



Current situation of Non-Formal Education

Recommendations on how to validate and recognize
the Non-Formal Education

Project: Youth Empowerment Support to Non-Formal Learning – YES2NFL



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Introduction

Recent changes in the education system, mainly brought by the new competencies of youth and increased capacities of teachers led to a new revolutionized environment in learning methods as well as teaching.

Some countries have been far more advanced in the aspect of recognition of youth work and exploring possible links between recognition of youth work and employability/employment of young people, to share and discuss experiences, examples, and possibilities of working towards recognition and to develop partnerships for future action

Therefore, recognition of youth work and non-formal education/learning by national entities is becoming a need all around Europe.

This situation analysis is developed by the youth and team of the project title: Youth Empowerment Support to Non-Formal Learning – YES2NFL, which is co-financed under Key Action 2, Capacity building in the field of youth under Western Balkans Window by the European Commission.

This situation analysis has a goal to bring together information from eight partner countries of this project and to provide necessary recommendations for stakeholders.

We hope that situation analysis will serve all youth workers, trainers, and educators in non-formal education and that they will find useful information that might support the personal and social development of young people involved in their programs and activities.

Note: Current situation of Non-Formal Education includes information that was publicly available until September 2020.

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General Information:

The situation analyzes YES to NFL comes from the importance of recognizing and validating non-formal learning (NFL) and the potential benefits it can bring. Even though NFL has been noticed by several European Institutions, it still needs to be promoted and validated as a methodology. It's important to mention that 2018 was the last year of implementation of the recommendations given by the Council of Europe for program countries.

According to the experience of all partners noticed that there is a lack of sharing practices in the benefits of NFL and there is a lack of tools adapted for different countries (especially for Western Balkans). This is easily visible in the education sector like universities where there is an existing curriculum, but it's not given importance to it. There is not a clear path on how to go through it and there is a lack of awareness-raising activities on the benefits of the NFL.

A huge number of people around Europe are trained, educated, and familiarized with NFL methodology for several years, but only a few of them have used it or translated it into the education methodology for society.



Figure 1 – A snapshot during the seminar in Kosovo, June 2022.

NFL is a trend, a new way of learning but still not known and appreciated. Unfortunately, this methodology is still not recognized in many countries of the EU and is not known at all in Western Balkan-WB.

In addition, WB aims to be part of the EU family, and to become part of a family you should first get to know this family; you need to collaborate and have the same way of understanding and functioning among us.

In this situation analyze, participants from different countries have shared all their values and differences. It is material with mix cultures and ways of understanding and dealing with NFL.

Objectives of the situation analysis:

- An analysis of the current situation of Non-Formal Education in each country;
- Exchange of information for each country participating;
- Recommendations on how to validate and recognize Non-Formal Education;
- Strengthen the cooperation between all involved stakeholders;
- Promotion of awareness raising for modernization of the education system through NFL;
- To raise awareness about the importance of combining non-formal and formal methods of education to improve the skills of young people;
- Improve intercultural dimensions in the youth field;

BELGIUM

Introduction and context

Due to its federal structure, Belgium developed three NQFs, one for each of the three language communities: Flemish, French, and German-speaking. Despite adaptation to the needs of each community, the three frameworks share important common features, supporting interoperability. An amendment to the Belgian federal law on the general structure of the education system was adopted in 2012, stating that the European qualifications framework will be used as a common reference for the three communities in Belgium; this addresses the challenge of linking the three frameworks and potentially eases mobility of Belgian citizens within the country. The three frameworks have been/will be referenced separately to the EQF: the Flemish and French Communities have completed this process and the German-speaking Community is expected to do so soon.

Belgium (the French Community)

The French Community of Belgium has been working on a national qualification framework for lifelong learning since 2006. Three distinct political authorities¹ are involved in the work:

- a) the French Community (the inhabitants of the French-speaking area of the Walloon Region and the French-speaking inhabitants of Brussels); Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (FWG);
- b) the Walloon Region;
- c) the COCOF (Commission Communautaire française de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale).

The current framework dates back to 2010 when the three governments of the French Community agreed on the principle of creating a qualifications framework with double entry, one for educational qualifications and one for professional qualifications, placed into eight levels and consistent with the descriptors of the European qualifications framework. The proposed framework structure is close to that applied by the Flemish Community of Belgium. All major stakeholders agreed in mid-2011 on these main principles of the framework. The CFC was formally adopted in 2015, through a decree operationalizing the agreement between the three francophone governments². The follow-up to the decree, particularly the inclusion of qualifications into the framework, has been slower than originally anticipated and the CFC has not yet reached full operational status. The framework was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in December 2013. Self-certification to the QF-EHEA is a work in progress.

¹Responsibility for compulsory, adult and higher education lies with the French Community, whereas the Walloon Region and the COCOF are responsible for continuous vocational training in their respective areas.

²Ministère de la Communauté française (2015). Décret portant assentiment à l'accord de coopération conclu le 26 février 2015 entre la Communauté française, la Région wallonne et la Commission communautaire française relatif à la création et la gestion d'un Cadre francophone des certifications, en abrégé «CFC» [Decree of 15 May 2015 approving the cooperation agreement concluded on 26 February 2015 between the French Community, the Walloon region and the French Community Commission on the creation and management of the francophone qualifications framework, abbreviated as CFC]. *Moniteur belge*, No 145, p. 32947, 9.6.2015. archive.pfwb.be

Belgium (the Flemish Community)

On 30 April 2009, the Flemish Parliament and Government in Belgium adopted the act on the qualification structure³ (kwalificatiestructuur) introducing a comprehensive qualifications framework, covering all levels and types of qualifications. The framework, based on an eight-level structure described by the two main categories of knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility, was formally referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in June 2011. The road from formal adoption to implementation proved more time-consuming than originally predicted. Delays were partly caused by the need for further legal instruments (implementation decrees on professional and educational qualifications), and partly by negotiations with the social partners on how to link and level professional qualifications to the framework. This clarification was largely completed by 2013-14, allowing implementation to speed up.⁴ An update of the reference-report was presented in 2014. The Flemish qualifications framework (FQF) is operational, including by February 2019 a total of 384 professional (Beroepskwalificatie) and 252 educational qualifications (Onderwijskwalificatie) at levels 6 and 7 in the qualifications database⁵. Professional qualifications have been leveled individually (as opposed to a placement 'block-wise') in a process involving the main social partners. The qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2009 and is an integrated part of the FQF for lifelong learning.

Belgium (the German-speaking Community)

The German-speaking Community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (Qualifikationsrahmen der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft, QDG) on 18 November 2013⁶. Being the smallest part of Belgium (geographically and in terms of population) the framework reflects the work done in the Flemish and French Communities but is also inspired by the German qualifications framework (DQR). The 2013 decision envisages that a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning will be linked to the QDG. The QDG has, so far, not been referenced to the EQF.

The repertory of qualifications in Belgium

The purpose of the national directory of professional certifications (RNCP) is to keep constantly up-to-date information available to people and businesses on professional qualifications and titles, as well as on qualification certificates that appear on the lists drawn up by the national joint committees for the employment of professional branches. It helps to facilitate access to employment, resource management human and professional mobility. The certifications recorded in the directory are recognized throughout the national territory. Registration in the national directory concerns only the actual certification. Professional diplomas and titles are classified by area of activity and level. For this last criterion, and until the adoption of the new nomenclature mentioned in article R. 335-31, they are classified according to the nomenclature of training levels approved by the decision of the standing group on vocational training and social advancement. Qualification certificates are classified separately by domain activity. The national directory of professional certifications has replaced the list of approved titles and diplomas managed by the former Technical Commission for the Approval of Titles and Diplomas in Technological Education (CTH).

³ Flemish Parliament (2009) Decreet betreffende de kwalificatiestructuur [Act on the qualification structure]. Belgisch Staatsblad, 16.7.2009, p. 49597. dataonderwijs.vlaanderen.be

⁴ The implementation decisions for professional qualifications were agreed by the Flemish Government in January 2013. The implementation decision which operationalizes educational qualifications level (1-4) was approved in January 2014. The implementation decisions for educational qualifications level 4 (Se-n-Se) and 5 were agreed by the Flemish Government in January 2013 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

⁵ The qualification database (Kwalificatiedatabank): app.akov.be

⁶ Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2013). Dekret zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Decree of 18 November 2013 establishing a qualifications framework for the German-speaking Community]. Belgisch Staatsblad, p. 12532, 13.2.2014. reflex.raadvst-consetat.be

Qualifications and professional titles are automatically registered in the RNCP issued in the name of the State which have been created after consulting advisory bodies in which representative organizations of employers and employees are members.

Professional diplomas and titles as well as professional qualification certificates may be registered, at the request of the authorities or bodies which created them, after consulting the National Commission for Professional Certification. Unless there is an exception based on a legislative or regulatory text, all the certifications published in the national directory are accessible by the validation of acquired experience (VAE).

The structure of the national repertory in Belgium

Belgium (the French Community)

From 2006 onwards, a High-Level Interdepartmental Group (HLIG) carried out work to prepare for the definition of a qualifications framework and compiled a report. This report set out the basic principles of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), emphasized some precautions that needed to be taken to avoid any misunderstandings during its implementation, stressed the need for a quality assurance system whose principles were affirmed, and finally formulated a proposal for the gradual construction of the framework within the French Community.

In October 2007, the providers of vocational training (IFAPME – FOREM – Bruxelles Formation) and social advancement education came together in a Skills Validation Consortium and continued the work of the HLIG. The Consortium's Management Committee, relying in particular on the expertise of the Education and Training Council, identified a common methodology to position the certificates and qualifications derived from the provision of vocational training and social advancement education about the EQF. This methodology was successfully trialed on around fifty qualifications covering a variety of fields of employment and professions with various education, training, and validation bodies. The methodology consists of four steps:

- checking that the qualification can be positioned according to certain criteria (relevance, competent body, assessment process, and qualification awarded);
- positioning the profession/field and the qualification of the generic descriptors;
- gathering any information regarding existing arrangements;
- positioning the qualification in the EQF.

In 2009, the Education and Training Council issued a formal opinion on the creation of a French-Language Qualifications Framework.

In 2010, the governments of the French Community, the Walloon Region, and Cocof entrusted the task of creating and managing the French-Language Qualifications Framework to a common scheme using a cooperation agreement. An intergovernmental working group bringing together representatives of the ministers concerned was assigned responsibility, with the help of experts, for providing methodological guidance and introducing a working plan according to a rigorous schedule. The idea was to create a dual-entry French-Language Qualifications Framework that would include, for each level, the qualification indicators and descriptors together with both the educational qualifications and diplomas and the vocational training qualifications. This dual-entry common framework has the advantage that it meets the objectives of the EQF while upholding the objective differences between the two types of qualification and in particular the fact that the education system has objectives that extend beyond gaining employment. A guidance paper for the Government was submitted in December 2010.

In 2012, the governments confirmed those decisions. Further developments have taken place, such as:

- an agreement on the positioning methods, respecting the relevant fields (education or professional training);
- the finalized definition of the level descriptors according to the Flemish and European Frameworks ;
- the soon-to-be-finalized definition of rules ensuring the quality of certification granted by each stakeholder, and the quality of positioning in the framework ;
- the creation of the steering and positioning body was responsible for technical issues with positioning.

On March 18, 2015, a draft decree was voted, approving the Cooperation Agreement (February 26, 2015) between the French Community, the Walloon Region, and the French Community Commission, on the establishment and management of a French-speaking Qualifications Framework, CFC.

The French-speaking Qualifications Framework is a framework of public interest regulated by the government, which aims:

- at promoting continuity and progression of learning pathways for citizens ;
- at increasing the readability of the qualifications of the French Community, the Walloon Region, and the COCOF ;
- at strengthening the intrinsic quality of the teaching process, training, and skills validation, ensuring the adequacy of the positioning of each qualification at a given level of the frame ;
- at encouraging mobility of students in the French-speaking, European and Belgian world.
- CFC is an eight-level framework that is compatible with the CEC and the VKS (Vlaamse kwalificatiestructuur)

The establishment of the CFC Instance began in May 2016 with the appointment of a coordinator for the executive cell. This year also saw the full constitution of the bodies of the Instance and the creation of rules and regulations for the Management Committee.

The first mission of the Instance is to position the certifications by checking the above-mentioned criteria and the correspondence of the level. Simplified procedures have been developed considering the transitional provisions of the cooperation agreement to position a large number of certifications quickly.

As of September 1, 2019, the following certifications have been positioned:

111 certifications of vocational education and vocational training providers at levels 2, 3, and 4 which are in line with a training profile developed by the SFMQ (Service francophone des métiers et qualifications), bringing together education providers, social partners, and public employment services.

Bachelor's degree holders at level 6 and master's degree holders at level 7, in higher education.

Forty vocational training certifications at levels 2, 3, 4, and 5, not in adequacy with an SFMQ profile, including several titles of the validation of competences.

the Certificate of Upper Secondary Education (CESS) at level 4.

twelve certificates of qualification in social advancement education.

twelve certificates from the seventh year of vocational secondary education (eleven at level 4, one at level 5).

Belgium (the Flemish Community)

The decree of 30 April 2009 laid down a **Flemish qualification structure**. The qualification structure is a systematic classification of all qualifications recognized by the Flemish Government, based on an all-around applicable framework. This classification aims to make qualifications and their mutual relations transparent so that education, course providers, and other social players can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and the competences contained therein. The qualification structure can also be used as a frame of reference to:

- develop assessments for recognition of acquired competences and align procedures;
- provide direction and/or guidance in school careers and careers.
- A distinction is drawn between vocational qualifications and educational qualifications.
- vocational qualifications are completed and ranked units of competencies using which professions can be carried out;

Educational qualifications are completed and ranked units of competences that are necessary to function and take part in society, with which studies in secondary or higher education can be started or with which vocational activities can be carried out. They can only be acquired through education and only institutions recognized by the Flemish Government can issue proof of qualification in this respect.

Levels

The **European qualifications framework** distinguishes **8 levels**, which go from level 1 to level 8. Each level in the framework is described using a **level descriptor**. **The Flemish qualifications framework is also split into 8 levels**. The Flemish qualifications framework provides a generic description of the characteristics of the competences that pertain to the qualifications at that level and comprises five descriptor elements: knowledge, skills, context, autonomy, and responsibility. They determine the level of the qualification. The level descriptors are used to describe and classify both educational and vocational qualifications. There are, indeed, two types of qualifications (at each of the 8 levels):

Composition of educational qualifications at the various levels:

Level 1: final objectives primary education

Level 2: final objectives Adult Basic Education

final objectives 2nd stage VSE one or more recognized vocational qualifications

Level 3: final objectives 2nd grade 3rd stage VSE one or more recognized vocational qualifications

Level 4: final objectives 3rd stage GSE and the specific final objectives for 3rd stage GSE that are linked to one or more areas of science

final objectives 3rd stage TSE and the specific final objectives for 3rd stage TSE that are linked to one or more areas of science

final objectives 3rd stage ASE and the specific final objectives for 3rd stage ASE that are linked to one or more areas of science

final objectives 3rd stage TSE or ASE and one or more recognized vocational qualifications

final objectives 3rd grade, 3rd stage VSE and one or more recognized vocational qualifications

final objectives for additional general education for Adult Education and one or more recognized vocational qualifications

final objectives of advanced secondary courses (Se-n-Se)

one or more recognized vocational level-4 qualifications

Level 5: final objectives of Higher Vocational Education courses (HBO5, ASSOCIATE DEGREE) one or more recognized vocational level-5 qualifications

Level 6: final objectives of programs leading to a bachelor qualification

Level 7: final objectives of programs leading to a master qualification

Level 8: final objectives leading to the qualification of the doctor

Belgium (the German Speaking Community)

The Qualifications Framework of the German-speaking Community (QDG) was elaborated together with all educational institutions within the German-speaking Community, in particular the Institute for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (IAWM). In addition, other institutions outside the German-speaking Community, in particular, the Flemish Community and the German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), have provided scientific support for this concept.

The guidelines and recommendations of the European Union have provided an important impetus for the qualification framework of the German-speaking Community. Within the framework of the Bruges-Copenhagen Process and the EU agenda, special importance was attached to vocational education and training. The German-speaking Community acted based on a recommendation of the European Council and the European Parliament: Like the other EU member states, it had to develop its national qualifications framework according to the model of the European Qualifications Framework.

The system adopted for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Belgium

Belgium (the French Community)

In French-speaking Belgium, the system for validating non-formal and informal learning has undergone important developments since the early 2000s. It is the result of initiatives supported nationally and is framed by important pieces of legislation. Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) was first developed in adult education (Enseignement de promotion sociale (EPS) in 1991, followed in 2003 by the continuous vocational education and training (CVET) sector, with a focus on individuals with no formal qualifications. Recent policy strategies⁷ confirm that validating non-formal and informal learning is now a key element of employment and education policies. Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning are embedded in the NQF decree, which makes the facilitation of VNFIL part of the NQF's objectives. It defines 'certification' 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 validation of his/her competences.

⁷ Plan Marshall 4.0 (2015): <http://planmarshall.wallonie.be/> / Strategy for the Walloon Region 2014-19 www.wallonie.be
Strategy 2025 for Brussels: strategie2025.brussels

There are now two types of VNFIL in Belgium: the validation of competences (validation des compétences (VDC)) in the CVET sector, leading to the award of a recognized skills certificate (titre de compétence) following an assessment procedure; and the 'valorization' of prior experience (valorization des acquis de l'expérience (VAE) in adult education and higher education, leading to the validation of learning units or exemptions from certain parts of a study pathway. It is important to make the distinction between the concepts of 'valorization' – to enhance and get credit for prior experience to obtain access to formal education and training – and 'validation', which gives access to a recognized title or qualification. Although the standards used for validation for the latter are the same as in the formal system, skills certificates awarded through validation are not equivalent to formal VET qualifications. They can be used to access further training courses and can be combined to obtain a qualification in the adult education sector which may be included in the NQF. The most significant developments recently have been in adult education, where a new decree⁸, adopted in 2017 and published in January 2018, promotes a unified approach to admission, exemption, and certification of formal, non-formal, and informal prior learning. It also seeks coordination between EPS providers, further development of validation procedures, transparency, clear routes, and further transferability of certificates, as well as close cooperation with the CVET sector. In higher education, with a new regulatory framework in place since 2014 (Decree on the organization of higher education), VAE has a stronger institutional basis and is used to grant admission to education pathways (all cycles of higher education) or exemptions. At the secondary level (vocational or non-vocational), VAE is used to grant admission into education pathways or exemptions, but it can also lead to the issuing of a certificate of achievement (attestation de réussite) when the student passes the integrated final test (épreuve intégrée). Challenges still need to be addressed, particularly in terms of widening the profile of VAE users and reaching out to disadvantaged communities such as migrants and refugees. While awareness of the value of validation procedures for the labor market has been increasing, additional investment and strategies in visibility efforts are to be put in place. However, the scheme today is generally considered effective and robust.

Belgium (the Flemish Community)

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has been well-established on the public policy agenda in Belgium. In Flanders, the term EVC (erkennen van competencies: recognition of competencies) is used to refer to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Validation is used to gain admission to an education and training program, to request exemptions from (parts of) the study program, and to obtain a work experience certificate⁹. Validation is a matter of policy in different sectors and the arrangements in these sectors differ as each Ministry department regulates validation within its sector. Validation practices in the different sectors have not changed substantially since 2016. The main change has been increased cooperation between different validation providers (inside as well as outside education) and the willingness to create a single integrated framework linking validation processes to the FQF. New developments in quality assurance have also taken place. A decree¹⁰ approved by the Flemish government in February 2019 has the aim of strengthening the coherence of validation systems. An integrated quality framework has been developed in this decree; it will serve as the basis for a system of external quality assurance for all courses resulting in professional qualification at all levels¹¹.

⁸Gouvernement de la Communauté française (2018). Arrêté du gouvernement de la Communauté française fixant les modalités de valorisation des acquis pour l'admission, la dispense et la sanction dans une ou des unités d'enseignement de promotion sociale. Moniteur belge, No 13, pp. 3407-3416, 18.1.2018.

⁹Legislation is planned that it will make it possible that an individual will receive a professional qualification after an EVC-procedure.

¹⁰Flemish Government (2019). Decision of the Flemish Government concerning the implementation of the decree of (date) concerning an integrated policy for the recognition of acquired competences]. <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/nbwa-news-messagedocument/document/090135578027091c> Flemish Government (2019). Draft decision on the implementation of the decree concerning an integrated policy for the recognition of acquired competences (EVC)]. <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/nbwa-news-messagedocument/document/090135578027091b>

¹¹ This decree covers professional qualifications at levels 1-4 as well as professional qualifications at levels 5-8 obtained outside HE.

This will ensure that all people following professional courses or procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL) resulting in the same professional qualifications and titles, also obtain the same set of competencies after completion of the course or procedure. Readily accessible information and guidance are provided in Belgium Flanders, but awareness-raising efforts will only be increased once the new, integrated approach enters into force. All information on validation in Flanders is available to the public via a dedicated website.¹²

Belgium (the German-speaking Community)

A strategy for introducing a validation system was outlined in 2015. This refers to European developments in this area and sees validation as an integrated part of an overall, lifelong learning strategy for the region. Individuals with no (or low) qualifications are seen as a key target group. A public launch event on the recognition of competencies took place in October 2016, with stakeholders of the German-speaking Community invited to participate in a debate. Subsequently, a steering group was set up involving stakeholders from formal and non-formal education as well as employment and social partners. Between February and November 2017, the steering group developed a validation concept to put concrete arrangements in place by 2018. On that basis, application arrangements are being developed, jointly financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) (Cedefop, forthcoming). In July 2018, a pilot project Creating future directions was initiated to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

It is aimed primarily at low-skilled jobseekers and workers, as well as migrants whose foreign diplomas could not be recognized; access to education and employment is very difficult for these target groups. The project is divided into three parts: guidance and counseling to find an appropriate continuous training.

Offer (support level); the Profile PASS workshops focusing on the elaboration of personal competence profiles (level of formative validation); and the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired professional competencies concerning training occupations and programs offered by the training providers in the German-speaking Community (level of summative validation).

¹² EVC www.erkennenvancompetenties.be

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Cooperation agreement of February 26, 2015 between the French Community, the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission

It concerns the creation and management of a French-speaking Qualifications Framework, abbreviated as "C.F.C. ".

Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008

It established the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.

Referencing report from the Francophone Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework of November 22, 2011

Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning

It Cancels the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 establishing the European qualifications framework for education and training through life.

Order of the Government of the French Community of February 8, 2017

It designs the members of the Management Committee, the Expert Committee and the Appeals Board of the CFC Steering and Positioning Authority.

Management of the system for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Belgium

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation of non-formal and informal learning leads directly to certification which may be used either on the employment market or to enter an education program in inter-operator transfers. The Skills Validation Consortium (CDVC) in BEFR issues Skills certificates on behalf of the three governments¹³. The Skills certificate may be promoted on the employment market and taken into account by public employment services. It allows for transfers between vocational training providers who are members of the Consortium. In BEFL, there is an equivalent mechanism, developed by the SERV and organized by the Flemish Government with approved centers (Ervaringsbewijs)¹⁴. It should be noted that despite the differences (concerning how awards are designed and how they operate), both skills validation systems are communicable. In BEDG, a skills validation system is under development. A steering group is going to be set in place at the end of this year to elaborate on a concept for a validation system.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning allows an individual to promote a certain previous pathway (experience, training) when joining a public VET provider so that there is no need to repeat a portion of the pathway and then go on to obtain a certification with the same provider.

This is the case in French-speaking Universities and Higher Education Institutes, which enable entry into postgraduate education (Master's level). We can also mention here Article 8¹⁵ of the Adult Education Act which allows an individual to avoid repeating all or part of the training modules that have already been covered, except for the final test (épreuve intégrée) which approves the certification pathway. The same principle is applied by the IFAPME. More widely, adult education may take special measures to acknowledge the particular training pathway and the qualifications acquired for further studies within this system¹⁶. In Flanders, the concept is generally referred to under the name of Erkenning van Verworven Competencies or recognition of acquired competencies. In higher education, the recognition process of non-formal and informal learning aims at the recognition of 'knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes acquired through learning processes for which no diploma was awarded', for adults wishing to enter or re-enter universities. It makes non-standard access, course exemptions (partially or in totality), and credit transfers possible. The process offers students recognition of prior formal learning acquired in other establishments and institutions to facilitate their mobility and transfer; it also extends the process of recognition to include people who can demonstrate that they have acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies through professional or personal experience. The immediate result of a successful recognition process is proof of competences¹⁷, which then in turn may lead to access to higher education programs, or the award of credits or a full degree (based on an exemption). Adult education¹⁸ pays great attention to approving acquired competencies, both about dispensations and the certification of acquired competencies. A distinction is made between the following actions: the measuring and testing of acquired competencies as a function of the dispensations applied by the centers and the assessment of professional competencies. Adult education centers may act as assessment bodies for the delivery of the Title of Professional Competence. The validation of acquired competencies in the context of dispensations from course components is the responsibility of the director of an educational institution.

¹³ The French Community, Wallonia and the French Community Commission in Brussels.

¹⁴ Titel van Beroepsbekwaamheid (title of professional competence).

¹⁵ Decree of 16 April 1991.

¹⁶ Order of the French Community Government 29/09/2011.

¹⁷ Bewijs van bekwaamheid.

¹⁸ Decree of 2007.

Certification and qualifications frameworks

The notion of certification is traditionally associated with certificates and diplomas issued by education and training providers organized by the Communities, with these benefiting from legal recognition. Based on the European reference definition (without taking into account private certifications which are becoming increasingly commonplace), other certifications issued by public providers have gradually begun to appear in the field of VET:

- (a) certificates issued by training providers which are recognized by all Communities (or are in the progress thereof);
- (b) the skills certificate awarded by the CVDC (Consortium de Validation des Compétences, Skills Validation Consortium), certifies the recognition of competencies associated with a profession (generally comprising several skills units and therefore, several certifications). However, this is not legally recognized as a diploma like the French-speaking Community Diploma, even if it is recognized for entry into the professional field or in the framework of promotions to certain posts in Wallonia;
- (c) certificate of vocational experience (Erværingsbewijs), provided by a test center accredited by the Flemish Government (www.erværingsbewijs.be);
- (d) certifications issued by three French-speaking public vocational training providers, through the zCertificate of Skills Acquired during Training (CECAF - Certificat de compétences acquises en formation).

A certification test is associated with each training unit, which then corresponds to employability on the employment market, taken separately or in combination with other skills acquired. A Training Skills Certificate is awarded once a unit has been completed or following the completion of the training pathway. The supplement to the European certificate, EUROPASS, is awarded in the annex. Moreover, a procedure has been established allowing for the correspondence between these certifications with Skills Certificates. Certificates may be considered for individual training pathways, notably following inter-operator routes, or eventually for diplomas, via adult education.

The three Communities have their qualification framework. Developers in other federate entities were concerned with fully taking stock of the guidelines in the Flemish framework, the first to have been adopted, by implementing an identical structure: eight qualification levels or two entry pathways and the same type of descriptors. The adoption of qualification framework(s) allows for greater legibility and transparency of systems and therefore increased mobility of trainees.

Belgium (the French Community)

The national qualification framework of the French-speaking community has been developed and approved by all VET providers' managing committees. It has been linked to EQF at end of 2013 and in mid-2015 the NQF was legally adopted. The referencing report is in the process of being validated by the European Commission. Discussions at the level of the governments are underway to reach a cooperative agreement that sets out the working arrangements. A dual-sector framework principle has been adopted: one sector for the eight levels for all education certifications; one sector for the eight levels for vocational training certifications and skills validation certificates. At this stage, common generic descriptors and principles on the positioning methodology have been adopted. A positioning body will be responsible for:

- (a) organizing negotiations between training and educational providers;
- (b) issuing an opinion of compliance on the positioning of certificates and overseeing developments in generic descriptors and approval thereof;
- (c) overseeing the transparency and quality of positioning methods; acting as a national coordination point at the EQF level;
- (d) managing the certification registry accessible to the general public, and providing external information and communication.

Belgium (the Flemish Community)

The Act on the Flemish Qualifications Structure (FQS) was adopted in 2009 and consists of eight levels, described with elements of knowledge, skills, contextual elements, autonomy, and responsibility. Within this framework, there are two kinds of qualifications: the 'professional qualification' and the 'educational qualification'. Both are outlined with the same elements. Professional qualifications are based on the content of 'Competent'. Educational qualifications (e.g. a secondary education certificate, a bachelor's or master's degree, an associate degree) can only be obtained and therefore are developed by educational partners. The vocational education programs will lead to an educational qualification wherein at least one professional qualification is integrated. FQS is also a reference for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and as an orientation point for guidance and counseling. In 2011 the Flemish referencing report has been linked to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and has been filled with qualifications since then.

Belgium (the German-speaking Community)

The Decree on the Qualification framework of the German-speaking Community was adopted in November 2013. The decree emphasizes that VET and general education should be equivalent. Within this framework, there are two kinds of qualifications: the 'professional qualification' and the 'educational qualification'. Both use the same elements to describe them. The regional qualification framework of BEDG consists of eight levels, described with elements of knowledge, skills, contextual elements, autonomy, responsibility, and social competencies.

Areas of application of the system for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Belgium

Belgium (the French Community)

The development of the CFC has been seen as an integral part of the evolution of the existing education and training system, to improve overall transparency and collaboration, aid mobility, and support individual learning pathways for citizens. The 2015 decree on the CFC refers to the following key objectives:

- (a) facilitate learning continuity and progression.
- (b) build bridges between different parts of the education and training system;
- (c) strengthen the relationship between initial and continuing education and training;
- (d) support validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- (e) increase transparency and facilitate comparison across regional and national borders.

New objectives of the framework are (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles; Wallonie; COCOF, 2018):

- (a) facilitate the employment of citizens and recruitment for employers;
- (b) promote equal opportunities for citizens;
- (c) facilitate the assessment of competencies.

While the CFC is seen as an instrument for strengthening the use of learning outcomes and for reference to the EQF, the framework will not have a regulatory role and it is not seen as an instrument for reform of existing institutions and structures. According to the activity report of the CFC conducted by the EQF NCP (May 2016 to June 2018)¹⁹, a framework is a tool that can play an important role in citizens' education, training, and career pathways.

¹⁹ This report will be published on the CFC website and will be available on request in the future (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and Wallonie COCOF, 2018).

It is also not seen as a control device for the validation of qualifications but rather as a support instrument aiming at the continuous improvement of qualifications (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and Wallonie COCOF, 2018).

Belgium (the Flemish Community)

The 2009 act on the qualifications structure defines the Flemish qualification system as ‘... a systematic classification of recognized qualifications based on a generally adopted qualifications framework (FQF)’. The qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) aims at making qualifications and their mutual relationships transparent so that stakeholders in education (students, pupils, and providers) and the labor market (social partners) ‘/.../ can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and the associated competencies’ (Flemish Parliament, 2009, Chapter I, Article 3). The act underlines that the qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) should act as a reference:

- (a) for quality assurance, for developing and renewing courses;
- (b) for developing and aligning procedures for recognizing acquired competencies;
- (c) for comparison (nationally and at the European level) of qualifications.

This indicates that the FQF is seen as more than a simple description of existing qualifications: it plays a role in the continuous review and renewal of qualifications. In 2018, the Flemish Government launched changes in secondary education (new educational structure and update of content) aiming to help reduce social inequalities. With this reform, starting in 2019²⁰, the FQF is seen as an instrument reshaping the structure and content of secondary education. It is stipulated in legislation that educational qualifications are a leading principle of this reform. In vocational educational programs, professional qualifications are integrated with educational qualifications.²¹ The new policy reform aims at introducing the concept of ‘competencies’ as a reference within secondary education. There is also reform at level 5 where the current higher vocational.

Belgium (the German-speaking Community)

The main objective of the framework is to strengthen national and international understanding and comparability of qualifications. While subject to federal laws on education applying in Belgium, the geographic location of the region means that citizens are likely to cross-regional or national borders for living and work. This makes it a priority to clarify the relationship between own qualifications and those awarded in the neighboring countries. The framework also promotes equivalence between general and vocational education and training²², and the strengthening of the learning outcomes principle is an important step in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability.

²⁰The reform of secondary education will start on 1 September 2019 and be finalized in 2026 (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018)

²¹ Educational qualifications are based on learning outcomes determined by education level. The parliament Act on the Flemish qualification structure makes a distinction between the procedures for recognition at levels 1-5 and levels 6-8 (Government of Flanders; AKOV (2011).

²²For example, the completion of the general upper secondary level and upper secondary technical and arts education are both level

ESTONIA

Youth work is a creation of conditions for promoting the diverse development of young people which enables them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work based on their free will www.hm.ee.

The organization of youth work belongs to local authorities (council, rural municipality or city government, and institutions and partners administered by them) and are responsible for planning the obligations of youth work and the extent of activities and funds arising therefrom: [Local Government Organisation Act](#) coordinates youth work in Estonia.

The organization of youth work of local authorities is regulated under the [Youth Work Act](#). According to this Act, a young person is a natural person between 7 and 26 years of age. A youth worker is a profession in Estonia. Tallinn University prepares youth workers for non-formal education.

Youth work in school is youth work provided in primary, secondary, and vocational schools. School youth work supports the achievement of goals set out in the school curriculum, is based on extra-curricular activities, and is organized by the school youth worker, school student council, or hobby group leaders who use the best principles of non-formal education.

Non-formal education system and benefits	
Specific Aim	To increase knowledge and skills
Location of the learning activities	Anywhere, a library, a school, outdoors, etc.
Target group	Any groups, mixed groups no matter their level of qualification Any ages, no grouping according to age
Learning content	The Curriculum is always structured The educational program is fixed according to the learners needs
Validation	Official Certifications Recognition of all skills and competences including non academic skills
Method used	Participatory, peer learnin Using questioning techniques instead of answering Encouraging different views, Facilitator and learners considered as equals Supportive attitude on the among learners

Non-Formal Education, Glossary Council of Europe, European Union: www.pjp-eu.coe.int

Very important in Estonia is talent development through hobby education. There are surely many ways for that throughout diverse opportunities of non-formal education and the youth field. Yet, in Estonia, there is a long tradition of the hobby education service that Estonia is extremely proud of.

It is a unique, curricula-based non-formal learning service in which young people participate voluntarily to benefit from the long-term supervised support from professionals to develop their competencies, be it in music, sport, tech, STEAM, or other areas of their interest. It is also one of the most popular activities in the youth field in Estonia, with more than half of the overall youth population participating!

To respond to that interest and need of young people, there is a vast network of hobby schools developed all over Estonia. In cooperation with respective umbrella organizations. Please, visit and study information about hobby schools at: www.educationnation.ee.

Non-governmental organizations are the main actors in non-formal education. Several pieces of legislation regulate NGOs work: www.heakodanik.ee.

Network of Estonian Non-profit Organisations (NENO) is a membership organization created for the implementation and protection of the common interest of Estonian public benefit non-profits. NENO currently unites 101 active and operational public benefit non-profit organizations in Estonia from all fields, both associations, and foundations. At the same time, the information network involves approx. 4000 organizations. NENO supports and empowers Estonian civil society organizations (CSOs) by analyzing their needs, preparing plans for solving these needs, and finding new partners to advance the organizational development of the CSOs and increase their capacity to achieve greater impact and actual results. Training for NGOs is mostly based on non-formal education methods. www.heakodanik.ee

To learn about the current status of Estonian NGOs, please, visit www.siseministeerium.ee

Estonian National Agency Archimedes has in focus non-formal education for youth. One training course was organized for European youth workers in Estonia in February 2019. The title was "The Power of Non-Formal Education TC in Estonia". Participants discussed the improvement of the impact of Non-Formal Education (NFE), principles, and methods in empowering young people as real actors in society and building bridges between different educational methods, approaches, or reflections. The course was organized with aims:

- To stimulate the participants to feel and reflect on the power of non-formal education (NFE) by experimenting with different kinds of non-formal educational methods.
- To analyze the role and reception of NFE in our different countries within a common Europe.
- To discover and debate the European strategy of NFE.
- To fight against the growing consuming approaches towards young people in the non-formal education field.
- To explore meanings, roles, and complementarities of different educational approaches and methods (formal, non-formal, informal).
- To reconsider daily youth work practices.
- To understand the principles of program building and NFE within Youth in Action.

To have real impacts, the participants experience an innovative approach, using a full immersion in the experiential learning cycle: doing/ feeling, reflecting, and transferring.

- Experiencing: different educational settings, different non-formal education methods (role play, simulation game, exercise...)
- Reflecting: on the methods and their impacts, on the power and limits of NFE, on building a pedagogical process.
- Transferring: to the own reality of participants, to improve ways of working with young people
- Sharing: different perceptions, current situations, and experiences.
- Developing: the building capacity of the participants, by including them in the decision process of the project designing (participants will decide on some sessions they feel they need to have) but also in the implementation of the program ('Power to the People' moments).

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Estonia

The 2009 act on the qualifications structure defines the Flemish qualification system as '... a systematic classification of recognized qualifications based on a generally adopted qualifications framework (FQF)'. The qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) aims at making qualifications and their mutual relationships transparent so that stakeholders in education (students, pupils, and providers) and the labor market (social partners) '.../ can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and the associated competencies' (Flemish Parliament, 2009, Chapter I, Article 3). The act underlines that the qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) should act as a reference:

VÕTA allows recognizing:

- earlier formal education acquired within the adult education system;
- knowledge obtained during further training or individually;
- knowledge and skills obtained from working experience.
- Recognizing the learning and working experience requires that the educational institutions opened up to a new approach, agreed on procedures and rules, and were ready to address every person individually.

Procedures for the validation

The learning gained through a work-related, hobby, or other daily life activities is proved by reference to or presentation of completed works, a portfolio of samples, a copy of a professional certificate, employment contract, certificate of appointment, or any other documentary evidence. Young people can also describe their knowledge, skills, and practical experience acquired through youth work using a designated online tool **Teeviit** (formerly known as **Stardiplats**). There is a growing number of registered users of the portal, which was launched in 2010 by the Estonian Youth Work Centre to facilitate the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through youth work. The tool is based on self-assessment and provides young people the opportunity to generate CVs based on the descriptions.

Procedures for obtaining formal education qualifications

In Estonia, the qualifications acquired in general, vocational, and higher education are described based on learning outcomes (competencies). The principles of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning have been defined by legislation.

Qualification awarding bodies, including educational institutions and awarding bodies of vocational qualifications, prepare their procedures for the recognition of prior learning and work experience (VÕTA procedures) following these principles.

Currently, a person can have his or her prior learning and work experience (including apprenticeship and traineeship) evaluated and recognized by the designated body (VÕTA commission) of the educational institution. Educational institutions may recognize prior learning and work experience both on the completion of the curriculum and when awarding qualifications recognizing the prior learning and work experience as an ECTS and ECVET i.e. it is possible to obtain credits on the bases of prior learning, traineeships, and apprenticeships. Educational institutions must inform students about the conditions of and procedure for the recognition of prior learning and work experience, including the terms and cost of assessment as well as the conditions of contesting the results, and ensure that all applicants have access to the necessary information, guidance, and counseling.

There is no specific target group(s) within the youth population defined in Estonia for which the validation of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning is specifically supported.

There is no specific program for the development of the professional competencies of staff involved in the validation process, but different educational institutions train their staff themselves.

Information and guidance

Educational institutions must inform students about the conditions of and procedure for the recognition of prior learning and work experience, including the terms and cost of assessment as well as the conditions of contesting the results, and ensure that all applicants have access to the necessary information, guidance and counseling

Youth Agency of Foundation Archimedes manages and develops the portal mitteformaalne.ee aimed at promoting non-formal and informal learning of youth, raising awareness of its value and opportunities for recognition, including Youthpass. Youth Agency of Foundation Archimedes manages and develops the portal mitteformaalne.ee aimed at promoting non-formal and informal learning of youth, raising awareness of its value and opportunities for recognition, including Youthpass.

The portal is widely known among youth workers in Estonia.

Hobby education is not free for children and some of them are expensive. Society layers with low income cannot afford to be part of non-formal education. When schools organize outdoor activities the costs take parents and it is sometimes not very cheap. It will be very important to get some financial support from the government as well, in the case of family low income.

Quality assurance

No system of quality assurance of the procedures and/or the criteria/indicators/standards used to assess the validation of non-formal and informal competencies exists in Estonia.

More information on: www.eacea.ec.europa.eu

BULGARIA

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH WORK

At the very beginning of the 21st century - in 2001, the Assembly of the Council of Europe stated: "The Assembly recognizes that formal educational systems one cannot respond to the challenges of the modern society and therefore welcomes its reinforcement by non-formal educational practices...The Assembly recommends that governments and appropriate authorities of member states recognize as a de facto partner in the lifelong process and make it accessible for all".

Yet, almost 20 years after this statement Non-formal education in Bulgaria is still not very well-recognized and is something as a "UFO" (close to the Bulgarian abbreviation - NFO). Non-formal education is done mainly by NGOs in Bulgaria and is not very sustainable as most of the activities are project-based with funding only for specific training, youth exchange, or seminar. NGOs themselves are very vulnerable and unsustainable structures in Bulgaria.

Recent research on active NGOs in Bulgaria carried out by the Open Society Institute among 785 active NGOs in the period January - February 2017 as well as from the analysis of documents in the Central Register of Public-benefit Non-profit Legal Entities with the Ministry of Justice states that:

Almost 60% of the active NGOs have most of their team members do voluntary labor. Most of the paid employees have been hired under part-time employment contracts.

Almost half of the active NGOs interviewed for this report shared that in 2016 their annual expenditure accounted for less than BGN 20 000 (equivalent to EUR 10 000) - Two-thirds of the organizations altogether had an annual expenditure of up to BGN 100 000 (equivalent in EUR 50 000).

The Bulgarian NGO sector is highly feminized. More than 50% of the interviewed active NGOs have more women in their personnel and 35% of the organizations have an equal number of male and female employees. The findings from the survey show that two-thirds of the active organizations have employees aged below 29. Organizations where people over 60 account for more than a third of the staff are just 10%.

More than half of the surveyed representatives of active NGOs in Bulgaria (55%) believe that citizen participation and involvement in the activities and causes of NGOs has increased compared to 5 years ago. The areas in which civil society organizations have the greatest influence include volunteering, working with children and young people, ecology and environment protection as well as protection of human rights. The respondents believe that NGOs have relatively more limited influence in such areas as Roma integration, social justice, and monitoring the work of the institutions.

From that same survey is visible that NGOs have the greatest influence on children and young people (in the field of youth work).

Apart from NGOs non-formal education is offered by Youth Centres in municipalities where there are such. Some of these youth centers are established by the municipalities in partnership with some NGOs, some are part of the Municipal administration offering youth initiatives and activities. Some of these centers are also Eurodesk points providing useful information to the young people about YOLO, scholarships, internships, and other learning and work-practice opportunities.

The governmental institution managing the youth non-formal education sector and the Erasmus+ program for Bulgaria is the Human Resource Development Centre which is the structure approving the projects youth organizations apply with for different youth activities - exchanges, seminars, volunteering projects, and training courses. The Ministry of Education is also offering support for youth activities under the National Youth Programme.

YOUTH WORKERS

The Law on Youth was promulgated in 2012 regulating youth work. Chapter 5, Article 32 describes the youth worker as “an adult who has undergone specialized training for working with young people or has a professional qualification for working with young people and developing and implementing youth activities”

Yet, the position of the youth worker is not officially included in the national list of occupations and it is hard to explain in one word what a youth worker does. It is not like saying “I am a doctor”, or “I am a vet” and everyone knows what it is.

The first university which started offering “Youth Worker” as a specialty was the “St.St. Cyril and Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo for the academic year 2014-2015. So there are still no official youth workers with a Master’s degree.

Most youth workers are either youth volunteers, social workers, or teachers who have undergone some non-formal education training of trainers or project management training courses. Some are doing the work voluntarily or under civil contracts only for the period of a certain project, and some teachers are doing it for the sake of diversifying their work with the young people offering them more interactive ways of learning.

YOUTH ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Distance learning and online-learning opportunities for young people are also relatively new forms of education for the young people of Bulgaria. The first such online learning opportunities were for learning foreign languages (mainly online English language courses), followed by the professional training centers.

KOSOVO

Adult Learning Strategy for Kosovo (2005–2015)

Convincing rhetoric about adult learning established early in the 2000s in 2004, the Adult Learning Strategy for Kosovo (2005–2015) was the result of a collaboration between key stakeholders in human resources development (education, labor, trade and industry, employers, and trade unions).

The objective was to determine how adult learning could be better adapted to the market transition with specific reference to economic development and social cohesion. It is one of the earliest strategies explicitly addressing adult learning in South East Europe (ECMI, 2006). The core of the strategy was to increase knowledge and competencies for a market economy, a systemic approach to develop adult learning, increase the value of learning, and promotion of a learning culture among its objectives. It acknowledged the mismatching of skills to jobs as a problem in Kosovo and identified increased knowledge and competencies for the market economy as a solution. However, it failed to identify a lack of qualifications and a poorly qualified workforce as part of the problem. Nevertheless, together with the development and implementation of information, counseling, and career guidance system, an occupational classification system, an integrated national qualifications system, modular course provision, and the development and implementation of a quality assurance system, the Strategy proposed the establishment of a system to recognize and validate competences acquired by adults through non-formal and informal learning, as well as the development of flexible formal and non-formal adult learning opportunities.

Some years later, in 2008, a Confine report coordinated by dvv international (2008) pointed to the lack of a systematic comprehensive approach in the field of adult learning. In particular, the report mentions the lack of a systematic comprehensive approach to the relations among the different forms of learning (formal, non-formal, and informal). It goes on with underlying the lack of national qualifications system standards and recognition of prior learning. In 2010, the Kosovo Progress Report, by the European Commission (EC, 2010), reported some progress in the field of education concerning the alignment with European standards. However, this progress was mainly in the tertiary education system. Relevant to this report is the positive comment made by the European Commission that the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) had been established, with an acting director appointed, as well as four staff and its board. Despite this, however, and the fact that the Council for Vocational Education and Training (CVET) became operational, there.

Instead, Kosovo was encouraged to step up efforts to modernize vocational training institutions, in particular, to train students in line with labor market demands, European standards, and Kosovo's qualifications framework. Finally, a very valid point was made that qualifications requirements in the VET sector are not sufficiently linked with those of general and higher education. A mix of all the necessary ingredients Nowadays, in comparison to the other countries in South East Europe, it seems that Kosovo is rather well advanced on the road to implementing validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. First of all, there is a law on adult education, which is not always granted in the four other countries. There is a clear strategy for the medium term (i.e. 2011–16; Kosovo, 2011). There are identified target groups (women, early school leavers and school leavers without a qualification, teachers, and workers in the informal economy) and general objectives (meeting labor market needs, reducing informal economy). The general objective of providing the people in Kosovo with a second chance at education – for early dropouts or school leavers without a qualification – is very present in the official rhetoric; as is the case in the other countries under study. The teachers, however, seem to be a rather unusual target group. They deserve special attention as it seems they have never been assessed before being assigned, classes.

National qualification framework (NQF) and a National Qualifications Authority (NQA)

Finally, there is a national qualification framework (NQF) and a National Qualifications Authority (NQA). The NQA is an independent public body established in December 2009, after the Law on National Qualifications (Law 03/L-060). The NQA has overall responsibility over the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by defining the levels in the Framework, ensuring compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework, establishing criteria and processes for the approval of qualifications proposed for inclusion in the NQF and accreditation of Vocational Education and Training providers, facilitating progression and transfer between different learning pathways, and assuring quality in VET accredited institutions. The NQF was prepared by the NQA, with the support of the EU KOSVET V project, funded by the European Union. It is the result of a long consultative process with all relevant stakeholders. A draft version of the NQF was approved in February 2011. Amendments were then made to reflect the lessons learned from tests carried out on the ground, from July to September 2011. The Governing Board of the NQA approved the NQF in December 2011.

The current role of the NQA will make it soon very familiar with issues that are germane to validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, such as establishing standards for general and vocational qualifications, managing the approval of new qualifications, developing procedures and criteria for validating qualifications, and locating them in the NQF; and drawing equivalences between qualifications offered in Kosovo and those offered in other countries. From a technical point of view, it seems clear that Kosovo has figured out very clearly the importance of setting in motion a system that guarantees that qualifications are recognized in the first place, starting from qualifications awarded in the formal learning system. From there, it is easier to build a system for recognizing qualifications that are awarded after the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in practice

When it comes to validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes per se, it seems the NQA is fairly advanced. It supports the development of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL³²) in practice by:

- Setting policies and guidelines about RPL;
- Raising awareness about RPL among stakeholders such as institutional partners involved in formative recognition processes, or learners themselves as potential applicants;
- Providing information and guidance to providers on how to implement RPL;
- Implementing the national qualifications framework and modules/standards on which RPL depends;
- Implementing the certification system that will include recognition for modules;
- Strengthening the quality assurance in the assessment processes, including for RPL;
- Initiating processes to develop national capacity to implement RPL, and This list shows a clear understanding of the best way to create a conducive environment for the implementation of a system for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The purpose of RPL in Kosovo includes:

- Enabling access to relevant education and/or training;
- Customizing learning activities to the needs of the learners;
- Reducing the time spent on future learning activities;
- Enabling access to labor market opportunities through certification/qualification;
- Converting old certificates with poor credibility into recognized qualifications; and
- Placing future learners in the formal learning system at the appropriate level upon entry into a program.

The RPL process is organized so that applicants gather and present evidence of their knowledge and skills. The evidence may be collected in different ways, for example through portfolios, or through assessments (such as written, practical, or/and oral tests). Learning modules approved for inclusion in qualifications and registered on the NQF will provide an assessment framework, which will include RPL. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has set a process in motion for organizing validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes with its Regional Centres for Employment (RCEs) and its Regional Vocational Training Centres (RVTCs). The procedure varies slightly: - Procedures with the RCE: registration at employment offices, evidence of experience, application for qualification; and - Procedures with the RVTCs: registration database, entrance test, modular testing, final test. It is difficult to evaluate what is being done exactly without field visits but the approach seems state of the art. One may wonder though, why the procedures are different according to the body learners will apply to. 32 RPL is the term used by the NQA. 22 In any case, none of the above has been implemented yet. Kosovo is not done yet with finishing the legislative work. In the meantime, the NQA is compiling administrative instructions. The plan is to start around the second quarter of 2013, and by the end of 2013 for the Teachers Professional Development (TPD) (Kosovo Education Strategic Plan, 2011).

The legal framework Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The legal framework Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined by the Law on National Qualifications as “the process of assessing the knowledge and skills or wider competencies that an individual has previously acquired through formal, informal or non-formal learning. This knowledge shall be used to give the possibility of advancement to a person or exemptions from part of a course or qualification or credit towards a qualification.” The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) will provide a structure for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This ambition has been an important driver in Kosovo for integrating a Credit System in the NQF. Modules that are components of qualifications will provide the framework for assessing the knowledge and skills that learners have developed. The approach to validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is therefore clearly linked to the establishment of a national qualifications framework. The NQA is committed to the development of a system for validating and recognizing conformal and informal learning outcomes. For instance, one of the criteria for accreditation as an assessment institution is that a provider must demonstrate that it offers arrangements for ensuring access to assessment and certification for applicants other than those following specified learning programs, including recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This is perfectly in line with the most advanced system elsewhere in Europe. The NQA has even developed “Guidelines for RPL” to support providers in their efforts to implement RPL. Linking the national qualifications framework and validation/recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes The NQF is regulated through mechanisms intended to ensure compliance with the arrangements and requirements laid down for the qualifications system and to ensure that the system delivers qualifications at an acceptable level of quality. The mechanisms for achieving these objectives are focused on: - Validation and approval of qualifications proposed for inclusion in the NQF; - Accreditation of institutions responsible for assessment and certification of NQF-approved qualifications; - Quality assurance of accredited institutions and the delivery of validated qualifications. An Administrative Instruction on “Criteria and Procedures for the Validation and Approval of National Qualifications and the Accreditation of Qualification Awarding Institutions in Kosovo” has been issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. This provides the framework for the validation and approval of qualifications for registration in the NQF. The credit system in VET provides a framework for accrediting prior learning including learning in non-formal and informal settings. The NQF provides a structure for the recognition of prior learning, whether formal or not.

The NQA is in the process of creating an Administrative Instruction regarding the validation of qualifications through recognition of prior learning. 23 Quality assurance in RPL at present, providers vary in terms of the quality of their assessment and processes for the internal verification of the assessment. The NQA will support providers to strengthen the quality assurance of assessment, and this will help to build the reliability of the credit system. In the past, the quality and regularity of external monitoring of assessment by VET providers have varied, and there has been insufficient institutionalized capacity available. A key responsibility of the NQA is therefore to strengthen and support the development of external quality assurance including private and conformal VET providers. Financing of RPL Currently, the plan is to finance RPL from a range of sources, depending on the providers and purposes of RPL, including financing by the state, international partners, and RPL applicants themselves. Sustainable funding sources will need to be found, particularly where RPL has the potential to contribute to interventions for social inclusion and employment or is linked to government initiatives for increasing skills supply in particular sectors. A clear rationale: labor market needs and productive/competitive workers in addition to a well-spelled out policy and strategy about implementing a system for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, Kosovo has also clearly identified the rationale for doing it. It is said that Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Tertiary Education should adequately meet the needs of the labor market. Raising the quality of VET and Tertiary Education is a priority of the Government. The objective is that occupational skills, professional skills, and individual competencies in general after undertaking to learn in the VET or Tertiary Education systems are at the desirable level. At the moment, this is still a challenge ahead for Kosovo to create a skilled and flexible workforce that can compete in local, regional, and global environments. Some elements of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the IPA When it comes to the impact of the potential access to the European Union, among the few Programme Fiches that [even partly] describe activities relevant to lifelong learning and the functioning of the labor market in general, there is the one on "Education and Employment" (Code 02.26). It says nothing about validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Despite a large proportion of the budget falling on the EU (10 ME out of a total budget of 11.7 ME) which usually places recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes rather high on the education and labor market agenda, there is not a single sentence about those approaches. There is also a Programme Fiche on "Education and Cultural Diversity" (2011/022-939) which, despite focusing on the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) and supporting measures for socially excluded groups such as the Roma, mentions non-formal learning only once. It is in the context of education being identified as a priority within the framework of economic development that Kosovo requires IPA support to improve the skill levels and employment prospects of the workforce, particularly by enhancing the performance of education systems and by facilitating the transition from education to employment, entry of young people to the labor market and support of their skills set through support for non-formal learning, participation, volunteering, and mobility. And this allusion to non-formal learning does not even refer to validation/recognition, and the whole paragraph does not make the case for a more qualified workforce (Total budget: 9.5 ME, EU contribution: 7 ME). There is finally a Programme Fiche on "Support to Employment and Education" (2009/021-145; Total budget 10.9 ME, EU contribution: 10.3 ME) that is very relevant to the objective of dvv international in the current endeavor: "to address poverty and inequality through improvements in education and 24 employments with particular attention to the quality of education, training and skills development". However, the fiche does not mention one single-time validation or recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Current situation of Non-Formal Education in your country

The Republic of North Macedonia, as a candidate country for EU membership, has made continuous and significant progress in the harmonization of its education system with the educational policies and standards of the European Union.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is indicated in the Education Strategy 2018-2025 as one of the challenges, i.e. one of the measures of the Strategy is: Support in the process of establishment and operationalization of the system of validation results of non-formal and informal learning. The Strategy also stressed that the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning in North Macedonia is in its embryonic phase, and the establishment of a system for Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF) management and inclusion of stakeholders is yet another open issue. A comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges was adopted with the development of the Roadmap for Further Development and Implementation of the MQF (2016). To implement the measure "Establishing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning" from the Education Strategy 2018-2025, on 13.11.2018, the first meeting of the Working Group for Amending and Supplementing the Laws and Bylaws was held to set up a national validation system for non-formal and informal learning - a process that will take effect in 2020.

This group was established by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia and consists of representatives of state institutions, public institutions, providers of programs for adult education, and civil society organizations. This body will work intensively on establishing the legal regulation to validate non-formal and informal learning and harmonize with existing legislation. The functioning, coordination, and operation of this body are supported by the Centre for Lifelong Learning - Skopje, within the framework of the project implemented by this organization in the Republic of North Macedonia in partnership with the PI Adult Education Centre, supported by DWV International from Bonn, with the financial assistance of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Non-Formal Learning (NFL) recognition

There is a developed system of education for adults where they may complete their education and acquire special skills. Various institutions also organize a large number of courses, ranging from information science and computer science to the study of foreign languages. Special educational courses from many institutions have also been organized in many fields in the public and private sectors. They offer a wide variety of courses for additional education. It does not award degrees but offers special courses leading to various certifications or qualifications.

New modes of distance learning are continually being developed. Some examples of the kinds of distance learning available through the Internet include UTOS, which is a web-based distance education system for learning, testing, and assessment in Macedonian; MATEIS—Mathematical Electronic Interactive System, which is an education system for learning mathematics and informatics; and International Education and Resource Network, which enables students and teachers worldwide to conduct collaborative projects in Macedonian and English.

Despite a long-standing adult education tradition, a lack of resources reduced the motivation of some employers to invest in the training and development of their employees, and a weak emerging private sector in education and training adversely affected the participation of the adult population in lifelong learning. A significant proportion of the population is still low-skilled and poorly qualified. This is especially a problem among the unemployed and people from vulnerable and marginalized social groups. Legislation on primary and secondary education provides only 'second chance' opportunities for adults to complete primary school qualifications, without which they are gravely disadvantaged in the labor market.

VNFIL is not the solution for adults without education and skills – for such groups targeted training courses are the response. Despite the obvious need, there is a shortage of providers in many areas. Adult education provision would be a lot more accessible if it were not so localized.

It is not only a question of numbers but also of how to support the development of providers that can provide courses across the country. Although an important role in adult education was foreseen for municipalities in the Adult Education Law, most of them have not risen to challenges including that of taking over jurisdiction of the open civic universities for lifelong learning. Several of the latter have ceased working either because the appropriate municipality failed to take responsibility for them or they failed to transform themselves into private institutions, the only alternative survival route opens to them. It may be concluded that the infrastructure of adult education providers and related institutions needs to be strengthened if VNFIL opportunities are to be made available in all parts of the country and for all social groups.

Improvement of the situation in terms of NFL in the public education sector and the private sector

The government has sought to develop and implement a policy and legislative framework for adult education. The first strategic Programme for Adult Education was developed in 2006, setting out objectives for tackling the illiteracy problem and providing basic education, providing education to increase life opportunities and increase social cohesion, and ensuring that adults can acquire skills and knowledge that equip them to meet labor market needs and cope with social change. A specific Law on Adult Education was enacted in 2008 to provide for the first time a more comprehensive legal framework to support lifelong learning. Under the provisions of the Law, a Council for Adult Education was established to provide overall strategic direction for the development of adult education, and a specialized institution – the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) – began its work in 2008.

The current state of the country's progress towards meeting the ET2020 benchmark of adult education participation remains significantly below the EU28 average but broadly in line with other countries in the region. The European Commission's 2013 Progress Report⁸ stated that "The country continued to improve its performance in the areas where EU level benchmarks were set for 2020. In 2012, the country performed better than the EU average as regards early school leaving, and reduced the gap with the EU in other areas such as adult participation in lifelong learning and tertiary educational attainment." Although serious problems remain to be addressed, there is increasing recognition that investment in human capital development is essential for the country, and there is a growing will to eliminate the remaining barriers that are holding back development in this area.

ALBANIA

Non-Formal Education in Albania

Non-formal education began in Albania in 1992, the year after the falling communism system. Few international NGOs started launching non-formal education and skill development. The non-formal education was directed at certain members of civil society targeting groups like women and youth; out-of-school children and school dropouts; and underprivileged people.

Today, unfortunately, there is still no quality information or studies on NFE and NFL in Albania. NFE can be found in the local youth strategies or the National Strategy, but the state, despite recognizing it in these strategic documents, does not have any concrete system or support for the development of NFE.

NFE is mostly practiced by civil society organizations in the country, but mostly in practice and not based on genuine theory. At the same time, the main field where NFE is practiced is youth and this practice in Albania has been brought mostly by Erasmus+ and the Council of Europe.

The private sector are involved in the non-formal education scheme. In this regard, the role of community development centers in imparting non-formal education to people ranging from children to adults is well developed. Afterschool centers, summer and winter schools, and Art and Creativity centers are very good examples.

There are community learning centers and local and national NGOs throughout the country, conducting technical and vocational training programs. Non-formal education is realized within separate training courses. Some are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Youth and Ministry of Social Welfare while the other parts are from independent actors. Courses for soft skills, pre-qualification, and additional qualifications of workers with different vocational profiles are also organized.

In the Albanian Qualification Framework Law, Article 6 within the Scope of the AQF implementation is: "certification of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, in cases when the latter is certified, including here recognition of prior learning".

As well, In the VET Law "Recognition of informal and non-formal prior learning is the process through which competencies a person obtained earlier in the informal and formal system, can be considered through an assessment leading to the award of a certificate of a formal qualification".

There are modules projected to help teachers to get in touch with NFL.

ILO, UNESCO and the Education For All campaign, UNICEF, and civil society collaboration present a series of ideas for teachers and educators for practical activities in the classroom and among their colleagues, including setting up networks to share ideas, experiences, and resources.

In 2006, this module came in Albanian language as teachers' information kit, created in the framework of the "Inclusive program" project on the elimination of child trafficking in three selected cities of Albania - Korçë, Elbasan and Berat, cooperation of NPF Korçë with The International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor of the International Labor Organization (ILO-IPEC) in Tirana.

In 2013, was presented by Ministry of Education and Sports this stimulating and developing initiative "School as a Community Centre - A friendly school for everyone", which aims to transform the school into a space where a new teacher-family-community partnership will be built, for social cohesion to a better community.

In 2014 this initiative was approved by law and today is an ongoing process to create the right comprehensive laws, culture, and mindset for using the school as a community center. So, the space of public schools can be used by the community as a space for additional academic courses for better formal education, development of critical thinking through youth clubs (debates, reading, poetry, etc.), sports, art, culture, the inclusion of common activities between parents-NGO-volunteers-institutional bodies in name of the common good.

In 2020, Tirana opens the innovative educational center TUMO, a new kind of educational experience at the intersection of technology and design. At TUMO, students learn independently and the curriculum is followed in English, through a platform called TUMO Path, which allows them to create a personalized plan and adapt to the diverse curriculum.

The TUMO learning program is made up of self-learning activities, workshops, and project labs with around 8 learning targets. Teens combine these into personal learning paths that adapt to their evolving preferences and rate of progress. As teens progress through the timeline, completing projects and leveling up, they build a portfolio of results that becomes their living diploma. TUMO Tirana opened in cooperation with the American-Albanian Development Foundation and the Municipality of Tirana and is the first TUMO center in the Balkans.

VNFIL is one of the priority measures in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-and on.

The recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through work experience and/or voluntary activities is a valuable tool to encourage people to pursue lifelong learning and for optimizing training costs.

SERBIA

Reorganization of Youth works in Serbia

In 2019 Youth work is finally Recognised as a profession.

The National Association of Youth Workers (hereinafter referred to as NAPOR) is a union of Civil Society Organisations that embrace 68 member organizations delivering youth work in Serbia that lobby, advocate, and influence existing and initiate new policies. All the processes related to the recognition of youth work at the national level are done by and within NAPOR. The main areas relating to recognition are:

- development of three vocational standards in the area of professional non-formal education (1. Youth activist, 2. Youth work co-ordinator; 3. Specialist for youth work and policies) that are included in the National Vocational Qualification system (still to be officially published by the government);
- development of standards for NFE programs in the youth field and a mechanism for its implementation ((re)accreditation process of youth work programs based on eight standards) that ensures building necessary skills and life values of young people to take active participation in community development along with the promotion of democratic principles;
- development of non-formal education curricula for two vocational standards in the area of professional youth work (1. Youth activist; and 2. Youth work co-ordinator) through which NFE providers gain standardized professional competencies to be able to make a greater impact on youth empowerment;
- development of a mechanism for validation of previously attained competencies for two vocational standards for NFE in the youth field;
- establishment of a pool of licensed organizations and trainers for delivery of multi-modular training for non-formal education vocational standards;
- establishment of a pool of mentors for validation of previously attained competencies;
- creation of a tool for recognition of the competences of young people gained through youth work programs and NFE (Passport of Competences). The Ministry of Youth and Sports and other relevant actors from the public, private and civil society sectors cooperate in this process, developing the Passport and aiming to improve youth employability.

In addition to NAPOR's efforts, with the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, there have been several initiatives relating to the support of youth work by following European initiatives. On 1 January 2015, the Ekoloski Centar Radulovacki became the fourth accredited youth center in Europe to receive the Council of Europe's quality label for youth centers. After the revision of the status in 2017, the center has been given the label for the next five years.

Moreover, the Ministry of Youth and Sports fully supported the application of Novi Sad, a city in Vojvodina (A northern autonomous Province in Serbia), for the European Youth Capital, which Novi Sad won in 2019, to create more opportunities for youth in youth, empower them to become proactive initiators of positive change and introducing innovative ideas not only in Novi Sad but also on a national and international level.

The National Youth Strategy (2015-2025)

Is the main public policy document in the field of youth in the Republic of Serbia. It represents a comprehensive document outlining the priority objectives that implementation should contribute to the active and equal participation of young people in various areas of social life.

The NYS lays down the basic principles of action, directions of activity, and expected results of the activities of all youth policy actors toward the improvement of the social position of young people and the creation of conditions for the full achievement of their rights and interests in all areas. Youth work is recognized in the context of non-formal education, where recognition of competencies acquired through youth work is underlined as essential for young people. Especially, the NYS recognizes that competencies acquired in non-formal education through youth work are important for the employability of young people because these competencies are precisely those that are appreciated by hiring employers.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development adopted bylaws on non-formal education in 2015. Non-formal education is acquired through the system of Publicly Recognized Activity Organizers (PRAO), organizations that offer adult education programs. Primary and secondary schools as well as other organizations that meet the requirements prescribed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development can be PRAOs.

Following the completion of an adult education program, an individual can obtain a full completion certificate, a partial completion certificate, or a program certificate. The full completion certificate is obtained for achieving the standard of professional competencies and achieving qualifications standard. For partial achievement of the standard of professional competence, the partial completion certificate is awarded. Upon completion of programs that do not lead to acquiring qualifications or professional competencies PRAO issues a program. The list of PRAOs is published on the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development's website.

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK INVENTORY SERBIA

1.1 LEGAL STATUS of NQF
The Law on the National Qualifications Framework was adopted on 5 April 2018 and published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia on 6 April 2018.
1.2 NQF STRUCTURE
The National Qualification Framework of Serbia (NQFS) has 8 levels and 4 sublevels. The NQFS Law defines four qualification types: 1) general - basic education and secondary education; 2) vocational education and adult education; 3) academic - higher education; 4) vocational - higher education. The Law on Adult Education provides opportunities to acquire parts of qualifications, but Serbia does not have partial qualifications (there are no qualifications called "partial qualifica-
1.3 QUALIFICATIONS DATABASE / REGISTER
The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) maintains an electronic database of qualifications, accessible on the NQFS website. By August 2018, 140 qualifications had been entered into this database, of which 86 have a qualifications standard. Entry of new qualifications is ongoing. The NQFS Law foresees development of an NQFS Register, consisting of three subregisters: a sub-register of national qualifications, a sub-register of qualification standards and a sub-register of publicly recognized adult education providers (JPOA). The data from the register will be open to the public and accessible, in Serbian and English, through the official website of the Qualification Agency (to be established).

1.4 LEAD NQF INSTITUTION

The NQFS Law sets the conditions for the institutional framework:

- An NQFS Council for strategic management of further NQF development and implementation. The Council will be an advisory body that gives recommendations on planning and development of human capital in accordance with public policies in the field of lifelong learning, employment, career guidance and counselling.
- A Qualification Agency that will perform administrative and technical tasks for the Council.
- Sector councils whose main function will be defining the needs for qualifications in the

The NQF Council and Qualifications Agency have been founded by Government Decree and Sector Councils are in the process of formation. labour market in Serbia

1.5 RELATION TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Serbia is EU candidate country and participates in the EQF Advisory Group. Referencing the NQFS to the EQF is foreseen for 2019.

1.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE NQF

The NQFS Law describes quality assurance arrangements of:

- Development and adoption of the qualification standard
- Enrolment of qualifications and qualification standards in the NQFS Register

1.7 VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The Law on Adult Education defines recognition of prior learning (RPL) as one of the paths for acquisition of qualifications.

The NQFS Law foresees RPL procedures, based on the standard of qualifications, for qualifications at levels 1,2, 3 and 5 of the NQF, and exceptionally, at NQF level 4. Operational details will be regulated in a bylaw.

1.8 RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS

The arrangements for recognition of foreign qualifications in Serbia are in transition due to new regulations in the NQFS Law, adopted in April 2018.

The ENIC-NARIC Centre Serbia is currently a unit of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Serbia. ENIC-NARIC Serbia operates in the area of higher education recognition of foreign qualifications only (academic and professional recognition).

With the implementation of the NQFS Law, ENIC-NARIC will become a department of the new Qualification Agency, to be established. The NQFS Law distinguishes Recognition of Foreign School Documents and Professional Recognition of Foreign Higher Education; both procedures shall be conducted by the ENIC-NARIC centre, as a department of the Qualification Agency.

1.9 STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Tools and approaches are available to support the reform of the qualification system, the implementation of the NQF and redesign of vocational qualifications. The focus is on implementation.

Therefore, Serbia is at the structured stage of ETF policy stage indicators of qualifications and

2.0 IMPACT FOR END USERS

The NQFS Law has been adopted and sets the conditions for establishing the institutional framework. The NQF Council and Qualifications Agency have been founded by Government Decree and Sector Councils are in the process of formation. A qualifications database, accessible via the NQFS website, is under development. The database will form the basis for the NQFS Register.

ITALY

STATE OF PLAY ABOUT NON FORMAL EDUCATION IN ITALY

The Council of Europe encourages member states to promote equal opportunities by recognizing the training and skills acquired by young people through non-formal education/learning and by identifying the different ways of certifying the experiences and qualifications acquired in this framework. All those who play an important role in the education-related policy-making process must take into account the fact that non-formal education is an essential part of the learning process and recognize non-formal education as an integral element in the process, lifelong learning, and youth policies. Following a Recommendation on the promotion and recognition of non-formal learning/education of young people, Member States are called upon to "work for the development of effective standards of recognition of non-formal learning/education.

As early as 1998, a recommendation from the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe invited the governments of each member country to recognize non-formal education activities and expand the formal educational offer by integrating proposals and methodologies of non-formal education in schools.

Indeed, the integration of non-formal educational proposals, provided by external organizations and experts, gives added value and greater learning tools to both the student group and teachers.

The situation in Italy is quite far from the European objectives concerning the theme of "Non-formal education".under the National Youth Programme.

In that, all those that are training activities that use the aforementioned method to educate young people are still part of the extracurricular world and therefore are not officially integrated into the school program.

By this, we mean that in Italy progress is being made concerning the issue but it is still a long way from integrating these methodologies into the school system if not due to the personal initiative of a school manager or a teacher particularly sensitive to the methodologies of non-formal education.

These are some of the examples that can describe the progress that has been made until now:

- La legge della buona scuola / "The law of good school";
- alternanza scuola-lavoro and PCTO / VET (Vocational and educational Training);
- unconventional kindergartens / schools;
- Master in Youth Worker;
- recognition of the Youth pass certificate.

"La legge della buona scuola", is a law, namely law 107, proposed by the Renzi government, to make a significant reform in the great universe of the school, focusing more on students and teachers, considered the two main protagonists of the teaching and learning processes that build the pillars of future societies.

It is a real revolution, a new approach to the way of seeing the world of education that has generated many disagreements. On 16 May 2017, the President of the Republic Mattarella affixed his signature to the government measures and they were published in the Official National newspaper (Gazzetta) and then entered into force on 31 May 2017.

The reform of the “buona - scuola” revolves around 12 key points, the points most related to the concept of non-formal education are:

- School autonomy is certainly the principle that most inspired and distinguished law 107 of the “buona - scuola”.
- The reform aims to provide schools with the financial and operational tools to allow them to independently reorganize the entire education system.
- Within the limits of the resources assigned, in the last three years "specific teaching" can be activated in the last three years based on two principles: autonomy and flexibility. These teachings will allow students to personalize their school path by shaping it according to their needs, vocations, or preferences, to lay a solid foundation for building a future post-school career.
- The “buona - scuola” also intervenes in the enormous school dropout for which Europe punctually accuses Italy, trying to stem it precisely with the alternation between school and work. In the last three years, work-school alternation courses have been successfully activated, designed specifically for the various school addresses.
- Another of the objectives that law 107 intends to achieve is that of renewing teaching.

For this purpose, € 30,000,000 have been allocated to be divided and distributed in schools based on the number of classes and pupils present.

The principle that inspires this provision is the desire to "modernize school teaching" giving an eye to the new disciplines born in the present and projected towards the future: digital skills.

This does not mean that traditional subjects will be set aside, on the contrary, it could be an opportunity to create, in the present, a bridge between the past and future.

“Alternanza scuola-lavoro” is a unique and innovative teaching method, which through practical experience helps to consolidate the knowledge acquired at school and to test on campus the attachments of future working students and students, thanks to projects in line with their study plan.

The schoolwork alternation is compulsory for all female students and students in the last three years of high school.

A cultural change for the construction of an Italian way to the dual system, which incorporates good European practices, combining them with the specificities of the productive fabric and the Italian socio-cultural context.

The last updated timing of implementation was during the school year 2017/18:

Alternation is a compulsory course of study for students of the last three years of the nation: about 1 million and a half.

Some references regarding the choice of alternative and unconventional schools, external to the traditional school circuit, both public and private:

- Steiner schools
- Montessori schools (www.operanazionalemontessori.it, www.fondazionemontessori.it)
- libertarian schools
- nature/forest kindergarten
- homeschooling

The existence and the continuous diffusion of schools like these mentioned and of families that face these choices are synonymous with the increasing awareness of the need to integrate different teaching methodologies into the school system.

The Youth Worker Master degree introduced in 2021 thanks to a collaboration between “Università Suor Orsola Benincasa” of Naples, “Agenzia Nazionale per i Giovani” (Italian National Agency) and “Santobono-Pausilipon” Foundation. It is a way to recognize at a national level the Youth Worker job position. It is just a first step toward the direction to implement a different kind of teaching method.

Youthpass is a European recognition instrument for identifying and documenting learning outcomes that are acquired in projects under the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programs. In Italy this document is not officially recognized everywhere but, in some universities, if you have it you can avoid some exams to acquire the same outcomes that you already have gained through the experience.

- www.eurodesk.it
- www.universoscuola.itlastica
- www.portaledeligiovani.it
- www.blogkamaleonte.wordpress.com
- www.bambinonaturale.it

Recommendation:

ESTONIA

Recommendation for Including Non Formal Learning in Rural Areas (Primary School- High School Level)

Extra benefits for teachers working in rural areas

Universities work with schools in rural areas and give opportunities to students to go work in rural areas (voluntary programs with Incentives: financial/opportunities, because this is a socially valuable action)

To make surveys among youth about what kind of activities they would prefer. It will help to involve youth in building in rural areas Non-Formal Learning.

A venue for activities, free of charge, anyone can use it with the purpose of NFL

Benefits to parents in purpose to pay only for NFL.

ITALY

Introduce official certifications for NFL

Practicing the NFL in the higher education system

Improve communication and cooperation between schools, governments, and NGOs

Improve the system of recruiting teachers.

Train teachers to include NFL in the school system.

Structuring the participation of public schools in international cooperation (E+ and others)

National NGOs cooperation to push the integration of NFL in the formal system dialoguing with governments.

ALBANIA AND BULGARIA

Recommendation for Including Non-Formal Learning in Rural Areas (Primary School- High School Level)

Extracurricular activities (recognize the extracurricular activities/certificates) to help parents in rural areas understand the importance of these activities.

Ministry of Education should recognize all extracurricular activities with certificates.

Municipalities and governing bodies should implement the rule for the recognition of the certificates, as well as design the certificates.

NGOs and Youth centers should include in their NFL activities parents to understand the extracurricular activities and the use/value of the certificates in the future.

Overview of all the schools in Albania, send reports to the ministry of education of the situation on extracurricular activities.

Ministry of Education with the help of the governing bodies at the municipality level collects information on the actual situation in rural areas in terms of extracurricular activities and plans the implementation of methods to include NFL in schools.

NGOs and statistics organizations assist with the process.

Policies to support teachers for teaching in far areas (infrastructure + higher wages).

Government should pass a law for teachers who work in rural areas to be paid more and to have access to the needed infrastructure.

Municipalities should facilitate the work of these teachers of infrastructure support.

NGOs and other NFL centers create programs for the training of teachers working in rural areas on the methodology of NFL.

Competitions in local/national/international level (recognized, valued, prize).

Government should recognize through certificates and prizes the winning students/pupils of competitions.

Municipalities and local governing bodies facilitate the process of competition (infrastructure)

NGOs, Youth Centers, and NFL institutions provide information.

Provide information updated and translate it into the mother tongue.

Voluntary work in rural areas (for kids/students) / supervised work MALEV (recognized) (that can be a Katalisator for farming - think and live local!).

Government/ Ministries implement the involvement of students/pupils from the city in voluntary work in rural areas, cooperating with locals.

Municipalities and local governing bodies facilitate the process in the respective area.

NGOs/ Youth Centers and NFL institutions create a web of connections with participants from civil society who can join and help the activity.

The government passed the Law of National Sons/Daughters Day.

Municipalities and local governing bodies make sure the implementation of this Law.

NGOs/ Youth Centers/ NFL institutions work on the propaganda of the importance of this day and work on projects/ideas on the methodology of NFL.

Competitions for teachers/ appreciation for their work/extra work/ Teacher Ranking.

The government recognizes the work/extra work of teachers through Ranking and Grading.

Office responsible for Ranking and Grading.

Information about the NFL and the importance of extracurricular learning/ visible & accessible in schools like information boards.

Summer camp/excursion.

Village level: infrastructure upgrade (Schools, equipment).

Free school buses/ transportation.

The government gives the funds needed for the infrastructure.
Municipalities and local governing bodies manage the process of upgrading the infrastructure.
NGOs keep records of the process and make sure it is fair.

Youth Workers should be recognized as a profession.

Government/ Municipalities/ local government bodies should open new workplaces for people to join the projects of upgrading the infrastructure of local areas as well as implementing NFL methods within the education system.

NGOs/ civil society organizations join the project through voluntary work.

Attract more people to youth work centers.

Municipalities/ local governing bodies/ NGOs/ Youth Centers/ NFL institutions run projects to attract more people to youth work centers.

KOSOVO AND NORTH MACEDONIA

Implementing NFL starting from kindergarten school.

Improve communication and cooperation between schools, governments, and NGOs

Improve the system of recruiting teachers.

Train teachers to include NFL in the school system.

Structuring the participation of public schools in international cooperation (E+ and others).

National NGOs cooperation to push the integration of NFL in the formal system dialoguing with governments.

Ministry of Education should recognize all extracurricular activities with certificates.

To have a wider range of NFL topics/subjects.

Monitoring the process of including NFL in the school system, and controlling the results.

Extra work of teachers, to be recognized by the government.

To include families of students in the NFL, and also make them part of the process by participation.

BELGIUM AND SERBIA

Recognizing the NFL teaching method by passing appropriate laws

Unifying the language throughout the country to ease the processes of communications and promote non-formal education effectively and efficiently. This is because this will allow the emergent

Establishing the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning

Forming an Institute with the intent to work on forming staff, translating, regional cooperation, monitoring and studying due situations and the developments regionally and inside the country with the opportunity to include the NFL methodology in the educational system with close cooperation with the government and relevant ministry.

Municipality level

Providing locations for meetings and events

Construction of Youth Centers

Providing Human Resources Staff

Increasing cooperation between Municipality and other Institutions

Organizing NFL courses for pedagogues at all levels

To spread more Non-Formal Education to develop the youth skills with activities and training.

Civil society

Raising awareness and acceptance of NFL themes among public events (discussions and presentations, inviting official speakers, etc.)

Spreading knowledge

Education institutions

Promoting Youth Centers activities by providing extra credits in the yearly students' report cards

Combining regular school subjects with European non-formal projects

Letting the students share their skills outside the school environment (Youth Centers)

Increasing cooperation between external organizations and educational institutions.

Project partners



Kosovo (Coordinator)



Belgium



North Macedonia



Italy



Bulgaria



Bulgaria



Serbia



Albania



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