (entirely according to the individual's needs).
2. Guidance and counselling are available for anyone who may need them.
3. Guidance has a clear role in VPL.
4. Guidance is available for the individual throughout the course of the VPL process.
5. Guidance supports the individual in making use of the results of a VPL, e.g. by assigning further competence development if necessary.

EUROPASS INDICATORS:

1. Certificate supplements, and if applicable diploma supplement, are awarded in all formal vocational education as Europass annexes.
2. Europass has a strong national support to be used in the presentation of partial qualifications and competences, as well as non-formal and informal learning.

ESCO INDICATORS:

1. There are national classifications of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations that can be linked to ESCO.
2. These classifications are used to increase transparency and mobility between different industries.
3. Soft skills and generic hard skills can be systematically classified in the national terminology.
4. Skills matching, validation and education are applied with support of national classifications that can be linked to ESCO.



Questions for deeper reflection on LLG:

Certain research results suggest that VPL does not achieve the desired effect without appropriate career counselling. Is autonomous career guidance available, entirely based on individual needs and purposes? Does guidance play an active role throughout the VPL process?



Questions for deeper reflection on Europass:

The European format for CV is gaining ground. The part of the Europass called Skills Passport can be used to document skills and experience. Is that supported or advocated at national level?



Questions for deeper reflection on ESCO:

All Nordic countries have some form of vocational classification - most are based on the international standard ISCO. In order to be able to match the individual's competences against the needs of the labour market in a more rational way, matrices that are more detailed are needed. It is important to be able to mirror general, transferable vocational skills as well. For this purpose taxonomies and competence nomenclatures should be developed.



Conclusion

– Opportunities, challenges and choices

Developing a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning is a long process. VPL can be seen as part of a paradigm shift linked with lifelong learning. It can also be seen as a shift from education to learning, from course descriptions to learning outcomes. Concepts such as learning, competence development, qualifications and learning outcomes are central. If we choose to see VPL from that perspective it becomes easier to understand why the application of VPL is developing at a relatively slow pace. In order to acknowledge competences and give VPL increased validity, a different perspective on non-formal and informal learning is necessary.

In this document, the Nordic expert network for validation within NVL, has formulated a

number of indicators and areas for development in order to contribute to the development of VPL. As mentioned before, the indicators may be applied in each country or organisation to assess the status of the implementation. Thus the indicators can motivate towards further development. With support of the indicators, one country or organisation can compare their situation to other countries or organisations by benchmarking, and thus be motivated to improve their own system. In this way, exchange and learning are promoted between the Nordic countries.

It is the hope of the expert network that this document will inspire to a holistic approach, a more rapid development and a strengthening of the Nordic countries' position as an innovative, inclusive and competence-driven market.



Background

The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the autonomous areas of Åland Islands, Greenland and Faroe Islands) have worked on developing systems for validation since the issue was first on the European agenda at the turn of the century. Some of them even before that – one reason for this being that VPL is perceived as beneficial for both the individual and society.

- Individuals can become aware of their own competences and have them identified and recognised so that it leads to further learning or work (empowerment and employability).
- Society and the labour market can have better access to the individual competences, thus raising the competence level of society. This enhances mobility,

integration and growth (mobility and flexibility).

VPL is high on the European agenda, which is evident in the commitment, comprehensiveness and coherence of the European educational policy and in the recommendations of the European Council¹⁴.

Validation is a part of lifelong learning, a concept that has been on the educational policy agenda for many years. It is evident, not only in policies and plans of international organizations such as UNESCO, the OECD, the EU and the IMF,¹⁵ but also in the strategies and plans of the Nordic countries at national, regional and local level. Lifelong learning is described as a positive and enriching experience that everyone should have access to, the basic principle being that humans have a capacity

14 Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, 2012/C 398/01: www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/Council_Recommendation_on_the_validation_20_December_2012.pdf

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012H1222\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:32012H1222(01))

15 UNESCO United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, OECD The Organization for Economic Co-operation, IMF International Monetary Found

” There is also an emphasis on the importance of involving key stakeholders

for continuous learning. When validation of prior learning is linked to a lifelong learning agenda, more than one perspective needs to be taken into account. The benefit for the individual has different perspectives:

- Economic - by contributing to the increased possibility of having / getting a job (employability) and shortening of study time
- Social - motivation, integration and people's power over their own lives (empowerment)
- Educational - education and career, access to further learning
- Civic - democratic processes and decision making

The European Council Recommendation highlights the importance of enabling mutual learning, experience exchange and establishing development projects and best practices. There is also an emphasis on the importance of involving key stakeholders, such as education providers and other organizations that

work with guidance and education, the third sector and working life.

CONCEPTS AND FRAMEWORK

VPL is described in different ways: In Norway and Denmark the term “recognition of real competences” (anerkendelse af realkompetencer) is used, while in the other countries the term “validation” (validering) is employed, which is also a common term in many Nordic texts¹⁶. In English texts, a wide range of terms are used that broadly deal with the same topic. In the English version of the document, we choose to use the term Validation of Prior Learning (VPL), although in other contexts it is described as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential learning (APEL), Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL) and Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL). The Nordic countries also use the European principles presented in the Common European Principles on Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning¹⁷ and the

16 Hult Å o Andersson P Validering i de nordiska länderna, Policy och praktik, 2008, NVL

17 www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory

18 CEDEFOP (2009): European guidelines for validating nonformal and informal learning. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg 2009, chapter 6.1 and appendix 6, table 4

European Guidelines¹⁸. These principles are:

- Individual entitlements. In principle a voluntary matter for the individual with equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals. The privacy and rights of the individual are to be respected.
- Obligations of stakeholders. Stakeholders should establish, in accordance with their rights, responsibilities and competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Stakeholders should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.
- Confidence and trust. The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.
- Credibility and legitimacy. Systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests and ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders.

Important terms for qualities/characteristics of the processes linked to validation are:¹⁹

- Reliability: would the outcome be the same if the VPL process were repeated under the same conditions?
- Validity: is the learning that is being validated the learning that is intended to be validated?
- Safety, security and confidentiality: is the candidate's interests protected during the process?
- Standards/referential: are the benchmarks of content and level of learning well defined?
- Sustainability: will the process operate over time within the resources of money and time required?
- Visibility/transparency: is the process of validation generally understood and does it lead to wider recognition of the candidate's learning?
- Fitness for purpose: does the process reflect the circumstances and intentions of the learner?
- Cost-efficiency: can the process be modified so that the benefits (personal and financial) are in proportion to the cost?

19 Observal-Net: The Structure of Validation Procedures

- www.observal-net.eu/documents/uk-formal-documents-7-structure-validation-procedures

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The different processes that form the European Union Recommendations for Validation of non-formal and informal learning as of December 2012 are as follows:

1989 – ECTS

2002 – Copenhagen process

2004 – Principles for VNFIL, Europass

2006 – Youthpass

2008 – EQF

2009 – Guidelines for VNFIL, Education 2020, ECVET, EQAVET, EU's youth strategy

2010 – Bruges Communication

2011 – Agenda for adult learning, Modernizing HE

2012 – Europa 2020, Recommendation for VNFIL



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