

VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING



Country Factsheet 2021 Republic of Moldova



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Context and Stage of Development

Efforts to fulfil the strategic objectives and recommendations on validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in the Republic of Moldova began in 2018. In 2019, the national regulatory framework on VNFIL was approved and eight vocational education and training (VET) institutions obtained the title of Validation Centre (VC) and were tasked by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR) to pilot and support the implementation of validation services.

The legal framework for VNFIL foresees validation to be undertaken in VET for qualification of levels 3, 4 and 5 of the NQF. Currently in demand is the validation of professional competences in trades at level 3 of the NQF in fields such as construction, catering, services, textiles, etc. Only full qualifications can be awarded.

Validation is possible only for learning outcomes in qualifications approved and registered in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and exclusively by those VET institutions that are accredited by the ANACEC (National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research) and whose training programmes are approved by this legal body.

Policy and Regulatory Framework

The Education Code, approved in 2014, provides for the assessment of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning. Certification may be carried out by authorised bodies on the basis of a regulation approved by the MoECR. To this end, the MoECR approved a number of acts implementing Article 123 of the Education Code, including the Regulation on VNFIL and the Practical Guide, approved in 2020.

The VNFIL Regulation establishes the normative framework for the functioning of the national validation system, through which the process of identification, documentation, assessment and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts is carried out.

The VNFIL Regulation lays out requirements and procedures for the organisation and conducting of the VNFIL process and delegates the right to provide VNFIL services to VET institutions.

The legal framework does not expressly specify the purpose of VNFIL and its importance for the citizen in terms of training or career development prospects.

The officially endorsed Practical Guide on VNFIL serves both validation providers and VNFIL beneficiaries. It includes specific terminology, a step-by-step VNFIL procedure, the list of required documents for starting the VNFIL process, tools and mechanisms for the validation of professional competences, and guidance on the development of the examination programmes.

The draft of Education 2030 Strategy considers "the need to develop an education system resilient to social, demographic, economic, environmental and pandemic shocks by developing people's individual competences to cope with them in formal, non-formal and informal learning". The Education Strategy points to the need to create a system and tools that would enable the identification, validation and certification of individuals' professional competences.



Institutional Setup and Collaboration

The MoER is the central body of public administration responsible for the development of the legal framework on validation and its enforcement. The main services within the MoER which have duties directly or indirectly related to validation are the Life-long learning (LLL) Service, the NQF Department and the VET Department.

The MoER has assigned the role of validation providers to VET institutions with increased potential and capacity.

Information on the legal framework for the validation of competences can be found and accessed on the websites of the MoER and validation providers who are the main source of information, advice and guidance, and the contact point for VNFIL candidates. The counsellors at the validation centers provide free consultations and advice on the VNFIL services and offer support to potential beneficiaries.

VET institutions that act as validation centres are subject to evaluation and accreditation by the ANACEC. The ANACEC, under the MoER, is the key agency coordinating the accreditation of all education institutions and education and training programmes in the country.

Other public and private organisations are involved or consulted in the development of VNFIL policy.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family with its Department on Employment and Migration Policies dealing, inter alia, with the VNFIL, being responsible for issues relating to the National Employment Agency (NEA), sector committees, occupational standards, the classification of occupations, and developing policies on labour market and migration. However, the VNFIL legal framework does not explicitly define the roles for the above-mentioned stakeholders.

Funding

There is no public funding available to support the implementation of VNFIL. The cost of certification must be borne by the candidates. Fees for VNFIL are set by the validation centres and coordinated by the MoER, in accordance with the legislation and in respect of the cost effectiveness ratio. The VET institution is a non profit organisation, and therefore the fees for VNFIL services must not exceed the actual costs incurred.

For certain at-risk groups (the unemployed and disabled persons), the certification fee may be staggered by applying preferential financial conditions or reimbursed to candidates through funding programmes.

Businesses may cover the costs for their employees, but the number of such businesses currently participating is very limited.

Beneficiaries and Impact

VNFIL beneficiaries may be Moldovan citizens and persons included in the categories specified in Article 2(l) of the Law on the Integration of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova.

With the support of development partners, the International Organization for Migration and the UNDP project "Migration and Local Development", over 330 citizens have certified their professional competencies in 9 Validation Centers.

Validation services are offered in 46 trades.

Certificates issued by the validation centres are intended to have the same impact on employment, further education and training in formal systems as those obtained via formal VET programmes.



Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the evidence of good progress achieved in the field of VNFIL, the implementation of validation is faced by challenges which might limit the opportunity for further rollout.

The legal framework delegates all VNFIL obligations and responsibilities, including the certification process, to the VET institutions.

The roles of other national stakeholders (such as the NEA or Ministry of Economy) are not identified or specified. As a result, the awareness on VNFIL among the entire stakeholder ecosystem is low and the private sector is not involved. An institutional dialog among stakeholders would enable linking validation with other relevant national policies and the development of a plan for strategic development of the system. This might be necessary for better targeting of the beneficiaries. Currently the purpose of VNFIL and its role in facilitating training and career development of individuals is not defined.

Validation is not sufficiently promoted. There is a need to develop and implement a promotion and communication strategy, targeted to the identified groups of potential beneficiaries.

The slow progress in updating qualifications and a low number of quality assured qualifications included in the qualifications register are impeding the expansion of validation. The list of Vocational Training Fields is limited and does not provide for validation of competences in many labour market relevant areas. Currently there is no opportunity for partial award. Allowing a gradual accumulation of validated competences (in modules) to subsequently obtain the full Qualification Certificate would make the system much more attractive. This would have to be accompanied by availability of complementary courses.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure the VNFIL impact are not in place. External evaluations are not carried out due to the limited number of staff in the LLL Service, the lack of funding and instruments for monitoring and evaluation. Investments in this area will be necessary.

There is a lack of state legislation that would better motivate public and private institutions to engage in provision of validation services. The funding model in which the certification fee cannot exceed the actual costs incurred does not offer financial incentive for a VET institution to prioritise these services in their development plans. Consideration has to be given to additional sources for sustainable funding of validation. Involvement of partners in further development of the system will be crucial.

Digitalisation of some of the processes and services could increase the efficiency of the system and allow better monitoring of progress and results.

Further capacity development of the key personnel involved in VNFIL, including the staff of the LLL Service and Validation Centres, will be necessary. The Practical Guide could be expanded by adding more guidelines on assessment methods that are suitable for various groups of beneficiaries including those coming from disadvantages groups.