

VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT MOLDOVA

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0. BRIEF 2023 UPDATE OF THE REPORT

This report was originally produced in August 2021. In March 2022, the Republic of Moldova applied for EU membership, and in June 2022 it was granted the status of EU candidate country. In 2023, it joined the European Qualifications Frameworks (EQF) Advisory Group. During the same year the European Commission compiled an updated European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning¹. In order to include this report on the website of the European inventory on VN FIL, the ETF has produced a brief update covering key policy and legislative developments in the area of validation, with updated statistics on validation service providers and beneficiaries, available as of August 2023.

The period between 2019 and December 2022 was seen as a pilot phase for validation, with nine training centres (VET Colleges and Centres of Excellence) involved as validation service providers. The policies and practices during that time were reviewed and followed by a set of recommendations². These recommendations highlighted the need to extend the ministerial order approving the existing validation regulations beyond the pilot phase, with the goal of introducing validation as a permanent feature in the Moldovan qualifications system. Following this recommendation, the key regulatory change was the approval, in September 2022, of the “Regulation on the certification of professional skills corresponding to level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications under the National Framework of Qualifications”³. This regulation extended the implementation of validation services nationwide.

Moldova made good progress in expanding access to validation services. New centres have been authorised to provide validation services, currently being offered in 13 locations and for 92 occupations.

During the period between 2019 and 2023, 961 candidates had their skills certified.

¹ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/european-inventory-on-validation>

² Analysis of policies and practice related to the process of validating skills acquired in the context of non-formal and informal education (VN FIL/RPL) in the Republic of Moldova

https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/integrated_report_rplpilot_md_.pdf

³ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/integrated_report_rplpilot_md_.pdf

1. INTRODUCTION

The legislation and policies of the Republic of Moldova contain provisions and measures to promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VN FIL). The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova came into force at the end of 2014, establishing a new structure of the education system and a new mission, which consists of creating the legal basis for the recognition of non-formal and informal education.

The same mission is also underlined in the strategic documents. According to the Interim Evaluation Report of the Education 2020 Strategy, a consultation on and approval of the "methodology on the certification of knowledge and competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts" was a priority. The draft Education 2030 Strategy sets out the steps and actions needed to address the problems identified in the system, including "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.

In order to capitalize on this premise, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR)⁴ has developed the regulatory framework for the validation of learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, approving in 2019 the Regulation that allowed educational institutions to start the process of providing services for the assessment and certification of professional competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, and subsequently starting the process of piloting the VN FIL. In September 2022, Ministerial Order No 885 approved a follow-up "Regulation on the certification of professional skills corresponding to level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications under the National Framework of Qualifications" which extended the provision of validation services nationwide.

The recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is an indicator of democratic transformation that raises several issues, the main ones being:

- the orientation of the education process towards competences;
- the need for an individualised approach;
- the recognition of non-governmental organisations as effective providers of non-formal education services;
- the change in society's culture and understanding of the value of lifelong learning.

The VN FIL is a process by which the authorised institution confirms that an individual has achieved relevant learning outcomes against a particular standard. The VN FIL procedure consists of the following

⁴ In 2021 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova was restructured and renamed as the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova



distinct phases: identification of the individual's experience; documentation to establish the visibility and veracity of the individual's experience; assessment of the experience and certification of the results of the assessment, which may record the acquisition of a full or partial qualification (one or some competences that make up the qualification).

The coordination of the field of non-formal and informal adult education, as well as the system of VN FIL in the Republic of Moldova, is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), which works in cooperation and agreement with the National Employment Agency (NEA), the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other relevant ministries (the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MoLSPF), the Ministry of Economy (MoE), etc.).

Currently, the regulatory framework covers only Vocational Education and Training (VET) and qualifications in levels 3, 4 and 5. The VET sector was prioritized but the development of regulatory acts for higher education is now underway.

The VN FIL is linked to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and only qualifications approved and registered in the NQF can be issued through the process of VN FIL. Learning outcomes are the reference points for validation and certification of the learning obtained in non-formal and informal context.

The learning outcomes achieved by an individual in the context of non-formal and informal learning can be recognised as part of the formal validation process, following a standard assessment procedure, by the institutions entitled to provide VN FIL services. The process of validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts may be initiated by institutions entitled to provide VN FIL services only in the occupations, professions or specialities in which these institutions have provisionally authorised or accredited initial education and training programmes.

Overall, the VN FIL is underpinned by the legal framework, and the infrastructure for validation of non-formal and informal learning is in place. There is a need to further develop the regulatory acts on VN FIL in higher education; monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be developed and put in place; the capacities of service providers to meet all the expectations placed upon them need to be developed and consolidated; actions should be taken to improve communication, collaboration and coordination between all relevant stakeholders; and awareness raising campaigns at national level, funding, etc. should also be developed.



2. NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

The Education Code provides for the assessment of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal education pathways. Article 123 (9) and (10) expressly states that lifelong learning in the context of non-formal education, which may differ in duration, and lifelong learning in the context of informal education, depend on the intention of the learner and do not automatically lead to the certification of the knowledge and competences acquired. Certification of the knowledge and competences acquired in the context of non-formal and informal education may be carried out by bodies empowered for this purpose, on the basis of a regulation approved by the MoECR. To this end, the MoECR has approved a series of acts implementing Article 123 of the Education Code:

- Regulation on continuous training of adults, approved by Government Decision No 193 of 24.03.2017.
- Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal education, approved by Order No 65 of 24.01.2019 and replaced by Order No 885 of 01.09.2022 approving the Regulation on the certification of professional skills corresponding to level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications under the National Framework of Qualifications, which extended the validation to a service that can be offered nationwide.
- Practical guide for the validation of competences obtained in non-formal and informal education, approved by MoECR Order No 1096 of 07.10.2020 and updated by MoECR Order No 1066 of 21.08.2023⁵
- MoECR Order No 309 of 25.03.2021 on the establishment of Centres for the validation of non-formal education
- MoECR Order No 310 of 25.03.2021 on the establishment of a new piloting period of the Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal education.

The Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (the VN FIL Regulation) established the regulatory framework for the functioning of the national non-formal and informal learning validation system for the TEVT sector, through which the process of identification, documentation, assessment and certification of knowledge and competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts is carried out.

The Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal learning, approved for the pilot period from 1 March to 1 October 2019, and extended for the period from 1 April 2021 to 30 April 2022, delegated

⁵

https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/ghid_practic_de_validare_a_competentelor_in_contexte_de_educatie_nonformala_si_informala_aprobat_prin_ordinul_mecc_nr._1096_din_07.10._2020.pdf

to VET institutions the right to provide services for validating knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts, in accordance with the legislation in force. The decision on the establishment of a Validation Centre within the VET institution belongs to the MoECR. The MoECR usually assigns this role to Centres of Excellence and VET institutions with a high potential and capacity in certain areas of vocational training. Validation Centres are subject to assessment and accreditation by the ANACEC. At the same time, the VN FIL Regulation laid down requirements and procedures for the organisation and conduct of the process of validating candidates' professional competences.

Based on the Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal learning approved by the MoECR, each validation centre draws up internal validation regulations.

According to the existing regulatory framework, validation procedures are to be implemented only for learning outcomes in qualifications that are approved and registered in the NQF, and only by those VET institutions that are accredited by the ANACEC and have their training programmes approved by the same legal body.

The Practical Guide to the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (the Guide) provides validation service providers with an explanation of the specific terminology, a step-by-step description of the process of setting up validation services, the documents needed to start the process of providing validation services by the VET institution – including the requirements for the competencies of the validation centre staff, the validation procedure from the perspective of the VET institution's validation centre, tools and mechanisms for the recognition and validation of professional competences, and guidelines on how to develop examination programmes. The Guide also provides applicants/candidates for validation services with an explanation of the validation procedure, the content of the applicant's file, etc.

At the same time, the guidelines were developed by way of recommendation, with each individual educational institution or validation centre taking into account the particularities of the trade/profession/specialty for which assessment and certification of general and specific professional competences is sought.

2.2 Validation in education and training

The legal framework on VN FIL foresees validation to be undertaken in relation to qualifications at levels 3, 4 and 5 of the NQF. Currently, there is a wider practice of validating competencies in trades at level 3 in the NQF in various fields, including construction, catering, services, textiles, etc.

At the same time, the regulatory documents for the initiation of the validation process for level 6 of the NQF (higher education) are being prepared.

It is the MoER that coordinates the validation of professional competencies obtained through non-formal and informal learning, and its mandate is to develop specific policies and monitor their implementation. The MoER also approves the Validation Centres within VET institutions. Validation Centres are located both in the capital and in other regions of the country, and there are currently one for each area of the national economy.



The VNFI has received increased attention in the last three years and has the potential to benefit the degree of employability in occupations according to the Occupation Classifier (CORM 006-146), to boost career growth, and to facilitate the continuation of the studies at higher levels of education.

The VNFI processes take place according to the process flow specified in the VNFI Regulation. Thus, based on the MoER request or on their own initiative, the VET institutions establish a Validation Centre, which is approved by the MoER and, in accordance with the legislation in force, goes through the ANACEC evaluation and accreditation process. At present, validation services can be delivered by the VET institutions that offer initial training in the respective qualifications subject to validation, accredited according to the provisions of the legislation. Beneficiaries of the validation can be citizens of the Republic of Moldova and the categories of persons specified in Art. 2(l) of Law No 27412011 on the Integration of Foreigners in the Republic of Moldova.

The Validation Centre carries out the validation process, which includes identification, documentation, evaluation and recognition of competences gained in non-formal and informal learning contexts.

At the documentation stage, candidates have to provide a portfolio with all the documents required by the legislation. Applicants for validation services are guided by a counsellor. In addition to assisting with the portfolio, the counsellor organises interviews with the applicants to discuss their skills and knowledge with the aim of identifying the competences for which the person is to be certified. The counsellor explains the assessment plan for the required competences. It is decided which competences are to be evaluated and validated. Applicants have the option to validate some of the competences that make up the qualification (certain modules within the training programme) or all the competences included in the qualification. The process of assessing competences is similar to that applied in formal education. The procedures and mechanisms specified in the Regulation on the organisation and conduct of the qualification examination⁶, approved by MoECR Order No 1127 of 23.07.2018, relate to the way in which the assessment and certification stages of competences obtained in non-formal and informal pathways are conducted.

The VNFI Regulation does not prohibit the assessment of adults who are concurrently graduates of formal VET.

The assessment process consists of a theory part, based on a theory test, and a practical part. The test items are developed in accordance with the education and training programme curriculum. The practical test is usually a genuine activity, which simulates sequences of the person's activities at work according to the occupational standard or occupational profile. Once the theory and practical tests have been passed, the certification process follows.

So far, there are no mechanisms for the validation of higher-level knowledge and competences, at level 6 and above in the NQF. As for general education, the legal framework provides for sitting the national Baccalaureate exams externally (for more details see Annex 1).

⁶ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=102917&lang=ro

⁷ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/examen_de_calificare_actualizat.pdf



The process of the validation of professional competences culminates with the issuing of the Qualification Certificate. The template of the Certificate is approved by the MoER. The certificate of validation of prior learning is accompanied by an appendix, referred to as the 'certificate descriptive supplement'. The content of the certificate descriptive supplement varies from case to case depending on the units of competence that are assessed and validated.

Certificates issued by the Validation Centre have the same effects as regards employment, further education and training in formal systems⁸ as those obtained via formal education and training programmes.

Although, in theory, the VNFI can provide an exemption from an academic requirement, allowing someone to enter a formal study programme without having gone through a formal education or training programme, so far only professional competencies have been validated. Considering that the VET programmes include general education subjects as well, the current VNFI arrangements are insufficient to support entry to the higher-level programmes.

The validation of professional competences acquired in non-formal education contexts and informal learning pathways is carried out at level 3, 4 and 5 of the National Qualifications Framework.

The existing legal framework enables the organisation and implementation of the evaluation, validation and certification of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning. However, at the moment the validation is carried out only for professional competences at the level of VET. There is no mechanism for validating qualifications with a higher level of competences.

At the same time, the legal framework includes all the tools and stages specific to the validation process, which are internationally benchmarked.

The VET system is open and accessible to all applicants. The same eligibility criteria are valid both for access to formal education and training programmes and for access to the VNFI.

The validity of competence assessment can only be ensured for qualifications for which qualification standards exist, and the number of these is rather limited. There are areas where the NQF is not developed, which has an impact on the further scaling up of the VNFI.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

At the national level the NEA is responsible for the implementation of employment and unemployment insurance policies, including measures on the provision of vocational training services, and the promotion of career guidance policies.

The identification of unemployed people and their referral to vocational training centres is done by the NEA during the year, based on the number of people that are planned to be trained.

⁸ This is not currently fully exploited yet



On-the-job training (work based learning) is organised for registered unemployed people who have a certificate but no work experience. In this case a contract is concluded with the employer for a period of 4 months. The unemployed person receives an allowance/stipend and compensation for expenses such as transport and/or accommodation. The employer receives a subsidy of 30% of the average wage for the period of the traineeship. Vocational training services are provided only to unemployed people registered with the territorial employment services.

Career guidance centres are organized within the NEA. Certification of the skills obtained by the unemployed formally or informally is another new measure to be implemented. At the same time, the NEA identifies unemployed people who need validation and training services. Registered unemployed persons can be channelled to the Validation Centres on the basis of referral letters in order to benefit from the VN FIL measure. The collaboration between the Validation Centres and ANOFM takes place on the basis of a contract or collaboration agreement.

The activity of validating the professional competencies of adults obtained in a non-formal and informal context was supported by the IOM. The IOM provided support to VN FIL applicants, covering the costs that accompany the evaluation and certification processes. Usually, the IOM and other international organizations support the VN FIL expenses for a limited number of people, and in cases where financial coverage is not enough for all applicants, people usually refuse to personally bear the costs for VN FIL certification. In addition, the IOM also provided technical support to the VET institutions offering VN FIL services.

VET institutions could also benefit from advice and consultancy on validation issues from experts of international agencies that have supported the implementation of the validation system in Moldova, support which has been gradually phased out.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

Currently in the Republic of Moldova there are no known examples of validation of non-formal learning opportunities offered by third sector organisations aiming to support volunteers or youth work or other target groups.

At the same time, according to the provision of the legal framework, any institution or organisation, regardless of their legal status, is eligible to implement validation of learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts provided that they undergo the accreditation process and meet all the requirements set by the MoER and the ANACEC. The same accreditation and quality assurance procedures are applied to all organisations accredited by the ANACEC.

Thus, some non-governmental organisations are discouraged from applying for accreditation even if they have better potential and capabilities than many state institutions. Since one of the conditions for eligibility is to have a permanent office and staff, additionally, the cost for accreditation of the training programmes is quite high, being similar to that of the initial training programmes, of long duration and time consuming.



2.5 Role of other institutions in VNFI

The Ministry of Education and Research is the central public administration body responsible for the development of the legal framework and its enforcement for the entire education sector, including the subsector of adult education and VNFI. The main units within the MoER which have direct or tangential duties relating to VNFI are the LLL Service, the National Qualification Department and the VET Department.

The ANACEC, under the MoER, is the key agency coordinating the accreditation of institutions and education and training programmes in the country.

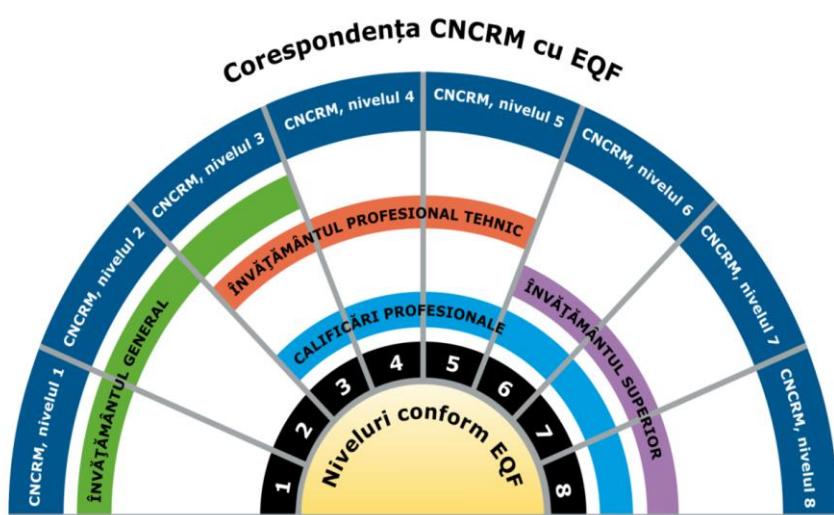
Other public and private organisations are involved or consulted in the process of policy development.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family with its Department on Employment and Migration Policies deals, *inter alia*, with VNFI, being responsible for issues related to the National Employment Agency, its Labour Market Observatory (established in 2018), sector committees, occupational standards, the classifier of occupations and developing policies.

3. LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Moldova⁹ was approved by Government Decision No 1016 of 23.11.2017. The NQF Directorate operates within the MoER. For each level of qualification, the NQF stipulates the correspondence between the qualification levels of the NQF with the reference levels of the European Qualifications Framework, the type of general education and vocational training programmes in the Republic of Moldova through which the qualification levels can be obtained, the study certificates and diploma issued by the formal education system, the access conditions corresponding to each level, and the mandatory conditions regarding the assessment of the final results. The certificate of completion of vocational studies indicates the level of qualification according to the NQF.

Figure 1: Correspondence between the NQF qualification levels and the EQF



Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

The qualifications are described by learning outcomes, accumulated over the course of a study/training programme or obtained in the context of non-formal education and recognised according to the regulations in force.

Professional competences, formulated in accordance with the labour market requirements, are described in:

- occupational standards, for levels 3-5 NQF;

⁹ <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=372759>

b) international occupational standards / competence standards, for levels 6-8 of the NQF.

By Government Decision No 1199 of 05.12.2018¹⁰ and MoECR Order No 782 of 23.05.2018¹¹, the technical concept of the National Register of Qualifications was approved. The National Register of Qualifications contains qualifications corresponding to the qualification levels provided in the NQF, regardless of the system of education and training through which they were acquired, formal, non-formal and or informal learning pathways.

Currently all approved qualification standards are published on the MoECR website (for VET and higher education).

At present, the decision of the Qualifications Commission has been approved by the MoECR and the following qualifications published:

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF APPROVED QUALIFICATION STANDARDS BY QUALIFICATION LEVEL (3, 4, 5) AND QUALIFICATION TYPE (2023)

The education system through which qualifications are provided in formal education	Qualification level	No. of qualifications developed, approved and published
VET	3	22
	4	32
	5	4
Higher Education	6	16
	7	11
	8	1

The qualifications provided by the NQF are structured in 8 levels. The NQF qualification levels correspond to the levels set by the European Qualifications Framework (including the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education area) and reflect the current and future situation on the internal labour market and the training opportunities defined in the national education system. The qualification levels in the NQF are defined on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences.

The structure of the description of the qualification levels of the NQF is similar to that of the European Qualifications Framework.

Formal validation of competences is defined in the NQF as the process of giving official status to the competences demonstrated by a person, by awarding a certificate or by granting equivalence, by conveying credit units or validating competences. The NQF provides for the equivalence of qualification levels awarded before the entry into force of the NQF with those provided for in the descriptors of qualification levels under the NQF (2017) and the European Qualifications Framework. Vocational qualifications are awarded in qualification levels 3-8 and in formal education can be obtained in the VET and higher education systems.

¹⁰ <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=378836>

¹¹ https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/concept_rnc_782_din_23.05.2018.pdf

The legal framework provides that these qualifications can be obtained in informal and non-formal contexts through the validation process.

The NQF defines 'learning outcomes' as a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, values and/or competences that a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate after completing the learning process.

Indicators of learning outcomes are related to indicators of the demand for competences for the performance of professional activities at the respective qualification level, defined by occupational standards, and serve as a basis for:

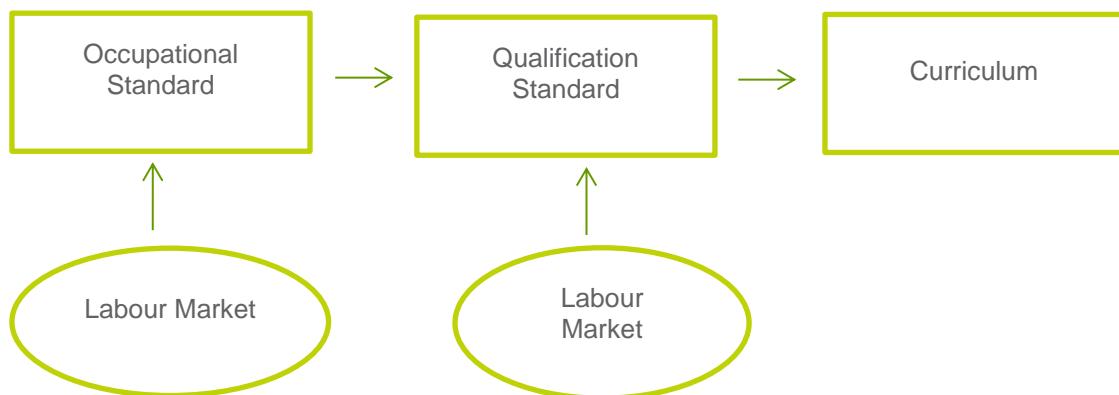
- single-position description of the requirements for the qualification of graduates and employees (within the framework of occupational and educational standards);
- development of criteria for the assessment of the qualification of graduates and employees at all levels of vocational education;
- development of requirements for occupational functions;
- planning of different flexible learning pathways in vocational education;
- provision of mechanisms for the assessment, determination and validation of qualifications;
- recognition of knowledge and skills obtained in formal, informal and non-formal learning pathways.

A methodological guide for the translation of professional competences into learning outcomes, approved by MoECR Order No 445 of 12.05.202012, shows how to translate the occupational standard competences into learning outcomes specific to the qualification standards.

According to the provisions of the Education Code, the professional training of skilled workers, technologists, foremen, technicians and other categories of specialists in the VET system is carried out in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework and the Nomenclature of Vocational Training Fields and Trades/Professions, with the Nomenclature of Professional Training Fields, Specialities and Qualifications, approved by the Government, and with ISCED levels 3, 4 and 5.

¹²https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ghidul_metodologic_pentru_transpunerea_competentelor_profesionale_in_rezultate_ale_invatarii.pdf

Figure 2: The route from labour market to curriculum



The competences to be possessed by graduates of VET training programmes are formulated in the qualification standard in accordance with the occupational standards or at least the occupational profile. The methodology for developing occupational standards provides for the development of occupational standards for all trades, occupations and specialities for each level of VET: secondary (ISCED level 3); post-secondary (ISCED level 4) and post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED level 5) in different fields of work/vocational training.

The curriculum is designed according to the Education Code, by modules/subjects and developed by experts in the field, by levels of education (secondary, post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary) and by areas of vocational training, in accordance with the NQF, coordinated with sectoral committees and approved by the MoER in coordination with the other central bodies concerned.

Qualifications in VET are based on a system of competences taken from the occupational standard. Graduates of VET programmes or persons applying for validation of vocational competences must demonstrate mastery of these competences.

Translating the professional competences of the occupational standard into terms specific to the vocational education and training process is achieved through the qualification standard. This, in turn, serves as the basis for developing the curriculum.

In secondary VET (ISCED level 3) the curriculum is structured into modules, each of which forms one or more vocational competences specific to the qualification.

The structure of the curriculum is unique for all types of vocational training programmes and for all areas of vocational training and is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the methodological support for curriculum design in secondary technical vocational education, approved by Order No 676 of 13 July 2016¹³.

¹³https://www.mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/suport_metodologic_web.pdf

The curricula are public and once approved become mandatory at national level for all education and training programmes offered in formal education by VET institutions. The approved curricula are uploaded on the MoER website¹⁴.

Overall, these documents, namely the qualification standard, occupational standard or professional profile or curriculum provide the base for assessment in VNFI. The programmes for the validation exams are elaborated, depending on the availability of the respective regulatory documents, either based on the qualification standard, the occupational standard or occupational profile or curricula, and with reference to the methodological support package "Development of programs and evaluation tests for qualification exams in technical vocational education", approved by MoER Order No 644 of 13.07.2020.

The activity of validating the competencies obtained in non-formal and informal contexts is only at the beginning in the Republic of Moldova and at present it is implemented quite actively particularly for the blue collar occupations, offering full qualification of all professional competencies included in the qualification or only some of them.

The certification of professional competencies is ensured by documents approved by the MoER.

In the formal education sector, only full qualifications can be certified.

Regardless of whether the competences are gained through VNFI or formal education and training, the learning outcomes (certificates) are identical and have the same value and weight.

4. STANDARDS

The validation of the competencies obtained in non-formal and informal pathways is focused on the evaluation of the professional competencies based on the qualification standard.

The qualification standard:

- ensures the rational organization of the training services market starting from the labour market needs in the context of the development of the national economy,
- involves all social partners interested in qualifications relevant to the labour market,
- contributes to the formation of qualifications based on quality assurance learning,
- is a catalyst for lifelong learning,
- correlates NQF qualification levels with 8 EQF reference levels,
- serves as a tool for recognition and equivalence of study certificates and qualifications obtained in different national education systems, and
- supports mobility for further studies or employment in the country and abroad.

¹⁴ <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/curriculum-invatamintul-profesional-tehnic-secundar>
<https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/curriculum-invatamintul-profesional-tehnic-postsecundar>

The development of qualification standards facilitates the extension of validation arrangements, but at the moment their number is limited (see Table 1).

5. ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN VALIDATION ARRANGEMENTS AND ITS COORDINATION

The MoECR, through its LLL Service, has the main responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the national validation system. The legal framework on VNFIL does not provide specific roles for the above-mentioned partners, namely the MoLSPF, NEA, MoE, CoCI, etc.

The establishment of the Validation Centre as a structure of the educational institution is executed by an order of the Minister of Education and Research, which evaluates the capacity of the potential provider to carry out the validation process as stipulated in the “Regulation on the certification of professional competences corresponding to level 3, 4 and 5 qualifications of the National Framework of Qualifications, acquired in non-formal and informal education contexts.”

The main validation service providers are VET Centres of Excellence and Colleges. They can apply to the MoECR for authorisation to establish a Validation Centre for qualifications in which they are already accredited to deliver initial training. The Ministry can also appoint institutions on its own initiative to deliver validation services for qualifications of strategic importance.

Regarding the organizational capacities of the VNFIL providers, it has to be mentioned that the VET institutions which are nominated to act as validation centres have good potential, in terms of both human capital and the institutional technical-material basis, to ensure the processes stipulated by the Regulation. At the same time, as the VNFIL procedures are still at the pilot stage, the teaching and training staff of the institutions need continuous training to face all the challenges as well as to be supported and receive advice on legal, methodological and financial issues at national level.

The validation centres have a right to co-opt participants from the economic sectors as members of the Evaluation and Certification Committee.

The Framework Regulation for the organization and functioning of the Centre of Excellence, approved by MoER Order No 1158 of 04.12.2015¹⁵, indicated that the certification of professional skills, acquired in a formal, non-formal and informal environment, represents one of their functions.

Thus, in order to exercise the validation function, the Centre of Excellence has the following attributions:

- ensuring adequate prerequisites for the provision of certification services for competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts;

¹⁵<http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=362790>



- developing effective partnerships with the economic environment to ensure the participation of economic agents in the vocational qualification assessment process.

The MoER developed the regulatory framework for validation and a practical guide for the validation of competences attained in non-formal and informal education contexts, which was approved by Order No 1096 of 07.10.2020 and revised by Order No 1066 of 21.082023¹⁶. It identifies and authorises VET institutions with the relevant potential to provide VN FIL services.

6. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

a. Information

Information on the legal framework for the validation of adult competences, the Practical Guide, an information brochure for the candidates, statistics and promotional materials such as videos with “success stories”¹⁷ can be found and accessed on the MoER website¹⁸. The information on VN FIL services offered is prominently published on the websites of the VET Institutions / Validation Centres.

The main providers of information, advice and guidance on validation processes and the contact point for candidates and beneficiaries of validation services are the validation providers.

The regulatory framework and guidelines highlight the obligations of the Validation Centres to promote validation activities, including establishing strategic partnerships with local actors.

b. Advice

The VET institutions / Validation Centres have counsellors who are responsible for providing free of charge consultations and advice on VN FIL services and offering support to potential beneficiaries of validation services.

At the same time, the Regulation on validation of non-formal and informal learning and the Practical Guide are available online. The practical guide includes a detailed description of the validation process from the perspective of the validation centre and from the perspective of the candidate.

¹⁷ <http://ccc.md/formare-profesionala-continua/validare-a-competentelor/>,
<https://medium.com/undp-moldova/cuno%C8%99tin%C8%99Bele-profesionale-validate-%C3%AEn-lipsa-studiilor-de-profil-o-%C8%99ans%C4%83-pentru-un-viitor-mai-bun-87f46f862267>

¹⁸<https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/acte-normative-5>

c. Guidance

The candidate's application to the VET institution / validation centre initiates the validation procedure, and the candidate is informed about the VNFI processes, and the set of documents needed to start the VNFI procedure itself.

Initially the candidate submits to the Validation Centre a portfolio with the documents required by the legislation, in order to display their individual competences in various ways. The candidate's portfolio includes the following materials:

- Completed application form according to the template proposed in the Guide,
- Registration form,
- Proof of previous academic studies,
- Evidence of professional experience,
- The receipt for payment of the validation fee issued by the VET institution,
- Certificate attesting disability, invalidity, special educational requirements, etc.

Additionally, the applicant has to sign a self-declaration form on abiding by the health and safety rules during the assessment process.

Candidates may require help and advice when preparing their portfolios, and may receive help and support from the secretary of the Validation Centre throughout the entire process.

The assessors analyse the range of documents provided by the applicant and decide whether to accept or reject the candidate's application. In the case of a rejection of the application, the candidate is entitled to challenge the respective decision by filing an appeal. The appeals commission will analyse the candidate's appeal.

If the candidate's application is accepted, the Evaluation and Certification Committee prepares the Evaluation Plan. The plan includes information on the professional competencies that will be assessed and the timing of the theory and practical tests. Unlike the certification procedure in formal education, in the case of the evaluation of informal and non-formal education, priority will be given to direct observation at the workplace evaluation methods.

In the process of implementing the Assessment Plan, the candidate is guided by a counsellor. The candidate consults the list of professional competencies proposed to be evaluated, and if desired he/she can reduce or expand the number of his/her professional competencies to be evaluated.

All these aspects are analysed by the Evaluation and Certification Committee and are included in the Assessment File. The implementation of the Assessment Plan consists of the evaluation and certification of the candidate's competencies, which is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the *Regulations for the organization and conduct of the qualification exam*.



7. VALIDATION PRACTITIONERS

a. Profile of validation practitioners

The existing regulatory framework envisages the following validation practitioners: the Secretary of the Validation Centre, the Coordinator, the Counsellor and the members of the Evaluation and Certification Committee. There are also working groups which develop plans for the validation procedures and the assessment instrument. The validation practitioners are selected from among the regular staff of the training institutions. The establishment of the Validation Centre does not imply recruitment of additional personnel.

The role of the Validation Centre Coordinator is executed by one of the Deputy Directors of the institution. The duties of the coordinator are to ensure the operative management of validation processes, drawing up work plans for the validation services, ensuring coordination among the involved staff and proposing staff for the role of counsellor.

The candidate's guidance is to ensure the correct identification of the candidate's professional competences. Thus, the candidate is guided in the process of drawing up the application, the Declaration Registration Form and all the materials to be included in their portfolio. The appointed counsellor provides support and consultancy to the candidate for the entire VNFI period.

In the absence of evidence confirming the candidate's mastery of professional skills, which the candidate must validate, the validation committee may recommend further, additional training.

Unfortunately, training only in selected modules to complement outstanding units of competencies is not available, as VET institutions offer only full training programmes.

The counsellor explains the acceptance/rejection of the validation request decision to the candidate, putting forward the Validation Committee's reasoning. The counsellor will describe the assessment plan to the candidate and, if necessary, the changes requested by the candidate will also be introduced.

The assessment plan is drawn up by the candidate's assessment officer.

The Chairperson of the Evaluation and Certification Committee oversees the work of the Committee in the process of identifying, evaluating and recognising the knowledge and competences acquired in non-formal and informal education contexts.

The Chairperson of the Evaluation and Certification Committee carries out the following duties:

- sets, after consultation with the members of the Committee, the date and time of the meetings, chairs the meetings of the Committee;
- determines and delimits the duties of the members of the Committee;
- represents the Committee in relations with other public authorities and institutions, natural or legal persons;



- proposes the evaluation plan/programme of the Committee and the details of the organization and implementation of the evaluation;
- appoints the member of the Committee responsible for the evaluation of the candidate, according to his/her competences.
- coordinates the work of the Committee's secretariat, in terms of documents required for the certification process.

The Evaluation and Certification Committee (the Committee) is independent in its decision-making and has the following tasks:

- examining the candidates' files;
- drawing up the list of applicants;
- initiating and carrying out the procedure for the identification, assessment, recognition and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal education pathways;
- taking the decision on certification/refusal of certification of competences, based on the results;
- at the end of its mandate, the Committee elaborates a report on the number of applicants, final results, the number of persons the type of competences/qualifications submitted for certification. the final results of evaluation, the number of persons proposed for the certification, the type of competencies and qualification to be issued.

The members of the Evaluation and Certification Committee have the following obligations:

- to attend the meetings of the Committee;
- to ensure compliance with the requirements on safety regulations and labour protection during all stages of the assessment and certification;
- to comply with the regulatory requirements of the *Regulation on non-formal and informal education* and the regulatory document on the *organisation and conduct of the qualification examination*;
- to verify the authenticity of the data in the documents submitted confirming the professional competence of the candidate, in order to determine the reliability and compliance with educational standards;
- to carry out the assessment process using appropriate methods that ensure reliability, impartiality, transparency of the process and minimise costs;
- to consult candidates on the qualification requirements, assessment criteria, the preparation and conduct of the assessment and recognition process of competences or qualifications;
- to provide support to the candidate during the assessment process - from the receipt of all documents to the committee meetings;
- to choose the appropriate form and methods of assessment according to the individual evidence submitted by the candidate, evidence of professional competence;



- to draw up the programme / plan for the assessment and recognition of competences, specifying the methods and scope of application in the assessment of competences, taking into account the specifics of the qualifications;
- to adapt the assessment methods to persons with special educational needs.

The Secretariat has the following tasks:

- receiving the application, the letter of reference (if applicable), the self-assessment questionnaire, copies of the documents attesting to the candidate's professional competence;
- receiving the files of the candidates applying for the validation procedure of the competences according to the qualification, gives advice if necessary;
- registering the candidate in the register and creates a personal file - dossier;
- preparing the evaluation forms for the Committee members;
- taking minutes of the Committee meetings;
- drawing up the report on the issue of certificates and completes the register of the issue of documents confirming previous education;
- handing over to the institute, with minutes, the written works, the graduates' drafts, the evaluation sheets for each candidate, authenticated by the President of the Committee and the minutes of the Committee meetings, the decisions adopted by the Committee, other documents issued during the organization and conduct of the certification process.

The counsellor has the following obligations:

- to consult the candidates in the process of selecting and completing the file with the documents attesting the previously acquired professional competencies;
- to assist the candidates in completing the application form;
- to consult the candidates regarding the qualification requirements, the evaluation criteria, the preparation and development of the processes of evaluation and validation;
- to provide support and guidance to the candidate throughout the entire validation process, from receipt of all documents to meeting of the Evaluation Committees and Appeals Committees, as appropriate;
- to provide the necessary support for any candidates with Special Educational Needs throughout the processes of validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- to organise, where appropriate, the running of consultation programmes for candidates by the teaching staff of the educational and training institution, specialists delegated by employers, representatives of the social partners, etc. in order to facilitate candidates' access to the necessary information;
- to summon the applicant for evaluation within 10 days of submission of the application.



b. Qualification requirements

The evaluation and certification committee is composed of at least 3 members, appointed by order of the head of the VET institution/ validation centre, as follows:

- the chairman of the Committee;
- members of the Committee - assessors who are part of the staff of the Validation Centre, specialists delegated by the relevant ministries, sectoral committees, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova, other persons who meet the criteria of professionalism.

In the case of certification of a qualification involving distinct areas of competence, a broader committee is created, whose members cover the entire occupational spectrum or several committees.

The eligibility requirements for members of the Evaluation and Certification Committee require a minimum ISCED VI level in the respective professional field; professional experience of at least 5 years in the relevant field; the qualification of assessor, issued by educational institutions accredited by the Ministry of Education and Research.

c. Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

To successfully carry out the validation process, the validation centre organises training sessions for the chairpersons and assessors of the Evaluation and Certification Committee for the processes of counselling, documentation, evaluation, recognition and certification.

At the same time the validation centre is responsible for creating a database on the applications of candidates registered for the validation procedure in the respective professional fields and qualifications and prepares the annual report on the completion of the validation process which is sent to the Ministry of Education and Research.

The Validation Centre, in order to carry out its functions, may establish partnerships with other structures, public or private.

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Validation centres are subject to evaluation and accreditation by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research. Thus, the accreditation procedures are provided on the basis of the 'Methodology of external quality assessment for the provisional authorization of operation and accreditation of study programmes and institutions of technical vocational education, higher education and continuing training' and the 'Regulation on the calculation of fees for services rendered within the framework of external quality assessment of study programmes and institutions of technical vocational education, higher education and continuing training', approved by Government Decision No 616 of 18.05.2016.



The regulatory framework provides guidelines on the appeals procedure, the assessment process, assessment criteria and learning outcomes, the tools and methods that are to be used in the validation process, guidance and advice procedures, identification and documentation procedures and certification procedures.

No external evaluations are envisaged so far. The internal quality assurance is left with the Validation Centre and external quality assurance, which is the mandate of the MoER and is also challenging due to the limited number of staff in the LLL Service and the lack of instruments for monitoring and evaluation procedures. The monitoring and evaluation processes also involve costs for which an appropriate budget lines have not yet been created.

The Practical Guide recommends that the evaluation of the quality of validation processes is carried out on the basis of a self-assessment by the authors of the validation programme (self-evaluation), by other specialists from the institution which carries out the validation (internal evaluation) and by specialists from economic units (external evaluation). The Guide includes an example evaluation form, which focuses on the following criteria:

- Correspondence of the assessment objectives with the competences stated in the occupational profile / occupational standard / qualification standard / curriculum of the trade / profession / specialty.
- Consistency with the occupations and skill levels established in the Occupations Classifier.
- Basing the validation programme on modern technological innovations and achievements.
- Complying with the methodology for evaluating skills specific to technical vocational education.
- Compliance with the structure and consistency of the content of the professional skills validation programme.

The Guide includes additionally an example of a beneficiary feedback questionnaire.

9. INPUTS, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

a. Funding

The regulatory framework envisages validation to be funded through the national budget as well as through fees paid by the candidates¹⁹.

The development of the VNFI regulatory acts and the piloting process was supported by international organisations, such as the UNDP, IOM and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

¹⁹ For the registered unemployed, expenses are to be borne by the NEA in the future. In 2021, given that the mechanism for implementing Art. 35 of Law 105/2018 is not yet in place, during the VNFI piloting process the expenses for the VNFI services to unemployed were borne by the IOM and the UNDP.



The development of the first version of the Practical Guide on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Prior Learning was carried out with the financial support provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation within the “Migration and Local Development” project, implemented by UNDP Moldova and IOM Moldova.

The International Organization for Migration provided the initial funding support for development of the VN FIL, capacity building of the human resources and technical teams and initial pilots processes. This has played a key role in the launching of the VN FIL processes in the country.

Since 2023, no more international financial support has been provided for validation.

b. Distribution of costs

Fees for validation of non-formal and informal education are set by the institution/validation centre and coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research, according to the legislation, respecting the cost-effectiveness ratio.

The Validation Centre is a non-profit institution, so the fee for certification will not exceed the actual costs incurred.

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

There is some indicative information on the cost of validation services on the MoER website and on the websites of the Validation Centres. For example, the cost of validation in selected construction trades (such as plasterer, carpenter, plumber-installer) charged by the Centre of Excellence in Construction was (as of August 2023) 2000 lei, which is approximately EUR 104²⁰.

Businesses can cover validation costs for their employees, but the number of those interested is very limited, practically non-existent, unless the legislation²¹ requires their employees to be formally qualified correspondingly to their positions and the company's field of business. Predominantly in the energy sector, all employers comply with the legal provisions and ensure that all employees are certified according to the position held. However, not all employers tend to comply with the legal requirements.

²⁰ <http://ccc.md/formare-profesionala-continua/validare-a-competentelor/>

²¹ According to the provisions of the Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova, Chapter II, Article 57, at the conclusion of the individual employment contract, the person who is hired shall present to the employer the diploma of studies, the certificate of qualification confirming the special training - for professions requiring special knowledge or skills. Thus, the State Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Moldova can check at any time whether a company complies with the laws and regulations in the field of labour, occupational safety and health. In order to avoid fines, employers are obliged to provide the inspectors with the required documents and information, including documents confirming professional training according to the position held by employees.

c. Evidence of benefits to individuals

Given that the certificate obtained through VNFIL has the same legal value as any other certificates acquired through formal education, beneficiaries have the same opportunities as holders of certificates obtained through formal education. These opportunities include, namely, employment, access to another level of education, career advancement, salary increases, etc.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, certification provides a significant boost to the beneficiary's self-esteem.

d. Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

i. Validation trends

According to the data available on the MoER website²², validation services are currently offered in 13 locations and for 92 occupations. Since January 2019, 961 candidates (among them 739 female) have had their skills certified. 165 of them were Moldovan migrants who returned to the country.

The most active Validation Centre is Alexei Mateevici" College in Chisinau which offers validation in sectors such as child and youth care and teaching assistance²³, followed by the Centre of Excellence in the Construction Sector and the Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF CANDIDATES CERTIFIED THROUGH VNFIL – TRENDS

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total (2019-2023)
24	39	284	243	376	966

Source: MoER, (as of 7 September 2023)

Overall, most applicants for VNFIL services are people who either have some work experience and/or are currently employed. Those who can provide evidence of employment and a document confirming relevant work experience can obtain a qualification certificate following the assessment process. There are no fixed requirements regarding the length of the work experience.

ii. Validation users

According to interviewees, representatives of validation centres, most of the beneficiaries are people who have professional experience in a relevant field and/or continue to work in that domain.

²² <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/validarea-educatiei-nonformale-si-informale-1>

²³ https://cpam.md/?page_id=3617

Statistical data on the number of beneficiaries of validation are available on the website of the Ministry of Education.

iii. Validation and disadvantaged groups

The regulatory framework for validation and certification of prior learning provides opportunities to support disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed, migrants, people with no qualifications, early school leavers, adults with a low level of qualifications, etc. The 2023 statistics on certification through validation record 165 beneficiaries, who were Moldovan migrants returning to the country.

10. VALIDATION METHODS

According to the legal provisions, the members of the evaluation and certification committee must ensure that evaluation and certification are carried out using methods that ensure:

- the truthfulness, objectivity, accuracy, completeness, impartiality, transparency and efficiency of these processes;
- the adaptation of the evaluation and certification methods to the needs of persons with special educational needs;
- the development of plans for the evaluation and certification of candidates' professional skills.

The assessment plan is drawn up by the Validation Centre.

The plan contains information on the professional competences to be assessed and the timetable for both the theory and practical tests. In contrast to the certification of formal education outcomes, in the case of validation of non-formal and informal education, priority will be given to assessment methods using observation in the workplace.

11. THE POSITION OF VALIDATION IN SOCIETY: VISIBILITY AND TRUST

One of the objectives of the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education and Training for 2013-2020, approved by Government Decision No 97 of 1 February 2013, is to ensure vocational training based on skills and to link the training to the requirements of the labour market. The strategic guideline behind this was to secure the mechanism for recognising skills obtained through non-formal and informal learning in VET. Consequently, the strategy foresees the creation of a validation system for informal and non-formal learning through the development and implementation of the methodology for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

At the same time, the draft Education 2030 Strategy sets out guidance and actions to address the problems identified in the system, including "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.

Furthermore, one of the priority directions of the Education 2030 Strategy foresees the *development of the learning outcomes assessment system at all levels and cycles of the education system, focusing on descriptors, qualifiers, accumulation portfolios, and also on motivational and non-stressful mechanisms of this process*.

Validation has been successfully introduced in Moldova but is still a new mechanism. With sufficient attention to funding, support for the validation service providers and further outreach and promotion, the visibility of validation could be expected to increase gradually.

12. CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the start of 2018, the Republic of Moldova had made good progress towards fulfilling the strategic objectives and recommendations on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The national regulatory framework had been developed, and 13 VET institutions had obtained the title of Validation Centres. Following the successful pilot period, validation has been introduced as a system that can be made available nationwide.

A review of the pilot process carried out in 2022 by the DVVI²⁴ highlighted the need to implement occasional reviews and evaluations of the validation process and to approach advocacy and promotion activities in a strategic way. Furthermore it was proposed that a formal training programme for Master Trainers for VNFI be developed. Over the long term, VNFI should be introduced in the higher education sector and included in the academic quality assurance regulations.

These further recommendations could be taken into consideration in scaling up the validation system:

- With the phasing out of donor support, funding for all elements of validation has to be mobilised. Further scaling up of the services will require increase State financing. Diversification of funding (State, employers, projects and fees) could be considered;
- A better linking of validation with other strategic policies (employment, migration, economic development) might generate additional funding sources, support outreach and lead to better visibility of validation in society;
- The Validation Centres have to be incentivised and supported to continuously offer validation. Continuous strengthening and extension of validation services should become a part of their institutional development plans;
- Incentives for candidates might be necessary, particularly for candidates from disadvantaged groups;

²⁴ [integrated_report_rplpilot_md_.pdf \(gov.md\)](http://integrated_report_rplpilot_md_.pdf (gov.md))



- Validation practitioners should have the opportunity to participate in continuous professional development activities, in particular concerning assessment of adult competences. Networking among providers and practitioners can provide a good opportunity to strengthen the services through mutual learning and support;
- Stronger integration of validation with further learning pathways, in particular availability of complementary courses for candidates who are not yet ready to have the full qualification awards is of crucial importance. Validation is an essential element of a flexible learning pathway. Apart from being a stand-alone service, it could also be offered as a standard practice in the beginning of ongoing VET courses;
- Validation should become an integral part of the national qualifications system; validation services should be extended to general and higher education;
- With the growing number of validation users, the introduction of monitoring and evaluation systems could be considered, in order to monitor the benefits and collect data that will allow continuous improvement of the system and alignment with the needs of different groups of users. This should encompass monitoring not only the numbers of certified candidates but also the success rate and support given to candidates who are not successful in the process;
- Consider the use of digital solutions for identification of skills (such as self-assessment tools, presenting and extracting evidence on skills), digital administration of the validation processes and monitoring. Digital solutions (such as assessment instrument data banks) can support the work of validation practitioners. In the future, integrating validation-related data into the qualifications register should be envisaged.

13. ANNEX - THE NATIONAL BACCALAUREATE EXAMS IN EXTERNAL REGIME

The Regulation on the National Baccalaureate Examination approved by MoER Order No 47 of 23 January 2018 gives persons who apply to take the Baccalaureate Examination and have completed the high school curriculum in general, or have attended technical vocational or higher education institutions, and persons who have completed forms of education equivalent to high school education, the right to take the National Baccalaureate Examination. Candidates requesting to take the baccalaureate exam externally are registered according to the provisions of the previously mentioned regulation.

Applications for sitting the national Baccalaureate exams externally are submitted to the MoER during the period from 10 January to 15 February of the current year, approximately. The application form for the national baccalaureate examination can be found on the website of the National Agency for Curriculum and Assessment (www.ance.gov.md). The file with the required documents is submitted to the MoER.

The application must include: profile, language of study, foreign language studied, exam at request. The application must be accompanied by a copy of the secondary school leaving certificate and confirmation from the educational institution that issued this document (for persons who have graduated from secondary school) or the original school transcript for grades X-XI, or the original academic transcript issued by the educational institution (for persons who have studied or are studying in vocational/technical (colleges) and higher education institutions), a copy of the identity card. The files must be submitted to the National Agency for Curriculum and Assessment by the deadline.

The national baccalaureate examination is open to persons aged 19+ who are graduates of general secondary school, graduates of VET school with 3 years of study duration, persons who have at least 2 years of high school with completed schooling (grade X-XI), graduates of colleges and students of higher education institutions who were admitted to study on the basis of the general secondary school certificate.

Candidates who have been admitted to the programme sit the 'difference' tests to certify their level of mastery of all the subjects in the Secondary Education Framework Plan. The curriculum difference examinations for the secondary school course are held in the institutions designated as centres, according to the established timetable.

The educational institutions designated as Centres for the support of differences in the syllabus organise, during the period from March to April of the current year, consultations to address the differences in the syllabus for certifying the degree of mastery of the curricular content in the subjects provided for in the Framework Plan for primary, secondary and high school education. Candidates also benefit from the services of the library, the offices and the laboratories of the respective institutions.

The external Baccalaureate Examination is held at the same time as the secondary and high school graduation examination, according to the timetable and in the centres approved by the MoER. Persons



requesting to take the baccalaureate exam externally take the baccalaureate exam under the same conditions as the other candidates. For candidates who take the external examination, the baccalaureate diploma and its annex are issued by the institution designated as the Centre to support the differences in the programme.

14. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
CoCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CORM 006-14	Classifier of occupations in the Republic of Moldova
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MoER	Ministry of Education and Research
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoLSPF	Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova
NEA	National Employment Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
RM	Republic of Moldova
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

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Ministry of Education and Research

Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family

National Employment Agency

Sector Committee in Agriculture

Key Stone NGO

ICS Premier Energy Distribution SA

Centre of Excellence in Services and Food processing

State University of Tiraspol

