



Upskilled New Painters

The recognition of prior learning of adults, migrants and refugees coming from all sectors, to give to the Painting trade the people with the right competences to fulfill the labour market needs

IO3: Research on needs opportunities on informal learning in the painting sector

State of play on Recognition of prior learning



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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State of play on Recognition of prior learning

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Introduction

Since 2012, following the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, the Member States have taken up the challenge to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018, as validation was lacking or defined differently in the European countries.

The main aim is to enable individuals to improve the visibility and the value of their knowledge, skills, and competences acquired outside formal education and training as at work, at home, or even in voluntary activities and they might have different motivations for validating their skills and wish to use them in different learning sectors.

The value of these competences is huge although acquired outside the formal learning. The idea behind this is to provide formality to those competences awarding qualifications through recognition of prior learning (RPL), which have the same value as those awarded through participation in formal VET.

However, although the European Recommendation, is not enough that each Member State establishes a strategic framework and legal regulation on validation. It is necessary to connect validation to other practices on track by the major reforms on the qualification systems as the European Qualification Framework, the design of qualifications in Units of Learning Outcomes, and the involvement of the labour market in understanding the importance of the qualifications.

The main issue is about building trust by the involvement of the relevant stakeholders such as employers, trade unions, chambers of industry, commerce, and skilled crafts, VET centers, schools, and employment services to ensure that the outcomes of the validation process are accepted by the labour market and the society.

61 million adults aged 25 to 64 – many of them in employment and most of them native Europeans – are low-qualified giving the notice about the importance of the development of validation arrangements.

In February 2020 the European Commission published a study evaluating the actions taken by the Member States in response to the 2012 Council Recommendation which was considered in the present report. In the evaluation was underlined that important differences were revealed regarding the involvement of employers and labour market stakeholders in the design and implementation of validation strategies at the national level. However, it was underlined that the Member States *“have overall made relatively good progress towards meeting the objectives of the 2012 Council Recommendation.”*¹

The 2012 Council Recommendation established 11 principles to support the implementation of validation arrangements by Member States. This is one of the reasons for the topic complexity because it is necessary to observe the state of the art of the following aspects:

- Validation arrangements are linked to NQFs and in line with the EQF
- Guidance and counselling are available

¹ Study supporting the evaluation of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

- Information and guidance on benefits, opportunities, and procedures are available and accessible
- Transparent quality assurance measures support reliable, valid, and credible assessment methods and tools for validation
- Qualifications or parts of qualifications obtained through validation comply with agreed standards that are the same or equivalent to those qualifications obtained through formal education programs
- Synergies between validation and credit systems exist
- Disadvantaged groups are particularly likely to benefit from validation
- EU/ national transparency tools are promoted to facilitate the documentation of learning outcomes
- Provision is made for the development of the professional low competences of validation practitioners
- Skills audits are available for individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment

Purpose of the report

The objective of the present report is to gather information on 15 countries, UNIEP members² and Portugal, to give a general overview of the situation in each of the countries to help the entities from these countries, namely UNIEP associations, to better understand the educational panorama, aimed to recruit the most qualified people to the enterprises and to bring individuals from other sectors to the painting sector, namely migrant population.

The recognition of prior learning is a very important pathway to upgrade the qualifications on the labour market and should be embedded in the VET systems by the stakeholders, namely the enterprises. However, it is important to underline that validation is a complex topic, very much linked to the value of the VET system and it is perceived in different ways across the Member States.

The perspective of the report is connected to the labour market and the role of the enterprises and other actors as social partners and associations in the RPL process. Due to the density of the topic, it is necessary to boundary in a most practical approach to guide the enterprises and individuals linked to the painting sector.

Definitions

For sake of clarity and to enable our comparative analysis, the definitions mentioned are those from the Council Recommendation as follows:

Recognition of prior learning - means the validation of learning outcomes,³ whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning, *acquired before requesting validation*.

² Austria, Belgium FL/FR, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, UK.

³ Learning outcomes means statements of what a learner knows, understands and can do on completion of a learning process, which is defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences

Formal learning - means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.

Non-formal learning - means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; in-company training, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public.

Informal learning - means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective as skills acquired through life and work experiences.

At the core of this process there is the concept of validation, which can be different in the different countries.

Validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised entity that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard through the following four distinct phases:

1. IDENTIFICATION through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;
2. DOCUMENTATION to make visible the individual's experiences;
3. a formal ASSESSMENT of these experiences; and
4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification;

The aim of a validation process is to make non formal and informal learning visible in the labour market and in the education system.

The recognition of prior learning may also include prior learning in formal education gathering all the forms of learning (formal, no-formal and informal).

However, validation cannot operate separately and needs to be embedded in wider skills and lifelong learning strategies, which requires an institutional change to facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Regarding the four phases - Identification, Documentation, Assessment and certification - they are not necessarily undertaken as separate phases. There are countries where these different phases are usually not carried out separately.

Another important aspect in the comparative exercise is that the terminology of activities described under the four phases defined by the Council Recommendation on validation is not consistently used across the Member States, but it broadly covers similar elements of the four stages proposed at the EU level.

A further consideration is that labour market stakeholders can have a significant role to play in referring individuals to competent authorities for the assessment and certification stages of validation where appropriate.

The process of validation can lead to different outputs - award of full qualification, award of parts of qualification, other types of certificates not linked to formal education but relevant to the labour market and training specifications.

Regarding the certificates valuable for the labour market even they are not included in the formal system allow the individuals to access the labour market directly or to obtain exemptions or access to formal training programs.

Regarding funding, the European Social Fund has been allocated in several countries to support the implementation of VNFIL systems in their developmental stage or to modernise and expand the coverage of services in countries with well established VNFIL systems.

Each country will cover the following aspects: context, National approach to validation and link with the qualification system, organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination, involvement of social partners, VET and labour market, value of the certification, funding and validation initiatives or projects targeted at migrants, refugees.

Country reports



Austria

The National Validation Strategy was published in December 2017, after several years of development in close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders and is closely linked to the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy and to the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which has been designed as a comprehensive framework, consequently closely linked to facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The national validation strategy intends to raise awareness about the value of competences gained in non-formal and informal settings, to provide a platform and framework for the (further) development and coordination of existing and new initiatives and to provide potential users with an overview of relevant available measures.

The national validation strategy is organized around the following strategic key objectives:

- Increase the value of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts;
- Make validation arrangements better accessible by providing low-threshold, central information and advisory services;
- Improve opportunities for education and work by facilitating the obtainment of qualifications by adults as 'second-chance education';
- Improve permeability at the central interfaces of the Austrian education and training system (thus, improving flexibility and efficiency);
- Strengthen validation as an integral part of the Austrian education and training system;
- Promoting the learning outcomes orientation and quality assurance.

However, there is no comprehensive quality framework and there are no common quality standards for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL).

The current system is weak as there are no uniform arrangements to regulate validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning and no general individual right for individuals to access validation initiatives.

This has not been changed with the national validation strategy. Furthermore, the fragmented structures and responsibilities for validation in Austria might not facilitate the implementation of the strategy despite the structures established (steering and working groups across sectors).

There are also concerns that the strategy will raise many expectations that may not be met, also because financial issues remain unresolved. This could therefore be an obstacle to the implementation of the strategy or delay its implementation showing that VNFIL is currently not considered a policy priority in Austria.

Considering migrants and refugees there are validation initiatives not fully systematic that also lead to the identification of training options based on identification and documentation phases.



Belgium FL

The issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning has been established for more than a decade on the public policy agenda in Belgium, where initiatives had been developed to improve access to lifelong learning. Formal legal frameworks for validation have been put in place in both the French and Dutch-speaking parts of the country.

In Belgium's Flemish region, the integration of VNFIL systems across all sectors, the conditions for validation bodies to deliver certifications against a defined qualification or professional standard was defined by a law adopted in 2019, aimed at increasing coherence of validation between different policy domains of education, employment, youth, culture, and sports and communication, because each Ministry Department regulates validation within its policy field.

Organisations in all sectors (inside and outside education, public and private) can act as a recognised validation body.

In Belgium's Flemish region, the expression 'EVC' (*Erkenning Van Verworven Competenties* - recognition of competences) refers to the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Regarding the labour market the recognition of non-formal and informal learning arrangements are set up by the Department of Work and Social Economy through the 'Certificate of Work Experience' (*Ervaringsbewijs*) which allows the individuals to receive a certificate of work experience if they demonstrate that they have acquired the skills needed to perform an occupation. The social partners give their advice on the professions for which a certificate of work experience is relevant (and needs to be included). It is based on the competences related to a certain profession, no matter where one has achieved those

competences. Therefore, professional competence profiles are translated into “standards” by the SERV (Flanders’ Social and Economic Committee) and the social partners. These standards are used in a test situation to assess whether people have the required competences. If they pass the test, they receive a certificate of work experience, granted by the Flemish government. The organisations assessing applicants are recognised centrally by the Minister of Work after they have fulfilled the procedure for accreditation by responding to a call for proposals by the European Social Fund (ESF) Agency.

Due to its close link to the labour market, it is the employers who can support the value of these certificates. Some collective labour agreements as, for example, health care state that having a certificate of work experience gives access to better job classifications or enhanced functions.

In addition to this procedure, a platform for competence-based matching has been implemented (an interface that virtually connects individuals and their competences with prospective employers and training opportunities)

The Flemish National Qualification Framework outlines what kind of training, experiences, and roles can lead to a qualification. It is a reference framework that allows education and training providers and the labour market to communicate about qualifications in the Flemish community and Europe. The NQF distinguishes between “professional qualifications” and “educational qualifications” allowing for both validation procedures.

As mentioned above, in Belgium’s Flemish region, each Ministry Department regulates validation within its policy field.

The Department of Education and Training follows a decentralised model where the education and training institutions assumed the responsibility. Validation practices in the sector are developed from the bottom up, depending on the motivation of those concerned and the amount of demand. However, incentives are also provided centrally. Overall, the Ministry of Education and Training is responsible for the broad design of and approach towards validation by drafting the legislation on the different sectors within the field of education.

The employers' organisations and trade unions, agree on the principle of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Most of them underline the positive dimensions of this process as well as the opportunity that is therefore given to recognise the formative dimension of work. They recognise that the process can be useful when it comes to identifying cross-cutting competences as in the case of mobility or restructuring.

As VNFIL provision is grounded on a collaborative model which facilitates the pooling of financial resources from various stakeholders, funding arrangements are diverse

In Belgium’s Flemish region, the regional government’s ministries of education and labour have confirmed sharing VNFIL related expenditure based on a legislative decree which was recently updated to reflect the European Recommendation principles.

The Secondary Exam Committee is funded by the government as it is a service provided by the government. The adult and higher education training institutions must accept the various costs of validation together with individuals who also assume some of the associated costs.

In the work sector, the certificate for work experience is funded in part by European Social Fund (60%) and in part by the Flemish Community (40%).



Belgium FR

In French-speaking Belgium, the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning, VNFIL has a long tradition and was first established in adult education (*Enseignement de promotion sociale- EPS*) in 1991 aimed to promote lifelong learning at the Federal level.

In 2003 in the continuous vocational education and training (CVET) sector, a focus on individuals with no formal qualifications boosted the validation arrangements.

Currently, there are two types of VNFIL: the validation of competences in the continuous vocational education and training sector, leading to the award of a Skills Certificate and the valorisation of prior experience (VAE - *valorisation des acquis de l'expérience*) in adult education and higher education, leading to the validation of learning units/access or exemptions from certain parts of a study pathway.

VNFIL is a priority topic well prepared and developed aimed to print transparency to all EPS providers in the validation procedures defining clear paths to a further transferability of different certificates and recognition of prior learning because qualification is equivalent although the different formal education standards.

In French-speaking Belgium exists a multi-stakeholder collaboration which contributes to creating a common vision and ensuring the appropriate distribution of costs among the participating stakeholders.

A legal agreement renewed in 2019 based on the principles of the European Recommendation has ensured a consensus among public institutions, social partners and the business community (forming a consortium) as to how the offer of VNFIL services should be organized and modernized in an important agreement to boost validation arrangements.

The validation of competences has gained additional funding to strengthen the cooperation with the labour market and enterprises – notably taking on a proactive approach through skills reconversion of workers that have suffered collective layoffs due to bankruptcy or restructuration of their employers where skills audits are part of the validation service offered to companies undergoing restructuring.

Less progress has been made in VAE in Higher education. Additional work remains to be done in the field of focusing on disadvantaged groups, as migrants and refugees. The third sector provides a large area yet to be covered as there seem to be very few validation initiatives in the sector, without any centralised support and legal frameworks.

The National Qualification Framework follows the European Qualification Framework and supports education qualifications and vocational qualifications in a dual entry where 'certification' is defined as the formal result of an evaluation and validation carried out by a competent authority, establishing that an individual possesses the learning outcomes corresponding to determined standards, either at the end of an education or training pathway or following the validation of his/her competences. It is a very flexible system where validation in vocational training, leads to the award of a Skills Certificate, which is a legal document, recognised by the Walloon Region and the French Community.

The standards for validation are the same as occupational standards in the formal system.

However, the French-Speaking Government of the French Community and the Walloon and Brussels region are involved in different steps of the process, but each level is governed by a specific legal framework. It means, a lack of an overall framework or overarching national institution responsible for the validation systems in French-speaking Belgium.

Regarding validation in the field of continuous vocational training has been developed by a Consortium of the five most important public sector training providers in French-speaking Belgium: FOREM (*Service public Wallon de l'emploi et la formation*, Walloon Employment and Vocational Training Service, equivalent to the Flemish VDAB); *Bruxelles Formation* (Public sector training agency in the Brussels-Capital region); *Enseignement de Promotion Sociale* (Adult Education Provider in the 'communauté française'; *Institut de Formation des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* – IFAPME (Training Agency for the Self Employed and SMEs in the Wallonia regions) and *Service de Formation des petites et moyennes entreprises* - SFPME, (Training Service for Small and Medium-Sized enterprises in Brussels). The Consortium is a streamlined structure mobilising the largest platform in terms of vocational qualifications in French-speaking Belgium.

VAE in universities is partly supported by regional funding, partly by universities and partly by European funds.

EPS is funded by the Government of the French Community. Extra funding is also found by the European Social Funds and through different contracts with training organisations, Public Employment Services, and sectoral funds.



Czech Republic

VNFIL is well established in the Czech Republic and the number of qualifications created and awarded within this system is growing mainly funded from the state budget although the validation system and its tools are very much labour market-oriented.

A very important policy rationale behind the VNFIL strategy in the Czech Republic is the partnership between the education sector, business, and employers, with a specific focus on defining skills shortages in the labour market and utilising the VNFIL system to mitigate them.

The linkage of the levels of the national qualifications system to the EQF level is founded in the Czech National Register of Qualifications (NSK) where each validation certificate contains a reference to the corresponding level of the EQF.

The NSK comprises eight qualification levels and counts with 1234 vocational qualifications in a remarkable proliferation of the number of newly created vocational qualifications and awarded certificates. One of the reasons for this boost is the close orientation towards the labour market with a strong cooperation with employers as the system focuses on validation of vocational competences usable on the labour market.

The validation system is primarily focused on continuous training also because the competences and vocational qualifications are defined in sectorial sector councils in close

collaboration with employers and their representatives as the Czech Chamber of Commerce, the Agrarian Chamber, the Confederation of Trade and Industry).

There is a wider scope of the validation approach which improves connection and transferability of the validated outcomes among sectors and in benefit of the individuals.

The approach is mainly based on passing a competency-based assessment of the knowledge, skills, and competences obtained by individual applicants in their prior learning, including (mainly) work experience.

The competences required can also be gained through specific training programmes and acquired learning outcomes can be assessed through the same competence-based process. In 2014, the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 was approved, covering education policy, including the system of VNFIL.

This Strategy for Education Policy follows the Strategy on Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic which recognised the development of VNFIL as one of its key objectives and was the decisive impulse for the emergence of the Act on the VNFIL and its main tool, the National Register of Qualifications.

Even the Public Employment Services benefits from the NSK, which has been incorporated into the national Active Policy for Employment (APE) where the concept of retraining people with low or obsolete qualifications and those at risk of long-term unemployment is on the top of the action. This action provides the unemployed the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification.

In this national effort, many IVET schools were supported to become centres for adult learning and validation within three UNIV projects funded by the ESF. Since 2015 the administration of the NSK portal is funded mainly from the budget of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and employers.

The validation system as setting up and stipulated by the Act on VNFIL gives equal access to all. The system was not primarily addressed to support disadvantaged groups however it is used also to retrain people. An important debate was launched regarding how to broaden the system and how to use it to support different groups of potential users, including low qualified and early school leavers.



Denmark

Denmark's VNFIL system is described through several complementary mechanisms and laws that collectively provide a comprehensive VNFIL system - on VET, Adult Education, third sector, and labour market.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has been on the country policy agenda for about 20 years as a key element to promote lifelong learning providing to the individual's opportunities to be granted access to formal education and training programs in case they do not meet the formal entry requirements, to get exemptions for parts of a formal education and training program and/ or to have an individually tailored education and training program, to acquire a 'certificate of competence' leading to access/ exemptions

in adult education and training programs, to obtain 'education certificates' for parts of/or a whole education program on the basis of validation of prior learning.

The legislation and the formal framework have been set nationally, but the implementation is decentralized at the provider level. Financial constraints are obstacles to implementation and can be observed differences between the educational institutions regarding their level of activity.

A three-partite agreement (2018-2021) signed with the social partners includes financial incentives for both education providers and for enterprises to remove former financial constraints for more participation in Adult Vocational Education. Also, as part of the agreement, the Government has launched an initiative for the social partners' responsibility of providing information, advice, and guidance about basic and vocational upskilling of low-skilled and skilled employees at both private and public enterprises.

In 2015, a VET reform implemented a program for adults - Vocational Upper Secondary Education and Training - where validation of prior learning was made mandatory for all adult learners aged 25+. A mandatory Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) accessible up to NQF level 6, for the candidate prior to the education, is carried out, leading to an individual shortening of the VET period. The assessment for shortening follows the principles for both a standardized and an individual part of the VPL, with the criteria for the standardized part of the validation determined by the economic sectorial Vocational Training Committees.

Regarding adult education and continuous training, the use of VPL is selected with various means and incentives. Employers and educational institutions, obtain financial incentives to motivate employers and employees to adult vocational education and Continuous training.

The Validation of Prior Learning is a process focused on the VPL steps of declaration and documentation of competences, though not in terms of standardized methods and tools. The implementation of VPL arrangements is the responsibility of the VPL providers, the education institutions in charge of the specific education. The development of methods and tools for the declaration and documentation of prior learning has a high priority at the regional and sectoral levels.

Disadvantaged groups – and long-term unemployed people have the same legal right to have their prior learning assessed – however as the VPL is carried out by educational providers, the barrier could be that the individuals from these groups need to decide about the choice of education before being able to have the VPL.

Various entities, at the regional level, can oversee information, identification, guidance, and counselling. In the pre-phase leading up to the assessment process, these entities can include, among others, trade unions, employers' associations, job centres (PES), unemployment insurance funds, civic education institutions, study committees, and e-Guidance' online guidance service, who can all take responsibility for this part of the process, often in collaboration with the educational institution.

In the area of adult vocational education and training, there is a tradition for collaboration between enterprises and formal educational institutions concerning competence development of employees including validation. The social partners have an important role in strengthening this collaboration.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science are responsible for the assessment of prior learning legislative framework and for taking national initiatives

for implementing the legislation. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects with the aim of developing tools, methods, and procedures.

Public funding covers assessment at educational institutions but does not cover the information, or clarification with respect to the process about the individual's application. Educational institutions can charge a fee for the assessment of prior learning regarding the VPL programmes covering higher education.



France

The French validation system is well-developed and based on a legal framework and France can be considered as a leading country in this area. *Validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE) has now been in place for almost 20 years.

VAE has developed from a national perspective, strongly articulated to lifelong learning, training and employment policies. It is an integrated system, connected to the national qualification framework, the national directory of vocational qualifications (RNCP) which covers levels EQF 2 to 8. The RNCP, established by law in 2002, is the basis for the French National Qualification Framework (NQF). The aim of the RNCP is to ensure the quality and transparency of formal professional qualifications in France, by establishing a publicly accessible register of qualifications formally recognised by the State and social partners. The RNCP is overseen by a national commission, the *Commission Nationale de la Certification professionnelle* (CNCP).

The procedure is defined by law and decrees, ensuring consistency across sectors. It is integrated into the Labour and Education code. Qualifications awarded through VAE have the same value as those awarded through participation in formal VET.

VAE is a procedure that leads to the award of whole or parts of qualifications with a vocational and professional orientation and purpose at all levels, which comprises, the steps of identification, documentation, assessment, and certification. VAE is strongly focused on certification connected with the RNCP being the strength of the system. VAE is a fourth pathway to access qualification, alongside initial training, continuous training, and apprenticeship.

However, the legislation clearly states that validation is only possible for skills acquired from work experience. The requirement for validation in the number of years of professional experience required to apply for validation was reduced in 2017 from three years to one year whether continuous or not, part-time, or full-time, under one or more statuses (employees, self-employed workers, volunteers, job seekers, etc.) can apply for VAE. The experience gained through work activity must be directly related to the professional diploma or title or certificate of professional qualification for which the application is made.

A major weakness, in the VAE process, is the lack of coordination between stakeholders considering the distribution of competences between the bodies financing the services associated with VAE (State, regions, public employment services companies, candidates). Governance is currently a weak aspect of the French VAE system, especially since the

discontinuation of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Development of VAE in 2009. The assessment procedures differ depending on the type of qualification targeted by the application and awarding authority.

The system of validation of non-formal and informal learning builds upon longstanding practices in the field of identification and recognition of prior learning and professional experience. Its purpose is to give the opportunity to those who have no qualifications in connection with the activities they have undertaken to obtain a level of qualification corresponding to their skills.

As mentioned above, to qualify, individuals must justify having exercised at least one year of activity directly related to the activities mentioned in the standards of the qualification they want to obtain. VAE can be organised for a wide range of qualifications, not only those awarded or accredited by Ministries (vocationally or professionally oriented qualifications, including the higher education qualifications which are, in France, all considered to have a professional oriented purpose) but also sectoral qualifications recognised by social partners such as *Certificats de Qualification Professionnelle* (CQP) and others qualifications created by training organisations of private sector or consular chambers.

It is important to underline the specific meaning of validation in the French context. Skills audits, skills identification and documentation, etc. are not equivalent to validation. A variety of tools are being developed to identify individuals' skills and/or support access to the labour market or career development, at the regional level (*CarifOref*), at local level (*Maisons de l'emploi*), by public employment services (PES) but also by sector actors (professional branches), and individual companies.

The general institutional framework for VAE is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour with a key coordinating role to implement the system on the ground, in partnership with the regional council and the other Ministries' awarding qualifications.

Chambers of commerce, chambers of trade, private training providers and social partners are directly responsible for implementing VAE procedures related to the type of qualifications they award. They take charge of the entire process, from the provision of information to candidates to the organisation of jury sessions, certification, and providing quality assurance. Private sector actors are not directly involved in the VAE procedure if the targeted qualification is a state diploma, but the legislation foresees that at least 25% of the jury members are professionals, which can include representatives of the private sector.

At the national inter-sectoral level, social partners can contribute to shaping the general policy framework on VAE, through the adoption of sectoral or inter-sectoral collective agreements, governance bodies of employment, guidance, and vocational training, within agreements at company level.

In France, VAE is funded by public and private sources. Actors who intervene in the financing of VAE are the Regional councils, for the organisation and funding of information centres that provide information on VAE to the general public and provide support to candidates; the *Pôle Emploi*, provides funding for the costs which are not covered by regional councils, for candidates who are also job-seekers; Companies can finance some VAE actions and The State, within the framework of collective actions supporting employment.

There are no specific validation arrangements for disadvantaged groups, as migrants, and low-qualified adults.



Germany

In Germany, VNFIL is not a central topic in current policies and the German system is not very flexible among the educational sectors. It is difficult to transfer or combine different pathways recorded in different contexts. The inclusion of qualifications from non-formal contexts in the National Qualification Framework is foreseen but not yet implemented.

However, Germany has improved their validation arrangements since 2012, often designed for the specific educational sector - Higher Education or Secondary vocational education, and for different trades and occupations such as skilled crafts and care work, which cannot easily be combined or transferred.

Within vocational education and training, there are mainly three instruments for the validation of non-formal and informal learning: external students' examination; external assessment through *Qualifikationsanalyse* (qualification analysis) and self-assessment and external assessment (qualification analysis) of professional competences in the project *ValiKom*.

The instrument of *Qualifikationsanalyse* (qualification analysis) was developed to improve the assessment and recognition of professional and vocational education and training qualifications of foreign workers in accordance with the European Recommendation.

Based on the qualification analysis approach the pilot project *ValiKom* (2015- 2018) has developed a joint procedure to assess and validate occupational skills and competences acquired outside the formal education system. *ValiKom* was supported by four German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IHK) and four Chamber of Crafts and Trades to ensure the certification of the non-formal and informal acquired skills and competences, because they are responsible for examinations and the award of professional qualifications. The project aimed to establish a framework with a view to validating occupational skills and competences through self-assessment and external assessment to document prior learning and examine the equivalence of the competences compared to formal regulated professions. The target groups were low-skilled people, people without any formal qualification, persons returning to work after a period of absence, individuals willing to change their profession. However, it does not yet have a legal base.

Validation is still understood as an overall process that includes four stages (identification, documentation, assessment, and certification), as well as one step within the validation processes in between assessment and certification. However, in practice, the understanding of validation still differs across education sectors and need more debate and confidence building to develop mutual understanding and trust as a basis for next steps related to validation.

Despite the cooperative government approach of the initial vocational education in Germany there are many institutions offering different types of certificates and on the other hand the companies decide to what extent they recognise the prior learning of employees and applicants.

Further Projects and initiatives directed towards auditing individual competence profiles to define a career project or plan a professional reorientation or training are often (but not exclusively) initiated below the legislative level, particularly for migrants and refugees. Several tools have been developed targeting those groups that focus on the identification and documentation of social and personal skills but also vocational skills, as for example, my-professional-experience.org, a quick digital self-assessment screening-tool for MYSKILLS, as well as the *Kompetenzkarten* (Competence Cards) and the *Kompetenzbilanz für Migrant/inn/en* (Competence balance for migrants) focuses on adult migrants to support in the identification and reflection of skills and competences acquired throughout life.

In the context of collective labour agreements between the social partners - trade unions and employers' associations - several branches validated competences acquired through informal learning using qualifications in the formal education system as reference. Examples are the metal and electrical industry, as well as the building industry. However, this is not based on an actual assessment, but on the performance rating of employers regarding individual employees' competences.

There is no central institution or a standardised institutional framework for the overall coordination of the different validation approaches and systems. Different stakeholders are involved in different systems depending on their responsibilities. Within all validation processes directed towards formal qualifications, the responsible stakeholders that can award these qualifications and respective certificates use their formal standards as a reference

Funding can come from public authorities, as well as the private and the third sector or even individual candidates in many cases. Periods of funding vary. Measures funded by the public sector are required to develop and realise strategies for sustainability



Hungary

VNFIL arrangements remain limited in the country and Hungary does not yet have a national validation system based on uniform principles and procedures. One of the main reasons for this is the strong separation of educational and economic sectors.

Since 2012, the date of the European Recommendation the development of a comprehensive validation system has not started.

Validation as an objective is mentioned in several strategies (on LLL 2014-2020 and mid-term strategy against early school leaving), but without an action plan coherent with the detailed tasks, actors, procedures, responsibilities, target groups, and objectives.

Also, some strategic development programmes have been launched in the last years, partly with EU funding in the frame of the National Development Plan where validation is mentioned without detailed recommendations. The National Digital Education Strategy, promotes the idea of making visible and also recognising adults' previously acquired digital competences. However, the mechanisms of the validation are not developed.

It is not possible to find information on validation initiatives that have been developed by enterprises. The term validation is not known amongst employers.

The weak development of validation in the country is dominated by sectoral approaches where everything is lacking: strategic goals, funding, stakeholder participation, quality assurance, preparation for participants. The development of validation practice in each sector is done through one-off projects. After the development projects have been achieved, the results are not sustainable.

There is no national institution with responsibility for the coordination of validation development. The operation of validation solutions is characterised by sectoral separation. In the absence of an overarching validation policy, there is no government actor that would have exclusive competence in developing the validation system. The current framework of development is provided by EU supported projects.

As there is no overall system of validation, there is no national framework for funding validation activities.



Ireland

In Ireland, validation of non-formal and informal learning is referred to as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). It encompasses all forms of prior learning and is provided in the context of specified destination awards from Level 1 to 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) based on learning outcomes.

RPL provides access to formal education and can be used for the award of credit, to gain exemptions within a program, and support access to the labour market. Also, validation is currently being used by companies to retain their staff.

Ireland does not have a single national policy on RPL. However, existing national policies are driven by different actors and sectors which address specific issues related to workforce development, and aspects of diversity and social inclusion.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) outlined its commitment to the development of a national policy for RPL. In addition, this Department actively monitors the national progress of RPL through performance framework and reporting systems with relevant national agencies.

Overall, the country has made progress regarding each of the principles outlined in the European Recommendation on validation as follows: arrangements for RPL that lead either to full or partial qualifications and/or give access to education and training programs are in place across the sub-sectors of education (with the exception of the general education sector) and within the labour market there is growing the individual institutions offering tailor-made possibilities for employees to undergo RPL. At the same time, there are organisations collaborating and networking with counterparts in the education sector and labour market on RPL.

RPL arrangements are linked to the National Qualifications Framework which follows the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

It is foreseen that disadvantaged groups, including individuals who are unemployed and at risk of unemployment, can benefit from RPL through a range of inclusive measures.

RPL is characterized by the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders who are involved in the development and implementation of the RPL elements and principles. There is an RPL Practitioner Network that is an important and inspiring focal point for practitioners across multiple sectors to collectively support the development of system-wide capacity for RPL through sharing of practices, local policies, and toolkits. Specific ‘steering groups and advisory groups’ for particular projects were also foreseen.

Funding for higher education is allocated to the Higher Education Authority and funding for further education and training is funded by the Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS). The funding source for both is the Department of Education and Skills. As part of the National Training Fund, there is an investment in programs to support unemployed people in their journey back to work and assist those in employment to acquire new skills. Many of these programs incorporate RPL processes.

At the national level, there are no RPL practices specifically targeted to migrants / refugees. It remains the case that current RPL arrangements apply universally in the national context whereby citizens from other EU countries are granted the same rights to undergo validation processes as Irish nationals. There is a number of ONG (organisations non-governmental) funded by the Department of Justice and Equality which offer programs for migrants/refugees – some of which help individuals gain recognition for their skills and prior formal qualifications.



Italy

Italy gained a VNFIL comprehensive system being designed and introduced following the European Recommendation accomplishing a strong National System of Competence Certification, developed between 2012 and 2015, linked to the national institutional framework of rules for the validation of nonformal and informal learning as well embedded in the reform of the Labour Market.

The Italian strategy and policy on validation is directly related to the labour market as it has been developed primarily for employability purposes.

A 2012 Law defines, for the first time in Italy, the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as one of the key elements to ensure and implement lifelong learning, establishing rules and regulatory requirements (standards) concerning the characteristics of the system and the stakeholder’s involvement, ensuring transparency, usability, and broad accessibility of validation/certification services.

The national system of skills certification provides a national and comprehensive range of qualifications from all educational sectors and those with legal value, including professional and regulated qualifications. It also aimed at increasing the professional competences acquired at work, as well as those acquired in leisure time to promote mobility, to foster the

meeting together of demand and supply in the labour market and to increase learning transparency and the relevance of certifications at national and European level.

The system has been implemented through the following processes: the completion and improvement of the common national tools making the National Repertory of Qualifications active and available; the foundation schemes for the preparation of the services to the beneficiaries; the training and entitlement of validation bodies and operators; the launch of controlled applications to verify the effectiveness and sustainability of the system.

The process is linked and based on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which follows the European Qualification Framework (EQF) defining a clear common set of descriptors for the eight levels of Qualifications by identifying what kind of knowledge, skills, and autonomy/responsibility elements are attributable to each level.

The Labour Law, introduced in 2012, establishes a national system of certification of competences and validation of nonformal and informal learning. Regarding 'lifelong learning' issues, the law sets out several actions as the relaunch of the policies for lifelong learning through local networks made up of employment services, schools, universities, VET providers, and enterprises, the launch of specific public services to retrace and value formal, non-formal and informal learning, the establishment of national rules for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competencies and the publication of the National Repertory of Education, Training and Professional Qualifications.

The legislation defines key principles and features for the validation system underlining Validation as a central point, the importance of focus on the identification/validation and certification in the competences acquired by the individual in formal, non-formal, or informal contexts.

Exists the possibility of validating a whole qualification or parts. The entitled bodies can identify/validate and certify competences related to the qualifications or to parts of qualifications up to the total number of competences composing an entire qualification. The validation documents and certificates issued respectively at the end of the identification/validation and certification services are public documents.

The reliability of the national system of competence certification is based on a shared and progressive system of indicators, tools and quality standards applied at national level ensuring the system Quality assurance.

Regarding the content and management of qualifications, the 'entitling bodies' (or qualification authorities) directly pertinent to the labour market are, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, for the qualifications of those professions not organized in professional associations, chambers or colleges or otherwise regulated and the Ministry of Economic Development - EU Policies Department (leading several other national authorities) for the qualifications linked to regulated professions.

The 'entitling bodies should gain specific accreditation systems for the validation services that have been set up in all the Regions that formalized the procedures to implement the new validation framework. Almost all the Regions have entitled bodies that were already accredited for vocational training or guidance or employment services giving them this new task.

The funding framework for validation activities is mostly represented by public funds, regional and European funds.

Also, Employers' Training Funds (*Fondi Interprofessionali*) have been used for financing validation projects.

Migrants and refugees are considered as one of the most relevant target groups for validation and several pilot projects, have been focusing on this target group.



Luxembourg

The methodology implemented in Luxembourg is to validate non-formal and informal learning outcomes against qualifications awarded in the formal education and training system. The 'model' of validation in Luxembourg (known as *Validation des acquis de l'expérience* (VAE)) has emerged from a consultation process, based on the existing long-standing dialogue with different stakeholders in the field of education and training, and has led to the adoption of several laws related to validation in different education sectors.

However, the validation arrangements clearly state that validation is only possible for skills acquired from work experience. The requirement for validation in Luxembourg is three years (or 5,000 hours) of professional experience.

The legal framework on validation of non-formal and informal learning consists of several laws covering a three-strand system - general education, VET, and higher education.

The three types of VAE procedures in place, for formal qualifications referenced on Luxembourg's National Qualifications Framework (*Cadre Luxembourgeois des Qualifications, CLQ*) are the VAE procedure implemented by the Ministry of Education, Children, and Youth, concerning vocational certificates and diplomas and the general secondary education leaving diplomas at EQF/CLQ levels 2-4; and the Master craftsman certificate (*Brevet de maîtrise de l'artisanat*) at EQF/CLQ level 5; the VAE procedure for Advanced technician certificates (*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur, BTS*) at EQF/CLQ level 5: the procedure is implemented at the provider level, by the institution (*lycée technique*) delivering the diploma targeted and the VAE procedure at the University of Luxembourg concerning its Bachelor, Master, PhD diplomas (EQF/CLQ levels 6 to 8).

Despite the lack of a single legal framework for validation with a single national institution that holds primary responsibility for validation, informal coordination between different validation stakeholders takes place in practice and is also facilitated by the small size of the country. The allocation of responsibilities between the different key actors is well defined. In 2015, a notable development was the setting up of a Working Group, in the framework of Luxembourg's Lifelong Learning Strategy on validation of formal, nonformal and informal learning gathering key stakeholders in the field.

To guarantee the quality of the VAE process, representatives of employers and employees sit in all VAE validation committees. Professional chambers representing the interests of employers and employees (*Chambre des salariés*) are consulted on the elaboration of laws and regulations concerning VAE schemes, as part of social dialogue although they are not directly involved in the governance and implementation of the schemes.

The different types of VAE procedures are mostly publicly funded.

There is no specific targeting of disadvantaged groups like migrants and refugees. The VAE procedure and guidance offered by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth are open

to all potential beneficiaries, without giving priority to specific target groups. The University of Luxembourg launched some initiatives for refugees concerning language training and competence identification to facilitate the validation procedures.



Portugal

In Portugal, since 2000, the RVCC recognition, validation, and certification of competences (*Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de competências*) system have been in place covering all general education levels (GE), VET, and high education (HE).

Considering the labour market, in 2017 the *Qualifica* program targets low-skilled adults (unemployed or employed) and young people NEET (not in employment, education, or training) to validation procedures.

Aligned with the European goals of lifelong learning guidelines for adults' education, the main objective of the validation of non-formal and informal learning is to increase the levels of school and professional certification of the Portuguese population, namely those of working age (whether employed or unemployed). This policy is aimed at the preparation of human resources for economic development and labour market insertion and maintenance of workers.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is considered a strong element of recognition, validation, and certification of competences (RVCC).

Validation in RVCC awards a certification within the National Qualifications Framework levels (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações*) in line with the European Qualification Framework either a school certification (up to 12 years of school education) or a professional certification according to the National Catalogue of Qualifications (*Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações*).

The diplomas obtained through general education and VET RVCC have the same official value and give access to formal learning provision included in the national education and training system.

The procedure is assured by 300 *Qualifica* Centres - local adult education centres - a network in the whole country to increase access of adult learners to RVCC arrangement within a public offer of basic/secondary education and professional certification on a larger scale. These centres may integrate public basic and secondary education schools, vocational training centres connected to the Institute for Employment and Vocational Training, vocational schools, and other entities such as sectoral associations, non-governmental organisations, local development associations, and private enterprises in public-private partnerships.

Regarding the procedure, there are some specificities as compulsory training of 50 hours of education/training, 25 hours after writing the portfolio (school RVCC) or going through the validation tools (professional RVCC) to prepare him/herself for the final jury of certification session of the RVCC by which learners get school certification and/or professional certification.

There is a wide range of stakeholders participating in validation through RVCC, as the entities who are running the *Qualifica* Centers and the ministerial representatives, social partners, companies, training, and technological centres, experts involved in the Sectoral

Councils for Qualification. Those Councils are divided by economic areas, such as the agro-food sector, arts and crafts and jewellery, commerce and marketing, the construction industry and urbanism, culture and oversee Professional Competences Standards and keep up to date the National Catalogue of Qualifications.

In HE, validation involves the accreditation of professional experience and/or training attendance in different education and training contexts developed in institutions officially allowed to implement the RVCC procedures.

The European Social Fund (ESF) is used to co-finance VNFIL provision in the context of the Qualifica programme with a focus on low-qualified adults. ESF supports the development of the network of Qualifica centres, independent of being promoted by public or private institutions, to improve the visibility of RVCC and to contribute to making it a non-paid process for adult learners living in Portugal.

No relevant validation initiatives or projects targeted at migrants and refugees were identified.



Slovakia

In Slovakia, there is not a national model of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) developed although Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategies address this issue, a fundamental legislative basis for VNFIL is still missing.

As VNFIL procedures are not in place individuals cannot apply for VNFIL, with one exemption already introduced by legislation in 2009, a certificate ‘verifying professional competence’ entitling originally an unqualified individual to start a business requiring a formal certificate of apprenticeship meaning that entitles the holder to start a business which otherwise a Certificate of apprenticeship was required.

However, there is some visible improvement in the labour sector, with a wider implementation of the “*bilan de competences*” methodology, including training of labour office counsellors concerning the first two stages of validation. Expansion of this methodology into the education sector is under discussion.

There are activities related to preconditions for implementing VNFIL as the approval of the Slovak qualification framework and the design of 1 000 qualifications aligned to the Qualification Framework, linking learning outcomes to the description of qualifications. This is the first precondition for validation. Qualifications required by the labour market and included in the Slovak qualification framework will be gradually placed into the information system of further education and subsequently eligible for validation.

Currently, validation according to the Act on LLL refers, recognition of results of further education based on the assessment of achieving qualification standards leading to full or partial qualification and verification of professional competence necessary for running a business.

The LLL topics are run by the Ministry of Education which appointed Slovak Academy of Sciences to prepare a new LLL strategy to be submitted for public discussion to subsequently prepare new legislation addressing VNFIL.

The Ministry of Education is competent to harmonise the application of redundant practice in standards setting (education standards, occupational standards, LLL standards, qualification standards) and to create overarching qualifications in cooperation with other stakeholders like the Ministry of Labour and employer representatives as priority was given to the setting/revision of standards for qualifications needed on the labour market.

Financing validation services are not yet clarified. There is neither specific funding policy nor policy focus, except support to people without a Certificate of apprenticeship required by Trade Licensing Act to start a business and those affected within specific ESF projects.

There is not any validation arrangement to address the needs of migrants and refugees, also due to their marginal numbers as the country is not attractive for migrants and refugees. There are only pre-validation activities in place concerning unemployed people and those at risk of unemployment.



Slovenia

Slovenia has more than 15 years of experience in the validation of non-formal and informal learning where all qualifications registered in the National Qualification Framework can be acquired through VNFIL as a principle. However, in practice, regarding Higher Education, the system depends on universities availability.

The most comprehensive system is the system of national vocational qualifications legally embedded in the National Professional Qualifications Act from 2000 which states that national vocational qualifications can be fully awarded based on validation of non-formal learning. The key point of this system is the national register of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) which is fully integrated into the Slovenian Qualification Framework (SQF).

The Slovenian Qualification Framework is based on learning outcomes to be used for validation of prior learning for study programs. In the higher education sector, validation processes, as mentioned above, are not yet systematic. In vocational education, validation is available for parts of courses, courses, or modules and it can also lead to awarding a national vocational qualification.

In general, in secondary education and in higher education, single courses, parts of courses, or modules can also be obtained through validation. However, degrees can only be obtained through enrolment and completing at least part of the study program at the given institution.

The legal framework for the recognition of nonformal and informal learning for the labour market also provides the already mentioned National Professional Qualifications Act that falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Validation applies only to professions and vocations for which the catalogues

of standards for technical knowledge and skills are adopted by the Minister of Labour. The occupational standards and catalogues are proposed by social partners and therefore should reflect labour market needs. The database of the catalogue of standards for technical knowledge and skills is available online on the portal of the National Reference Point for Occupational Qualifications. The catalogue of vocational standards is also available on the same portal.

In 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities adopted two new rules - the Rules on the method and procedure for the validation of national professional qualifications and the Rules on keeping the register of providers of national vocational qualifications assessment and validation. These rules aim is to improve the validation procedures of assessors (the rules specify more detail about the validation procedure) and assessment centres (limit and raise the quality of assessment centres and institutions).

The National Coordination Point (NCP) of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework has the main role of coordinating the work of the expert commission of the National Coordination Point which is appointed for a term of four years. The NCP operates within the Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI).

The implementation at the national level is funded by the government with an important European Social Fund funding. Since 2016, Slovenia has continued to invest ESF funds for the development of validation methods, tools, web portals, counselling services for adults. Each of the projects has continued to contribute to the implementation of different elements of national validation arrangements. The establishment of both the NVQ and SQF was funded and co-funded by European funds.

Regarding institutions such as universities and schools, validation is funded by individual applicants. Individuals pay a validation fee that covers the cost of work undertaken by the committee or validator and for supplying the certificate.

The funding of the individual validation process of employees is covered by the individual or the employer.

In relation to risk groups, such as long-term unemployed people, marginalised groups, minority ethnic groups, the Employment Service of Slovenia has a budget for additional support. The Employment Service also organises training as a method of informing and advising participants about the opportunities for learning, including validation, targeted to them.

In 2017 a Decree on conditions and methods for ensuring the rights of persons with international protection was adopted. This Regulation specifies the terms and conditions for ensuring the rights of refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection among others, namely to education. It enables the integration of persons with international protection for whom formal education is not proved by documentation into secondary, higher professional education and higher education programs.



Sweden

VNFIL in Sweden covers all educational levels, often combined with additional education and training to cover skills gaps, to result in a qualification or certification. Higher education procedures exist aimed to provide access to HE institutions rather than a qualification. Specific VNFIL initiatives to support the labour market integration of newly arrived immigrants have been introduced since the adoption of the European Recommendation. In the period 2016 to 2018, Sweden has made significant progress to fulfil the objectives of the European Recommendation on Validation.

The National Delegation for Validation an inter-agency was appointed by the government with the purpose of ensuring transparency, coordination, quality, efficiency as well as a delegation of responsibility at the national and regional level. The national education agencies were tasked to promote and support the development work of education providers.

The priorities outlined in the national strategy progress stressed the provisions still are lacking. Although validation activities have generally increased, actions in some areas (e.g. in municipal adult education) are still not providing adequate coverage; the validation system in Sweden is highly decentralised with many actors needing an improving of coordination of their work; the possibilities for transfer of learning outcomes between different qualifications is limited, as not all qualifications are fully described according to the learning outcomes approach yet; the Swedish National Qualification Framework (SeQF) was introduced in 2015, and is perceived as an important tool in a validation context, but it is still underused; standards and guidelines for validation have been developed for many areas, but have not yet been implemented everywhere; financing of the development of validation is still fragmented, and is often characterised by short-term and ad hoc measures; validation is now increasingly used as a strategic tool for tackling skills shortages on the labour market together with the active involvement of the social partners; more immigrants are now having their prior learning validated as a way of facilitating integration into the labour market, but there is still a need to reinforce these efforts; statistics on validation in Sweden is incomplete, and for some areas non-existent.

The official definition of validation in Sweden is embedded in the Law on Education from 2010, where it is described as “a process that contains a structured identification, assessment and documentation as well as recognition of the knowledge and competence of a person, irrespective of how these have been acquired”.

The social partners are active in developing models for the validation of vocational competence for sectors and occupations and much of the validation taking place in the country is performed within the framework of the formal education and training system and within labour market programmes. Financing of the individual’s validation is embedded in funding for education or in resources allocated to labour market measures for unemployed people. The responsibility for adapting the validation methods to the specific needs of a certain industry has been allocated to the business sector organisations.

Municipalities that have an important role in Sweden’s practice can apply for state grants for regional cooperation on vocational training in adult education with the condition for

receiving this grant that the municipalities offer the opportunity for validation. In parallel, development work is underway with a regional build-up of validation functions, where adult education and other validators are gathered to create a simpler distribution of validation services. A state authority, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, supports the regions in this work and can distribute development funds.

Immigrant people have been a particular focus of validation arrangements due to the large influx in recent years. Validation is seen as a crucial tool for the integration of these groups into the labour market. To ensure their integration a set of labour market measures – the so called ‘Fast Tracks’ (*Snabbspår*) – have been developed since 2016 for sectors where employment prospects are considered especially positive. Most of the different Fast Tracks involve validation of prior learning, both of a formal and nonformal/informal nature, as well as upskilling in relation to occupational standards. The initiative speeds up the entry of skilled immigrants into occupations with labour shortages through activities which map, validate and bridge the skills of migrants that are identified as eligible for the programme. Validation has also been developed as a regular labour market programme at the Public Employment Service (PES).

The development of validation arrangements has been funded partly by the government, and the European Social Fund (ESF) that is increasingly being used as a source of funding for the development of methods and structures for validation at the regional and national level.

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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