

INVENTORY ON THE VALIDATION OF NON- FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT: UKRAINE

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0 BRIEF 2023 UPDATE OF THE 2021 REPORT

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is developing in many countries. Often there are many different approaches to validation, depending on the purpose and whether the validation is taking place in education, in the labour market or the voluntary sector. This makes collecting information about validation processes a challenging task as existing initiatives and practices are scattered and there is no central monitoring of them in most countries. Ukraine is not an exception to this rule. This report is the first inventory report that covers development in Ukraine and as such is a first attempt to bring all the existing developments together. Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning was one of the topics discussed during the Comparison of the EQF and the NQF of Ukraine and this has given use additional insights.

This report was originally completed in December 2021 and a lot has happened since then that provides additional information on the situation of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Ukraine. In order to consider this report as part of a common baseline on the state of validation of non-formal and informal learning across EU member states, EEA countries and ETF partner countries, we are providing a brief update. The update is not fully comprehensive and includes mainly a snapshot of information that was made available online and based on our discussions during the Comparison exercise. This snapshot will help the reader to put the developments into context and will allow a better baseline for the next report in a few years from now.

In spite of the fact that the years 2022 and 2023 were greatly affected by the war, it still saw the implementation of a new chapter in the validation of non-formal and informal learning, with the establishment of qualification centres. This is another demonstration of the proverbial resilience of Ukraine during the war. In 2021, the regulations of the accreditation of qualification centres were adopted. This opened the way to start the accreditation process and establish qualification centres for specific professional qualifications. The first qualification centres were established on the basis of the training institutions that were already involved in the validation of cooks, described in Chapter 2.5 of this report. In the course of twelve months up to the end of July 2023, 31 qualification centres have been established, (20 accredited by the National Qualifications Agency and eleven that have received exemption from accreditation during martial law in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution 314 of 18 March 2022). These centres issued 1504 certificates for professional qualifications for a wide range of occupations. In total existing centres can now award certificates for 148 different professional qualifications. This number is increasing month by month. The evolution can be followed on the [website of the National Qualifications Agency](#).

Although the Qualification Centres and the issuing of professional qualifications, are the most advanced and visible part of VNFIL initiatives in Ukraine, the Law on Education (2017) states that educational, professional and partial qualifications can be awarded on the basis of formal, non-formal and informal learning and that the state provides relevant services to facilitate this. In formal education therefore there have to be arrangements to validate non-formal and informal learning.

Some of these arrangements already existed before the Law on Education was adopted. This is particularly true for general education and VET, where the possibility of taking external exams and following a personal programme always existed.

In VET, an [admission control procedure](#) (вхідний контроль) has been developed, adopted and introduced since 2014. It allows training institutions which also provide opportunities for professional upskilling and reskilling, to shorten training periods based on experience. However, there is no central system to monitor its implementation. This aspect was not described in the report in 2021, but this has been the case already for a number of years. On-line many examples can be found from VET institutions and regional methodological centres for a wide spectrum of different profiles. We can therefore presume that this is therefore quite widespread.

In higher education and pre-higher vocational education, there are more recent developments. In accordance with the Law on Education requiring providers to make arrangements for the recognition of learning outcomes, obtained through non-formal and informal learning, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education introduced accreditation requirements for validation that instigated higher education institutions to develop their institutional arrangements. However, these were not immediately translated in new practices and in the meantime the Ministry of Education established a working group to develop a framework approach for validation in higher education and pre-higher vocational education. This has led to the [Ministerial Order No. 130 of 8 February 2022](#) 'On approval of the Procedure for recognition in higher and professional pre-higher education of learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and/or informal learning'. The order defines:

- general requirements
- the type of institutions and persons to which and to whom it applies;
- lists and sequences of the validation and recognition procedures;
- requirements for educational institutions;
- the application process and identification of appropriate learning outcomes;
- assessment procedures;
- how the outcomes affect the further learning.

Recognition may not exceed more than 25% of the learning programme but there are two exceptions: maximum of 35% in the case of IT, and maximum of 50% for military sciences, national security, state border security (by amendment of December 2022).

Just like in the case of the admission control in VET, the implementation is delegated to the level of providers that are developing their own arrangements. Thus, there is no overview on its current state of implementation.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since Ukraine has chosen the strategic course towards integration into the European Union, a number of essential steps have been taken to introduce European standards in different sectors. According to the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement the realization of lifelong learning concept has become a priority for the national educational reforms. Considerable progress has been made in introducing non-formal and informal learning at legislation level: The Law “On Education” (2017) defines three types of education (formal, non-formal and informal) in line with the terms of International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011. The state recognizes and encourages all types of education, as well as creates conditions for the development of educational entities that provide relevant educational services. The Ukrainian terms ‘non-formal/informal education’ and ‘non-formal/informal learning’ are used interchangeably. The term ‘recognition of (learning outcomes of) non-formal and informal learning / training’ is more prevalent in official documents dealing with validation.

Validation in the education and training sector is introduced through the procedure on recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. In accordance with Law on Education (2017), a number of higher educational institutions have developed validation regulation. Since 2019, it is one of the highly recommended requirements for accreditation of educational programs in higher education. Higher Education Institutions therefore started to develop their own arrangements for validation. The Ministry of Education decided however that a more coordinated approach would be needed, to guide the Higher Education Institutions in making their arrangements and ensure more coherence. This has been achieved through a [Ministerial Order 130 of 08 February 2022](#). The recognition of learning outcomes achieved at work places is provided by some educational institutions which are approved by the government.

Validation in the labour market sector is represented through the recognition of non-formal vocational training. The recognition procedure approved in 2013 was actively implemented for the profession ‘cook’ in three assessment centres in Kyiv, Odesa and Rivne between 2016-2022. The typical validation procedure consists of identification, documentation, assessment and certification inspired by the European guidelines laid down in “[The Methodological recommendations on the process of assessment and recognition of the results of non-formal vocational training](#)”

Since 2021, some important steps have been taken to activate the validation process. Validation of professional qualifications obtained in the workplace have been assigned to qualification centres in accordance with the regulation on qualification centres approved in April 2021. It is the basic national regulatory document on validation that defines the main tasks and functions of qualification centres. The procedure on accreditation of qualification centres by the NQA was approved in September 2021 and defines the basic accreditation principles and mechanism for legal entities intending to acquire the status of a qualification centre and evaluate / recognize the learning outcomes of persons, including those acquired in non-formal or informal learning.

The main stakeholders of VNFIL in Ukraine are the National Qualifications Agency (NQA), the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Ministry of Economy (MoE), the State Employment Service (SES), and the Ministry of Social Policy and Federation of Employers.

The NQA is a key agency coordinating the validation activities of all relevant actors in Ukraine. The Agency is authorized to accredit qualification centres responsible for validation. MoES plays a leading

role in policymaking and introducing effective mechanisms on the validation system in the education sector, particularly in higher and adult education. While the MoE in cooperation with the SES and its regional centres take the main responsibilities for VNFIL activities in vocational occupations. Employers' associations play an essential role in coordination and cooperation with the State Employment Service in pilot projects for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, dual education, foresight and development of occupational standards.

2 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

A number of national laws and policy documents provide the legal framework for validation in the country and regulate different aspects of VNFIL. Recent changes in legislation have introduced new regulations on the validation process making it systematic and operational. The validation of professional qualifications obtained in the workplace is assigned to the qualification centres. The regulation on qualification centres approved by the MoES in April 2021 is the basic national regulatory document on validation that defines the main tasks and functions of qualification centres. The procedure on the accreditation of qualification centres approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in September 2021 defines the basic principles and mechanism of the accreditation procedure of qualification centres (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Law, Decree, Order	Content relating to validation
Law "On Professional Development of Employees (2012)	defines the term 'non-formal vocational training'
Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of the procedure for recognition of non-formal vocational training results" (May 2013, #340)	identifies the mechanisms of recognition of non-formal vocational training results and regulates the procedure of recognition of non-formal vocational training results and sets the criteria for validation providers
Order "On Regulation on formation of commission for verification of non-formal vocational training results" approved by the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science (December 2013, #875/1776)	regulates the process formation of a commission for verification of non-formal vocational training results
Order of the Ministry of Education and Sciences 'On approval of the Procedure for conducting admission control of knowledge and skills for persons admitted to study under retraining or advanced training programs in vocational schools' No. 688, 6 June 2014	regulates the design of a process at the level of a VET provider to validate the learning outcomes of applicants in order to shorten the training programme

On approval of the Confirmation of the Results of Non-formal Vocational Training of Persons in Working Professions, 2016	This order of the Ministry of Social Policy, adopted in 2016, initiated the implementation of the validation of non-formal learning for guards, cooks and welders.
Law "On Education" (2017)	Defines 'non-formal and informal learning' introduces a legal right for the recognition of the results of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in the system of formal education identifies qualification centres as entities authorized to assess and recognise the learning outcomes including those acquired in non-formal and informal learning and assignment and / or confirmation of relevant professional qualifications
Order "On approval of the list of entities for recognition of non-formal vocational training results" approved by the Ministry of Social Policy (March 2016, # 256, revised in April 2018)	Contains the list of the assessment centres authorized to recognize non-formal vocational training results
Order "On The Regulation of qualification centres" approved by the Ministry of Education and Science (April 2021, # 452)	Defines qualification centre, its main tasks and functions, describes the rights and responsibilities of qualification centres
Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of the Regulation on the Register of Qualifications" (June 2021, #620)	Determines the procedure for creating and maintaining the Register of Qualifications, its main tasks and functions
Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of the Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine" (June 2021, #576)	Sets criteria and the procedure of recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside Ukraine to simplify further employment
Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of the Regulation on the assignment and confirmation of professional qualifications by qualification centres" (September 2021, #956)	Defines the main validation terms, determines the requirements for the procedure of assignment and confirmation of full and / or partial professional qualification by qualification centres
Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "The Regulation on the accreditation of qualification centres" (September 2021, #986)	Describes the basic principles and mechanisms of the accreditation procedure of qualification centres
Order of the Ministry of Education and Sciences 'On approval of the Procedure for recognition in higher and professional pre-higher education of learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and/or informal learning'. No. 130 08 February 2022	Regulates the design of a process at the level of a HE institution or pre-higher education vocational education institution to validate non-formal and informal learning

Aligning Ukrainian and European policies is crucially important, therefore, cooperation with international partners at the initial stage supports the design of a well-operating and reliable VNFIL procedure. The European Training Foundation (ETF) is an official international partner of the MoES in supporting reforms in the education, training and labour market system in the framework of EU external relations policies. In recent years, the ETF has initiated some pilots and developed a concept note to inform all relevant stakeholders and strengthen their understanding of VNFIL to further its development. In close cooperation with the ETF, the National Qualifications Agency has developed and launched the Register of Qualifications. The first version of the Register is fully operational and 282 [occupational standards of different economic sectors are registered](#). It also contains the database of [Qualification Centres](#) with the related professional qualifications, for which they have been accredited and the [data base of certificates](#) that has been awarded.

Box 2.1 National Qualification Agency

The National Qualifications Agency (NQA) was established by Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (December 2018, #1029) in accordance with the Law "On Education" (2017). Officially it started operating in November 2019. The NQA is a collegial body formed on a parity basis of 12 representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture, the Joint Representative Body of Employers at the national level and the Joint Representative Body of All-Ukrainian Trade Unions (6 - from government agencies, and 6 from the private sector). According to the legislation, the NQA is subordinate to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and it is authorized to implement the state policy in the field of qualifications. This involves the creation of mechanisms for the transparent and effective assignment of professional qualifications on the basis of modern professional standards and forecasts of the labour market needs, and the harmonization of the Ukrainian qualifications system with the European one. The NQA accredits Qualification Centres, where it will be possible to confirm qualifications on the basis of formal, non-formal or informal education obtained in Ukraine or abroad. The NQA also coordinates the development of occupational standards that would meet modern market needs, maintains a register of professional qualifications, moderates the process of professional training and retraining, participates in the development of the National Qualifications System, and it provides a channel of communication for the business sector, the private sector, and trade unions with central executive bodies in the field of qualifications. The [NQA's website](#) is well-designed and user-friendly. It contains information about the Agency and its mission, the NQF and qualification centres, international qualification systems, occupational standards, educational and professional qualifications, and the qualification register. It also provides several essential online services: an application for occupational standard development, a questionnaire for potential candidates for experts in accreditation of qualification centres, an application for the accreditation of qualification centres. New impacts are expected from qualification centres that are charged to recognise professional qualifications. Currently, the first experts in accreditation of qualification centres are being certified and the applications for qualification centre accreditation are being accepted by the NQA.

2.2 Validation in education and training

All national validation activities in the education and training sector are regulated by the Law "On Education" (2017) that defines non-formal and informal learning and introduces a legal right for recognition of the results of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in the system of formal education. The increasing popularity of non-formal and informal learning in the society, particularly among students, requires transparent and reliable validation. The development and implementation of effective VNFIL mechanisms for obtaining educational or professional qualifications is one of the key challenges for the Ukrainian education system today.

In general education, validation has a declarative character. The Law "on General Secondary Education" of Ukraine (2020) guarantees a legal right to the individual educational path (Chapter III, Article 14). According to this law a student has the right to the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and / or informal learning within the educational program that is provided by the general educational institution. The recognition of such student learning outcomes is carried out through the annual assessment and / or state final certification, which are conducted on a general basis, defined for full-time or part-time form of general secondary education. The student's learning outcomes obtained in formal education in another educational institution do not require any additional recognition. In the case of successful results of the annual assessment and / or state final attestation, a student is allowed to continue studying in the individual form of general secondary education. However, the declared right to validation is not used by parents on a regular basis, and is more in exceptional cases than the rule. The development of a relevant methodology and a clear simple validation procedure will activate the implementation of VNFIL system in general education.

In vocational education and training (VET), an [admission control procedure](#) (вхідний контроль) has been developed, adopted and implemented since 2014. It allows training institutions which also provide opportunities for professional upskilling and reskilling, to shorten training periods based on experience. However, there is no central system to monitor its implementation. This aspect has existed already for a number of years. Many on-line examples can be found from VET institutions and regional methodological centres of a wide spectrum of different profiles. We can therefore presume that this is therefore quite widespread. In vocational education, validation is expected to be further activated after the approval of a draft Law "On vocational education" that among a number of essential reformation aspects declares the student right to the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in accordance with the regulations approved by the Cabinet of Ministries of Ukraine. This document also lists the elements of the quality assurance system of vocational education including quality assurance tools and procedures for the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in particular. To make validation operate better, VET schools need a simplified procedure for getting permission from the government for VNFIL activities and introducing relevant changes to the legislation.

The validation system has been initiated in higher education since 2019 as one of the highly recommended requirements for the accreditation of educational programs in HE. The draft regulation "On approval of the procedure for recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning in higher education" developed by the MoES after the legislation approval stage is expected to introduce the validation procedure in HE at the national level. This document defines the basic validation terms and describes a typical validation process. Validation in HE is carried out as the recognition of learning outcomes provided by the accredited educational (educational-professional, educational-scientific) program, in accordance with the standards of higher education and the National

Qualifications Framework. Validation is not possible in the absence of current standards (at least one of the standards for interdisciplinary programs) in higher or professional higher education in the relevant specialty (specialties).

Approved by a decision of the collegial governing body of the HE institution, a typical validation procedure consists of identification, documentation, assessment and certification. For validation, an applicant must submit to the authorized institution: (1) an application form specified by the validation procedure in the authorized institution; (2) an educational declaration according to the template; (3) relevant documents (certificate, diploma, report, materials) to confirm directly or indirectly the learning outcomes obtained through non-formal education (if any). These documents (materials) may be submitted electronically in a digital format by e-mail or through the web service of the authorized institution. When submitting the application, the student has to present an identity document and proof of citizenship. Before conducting the assessment, the authorized consultant together with the applicant have to determine the list of learning outcomes identically defined by the educational standard or educational programme and specified in the educational declaration. Further identification of learning outcomes obtained through non-formal and / or informal education is carried out within the relevant levels of the National Qualifications Framework. To conduct the assessment, the authorized institution forms a committee consisting of at least three authorized experts acting on the basis of this procedure to assess an applicant's learning outcomes (see 7.2).

For the last two years, a number of HE institutions have taken an active part in implementing VNFIL initiatives and have developed internal regulations on the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal / informal learning¹. Currently, a number of HE institutions validate international certificates in foreign languages (mainly English, German, French) and credit them with a maximum mark for the discipline "Foreign language".

Ukrainian legislation also allows the recognition of foreign educational documents (including documents of non-formal and informal learning) of labour migrants, refugees and persons who require additional or temporary protection².

Significant development of the current validation system is expected of the draft legislation on adult education and training. In January 2023, the Verkhovna Rada adopted draft law No. 7039 on adult education in the first reading. It now awaits approval in the second reading before it is adopted. The draft law regulates the system of adult education, and ensures its mid-term development. The draft law takes into account the EU and Ukrainian experiences and main recommendations on the development of lifelong education and adult learning. It identifies the components of the adult education system; emphasises opportunities for the personal and professional development of individuals including social activities, that support economic and social developments at community, regional, and state level; it describes mechanisms supporting the establishment of a network of service providers in the field of adult education, diversification of activities, wide involvement of civil society, competition of educational programs, quality assurance of educational services, and recognition of learning outcomes obtained, in particular, through non-formal education.

It describes the duties, powers and responsibilities of the state, employers and citizens. Local authorities and the state guarantee access and active participation in adult education. The role of the

¹ <https://kpi.ua/en/informal-education>

² <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/ministerstvo/poslugi/viznannya-inozemnih-dokumentiv/normativno-pravova-baza>

state is about promoting, facilitating and supporting adult education. Local authorities facilitate and ensure implementation, employers ensure the professional development of employees and citizens, inform themselves about opportunities, and participate in adult learning in order to keep themselves up to date. The legal basis for adult education centres is described in the law, and will be implemented in a decentralised way at local and regional levels. The state facilitates financial support and soft loans for adults to participate in adult education.

For the last few years, non-formal and informal learning has become an integral part of professional training. According to the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On some issues of professional development of scientific and pedagogical workers" (August 2019, # 800)³, pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical workers independently choose specific forms, types, directions and subjects of educational services for professional development. The institution or organization providing professional training is an educational institution (or its structural unit), a scientific institution, another legal provider which conducts educational activities in the field of professional training for teachers and / or research staff and has a licence of the MoES. Based on the results of professional development, pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical workers are issued a document on professional development (certificate or diploma) usually for 1 credit (30 hours) annually. Each certificate / diploma is to be registered within 15 days after the completion of the course online on the professional training provider's website to be further recognised by the educational institution where pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical workers are employed. To apply for validation of non-formal / informal learning, it is required to provide a certificate (non-formal learning) or a report / e-portfolio (informal learning) according to the educational institution template. Within a month of the application, the Academic Council of the educational institution validates the results of professional training of pedagogical / scientific-pedagogical worker and approves one of two decisions: to recognise / not to recognise the results of non-formal / informal learning as professional training. In case of non-recognition, the relevant recommendations are given to the applicant for the further appropriate training that would result in validation.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

Recognition of the results of informal and non-formal learning is provided by the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017), but in reality, there has been no practical opportunity to confirm qualifications without studying in an educational institution until 2021 (except for the profession of "cook": see 2.5).

Recently some important steps have been taken to make the VNFIL process systematic and operational in the labour market sector. Validation in the labour market sector has been reinforced in April 22, 2021 when the MoES approved the "Standard Regulation of a qualification centre" in accordance with the Action Plan 2020-2027 for the implementation of the State Policy Concept "Modern Vocational Education" 2027. The document defines a qualification centre and state its main tasks, functions, rights and responsibilities. According to this document, Qualification centres are to: (1) assess the learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal educations and recognize the professional qualifications; (2) recognize professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine. The procedure on the accreditation of qualification centres approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on September 22, 2021 defines the basic principles and mechanism of the accreditation procedure for legal entities that intend to acquire the status of a qualification centre to assess / recognize the learning outcomes of persons, including non-formal or informal learning, to

³ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/800-2019-%D0%BF#n18>

confirm professional qualifications, as well as to recognize the professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine. Currently, the NQA is the key agency authorized to accredit qualification centres.

The qualification centres must perform the following functions:

- to develop and implement assessment procedures ensuring impartiality towards applicants, comply with the policy of equal opportunities for all candidates;
- to give open access to information on all the centre activities;
- to develop control and assess materials;
- to provide the necessary material and technical conditions for the organization and conduct of assessment procedures according to the requirements of labour protection legislation;
- to provide the appropriate number of qualified assessors;
- to provide the protection of information on the control and assessment materials, on the personal data of candidates and assessors from unauthorized access;
- to conduct procedures for assessing applicants' professional qualifications;
- based on the results of the assessment procedure, to issue a document confirming the fact of conferral / confirmation of the relevant professional qualification to practise a certain type of work or carry out a professional activity;
- to ensure the right to appeal the results of the assessment procedures;
- to recognize professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine and issue documents confirming the recognition of such qualifications;
- to submit to the NQA information on conferred / confirmed professional qualifications for their inclusion in the Register of Qualifications;
- to provide information and advice on assessment procedures, and the procedure for recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine;

Qualification centres provide services on the basis of the written applications of candidates, in particular, foreigners and stateless individuals legally residing and / or staying in Ukraine, refugees and persons in need of additional or temporary protection.

Every qualification centre has to meet the following requirements to be accredited:

- to have a licence to provide educational services in the relevant profession;
- to be able to create one or more committees in the prescribed manner;
- to have their own or provided bank of qualifying examinations and qualifying tests;
- to meet sanitary and hygienic norms, requirements of normative legal acts on labour protection;

- to provide workplaces for qualifying tests, certified under working conditions and equipped in accordance with the requirements and in line with professional standards at relevant qualification level;
- to have for assessment the following documents: the self-assessment questionnaire, the list of assessment instruments and assessment criteria.

New impacts are expected from qualification centres in activating the national validation system and bringing benefits both to the society and individuals. Currently, the first experts in accreditation of qualification centres are being certified and the applications for qualification centre accreditation are being accepted by the NQA.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

Currently, the third sector organizations are only indirectly involved in the validation process in organizing non-formal and informal learning. Currently, the activities of the third sector in the study area can be divided into several key aspects:

- career guidance activity as one of the meaningful components of the activity in general;
- organization of vocational training and retraining courses as the main activity of the organization;
- support for academic mobility, cooperation projects at the level of higher education, (in particular, National Erasmus +).

Third sector organisations provide additional opportunities to validation beneficiaries: post-training meetings, meetings with employers, continuous information on vacancies, individual psychological counselling and coaching sessions. Representatives of the third sector work with non-formal learning providers, and educational institutions of different levels of accreditation.

2.5 Role of other institutions in VNFIL

Recently, the State Employment Service (SES) has played a major role in the national VNFIL system by providing a validation process through the network of its assessment centres. In accordance with the Order “On the approval of the list of entities for recognition of non-formal vocational training results” approved by the Ministry of Social Policy (March 2016, # 256, revised in April 2018), the candidates can confirm the professional qualification of 3-6 levels in the profession of "Cook" in Kyiv Higher Vocational School #33, Rivne and Odesa CVETs of SES. Firstly, the candidate contacts the nearest employment centre to obtain information and advice on validation services (due to the quarantine restrictions, the consultation can be hold online or by phone). The employment centre expert informs the candidate about: (1) the requirements for the qualification level of a chosen profession; (2) the assessment criteria; (3) the validation procedure; (4) the assessment centre, the schedule and the estimated cost of validation service. Then the candidate is asked to fill out a self-assessment questionnaire, to determine the level of professional qualification (3-6). Based on the results of this questionnaire, the specialist of the employment centre issues a referral for further validation. Depending on the results of the self-assessment, the examination of documents and evidence of professional competence, members of the committee provide recommendations on the procedure and conditions of the theoretical examination and qualifying test, the place and timing of tasks.

The committee decides on whether the candidate passes the exam based on test tasks. The maximum length of the exam is 6 hours. If the candidate provides correct answers, namely 85% of the total material of the qualification requirements, depending on the declared category, the candidate is admitted to the qualifying test, which is conducted at specially designated equipped workplaces of the kitchen-laboratory. The candidate has a list of practical tasks for the preparation of five dishes, independently compiles calculation cards, and in accordance with the requirements of the technological process. Before performing the qualifying test work, the candidate is informed about the procedure, conditions and time norms for the task, instructed on occupational safety and health. During the performance of practical tasks, the members of the committee observe the process of cooking, organization of the workplace, compliance with sanitary and hygienic requirements, and safety rules. At the end of the cooking process, the candidate presents five dishes to the qualification committee, which evaluates and forms a conclusion on the results of the qualification attestation of the candidate. Qualification test work is considered completed if the practical task is performed in accordance with the technical and technological requirements and at the specified time. For the quality assurance, the qualification test work is recorded, and video or photo materials are presented in a digital format. If a person has achieved the level of professional knowledge, skills and abilities to perform certain work in the profession during the qualification assessment procedure, the relevant certificate is issued. To the candidates who did not make the grade, recommendations for further training are given.

Any employee, who works and masters certain professional skills, but does not have documentary evidence, shall have the opportunity to confirm their competences and obtain a state standard document.

Box 2.5 Ukrainian Adult Education Association

The Ukrainian Adult Education Association (UAEA) is a non-profit public organisation established to raise the awareness of lifelong learning in society and take an active part in the development of adult education in Ukraine. Among a number of tasks, the Association aims to participate in adult education policymaking process in Ukraine, to provide training for specialists in adult education system, to organise national and international events on adult education, to cooperate with governmental and non-governmental organisations and educational institutions inside and outside the country. Since 2016, it is an ordinary member of the European Association for the Education of Adults. An official partner of the Association is the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV) International, the German Adult Education Association⁴. DVV International is the largest further education provider in Germany that cooperates worldwide with more than 200 partners in over 30 countries. It represents the interests of approximately 900 adult education centres and their state associations, providing support for the European and global information and expertise exchange through conferences, webinars, publications, establishing places for lifelong learning in partner countries. Since 2010, DVVI Ukraine promotes lifelong learning and adult education via joint projects, training

⁴ <https://www.dvv-international.org.ua/dvv-international/profile>

for adult educators, research and publications⁵. The organisation experts closely cooperates with the Ministry of Education and Science in designing legislation for adult education. The Head of the UAEA Board Larisa Lukyanova, the Director of the Ivan Ziaziun Institute of Pedagogical and Adult Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine and one of the leading national specialists in adult education, focuses on the crucial importance of non-formal and informal learning that meets labour market needs, and the development of an effective VNFIL system taking advantage of its successful international experience while respecting national realities. Learn Lifelong is an online platform of non-formal education supported by DVVI Ukraine, the Ukrainian Adult Education Association and the International Centre of Non-formal Education⁶. The platform mission is to raise the awareness of lifelong learning, to facilitate communication between potential learners and formal / non-formal education providers, as well as to inform about VNFIL opportunities.

3 LINKS TO NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been brought in line with the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and now contains eight qualification levels instead of eleven, as before. The relevant decision was made by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on June 25, 2020. Introducing an updated NQF allows it to harmonize it with European standards and create conditions to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications. The new framework ensures the comparability of educational and professional qualifications that people acquire in Ukraine with qualifications obtained outside Ukraine, including the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning according to the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the approval of Regulation on the recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine" (June 2021, #576). The obtained diplomas or certificates are identical regardless of whether they are gained through education and training or VNFIL, and they are fully recognized by national employers. The NQF is a systematic and competency-based description of the qualification levels of education. Each level is characterized by a set of personal competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities to apply knowledge.

The qualifications of vocational (technical) education correspond to 2, 3, 4 and 5 levels of the National Qualifications Framework, the qualification of professional higher education is 5th level. The qualifications of higher education correspond to junior bachelor – 5th level of the NQF; Bachelor – 6th level of the NQF; Master's degree – 7th level of the NQF; Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Arts – 8th level, and Doctor of Science – and 8th level. The updated qualifications framework has also been

⁵ <https://www.dvv-international.org.ua/ukraine/publications>

⁶ <https://learnlifelong.net/pro-nas/>

supplemented with the concepts of educational and professional qualifications and brought in line with the amendments to the Laws of Ukraine “On Education” and “On Higher Education”.

The National Qualifications Framework is intended for use by executive and local governments, institutions and organizations, educational institutions, employers and others to develop, identify, relate, recognize, plan and develop qualifications.

Educational and professional qualifications are described in learning outcomes formulated in accordance with the descriptors of the NQS, which are: knowledge, skills, communication, responsibility, and autonomy. At the international level, the identification and validation of qualifications is performed by comparing the levels and descriptors of the NQS with the European Qualifications Framework 2017. Within the Bologna process, the recognition of educational qualifications is provided by the European Higher Education Qualifications Framework, levels, and descriptors are relevant to levels of the European Qualifications Framework.

4 STANDARDS

Ukrainian legislation in the field of education does not differentiate between the status of occupational and the education standards generally, or for validation in particular. Despite the similarity of status and importance of both documents for personal and career development and its implementation in the field of social and labour relations, approaches to the development of these documents differ significantly.

In accordance with the Law “On Education“ (2017), educational standards are developed and approved in the manner prescribed by special laws and other regulations. Education standards are developed in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework, and they define the requirements for mandatory competencies and learning outcomes of the applicant at the appropriate level and the total amount of workload of students. In accordance with the “Regulations on the development, implementation and revision of occupational standards” approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (2017), occupational standards are the approved requirements for the competencies of employees, which serve as a basis for the formation of professional qualifications. Occupational standards may be developed by employers, their organizations and associations, public authorities, scientific institutions, industry councils, public associations and other stakeholders. The procedure for the development, implementation and revision of occupational standards shall be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine upon submission by the NQA. Occupational standards contain requirements for employees' qualifications and competencies, which are determined by employers and serve as a basis for the development of professional qualifications.

In July 2021, the Government Portal published a list of fields of education and training in Ukraine harmonized with the International Standard Classification of Education. It allows educational institutions to indicate diploma specialties according to the Ukrainian standards and their international equivalents. Matching Ukrainian standards with fields of education and training provided by the list with ISCED codes in the context of internationalization of higher education is necessary:

- to ensure international recognition of educational qualifications of higher and vocational education obtained in Ukraine;

- to support international academic mobility of students and pedagogical / scientific-pedagogical workers with the further learning outcomes and certificate validation;
- to promote Ukrainian education for international students;
- to participate in international research on the comparison and statistical analysis of education systems⁷ .

In cooperation with the ETF and relevant stakeholders, the NQA is currently conducting the modernization of occupational standards to provide appropriate legislative and regulatory framework, and to develop an innovative National Qualifications System. Currently, the number of available occupational standards is 182 that are not only regularly revised but also newly developed (101 standards were registered in 2020, 57 standards in 2021).

5 ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN VALIDATION ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR COORDINATION

The Federation of Employers of Ukraine, the most influential association of business organisations, cooperates closely with the government and trade unions to support initiatives in the implementation of the National Qualification System, the development of occupational standards and validation in particular. The FEU is involved in developing the requirements for validation procedures, defining the criteria and procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside Ukraine, anticipating labour market needs, developing educational and professional standards, interacting with state bodies and institutions on the quality assurance of education and training⁸ .

The state research and scientific institutions - such as the Ivan Ziaziun Institute for Pedagogical and Adult Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences, Scientific and Methodological Centre of Higher Education, Institute of Modernization of Educational Content, Institute of Problems on Education - take an active part in providing scientific and methodological support for the modernization and improvement of the Ukrainian education system, in promoting lifelong learning, developing innovative forms and methods of non-formal and informal education, and researching successful international experience in VNFIL. The leading experts of these organizations are involved in reforming and policy-making processes bringing significant improvements that are directly or indirectly related to the development of validation system.

Box 5.1 The project Erasmus+ "Qualifications Recognition Support for Ukrainian Universities" (QUARSU)

It is important to solve the problem of recognizing the learning outcomes of non-formal/informal learning in higher education institutions. Methods and technologies of such

⁷ <https://mon.gov.ua/>

⁸ <https://fru.ua/en/>

recognition developed by European countries are thoroughly researched in Ukraine. In 2019-2022, with the aim of solving this problem, the project Erasmus+ "Qualifications Recognition Support for Ukrainian Universities" (QUARSU) is being implemented. The National University "Odessa Maritime Academy" is a coordinator of the project, the universities of Kherson, Lviv, Mariupol, Sumy, universities of Estonia, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Federation of Employers of Ukraine, Estonian Qualifications Authority are the national and international partners⁹. The aim of the project is to strengthen the role of the higher education sector in society by supporting the development of a validation system in Ukraine. The project goals are the development and testing recognition methodology compatible with the National Qualifications Framework, training human resources for the recognition processes, and designing a platform to support recognition. The main project activities are the following:

- the analysis of existing standards and methodologies;
- the development of recognition methodology;
- the development and implementation of a training system for recognition practitioners;
- the establishment of recognition centres in Ukrainian universities-partners.

The expected results of the project are guidelines for recognition with policy recommendations, guidelines for internal quality assurance in recognition; training centres in universities-partners, trained administrative and academic staff, recognition centres and a recognition support platform¹⁰

6 INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

6.1 Information

Currently, the NQA coordinates the validation activities of all relevant stakeholders in the country. One of its important mission is to raise public awareness on validation, to inform about its opportunities and benefits. The NQA's website gives information about qualification centres, international qualification systems, occupational standards, educational and professional qualifications, and the qualification register. It also provides several essential online services: an application for occupational standard development, a questionnaire for potential candidates for the position of expert in the accreditation of

⁹ <https://quarsu.nltu.edu.ua/en>

¹⁰ <http://kntu.net.ua/index.php/ukr/Nauka/Strukturni-pidrozdili/Viddil-z-navchal-no-naukovoyi-roboti-i-mizhnarodnoyi-diyal-nosti/Erasmus/Pidtrimka-viznannya-kvalifikacij-dlya-ukrayins-kih-universitetiv>

qualification centres, and application for accreditation of qualification centres. In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of the Regulation on the Register of Qualifications" (June 2021, #620), in close cooperation with the ETF, the NQA has developed and launched the Register of Qualifications to provide a unified platform for all the validation actors.

In accordance with current legislation, the SES provides free social services for career guidance for all target groups. Within the framework of career guidance, potential validation users are informed about vocational training services as well as the possibility to participate in the VNFIL activities. An applicant can get free consulting service on the validation process, providers, costs, duration, outcomes, further learning pathways in the regional employment centre as well as in the assessment centre. The SES website contains detailed information on the VNFIL procedure. All actual information about the VNFIL is also available in open access on the other stakeholders' websites that are user-friendly and well-designed. Regional employment centres in cooperation with social partners organise information events about the VNFIL arrangements. Mass media, social networks, chatbots are used for raising awareness about national and international opportunities in non-formal and informal learning. The SES also developed a seminar / webinar "Presentation of vocational training services", which apart from other relevant topics informs potential users about the benefits and peculiarities of the VNFIL procedure.

6.2 Advice

Any individual interested in the VNFIL services may address the regional employment centre or the relevant VET centre for a free consultation, detailed explanation, or advice. The SES websites also provide feedback service, and PES counsellors if needed can give appropriate support by phone or online. This advice option is considered to be a valuable contribution to the successful validation procedure since it helps to clarify the specificity of the VNFIL process itself as well as the service providers, costs, duration, recommended literature, and outcomes. The advice available at the VNFIL provider organisation is of most importance since it focuses on the specific target group. Validation practitioners at the Odessa and Rivne assessment centres acknowledge the vital importance of pre-assessment communication with the candidate for successful validation.

6.3 Guidance

The validation experts of the assessment centres in Kyiv, Odesa and Rivne provide full assistance and guidance to the VNFIL candidates: psychological support, recommendations for preparations including the list of references and linking the candidate's skills and competences with the VNFIL standards.

According to the draft regulation "On approval of the procedure for the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning in higher education", every applicant obtains free assistance and guidance at each step of the validation from authorized consultants.

Many qualification centres, explain in detail on their websites, how interested persons can apply, what are the requirements, what is the process and how much the fees are for having their skills assessed and certified.

7 VALIDATION PRACTITIONERS

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The procedure for the qualification centres' accreditation includes assessment of the validation practitioners, particularly assessors. In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "The Regulation on accreditation of qualification centres" (September 2021, #986), experts on accreditation check information about validation practitioners (assessors) and their professional qualifications, such as:

- specialized education (indicating all types of education that are relevant to assessment activities, indicating institutions and educational documents);
- professional qualifications (indicating all professional qualifications that are relevant to assessment activities, indicating documents);
- work experience (lists all types of work that is important for assessment activities, indicating the place and duration of work);
- education in the field of psychology (psychology studies in higher education, postgraduate education, distance learning, etc.);
- education in the field of taking educational measurements.

In accordance with "The Regulation on accreditation of qualification centres" the expert on accreditation is a person who has higher education, work experience in the relevant type of professional activity for at least five years and has the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out accreditation examination.

7.2 Qualification requirements

In the labour market, there are a number of qualification requirements for validation practitioners (assessors, experts on accreditation qualification centres).

In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On the approval of the procedure for recognition of non-formal vocational training results" (2013), assessors are highly qualified specialists. The chairman is a representative of the employer with relevant professional education and work experience of more than 10 years. The members of the committee are specialists with specialist education and relevant categories (levels) higher than a VFNIL candidate.

In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "The Regulation on the accreditation of qualification centres" (2021), the experts on accreditation of qualification centres must know:

- the criteria and procedure for accreditation established by this Regulation;
- the requirements of legislation and international documents relating to the assessment of learning outcomes and the assignment of professional qualifications;
- the requirements of relevant professional standards, assessment standards;

- the provisions of normative legal acts regulating professional activity of the corresponding type.

The expert on accreditation must be able to:

- analyse the documents and materials of the applicant, systematize and summarize information related to the assessment of learning outcomes and the assignment of professional qualifications;
- establish the professional competence of the applicant;
- collect information through surveys, questionnaires and other methods;
- compile a report on the results of the accreditation examination.

In the educational sector, according to the draft regulation “On the approval of the procedure for recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning in higher education”, there is a list of requirements for validation practitioners (authorized experts of a validation committee, authorized consultants).

Authorized experts are scientific and pedagogical staff with at least five years of teaching experience, trained in assessment processes, validation and quality assurance, they have no personal interest in the results of validation and adhere to the code of conduct for authorized experts, approved by the collegial governing body of the educational institution. Typically, the Dean or Director of the relevant faculty / institute forms a validation committee that includes the head of the graduate department, a scientific and pedagogical employee responsible for the educational component proposed for validation, scientific and pedagogical employee of the graduating department, usually the curator of the academic group of the applicant or their scientific supervisor¹¹.

There is a list of requirements for authorized consultants who assist and supervise applicants in the validation activities:

- ability to formulate learning experience in the form of learning outcomes in line with higher education standards;
- ability to involve external experts to address particularly complex issues related to the identification of learning outcomes;
- knowledge of the validation process;
- knowledge of the education system and the National Qualifications Framework;
- knowledge of labour market requirements;
- strict adherence to ethical norms and rules.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Since there is no mandatory training for VNFIL practitioners, practical experience and constant non-formal and informal learning, learning by doing play the most essential role in their professional

¹¹ <https://kpi.ua/en/informal-education>

development. Special training in soft skills is recommended for validation practitioners and degree in psychology brings a number of benefits for their VNFIL practice.

The National Qualifications Agency is organising online training for assessors of Qualification Centres.¹² During the training, the prospective assessors get acquainted with the main regulatory and legal acts in the field of qualifications, the functioning of qualification centres and the role of assessors evaluators in their work, including the stages of the assessment and certification process for professional qualifications, and the rights and obligations of the applicants. Training is taking place in the form of a professional dialogue / peer learning.

8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is an essential aspect of the recent documents developed on validation. According to the draft procedure for the recognition of learning outcomes of non-formal and / or informal education in higher education, the validation procedure in HE institutions is to: (1) provide special procedures to ensure confidentiality, ethical standards in the validation process; (2) establish requirements for the reliability and quality assurance of validation, including additional mechanisms of control and quality assurance for educational (educational-professional, educational-scientific) programs, which provide for the assignment of professional qualifications in professions for which additional regulation is introduced; and identify mechanisms for creating validation conditions for people with special educational needs. The authorized institution ensures the development and implementation of the validation quality assurance system as a component of the internal quality assurance system.

In accordance with the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "The Regulation on the accreditation of qualification centres" (September 2021, #986), to guarantee quality assurance in validation the qualification centres are obliged to: (1) have their own website, which publishes assessment procedures, information on the requirements for the assessment of learning outcomes, the procedure for recognition of professional qualifications obtained outside of Ukraine, etc.; (2) ensure compliance with the accreditation criteria and requirements for the activities of qualification centres defined by law. In order to ensure openness and transparency of the accreditation procedure, the NQA shall publish on its website: (1) a decision on the accreditation procedure immediately, but not later than five working days from the date of its adoption; (2) the report of the expert committee and the decision of the NQA on the results of the accreditation procedure immediately, but not later than five working days from the date of the NQA's decision.

According to "The Guideline on the assessment criteria of professional knowledge and skills, the list of assessment instruments and self-assessment questionnaires of non-formal vocational training" (2016) to ensure the objectivity and transparency of the validation process, it is recommended to regulate the validation procedure, unify materials and standardize assessment tools. For this purpose, it is recommended to develop a set of control and assessment materials (SCAM) to confirm the qualifications based on non-formal learning. SCAM was developed and approved by the validation bodies in agreement with the MoE, MoES, Joint Representative Body of employers and trade unions at the national level. According to the Guidelines, it is recommended to develop an assessment program that contains a set of step-by-step logical operations and allows conclusions to be drawn

¹² <https://nqa.gov.ua/news/pidgotovka-ocinuvaciv-rezultativ-navcanna-zdobuvaciv-profesijnih-kvalifikacij/>

about the number and types of tasks required to conclude the confirmation of full or partial qualifications. The choice of assessment methods should be made to gather evidence on the capabilities of a validation candidate¹³ .

The National Qualification System is based on European and national standards and principles of quality assurance of education. It considers the labour market requirements with regard to the competencies of employees and was introduced to harmonize the legislation in the field of education and social relations, to ensure the effective cooperation of education and the labour market and to promote the national and international recognition of qualifications in Ukraine.

9 INPUTS, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

9.1 Funding

Currently, there is no state funding envisaged for validation service users, particularly for vulnerable groups, and no financial support for entities applying to be accredited as qualification centres.

In the education sector, the process is covered through the regular resources of the MoES and educational institutions and is free for applicants. In the labour market sector, validation is fee-based and the service provider sets the fees for validation in line with their own cost-calculations.

Box 9.1 The EU-funded EU4Skills programme: Better Skills for Modern Ukraine

The on-going reforms in Ukraine are constantly assisted and supported by the EU. The four-year EU-funded EU4Skills programme: Better Skills for Modern Ukraine with the total funding of EUR 58 million was launched in 2019 to support the reforms of vocational education and training. The MoES selected 21 VET schools in 7 pilot regions (Lviv, Vinnytsia, Zaporizhia, Mykolaiv, Poltava, Rivne and Chernivtsi) for implementing the programme to build an effective unified network of educational institutions for preparing highly skilled and productive workforce for the labour market¹⁴. The programme focuses on the main tasks: (1) to increase the efficiency of VE reforms; (2) to improve the quality and attractiveness of VE and increase its compliance with the needs of the labour market by developing new occupational standards in cooperation with the NQA; (3) to modernize the infrastructure and equipment. In each pilot region, vocational schools apply for the opportunity to become the VET Centre of Excellence and Innovation.

The special focus of the programme is on professional training for the teaching staff of vocational schools. In cooperation with the MoES and Microsoft Ukraine, the EU4Skills Ukraine Programme has presented a series of online courses on Office 365 for the representatives of 25 educational and methodological centres and about 1,000 teachers and VET school managers have taken part in a digital competence training. These online

¹³ <http://ipq.org.ua/ua/library/base/37>

¹⁴ <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/reformi/rozvitok-lyudskogo-kapitalu/reforma-osviti>

courses are approved by the MoES and can be recognized as teaching professional training¹⁵

9.2 Distribution of costs

In the educational sector, all VNFIL activities are free for students since they are included in the education process and are covered by validation providers.

In the labour market sector, the VNFIL services provided in the assessment centres are covered by the individuals or employers supporting career development and promotion for their employees. The full cost includes assessors' payment, office and handling expenses without the cost of the food basket for the practical part, which the person buys independently. The validation service calculations are presented on the assessment centres' websites and differ per qualification level (3-6) and centre region (Rivne, Kyiv, Odesa from UAH 1750 to 3500, respectively).

According to "the Typical Regulation of qualification centre" (2021), the cost of a certificate and its duplicate are determined by the qualification centre itself.

According to "the Procedure for the accreditation of qualification centres" (2021), the applicant pays a fee for the accreditation procedure within five working days from the date of the NQA's decision to conduct the accreditation procedure in the amount determined in accordance with this procedure. The accreditation fee for qualification centres includes experts' payment per a number of service days, and organizational service charges. It is calculated on a very clear formula: $F = (P \times E \times D) + A + O$, where F is the accreditation fee in total, P is the expert's payment, E is the number of experts, D is the duration of the accreditation (number of days), A is the accrual of fees for the accreditation procedure to experts, O is the organizational service payment. The fee of an expert of an accreditation committee under the contract for the provision of services for one working day is 0.5 of the minimum cost of living per month established by law. The fee for organizational services related to the accreditation of qualification centres is 0.5 of the minimum cost of living per month established by law. The fee for the accreditation procedure as prescribed by law is transferred by the applicant to the NQA's account opened with the Treasury and credited to the special fund of the state budget as the Agency's own revenues considering the requirements of the Budget Code of Ukraine. Payment to an expert on an accreditation committee is made by the NQA in accordance with the agreement on the provision of services, and on the basis of the act of acceptance - transfer of the provided services.

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

Since the revamped validation process is at an early stage of implementation, the benefits of VNFIL arrangements to individuals have not been reported yet. We have some anecdotal evidence from the ETF talks with successful candidates who applied for validation for cooks in Odesa in 2018. VNFIL can be life-changing as it opens new employment opportunities that were blocked before. A number of

¹⁵ <https://eufordigital.eu/eu4skills-to-introduce-digital-technologies-and-tools-into-vocational-education-in-ukraine/>

the successful candidates decided after the positive experience of validation to explore more opportunities for personal and professional development.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

The NQA has developed several legal documents that focus on the effective handling of the VNFIL system in Ukraine. Ukraine has taken an important step towards harmonizing the National Qualifications System with the European Qualifications Framework, and providing recognition of professional qualifications obtained abroad. In June 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved “The procedure for the recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside of Ukraine” (June 2021, #576) developed by the NQA. The professional qualifications will be recognised by qualification centres accredited by the NQA. The applicants with no documents confirming their professional qualifications but with relevant professional experience are eligible to go through the general validation procedure in the qualification centre, which involves passing a qualification exam. In case of a competence mismatch for certain qualifications, the qualification centre experts determine the scope of differences in competencies (learning outcomes) to make a decision on the recognition of professional qualifications. The certificates obtained on professional qualifications increases the career options of skilled workers and simplifies job-searching and further official employment.

Although, there are no statistics on the VNFIL activities in general education, VET or HE in Ukraine, an obvious readiness of the society to participate in VNFIL is indicated by the representatives of different related institutions and organizations (Andreyev, et al, 2021). The Draft Law on Adult Education is expected to simplify the VNFIL process and open doors to its potential users. The Register of Qualifications provides an overview of Qualification Centres and professional qualifications and lists the successful candidates with their respective professional qualifications.¹⁶

Most validation candidates receive a qualification certificate in the VNFIL procedure. If they are unsuccessful the first time, they will have another chance to demonstrate their competences in the assessment centre.

9.4.2 Validation users

The number of validation users is slowly but steadily increasing. Since 2016, nearly 600 applicants have confirmed their professional qualification at a higher level for the vocational occupation of “cook” in three assessment centres in Kyiv, Odesa and Rivne. There are no statistics available about the target group in terms of gender, age, employment status, previous qualifications, etc.

The potential validation users in the labour market are employed individuals, labour migrants, vulnerable groups; in the education and training sector, and these are the students of all levels of education.

9.4.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

Currently, there are no VNFIL arrangements available for disadvantaged groups, although several initiatives have been introduced by the Cabinet of Ministries of Ukraine to support labour migrants,

¹⁶ <https://register.nqa.gov.ua/>

refugees and persons that require additional or temporary protection. The procedures for the recognition of foreign educational documents, enacted by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science (May 2015, #504), registered in the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine (May 2015, #614/27059) determine for all competent authorities the principles of recognition of refugees and persons that require additional or temporary protection.

The State Employment Service has been actively promoting validation among job seekers.

The recognition procedure for this category of applicants can be initiated without a complete package of documents. The legal basis for initiating the recognition procedure in this case is a refugee certificate, a certificate of a person in need of additional protection, a certificate of a person who has been granted temporary protection, and a corresponding application for the procedure. For the recognition procedure, refugees and persons in need of additional or temporary protection provide their educational documents, including those not listed in the list of documents, such as: copies of documents on education or periods of study, a student card, an academic transcript, a record book, a description of courses, documents on non-formal and informal learning, or other documents that may confirm the fact of education and / or qualification; as well as available documents on work experience, such as: certificate of work experience, employment contracts, employment record books, and certificates from workplaces or other documents that may indicate the relevant qualifications. If the information is insufficient, the procedure for recognizing foreign educational documents of refugees and persons in need of additional or temporary protection may include examinations, tests, and interviews specially organized by the competent authority.

10 VALIDATION METHODS

In accordance with Law “On Education” the validation of learning outcomes in GE is carried out through the annual assessment and / or state final certification through testing.

In accordance with the draft regulation “On the recognition of non-formal / informal learning and internal regulations of a number of educational institutions, the validation of learning outcomes in HE is carried out through differentiated tests, control sessions, exams, interviews and individual tasks. The validation is provided before the start of the course to ensure the student’s opportunity to learn the discipline in case of a negative assessment result.

The validation methods for the non-formal vocational training are based on “The Guideline on the assessment criteria of professional knowledge and skills, list of assessment instruments and self-assessment questionnaires of non-formal vocational training” (2016). The guidelines are designed to provide a common approach to the development of assessment criteria, self-assessment questionnaire of non-formal vocational training to guarantee the principles of transparency, objectivity and quality assurance.

The assessment criteria, a list of assessment instruments and self-evaluation questionnaires must be approved by enterprises, institutions, organizations regardless of ownership in agreement with the Joint Representative Body of employers and trade unions at the national level. For professions that are associated with high-risk work, these documents must also be agreed with the competent state labour supervision body. The guidelines are intended for use by executive authorities, certifying bodies, social partners of all levels of social dialogue, professional, public organizations, and other

parties interested in developing and implementing a procedure for recognising the results of non-formal vocational training.

For the development assessment procedures and diagnostic tools, it is recommended to focus on the types of work (main job functions) specified in the occupational standard, and the requirements for quality in these types of work. These requirements should be formulated according to the following parameters: the actions to be performed within each job function, and the necessary knowledge and skills. Assessments aim to make judgments about what a candidate knows, understands and is able to do. It is recommended to create a system of indicators in the form of a set of typical professional criteria for knowledge and skills (how a person should perform the tasks of an occupation and what she/he should know) within each action.

During the assessment, it is recommended to use the following means of measuring the results of non-formal training:

- 1) Control materials are examination tickets, control and test tasks, qualifying tests about the equipment and other means in accordance with qualifications and technological requirements.
- 2) Assessment materials include a set of assessment tasks, their specifications, as well as organizational, methodological and instructional documents that provide assessment of a candidate's competencies.

The Guidelines recommend using the following assessment methods:

- methods of knowledge assessment: 1) written tests, 2) oral and written exams, 3) interview method;
- methods of assessing skills and abilities: 1) observation of a person's work directly at the workplace, 2) simulation activities (modelling), 3) qualifying trial work, 4) trial work (by type of work);
- auxiliary methods of assessing the results of non-formal and informal learning: 1) self-assessment, 2) third party report, 3) declarative methods (portfolio).

It is also recommended to choose specific assessment methods for each type of work (main job function) for a specific profession / qualification in accordance with the requirements of occupational standards also considering economic efficiency.

According to a new legislation on qualification centres (September 2021), learning outcomes and / or acquired competencies are to be assessed at workplaces certified in the prescribed manner under working conditions, training and production sites, training simulators or premises, other places that provide conditions for the assessment procedure in accordance with the requirements of the assignment procedure, technical regulations, and labour protection requirements. Validation of learning outcomes of non-formal / informal vocational training is to be carried out through tests, qualification test work and practical tasks. One of the obligatory requirements for a qualification centre to be accredited is the development of banks of test tasks of different types (single choice, multiple choice, ranking, comparison, open-close questions, etc.) for each professional qualification.

11 THE POSITION OF VALIDATION IN SOCIETY; VISIBILITY AND TRUST

Globalisation, technological progress, an unstable and fast-changing labour market and many other factors have impacted the transformation of attitudes to non-formal and informal learning in Ukrainian society from a vague or general understanding to mindful awareness and a national breakthrough. World pandemic and quarantine restrictions have accelerated the development and implementation of VNFIL in all sectors. Policymakers actively cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and international partners to design a national systematic legislative basis for an effective, transparent and trusted validation process.

Raising public awareness on validation is one of the important NQA's missions. The NQA's website introduces the latest official information relevant to VNFIL activities. A number of panel discussions of the national forum "Human Capital 2030" planned for December 2021 are expected to inform about the range of validation opportunities and benefits to the public.

The State Employment Service as a key actor of implementation of validation in the labour market informs about the high level of reliability and transparency of VNFIL service in the assessment centres in Kyiv, Rivne and Odesa responsible for verification of non-formal vocational training results for the profession "cook". Most service users give positive feedback not only on the validation procedure itself but also on the information, advice and guidance as well.

One of the priorities of the Strategic Action Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science 2024 (MoES, 2019) is the provision of high-quality higher and adult education: the strategic goal 4.4 aims to meet the various educational needs of individuals (including disadvantaged groups) for personal and professional development, the operational goal 4.4.1 (a flexible and effective system of adult education) includes actions on raising awareness of lifelong learning, introducing quality assurance mechanisms in the adult education system and providing VNFIL mechanisms.

In the world of education, quarantine restrictions in 2020-2021 have totally changed the attitudes towards non-formal and informal learning. VNFIL activities are high in demand among students at all levels of higher education. The educational institutions develop their internal regulations on the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal or informal learning in accordance with the Laws "On Education", "On Higher Education". Generally, these documents give basic definitions, clearly define the validation procedure and provide organizational recommendations. Online courses in a relevant discipline that result in a certificate or any other evidence of successful completion give a legal right to participate in VNFIL procedures.

In academic year 2020-2021, the leading online educational platforms like Coursera and Prometheus provided free access to most of their courses. Many HE educational institutions supported this initiative and the lists of courses recommended for VNFIL were announced. Ukrainian students, who are active learners and interested in non-formal and informal learning, took this advantage and participated in VNFIL activities for the first time. The experience is not obligatory, but highly recommended for higher educational institutions, and proved innovative both for teaching staff and students' communities. Although there are no statistics available and it needs additional study, feedback from the validation service users is clear: positive comments on educational platform websites, likes and recommendations in social media prove the increasing interest in non-formal and informal learning, as well as rising awareness of VNFIL in the framework of formal education.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The suggested recommendations are made in relation to the promotion of validation benefits and the improvement of existing VNFIL system:

- to consolidate and coordinate all relevant stakeholders' activities to design a single national VNFIL system that would cover all sectors and support validation users at each stage;
- to align the National Classifier of Occupations with the modern ISCO-08 and ESCO;
- to simplify the validation system and make it more flexible;
- to develop effective validation mechanisms to recognise educational and professional qualifications;
- to approve adult education legislation;
- to use the successful experience of operational assessment centres (Kyiv, Rivne and Odessa);
- to address the international experience of training validation practitioners for further implementation;
- to provide accreditation of existing assessment centres and create reference qualification centres to exchange experience in VNFIL for professional qualifications;
- to simplify the procedure for getting permission for VET schools from government for VNFIL activities;
- to approve regulations on the procedure for the recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal education at all levels of education;
- to develop a relevant validation methodology and introduce validation at all levels of education;
- to develop a validation methodology for recognizing learning outcomes in workplaces;
- to ensure the transparent and reliable validation process via the external and internal quality assurance mechanisms;
- to extend the use of ICT for VNFIL promotion to the public;
- to introduce a unified digital platform for potential users and validation providers to communicate;
- to provide financial support for entities applying for accreditation as qualification centres;
- to provide state funding for potential validation users, particularly for vulnerable groups;
- to raise awareness on validation benefits among potential users.

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Ukrainian Adult Education Association <http://www.uaod.org.ua/en/>

13.2 Sources

Interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders and experts:

Name	Organisation
Volodymyr Kovtunets	National Qualifications Agency
Rodion Kolyshko	Institute of Professional Qualifications
Ludmila Vasilega	State Employment Service
Oleh Sharov Ihor Baluba	MoES, Directorate of Higher and Adult Education
Larysa Lukianova	Institute of Pedagogical and Adult Education of

	National Academy of Educational Sciences Ukrainian Association of Adult Education
Nataliia Kharchenko Natalya Shpyg Olena Litovchenko	Institute of Problems on Education of National Academy of Educational Sciences
Grigors Demin	Odessa VET Centre
Ruslana Bodrenko Olena Khomenko	Rivne VET Centre
Taras Derkach	NGO CSR Ukraine Career Hub

ABBREVIATIONS

CVET – Centre of Vocational Education and Training

GE – General Education

HE – Higher Education

MoE – The Ministry of Economy

MoES – The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

NQA – National Qualifications Agency

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

SES – The State Employment Service

VE – Vocational Education

VNFIL – Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning