VNFIL COUNTRY FICHE: SLOVAKIA
General description of the system

National terminology: *Uznávanie výsledkov neformálneho a informálneho učenia*

There is no genuine and appropriately developed national model of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). Although Lifelong Learning (LLL) strategies addressed this issue, a fundamental legislative basis for VNFIL is still missing. Nevertheless, the 2009 Act on Lifelong Learning created at least some pre-conditions for gradual progress. First of all the National Qualifications System (NQS, "Národná sústava kvalifikácií", www.kvalifikacie.sk) is backed by this legislation introducing a new approach based on learning outcomes to the description of qualifications.

Currently, validation according to the Act on LLL refers only to:

- recognition of results of further education based on assessment of achieving qualification standards leading to a full or partial qualification, the former fully corresponding to all requirements of a profession and the latter only to some of the knowledge, skills and competences related to the respective profession; and
- verification of a professional competence necessary for running a business regulated by the Trade Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. that is also based on assessing compliance with standards.

None of the above cases is a clear case of VNFIL. The first case refers to accredited programmes leading to qualifications described by standards, hence linked to formal rather than non-formal learning. Validation is based on examination of graduates from accredited programmes (1291 in total in 2015) by authorised institutions accredited for validation that organise the examination. Nevertheless, individuals with 5 years of practice can apply for examination in authorised institutions and can receive a certificate confirming compliance with qualification standards, without prior graduation from the accredited programme.

No tangible outcomes can be achieved through the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Awarding of partial qualification pursuant to Act on LLL cannot be seen as genuine VNFIL as explained earlier: It refers to further education rather than non-formal and informal learning and leads to a different certificate compared to formal education system. Currently existing procedure leads to certificate confirming professional competence entitling to starting a regulated trade however does not lead to the certificate of apprenticeship.

Process and vocabulary

There are no detailed validation procedures elaborated yet. The examination is the only obligatory part of the process also for the purpose of recognition/validation of further education and recognition/validation of partial or full qualification. Regulation (see http://isdv.iedu.sk/Documents/Usmernenie_skusky.rtf) addresses in detail administrative aspects of examination, but there is neither regulation nor guidance concerning four stages of validation (identification, documentation, assessment and certification) available. Validation procedure is fully up to authorised institutions listed in the Information system ISDV (http://isdv.iedu.sk/EligibleInstitutions.aspx).

There is neither specific funding policy nor policy focus, except explained priority resulting from limits set by Act on LLL (as explained at the beginning of this chapter) and objectives of ESF and communitarian projects. 40 qualifications prioritised as responding to labour market needs within an ESF project (see www.cvanu.sk) completed in 2015 by National Lifelong Learning Institute (NUCŽV). Modularised educational programmes and assessment standards to achieve respective qualification are presented at the project website, (see http://www.cvanu.sk/doc/15/40-modulovych-vzdelavacich-programov and embedded into Information system ISDV at http://isdv.iedu.sk/Documents/Kody_kvalifikacii.pdf). Nevertheless, NUCZV authorisation for validation expired by the end of 2015.

Usage of VNFIL

In 2015, there were 15 authorised institutions accredited pursuant to the Act on LLL entitled for "validation" (not in the VNFIL sense) of 224 qualifications (see the Information System of Further Education - ISDV at http://isdv.iedu.sk/EligibleInstitutions.aspx).

There were 3943 certificates issued since 2013 (640 certificates issued in 2013, 805 in 2014 and 2498 in 2015). These certificates are however not equivalent to the certificates from formal education. Certificate holders are entitled to start a business regulated by the Trade Licensing Act, but these certificates do not recognise the respective level of education and therefore they are not allowed to continue further studies within the formal education system.

Quality assurance

There is no quality assurance for VNFIL. Currently, the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning depend / are recognized by particular employer.

Educational institutions interested in quality assurance of their programmes are able to ask the Ministry of Education for accreditation process (profiles of the guarantor of the program, the lecturers, material and technical equipment,the program itself-based on the learning outcomes, qualification standard, assessment standards are unified, quality control is carried out by the Ministry of Education). ISO certification is used for the majority of the programmes related to the management of educational institution.

Role of Peer-review: Exchange of good practice, especially in the current state, before passing the Act on further education and Act on Recognition of Learning Outcomes.

Status of implementation of the CEDEFOP guidelines on VNFIL (2015)

1. Availability of information, guidance and counselling:

Regional centres for further training were created by the NUCZV within the CVANU project. These centres provided information on further training opportunities, but were not active in the VNFIL.

There is no genuine VNFIL in place in Slovakia yet. Partially relevant processes are promoted by national authorities and respective affiliated institution. With regard to

- The 'validation' in the Youth work it is up to the Ministry of Education and Iuventa – The Slovak Youth Institute,
- pre –'validation' activities such as bilan de compétences it is up to Ministry of Labour and public employment services (CoLSAF and its labour offices),
- 'recognition/validation' pursuant the Act on LLL and related to "qualifications" and 'professional competences' it is up to Ministy of Labour and authorised organisations, and by Ministry of Interior and Trade Licensing authorities

2. Stakeholders coordination:

Stakeholders were involved in the creation of the national qualification system with qualification standards. A working group composed of different stakeholders is currently working on conceptual basis of the VNFIL system.

3. Links to national qualification framework

A Slovak National Qualifications Framework (SKKR) has been developed for the purpose of assigning levels of SKKR to qualifications and to enable comparison with qualifications abroad via EQF. There are however no legislative preconditions fulfilled for establishing links to validation. Neither Slovak National Qualifications Framework (SKKR) nor National Qualifications System (NQS) are ready to be used for VNFIL. An ESF project continuing in the further development of the NQS is planned. Assessment manuals for VNFIL should be developed to complete assessment standards.

4. Standards and learning outcomes

Qualification standards (and assessment standards) were developed induced by Act on LLL No 568/2009 Coll. to regulate

provision of further education and examination leading to obtaining "partial or full" qualification. These standards were developed as temporary solution to fill in the vacancy caused by delay in development of NQS. These standards are registered and maintained by the Ministry of Education Information System of Further Education (ISDV; http://isdv.iedu.sk/EligibleInstitutions.aspx http://www.isdv.iedu.sk/ and will be replaced by NSQ standards in the future. Although these qualification standards were often developed in the cooperation with specialists from VET schools, they focused on (professional/vocational) knowledge and skills, while key competence should be reflected in assessment standards.

5. Quality assurance

There is no genuine VNFIL in place in Slovakia yet. Consequently there are no specific quality assurance arrangements in place. There is no model in preparation in distinguishing internal and external evaluations. Quality assurance that is already in place refers to existing procedures- accreditation of education and education institutions as already mentioned earlier concerning Act on LLL and Youth Work Act.

6. Professional competences of practitioners:

There are no genuine validation practitioners. It is expected that the profession/qualification of the validation practitioners (including the profile) will be addressed by NQS. Currently, NQS qualification cards set formal requirements for examiners (years of practice and graduation from respective studies). There are no mandatory requirement for practitioners in terms of training and/or a qualification set so far. This should be addressed by the NQS further development and the new legislation. The qualification standards for tutors/counsellors for further education were developed by NUCZV within the ESF project (www.cvanu.sk) that were also approved by the Ministry of education and embedded into the ISDV information system (http://isdv.iedu.sk/EligibleDetail.aspx?qualification=39). According to these standards, there were also training programmes containing some developed VNFIL relevant components. The required minimum level of education was graduation from second cycle of higher education. Similar approach can be expected concerning validation specialists.

Disclaimer: ICF European Inventory on Validation 2016 (unpublished draft version) was used in the preparation of this fiche.