# Formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning

Final report
November 2008

A study exploring the possibilities of formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning

## Disclaimer

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# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| APL | Accreditation of prior learning |
| APCL | Accreditation of prior certificated learning |
| APEL | Accreditation of prior experiential learning |
| CVDC | Wallonian consortium for the validation of competences |
| CNAA | Council for National Academic Awards |
| EC | European Commission |
| ENIC | European Network of Information Centres in the European Region |
| EQF | European Qualification Framework |
| EVC | Erkenning van Verworven Competenties |
| FEU | Further Education Unit |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HETAC | Irish National Council for Educational Awards |
| FE | Further Education |
| FEI | Further Education Institution |
| FHEQ | English National Framework for Higher Education Qualification |
| LADOK | Swedish National Student Register |
| LLL | Lifelong Learning |
| LLP | Lifelong Learning Programme |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| NARIC | National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union |
| NCEA | Former Irish National Council for Educational Awards (now HETAC) |
| NCVA | Irish National Council for Vocational Awards |
| NVAO | Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders |
| NQAI | National Qualifications Authority of Ireland |
| NQF | National Qualification Framework |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QAA | English Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education |
| RARPA | Recognising And Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| SCQF | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework |
| VAE | Valorisation des Acquis de l'Expérience |
| VET | Vocational and Education Training |

# Executive summary

Within the Bologna Process - the European higher education reform process - there has been a shift in focus towards the importance of recognising non-formal and informal learning, in other words competencies and skills gained outside of formal learning environments, such as universities. In several countries, steps have been taken to formally recognise informal and non-formal learning through certificates and reports. This development poses new challenges for the international recognition of qualifications, which is a necessity to ensure the mobility of citizens. The aim of this project has therefore been to begin to explore the possibilities of international recognition of these certificates of non-formal and informal learning assessment in higher education. The study has been undertaken and carried out within the NARIC network - the European network of information centres on recognition of qualifications.

The objectives of this project have been twofold. Firstly, to undertake a study of formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning through certification in several European countries. Secondly to analyse a number of sample certificates/reports and formulate recommendations for credential evaluators on how to deal with foreign certificates/reports and recommendations for the issuing institutions/bodies on how to make these certificates/reports more transparent for transferability purposes. The countries and regions involved in this study are the following: Belgium (Flanders, Wallonia), Denmark, England, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland and Sweden.

Within the project, a brief state of play regarding the situation of non-formal and informal learning in each country was prepared. Furthermore the project came up with a couple of recommendations formulated to credential evaluators and certificate issuing institutions and bodies, based on collected examples of 'RPL certificates'.

## The main recommendations towards credential evaluators include:

- ensure that the information presented on the RPL certificate is similar to certificates issued following a period of formal learning, to ensure consistency in evaluations,
- identify the standards against which the non-formal or informal learning has been assessed,
- check that the format of the certificate complies with national or institutional norms, and
- when evaluating RPL certificates, credential evaluators should adhere to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the RPL relevant paragraphs in the Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee.

## The main recommendations towards institutions and bodies include:

- providing information in the RPL document including items indicating the level at which the RPL was assessed, the profile of the course/module/programme for which exemption/certification/crediting on the basis of RPL is sought, and the exemptions granted in terms of institutional/national credits and/or ECTS credits,
- to provide information in a schematic form and clear and transparent manner, and
- to include additional information for example in an annex, that could provide information on matters such as the learning outcomes of the course, the RPL assessment procedures and reference to the RPL contact point at the institution.

One of the realities the project team was faced with during the project was the variety of national practices towards RPL and a lack of standardized procedures. The project team therefore recommends that future research will focus on trying to identify whether the recommendations of this study can be extended, and could cover a wider geographical coverage, ideally the whole NARIC network.

# Introduction

## I Context

Over the last decade steps have been taken in several countries to formally recognise informal and non-formal learning[1] through the issuing of certificates and reports. The number of these recognition practices as well as the number of countries involved is on the rise, not least because of national and European Lifelong Learning strategies in which the recognition of competencies and 'learning' outside formal education plays a key role.

These developments have gained momentum currently with a more recent shift in focus within the Bologna Process towards highlighting the importance of recognising non-formal and informal learning, alongside learning gained through more traditional and formal means. The importance of the improvement of recognition of non-formal and informal learning within higher education has been explicitly stressed during last two (4th and 5th) Ministerial Conference Communiqués of the Bologna Process in Bergen (2005) and London (2007). In addition, the adoption of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) in April of this year further cemented the importance of this concept promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

When addressing these new developments from the perspective of international mobility and the recognition of qualifications, credential evaluators who normally deal with the assessment of diplomas gained through formal education, are now faced with the question how to deal with these new types of documents, which provide evidence of a person's skills and competencies. This study therefore aims at taking the first steps towards exploring the possibilities of international recognition of non-formal and informal learning assessment in higher education.

### Consortium

The study has been undertaken by a consortium of four experienced NARICs – National Academic Recognition Information Centres. All the centres belong to the ENIC-NARIC network[2]; the European network of information centres on recognition of qualifications. The main aims of the NARIC network are to improve academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the Member States of the EU and the EEA countries and the associated countries in Eastern Europe as well as provide information and guidance on their own education system and associated qualifications. The NARICs involved in this study are: Dutch NARIC (Nuffic), UK NARIC, French NARIC (CIEP) and the Swedish NARIC (Högskoleverket).

## II Objectives

In order to explore the possibilities of international recognition of non-formal and informal learning, the objectives of this project were formulated two-fold:
1. To conduct a study of the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning through certification in several European countries, in order to present an overview of the status of certification of non-formal

and informal learning in the selected countries.

2. To analyse a number of sample certificates and/or reports from the countries involved, leading to the formulation of recommendations for credential evaluators on how to deal with these certificates/reports for transferability purposes. In addition recommendations for issuing institutions and bodies on how to make these certificates/reports more transparent for transferability purposes were to be formulated.

The following countries and regions were to be studied and the partners who would be responsible for them are as follows:

1. Nuffic: Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders),
2. UK NARIC: England, Ireland and Scotland,
3. French NARIC: France, Belgium (Walloon Provinces), and
4. Swedish NARIC: Sweden, Norway, Denmark.

# III Methodology and design of the project

In order to achieve the two objectives of the project, a pre-defined methodology was adopted by the project partners. This methodology can be divided into two main phases: 1) research, and 2) evaluation, both of which are detailed in this section.

## Research phase

This phase consisted of the production of a report for each country on the current state of formal recognition through certification of non-formal and informal learning in higher education. The overview of the state of play of certification of non-formal and informal learning in the selected countries also served as a contextual basis for the evaluation phase. In order to complete this phase, the project partners agreed on a standardised[3] analysis framework that was used to address questions about the type of certificates issued, their intended purpose, their academic and/or economic value and recognition within the country between issuing institutions or bodies. In more specific terms, the analysis frameworks focussed on issues such as:

- What kind of certificates/reports are issued by what kind of institutions/bodies?
- For what purpose are the certificates/reports? (e.g. labour market, access/exemptions in higher education, other)
- Is there recognition of certificates/reports within the country between the certificating institutions/bodies?
- Does a certificate/report for non-formal and informal learning provide economic or academic advantage on an individual or national level?

The various country reports are included in the first part of this report.[4]

In addition to the country-specific reports, each NARIC aimed to collect sample documents from their selected countries, in which non-formal or informal learning was formally certificated. It was decided that, where possible, one or two 'certificates' and/or transcripts – documents providing evidence of the validation or recognition of qualifications gained outside formal learning - with a 'summative', or formal, purpose, from each country or region would be collected. The purpose of this exercise was to assess the quality of these certificates. Furthermore, the project partners decided to try and collect different kinds of

formats from the various countries and regions of their research, in order for the evaluation panel to also be able to evaluate the format design during the evaluation phase of the project.

During the research phase and within the timeframe of the project, the project partners found various certificates from the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands and Flanders. This collection of certificates served as the basis for the evaluation phase.

## Evaluation phase

The main aim of this phase of the project was to analyse a sample of certificates collected during the research phase and to identify best and worst practice of certification of non-formal and informal learning in order to develop recommendations for credential evaluators and other stakeholders. For the actual evaluation, an Evaluation Panel Meeting was organised in Cheltenham (United Kingdom). A template was used for evaluation by the project partners, who assessed the collected sample certificates/reports of non-formal and informal learning, after each document was introduced by the relevant partner, thus providing additional context to the work. The evaluation focused primarily on the practical comparability and compatibility of the documents for credential evaluators in terms of:

• quality assurance mechanisms,

• forms of assessment,

• standards used (e.g. NQF levels), and

• format, including the competency statements (or other assessment outcome).

Following the evaluation of each certificate or report, each partner provided input on best and worst practice visible in the document and offered opinions on what additional information would be required (if any) for credential evaluators to be able to undertake an assessment. This analysis led to the formulation of a number of recommendations for credential evaluators on how to evaluate these certificates/reports for transferability purposes as well as for the issuing institutions and bodies, on how to make these certificates/reports more transparent for evaluation purposes. The outcomes of the evaluation phase are to be found in the second part of this report.

## Linguistic remarks: the use of RPL

The research phase revealed conceptual and linguistic issues that are important to mention, as the decisions that were taken as a consequence have impact upon the reporting and terminology used in the project. The project partners felt that it was important to highlight this difference in order that the report can be fully understood and to raise awareness of the complications surrounding the issue.

Despite the existence of standard European glossaries, such as that developed by Cedefop, particular attention has been paid to the use of the term 'recognition' in different contexts within the analysis frameworks. In standard NARIC publications and daily work, 'recognition' is used to refer to the process of evaluating an international credential within the educational framework or system of one's own country to facilitate admission to HE, FE or the labour market at a level in line with the individual's education experience. This process is undertaken by a Competent Authority in one country, although the credential in question originates from another.

On the other hand, 'recognition' in the sense of recognition of informal or non-formal learning refers to the process by which an authority or institution in one particular country assesses the knowledge, skills and

competence that an individual possesses as a result of a period of one of the following:

- learning acquired in a non-formal setting,
- learning that did not lead to a qualification, or
- learning acquired through work experience.

'Recognition' in this context is understood more in the sense of validation, as the assessors are identifying whether the knowledge, skills and competence claimed by the individual compare favourably with pre-defined standards within a programme of studies or against the entry level for particular courses.

Indeed this notion of validation is reflected in the terminology adopted to describe the process that is referred to predominantly in the project as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In French, for example, this process is known as *validation des acquis de l'experience*, where the emphasis lies on validating skills acquired through experience, both work and education-based.

The situation in the English language is more complex, reflecting the current heterogeneous approach to validating prior learning across the UK. In higher education, the process of identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of prior learning and achievement is commonly known as 'accreditation' rather than 'validation'. Examples of terms used can be found below:

- accreditation of prior learning (APL),
- accreditation of prior certified learning (APCL),
- accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL),
- accreditation of prior certified and/or experiential learning (AP[E/C]L), and
- accreditation of prior learning and achievement (APL&A).

However, as the use of accreditation in this context is limited mainly to the UK, it was decided to use an overarching term that would apply to, and be understood by, all the countries involved in the project.[5] Additionally, other English-medium publications may also use the terms recognition of prior learning (RPL) or recognition of prior learning and achievement (RPLA).

Consequently, all references to the process included in the main sections of this report will be stated as the recognition of prior learning (RPL). This is intended to encompass all the terms mentioned in this section, as well as those used in the countries analysed that have not been included. This decision has been taken in order to avoid confusion, whilst acknowledging that a multitude of terms for the process exist, both in the countries involved in the analysis as well as further afield. However in each country analysis framework, the national terminology has been retained to enable the reader to gain a greater understanding of the context and process employed.

Part I

# The research phase:

## The analysis frameworks

## 1.1     Sweden

The Swedish analysis framework has been prepared by *Högskoleverket* (The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education).

The following overview of the situation regarding recognition of prior experiential learning (validation) at both secondary school and higher education level in Sweden is based on desk research carried out by the Swedish NARIC and on replies to an informal inquiry sent to a selected group of officials at some Swedish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

## 1.1.1 General context

### 1.1.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In general the official Swedish attitude towards validation has been positive from its start in the 1990's. Validation is a measure to be used not only for educational purposes, but also within the labour market. When it comes to foreign education and vocational skills it can also be a means of integration. Validation of prior learning is considered to be a key element in the overall lifelong learning strategy by the Swedish government. However, there are still no national guidelines or a national system for validation of prior learning and validation methods have been developed by different institutions.

Following the Government Bill of September 1997 'Sweden the future and diversity – from immigration policy to integration policy' (1997/98:16), the Commissioner for the Recognition of Foreign Vocational Training at Secondary School Level and Foreign Labour Market Experience in 1998 proposed - for labour market purposes - organisation of validation at national and regional levels. No prior, formal schooling or certification was to be required from the candidates, instead anyone claiming to have appropriate experience should be given the opportunity to have his or her competencies assessed. According to the government directives the task was to investigate how to assess and recognise foreign qualifications. The subsequent proposals included an organisation for assessment and recognition of prior and non-formal learning open not only to immigrants but to all adults.

The initiation of what is known today as, among other things, recognition of prior learning, took place in the middle of the nineties when the Swedish term *validering* (validation) was first used in this context by the government committee *Kunskapslyftskommittén*.

The *Kunskapslyftskommittén* was set up in 1995 with the aim of proposing methods on how to increase the number of adults gaining an upper secondary education. Validation soon became an important part of the infrastucture of the committee's project Adult Education Initiative (*Kunskapslyftet*), the biggest ever investment in the field of adult education in Sweden. Through validation, studies pursued could be adapted to the prerequisites of the individual and the duration of

study, thus be focused on the individual acquiring new knowledge. Validation could be used as a pedagogical means for anyone studying within the municipal adult secondary level education, for people with a Swedish education or foreign education and skills, and as such be of great interest to the individual as well as to the state. The committee later proposed in a report that validation should be organised together with study counselling by the local authorities, which are the responsible parties for education on a municipal level.

In 1977 a Swedish higher education reform regulation introduced a rule which was later known as the '25:4 rule'. In retrospect this could be regarded as the first endeavour to recognise knowledge and skills acquired through practical and/or vocational experience. Through this regulation anyone who had reached the age of 25 and satisfied specific course requirements for admission to a higher education course would fulfill the general requirements for admission on the basis of at least five years' work experience, a duration that would later be changed to four years. This '25:4' category of applicants had no school-leaving certificates on which selection procedures could be based. Therefore the Scholastic Aptitude Test (now called *Högskoleprovet*, sometimes referred to as the National University Aptitude Test or SweSAT) was introduced to serve this purpose. For a limited period it also became possible to earn extra admission credits for activities undertaken in organisations and associations. During the period 1977-1990 the Scholastic Aptitude Test was intended exclusively for this group of applicants. From 1991 onwards all applicants to higher education have been able to apply for admission on the basis of scores achieved in the SweSAT.

According to the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (chapter 6, § 7-8), a student may receive credit for knowledge and skills acquired outside of the formal higher education system or in the course of working activities, if the knowledge and skills that the student cites are of such a nature and of such scope that they essentially correspond to the educational programme towards which they are intended to give credit. The higher education institution is to consider whether previous education or activities can be accepted for credit.

These RPL crediting possibilities have not been much put into practice at Swedish HEIs, although for more than 20 years the Higher Education Ordinance has allowed for the crediting of relevant knowledge and skills acquired outside of the formal higher education system or during a professional career.

## 1.1.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The validation of prior learning is considered to be a key element in the overall lifelong learning strategy of the Swedish government. Validation is often mentioned as one important measure in inititiatives to achieve wider recruitment of students and diversity in higher education. Validation is also seen as a means of achieving integration, for instance by recognising foreign vocational skills through the validation of prior and experiential learning.

## 1.1.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

Since the *Kunskapslyftskommittén* the following developments, among others, have been of importance in the development process of the validation of non-formal and informal learning:

### 1999 Appointment of Commissioner for Validation of Adults' Knowledge and Competence

In November 1999 a Commissioner for Validation of Adults' Knowledge and Competence was appointed by the government with the task of - among others - implementing and evaluating three pilot projects aimed at "the validation of knowledge and competence acquired abroad". The Commissioner's final report, presented in October 2001, contained suggestions for the organisation of a general system of validation, i.e. an organisation open to all adults.

The Swedish government defined the aims of validation in its directives to the Commissioner for Validation of Adults' Knowledge and Competence. To the individual, the government concluded, validation of knowledge and competence is a means:

- either to obtain certificates as a basis for admission to continued studies, or
- to get a certificate of vocational skills to present to the prospective employer.

Pedagogical validation includes, for instance, adapting the learning situation to the adult individual.

### 2001 Bill on Adult Learning

In the above-mentioned Government Bill, 'Sweden the future and diversity – from immigration policy to integration policy', the Swedish government stated the intention of making it possible to recognise foreign competence even when no documents were available. In the Bill on Adult Learning (2000/01:72 Vuxnas lärande) introduced in February 2001, the government, awaiting the proposals of the Commissioner for Validation of Adults' Knowledge and Competence, stressed the importance of a system of validation in connection with study counselling for adults wishing to gain secondary school level education.

### 2001 Bill on Reforms in Higher Education

In September 2001 the government presented proposals for the Higher Education Sector when its 'Bill on Reforms in higher education – a more open system' (2001/2002:15) was introduced. The proposals give HEIs a central role in the processes of lifelong learning. Among the proposals, the accreditation of prior and experiential learning as a means for broadening the recruitment of students is mentioned. The bill clarifies the responsibility for universities and university colleges to examine whether an applicant who lacks formal qualifications has acquired the knowledge required outside of the formal education system. Methods for assessing proficiency in real terms in relation to higher education should be developed by the institution. Persons who, through Swedish or foreign education, practical experience or by other means, are capable of profiting from the programmes they have applied for should also be eligible for them.

### 2003 Amendment to the Higher Education Ordinance

In 2003, the validation of real skills was further stressed as a possible basis for admission to higher education studies with the following amendment to the Higher Education Ordinance[6]:

"A person has basic eligibility for education beginning at the first level and intended for beginners if he or she (—-) has the potential to benefit from the education, by virtue of Swedish or foreign education, practical experience or because of some other circumstance." (chapter 7, § 5)

"A person who by virtue of Swedish or foreign education, practical experience or any other circumstance has the potential to benefit from the education also has special eligibility." (chapter 7, § 8)

Consequently, since 2003 Swedish HEIs are obliged by the Higher Education Ordinance to assess prior and experiential learning of applicants, who lack formal qualifications and who demand such an

assessment, in order to determine both their basic and specific eligibility for admission. The HEIs have received funding from the state to develop methods for this purpose, which aims to determine whether or not the applicant meets the admission requirements but also to tailor the studies to the admitted student.

However, the possibility to validate informal and non-formal learning has, as of yet, only been utilised on a relatively limited scale by Swedish HEIs. The number of applicants admitted to higher education studies on the basis of validation of real skills is still relatively small compared to the total number of students admitted.

## Table 1:  Admittance to HEIs on the basis of prior and experiential learning

An alternative possibility to admit students in case the number of applicants exceeds the number of places on offer was introduced in 1997 and later, in 2002, it was entered into the Higher Education Ordinance (now in chapter 7, § 13):

When the number of applicants exceeds the number of places on offer some form of selection has to be made. Applicants are first grouped into various categories. Within each category they are then ranked on the basis of their qualifications, such as school-leaving grades. Applicants who have been ranked highest are admitted to the programme. At least one third of the places offered in a programme must be allocated on the basis of school-leaving grades, and at least one third according to scores in the SweSAT (see above under 1.1.1.1). Extra points are allocated to applicants in the SweSAT group on the basis of their individual work experience. In addition, higher education institutions may lay down selection criteria consisting of some specific proficiency or other objective grounds for no more than one third of beginner places offered. This alternative possibility to select students was introduced in 1997 and later, in 2002, it was entered into the Higher Education Ordinance (now in chapter 7, § 13) that the HEI itself could decide on the grounds for selection for up to ten per cent of its places. The limit for this quota was in 2006 increased to one fifth and, in 2008, for up to one third of the total places available. These alternative selection criteria determined by the higher education institution may consist of:

"1. special tests other than the national university aptitude test,

2. knowledge, work experience or other experience that is particularly valuable for the educational programme applied for, and

3. other circumstances that are relevant for the education."

(The Higher Education Ordinance, chapter 7, § 23)

*2003 Ministerial Report on Validation of Adults' Learning*

In a Ministerial Report (*Validering m.m. - fortsatt utveckling av vuxnas lärande*, Ds 2003:23, Ministry Publications Series Report), published in 2003, the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science states that:

- validation is a process involving the structured assessment, valuing, documentation and recognition of a person's knowledge and skills, regardless of how, where and when they have been acquired,
- the purpose of validation should primarily be exploratory rather than verificatory,
- the education system and the working life should share the responsibility for validation,
- an individual's possibilities to be validated should be guaranteed through regional cooperation between educational authorities, business/vocational sector organisations and social partners, and
- a special commission should, during a transition period of four years, be established with the responsibility to promote the development of legitimacy and equivalency within those parts of the education system and working life where validation has not been regulated.

*2003-2007 National Commission on Validation (Valideringsdelegationen)*

The Swedish National Commission on Validation ('*Valideringsdelegationen*') was set up, for the period 2003 - 2007, to promote and inform about validation, as well as to enhance regional cooperation, explore quality and methodological issues and also to develop a methodology for validation.

The Commission on Validation reported its experience on the development of validation in Sweden in a survey published in October 2005. At this time, the Commission estimated - by compiling information from various orderers and providers of validation such as municipalities, county labour boards and educational enterprises, that on average about 25 000 individuals every year have some part of their respective competence validated. The Commission calculated from this total that around 10 000 of these individuals have had a larger part of their competence validated.

In its final report *Valideringsdelegationens slutrapport – mot en nationell struktur*, published in January 2008, the Commission on Validation proposes that:

- the Ministry of Education and Research should be given overall responsibility for a national strategy and development of validation matters,
- one government agency under the Ministry of Education and Research should be given overall responsibility for continued development of the work with validation,
- municipalities, the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) and the Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) shall work for the possibility of individual validation,
- every region should, if possible, establish regional cooperation concerning validation efforts,
- the state shall support quality development and quality assurance concerning validation,
- any actions of validation carried out should emanate from the individual and be characterised by an equivalent process irrespective of where in the nation the validation takes place,
- the authority or organisation concerned within education or labour market shall see to it that the development of validation methods and models continues,
- each validation action should result in some form of documentation,
- the individual should be given the possibility of receiving financial support, during the validation process,
- validation arranged via an initiative of a municipality, the Public Employment Service, the Social Insurance Agency or an employer should be financed by the respective party, and

- a professorship should be established to carry on continuing research and evaluation on the effects of validation.

*2006-2007 Swedish National Commission on Validation: Supplementary Tasks*
In 2006-2007 the Swedish National Commission on Validation was given the supplementary task of investigating, together with the National Agency for Higher Education and the National Agency for Services to Universities and University Colleges, "the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of the present division of labour in the validation of foreign academic degrees so as to facilitate the validation of education and professional experience acquired abroad." The findings of this investigation are included in the final report (*Valideringsdelagationens slutrapport – mot en nationell struktur*, January 2008) of the Swedish National Commission on Validation.

The proposals of this separate investigation within the Swedish National Commission on Validation are included in the Commission's final report (*Valideringsdelagationens slutrapport*).

The investigation proposals of the final report include a more coherent organisation and model according to which:
- persons moving to Sweden should be given the opportunity to have their education and professional experience assessed/recognised as soon as possible,
- there should be a "common point of entry", according to the proposal placed within *Högskoleverket* (the National Agency for Higher Education), with overall responsibility for guidance, information and quality assurance in the new system, to which such persons can turn regardless of whether their education is completed or not and regardless of the level of their education, and such persons should be able to have their education assessed/recognised without having to state the intended use for the assessment,
- the "common point of entry" should assess or refer an application for assessment of completed study programmes (e.g. vocational and 'academic' programmes at the upper-secondary level, post-secondary vocational programmes and/or tertiary programmes) to the relevant governmental agency or institution (the National Reference Point for Vocational Education at the National Agency for Education, the National Agency for Services to Universities and University Colleges, the National Agency for Higher Education, various competent authorities for regulated professions, etcetera),
- persons who have not completed their education and have, or lack, relevant professional experience should be able to get assessments made by subject specialists at the respective levels. These specialists will carry out assessment at the request of the common point of entry, to which they will deliver their assessment findings,
- persons who lack documents altogether or lack verifiable documents will be offered validation of a more extensive kind according to a process where both guidance counsellors and subject specialists from the various levels will be involved, and
- the result of the assessment should be a legally binding decision on recognition documented in an evaluation report (utlåtande) presented to the applicant.

The working group of the investigation initiated collaboration with a number of HEIs in order to discuss assessment and quality assurance methods with subject specialists. Similar collaboration was initiated with the Swedish Agency for Advanced Vocational Education, which has an important position in the field

of post-secondary education and is thus a natural partner in the development of new forms for the assessment of foreign qualifications in between the upper-secondary and tertiary levels. Outside the field of tertiary education, other operations of importance were identified as those already conducted in most municipalities and in various industries to validate foreign education and training and occupational experience in relation to the programmes of the Swedish upper-secondary school and in relation to occupational certificates.

In a pilot project thirteen persons had their foreign education and work experience assessed/validated and recognised. Some of these persons had not completed their foreign university studies, others had foreign post-secondary non-university qualifications while some were refugees lacking documentation of their foreign qualifications. The individual met with a study adviser and was interviewed and assessed by subject specialists, e.g. university professors or teachers at Advanced Vocational Education Institutions. The participants received an evaluation report documenting the outcome of the assessment/validation of their qualifications and skills. Based on their evaluation reports some participants had their qualifications and skills formally recognised, for example, a participant lacking verified documentation of her teaching qualification and teaching experience from Afghanistan received a Swedish Teaching Certificate (*Behörighetsbevis*), which is required in order to be eligible for a permanent teaching position in Swedish schools.

### 1.1.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

RPL is considered to be a key element in the overall lifelong learning strategy in Sweden. It is regarded as a useful measure not only for educational purposes but also within the labour market. RPL has been widely used within Adult Education at the Secondary and Further Education levels in Sweden. It seems, however, that RPL so far has been used on a relatively limited scale within the Higher Education sector.

## 1.1.2 Purpose

### 1.1.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

The main purposes for recognition of non formal and informal learning – irrespective of how the recognition is documented – are admission to higher education and/or the crediting of previously acquired knowledge and skills within further studies.

## 1.1.3 Structure/ organisation of recognition

### 1.1.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

Sweden has not yet formally and nationally regulated the procedure and methods for validating non-formal and informal learning. It is the responsibility of every HEI to decide its respective regulations. However, a basis for these should be the "Recommendations regarding the HEI process of validating a person's full competence" which have been laid down by the Association of Universities and University Colleges (SUHF). The purpose of the Recommendations concerns pre-requisites (both general and specific) for

admission to and the crediting of prior learning within higher education. The Recommendations cover:

- validation within the admissions process, and
- validation leading to an advance decision before an application for admission and the beginning of an admissions process. This would be done in order to allow time for possible complementary studies.

*Main steps in a general procedure*

Apart from the Recommendations (see above), there is no national regulation with a uniform procedure within the Higher Education sector. However, within the Adult Education sector, the Swedish National Commission on Validation has proposed that a validation procedure should have the following structure:

1. When relevant, the process begins with an initial phase where the individual, often together with a guide or official, performs a first exploration of knowledge and skills. This action should be clearly exploratory in nature; as a consequence, it does not include any elements of assessment or valuation. This is also the phase in which a decision is made, jointly with the individual concerned, as to the objective of the validation being carried out. The outcome of this phase will be used as the starting point for a further in-depth exploration of skills or, in some cases, for moving directly to a later stage of the validation process. Interviews and self-assessment tools are used to provide a more diverse picture of the real skills possessed by the individual. The estimated time needed for this phase is 1–2 hours. It should be documented by means of a recommendation or formal statement.

2. When relevant, the second phase relates to an in-depth exploration of knowledge and skills. This phase should also be seen as exploratory, but from a more targeted perspective. Specialists in the specific subject or occupational fields intended for validation should participate in this phase. Such specialists may be subject or vocational teachers, occupational assessors from a validation centre or representatives of an industry association or a vocational committee. Together with the individual, the specialists will agree on the level and status to which the knowledge and skills validated correspond. This phase is estimated to require 2–8 hours and consists mainly of various theoretical and practical elements resulting in a more detailed description of skills. Documentation is to be issued in the form of a formal statement or certificate.

3. When relevant, the third phase involves an assessment of skills against a certificate. Knowledge and skills will be valued in relation to established skills descriptions or course objectives. The valuing is to be carried out by vocational teachers or recommended occupational assessors. A skills assessment is estimated to take 1–10 days and is implemented in the form of theoretical and, as the case may be, practical elements. A certificate is issued by vocational teachers or recommended occupational assessors.

4. When relevant, the fourth phase involves an assessment of skills against a course certificate, a professional or occupational certificate or a license. Most of the action taken in this phase concerns verification. The objective is for the final documentation to consist of the relevant legal documents in the respective field of knowledge or skills. Given the strictly verificatory nature of this phase, there is a risk that the individual may not reach the level of knowledge required in the tests or exams. In the event that the individual fails to obtain the legal documents referred to above, a certificate should be issued indicating the modules or elements that the individual passed during validation. This phase will take

1–10 days and is to be performed by quality-assured assessors.

The National Commission on Validation emphasises that not all the above-mentioned elements need to be performed in the validation process and even where all elements do need to be performed, this does not have to take place on a single occasion. Furthermore, the commission is of the opinion that each validation action should result in some form of documentation indicating the following:

- aim and objective,
- model(s) used for validation,
- method(s) used for validation,
- supporting materials or tools on which the assessment, if any, was based,
- validation provider's authority to issue documentation, and
- method used for quality assurance of the process.

This is considered necessary to ensure adequate quality and equality before the law in validation as well as to enable follow-up of measures taken in the validation process. Another aspect which should be emphasised, according to the commission, is that there is not always a need for assessment and valuing; instead sometimes it may be entirely possible for the individual to move on towards the education system or the labor market after, for instance, an in-depth exploration. Nor is it necessary for all individuals to be validated.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*
Following the different steps in the recognition process, there are also different instruments used for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Some of the instruments used by the different HEIs are listed below:

- Description and demonstration of knowledge and skills/competences through, for instance, written and practical assignments, seminars, structured interviews and workplace visits.
- Self-evaluation, by way of filling out a web-based form leading to an extensive cv, compilation of portfolios, which are then used as the basis for a qualitative assessment.
- Assessment of documents submitted by the individual.

## 1.1.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

The respective HEI decides on the procedures of the validation and recognition.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*
There are no national guidelines as to whether a jury or assessors should be involved. Each HEI decides if their assessment procedure involves a jury. Involved are, for instance, teaching staff and study counselors from the department in question.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*
The HEI decides if there will be assessors or a jury involved and selects the jury accordingly. The respective HEI decides on the competencies an assessor or jury-member should have.

### 1.1.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

The Recommendations (see above) suggest that the result of a validation for admissions purposes and of a validation for the purpose of crediting should be documented in the Swedish National Student Register (LADOK), where the following should be stated:
- purpose of the validation,
- competence of the person validated,
- how competences not verified through documents was assessed, and
- results of the assessment.

Furthermore, the way credits are reported differ. For example crediting can be:
- reported in the official transcript,
- in a portfolio and through the filling out of a form which is a) registered at the HEI and b) sent to the individual, and
- in a formal decision on crediting (which is copied to the individual).

*Civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
Academic recognition: shortened study periods and thus, for instance, economical gain for the individual as well as for society. Every decision by a HEI regarding an individual can be appealed against by the individual concerned in case that he/she finds it negative.

### 1.1.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within Sweden

The Recommendations suggest national acceptance by the HEIs of basic eligibility for higher education fulfilled through validation by one HEI. The Recommendations also suggest that general and specific eligibilities for admission to a certain programme of study validated by one HEI be nationally accepted by the other HEIs for admission to their similar programmes of study. Furthermore, the HEIs should show a generous attitude towards the crediting of prior learning.

### 1.1.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning?

Admission requirements as well as goals and expected learning outcomes of the relevant programme of study or course.

### 1.1.3.6 Cooperation between higher education institutions in Sweden regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

Cooperation is decided upon in the individual cases by the HEIs concerned. Cases of cooperation as well as consultation between HEIs have been reported. See also section 1.1.3.4 above.

### 1.1.3.7 Quality assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

Every HEI is an authority taking its own decisions, for instance through regulations. The formal decisions taken on – for instance - RPL by or within the HEIs (according to the delegation rules in force) are official and can be requested by an interested party. This is due to the Swedish principle of public access to official documents. Furthermore, the student in question has the right to appeal against the official decision in question, should the student be dissatisfied with the outcome. The decision maker is always obliged to state this in the decision and to provide reference to the appeal board.

Every decision by a HEI regarding an individual can be appealed against by the individual concerned in the case that it is found to be negative. Information on how to appeal is included in the decision by the HEI. Appeals are directed to The Board of Appeals for Higher Education.

## 1.1.4 Future

### 1.1.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non- and informal learning

No formal decision has yet been taken in response to the proposals (see 1.1.1.3) put forward by the National Commission on Validation regarding the Adult Education sector.

The '25:4 rule' will be discontinued in the autumn of 2008. Following this, the Ministry of Education and Research has given *Högskoleverket* the task to follow and support the HEIs in their work with validation of prior and experiential learning (*bedömning av reell kompetens*) and to conduct a survey on the state of the art of the work of validation currently being carried out in the HEIs. *Högskoleverket* is to write a report on this to be submitted to the Ministry of Education and Research by 30 June 2009.

## 1.2    Denmark

The Danish Analysis Framework has been prepared by CIRIUS (Danish NARIC).

## 1.2.1 General context

### 1.2.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In 1984, the Danish Parliament agreed on a new programme to develop adult education and training. It also briefly touched upon the question of non-formal and informal learning which, in Danish, are referred to as 'real competencies'. It stated that "Adults have the right to have their real knowledge and skills documented and recognised, independently of the way these have been acquired".

In 1992, the apprenticeship programme for adults (*Voksenerhvervsuddannelsen*, VEUD) introduced a systematic approach to validating non-formal learning. This scheme made it possible for adults (over 25 years) to be exempted from certain parts of formal initial training based on prior educational or occupational experience. Since 1992, more than 10,000 adults have started training under the VEUD programme. Leading to the same formal certification as initial vocational education and training, VEUD represents an effort to address the specific training needs of adults.

At the same time, the strategic development of employees, or SUM system (*Strategisk Udvikling af Medarbejdere*) was set up by social partners in the industrial sector, namely the Confederation of Danish Industries and the Metal Workers' Union. SUM developed into an instrument to map and validate competencies of the human resources of the businesses, but was not linked to public sector schemes and plans.

The Labour Market Training Act (1995) emphasised the role of the workplace in promoting learning. The Act introduced programmes to assist individuals in identifying their competencies with the aim of undertaking subsequent training. Since 1996 under this Act, the labour market training centres (AMU - *ArbejdsMarkedsUddannelse*) and vocational education and training colleges (VET) have been offering individual competence assessments (ICA) for counselling purposes, resulting in individual training plans.

Within ordinary initial vocational education and training schemes credit transfer can be granted based on prior work experience. Credit transfer 'catalogues' for vocational and general or theoretical subjects indicate how and where exemption will be granted inside the formal system.

The Adult Education Reform (2001) set in motion wide-ranging actions on validating non-formal and informal learning. The Adult Education Reform may be looked upon as a first step towards a more coherent and comprehensive public approach to validation. It emphasised that stronger and more

transparent links ought to be established between the various formal, non-formal and informal learning settings. This would include at least VEUD, SUM and ICA initiatives. Moreover, the reform introduced the basic adult education scheme (GVU – *Grundlæggende voksenuddannelse*) and the higher education levels in adult education and training.

In 2002 the Government presented an action plan for better education. The emphasis on validation was strengthened, as the plan focussed on comprehensive validation, covering a broader range of needs: individual, commercial and societal. Priority was given to introducing an individual right to have 'real' competencies validated. Validation could potentially grant access to an education programme and/or exemption from part of the programme. According to the plan, certification based exclusively on non-formal competencies and part-qualifications should be made available. In addition, documentation arrangements for work experience should be coordinated with educational planning in the businesses.

In November 2004 a policy paper was issued by four Ministries: Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Culture, Economic and Business Affairs. After deliberation by the Danish Parliament it established the basis for a permanent system for validation of non-formal and informal learning in December of that year.

In the area of vocational education, the Ministry of Education lays down rules and regulations after due consideration of the recommendations of the Council for Basic Occupation-Oriented Education. In accordance with these rules and regulations, people with special education or unique job-related experience can be exempted from part of the course. Furthermore the Ministry of Education can take steps to lay down special rules and regulations regarding the structure and length of a programme for a special target group, upon obtaining a recommendation to do so from the relevant Trade Committee.

## 1.2.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The move towards establishing a system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is the result of greater political awareness of the benefits of a flexible labour market. In other words, Denmark recognises that in order to strengthen the overall level of knowledge and skills, better possibilities for recognition of non-formal and informal learning need to be established.

In addition, one of the objectives of the Welfare Accord of 2006 was to provide better opportunities for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning acquired through formal, non-formal and informal settings. The focus of the Welfare Accord was on low-skilled and other disadvantaged groups within the labour market.

In 2006 Denmark also developed a strategy for benefitting from globalisation. It accepts that globalisation has and will continue to take jobs away from the country, but also that these will always be replaced by alternative employment options. As such, it endeavours to support the labour market in adapting to these constant changes. There is an important role for recognition of non-formal and informal learning within this sphere, since it helps the labour market to re-train and adapt to suit different professions by recognising what workers already know.

Also in 2006 the Tripartite Committee, comprising the social partners and the Danish Government, agreed that it was their joint responsibility to strengthen adult education and training in Denmark. In August of that year the government and the social partners completed a joint task focusing on adult education and training efforts. Moreover, tripartite negotiations continued in 2007 with the implementation of the Welfare Accord and the Globalisation Accord.

In the Danish Government's Strategy for Lifelong Learning, which was published in July 2007, one of the cutting-edge tools is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Better opportunities for individuals to have their knowledge, skills and competencies assessed and recognised within adult education and continuing training, are aimed at promoting increased participation of adults in adult education and continuing training as well as to improve their opportunities in the labour market.

Four initiatives to promote this aim are mentioned in this summary, including the implementation of legislation, quality assurance and the development of documentation tools.

### 1.2.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

The key recent change in Denmark is the 2007 legislative amendment, which has given each individual the right to have their prior learning experiences validated in relation to adult education and continuing training. Law no. 561 of 6th June 2007 concerns changes in different laws for vocational education, for instance, the Law for Basic Social and Healthcare Education. This legislation was passed on the June 6th 2007 and has been effective from the August 1st 2007 (in one instance, however, not until August 2008). It is likely to have a major impact on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The changes encompass the requirement that all schools must undertake an evaluation and take prior non-formal and informal learning into account at least two weeks prior to the beginning of teaching.

Among other things, according to this legislation, access to individual competence assessment has been introduced in short-term higher education programmes for adults (VVU) and in diploma programmes (continuing professional education at bachelor level) in the higher education system for adults, either as a substitution for formal qualifications necessary for admission, or as an exemption for elements of the programme itself. Each student and, where relevant, the company which is going to offer practical training draw up together a 'personalised student education plan' for the student concerned. This 'plan' should be put in place at the beginning of a students' education. In addition, it is imperative that the plan is developed, having taken into account the students' evaluation of non-formal and informal learning. As a result the substance and length of study, the type of basic areas of study chosen and the credit received for basic areas of study in the initial period of education can vary for each individual. It is believed that the evaluation of non-formal and informal learning may lead to a scenario where the students achieve an entirely different level in a subject than originally anticipated.

Until 1st August 2007, applicants to these programmes had to document a relevant education programme and at least two years of relevant work experience in order to gain admission.

Finally, access to non-formal and informal learning assessment has been improved in continuous vocational training (AMU) as well as in general adult training within the new legal framework.

The new policy centres on the needs of the individual and aims to make the process as accessible and flexible as possible. A key aim is to motivate those with little or no education to participate in lifelong learning, by making it easier for them to access learning opportunities, through the recognition of their prior learning. According to the new legislation, each institution offering adult education and continuing training, can assess, and subsequently recognise prior learning for the purposes of:

- accessing formal education, i.e. using non-formal/informal learning experiences to meet the admission requirements of a programme,
- preparing a learning programme,
- awarding a certificate or diploma for part of or a whole programme if the non-formal/informal learning meets the requirements of specific modules within the learning programme, and
- offering the learner, on request, documentation that recognises their prior learning, which does not equate to a specific certificate or diploma.

The amendments aim to implement a number of principles, which extend the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in education programmes in adult education and continuing training, namely:

- individuals can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed on the basis of frameworks and regulations specified in the individual education programme area,
- individuals contribute to the documentation of their non-formal and informal learning,
- competence assessment is always based on the goals and admission requirements of the individual education programme (or subject area standards within general adult education and upper secondary subjects for adults),
- an individual's competence is recognised no matter how or where it has been acquired,
- the quality and standards of an education programme must not be lowered, even if the leaving certificate or diploma is based partially or completely on the recognition of prior learning from outside the public-maintained education system, and
- the results of the assessment are documented by issuing a competence certificate or diploma to recognise either a completed programme or completed modules specified in the programme's regulations.

In Preparatory Adult Education, it is also possible for a student to have an assessment of prior learning carried out to verify whether the intended programme is appropriate for the student. If not, it is possible to refer the student to another, more relevant, course. Assessment is made after entry to the programme. Furthermore the education programme, including the non-formal or informal learning assessment, is free for all students. General Adult Education at lower secondary level (single subject courses) run parallel to, although are not identical with, the initial basic education for the youth group and are offered to all persons aged 18 years or older. An assessment of the individual's knowledge and qualifications in relation to the subject may result in placing the student at a relevant entrance level. There are moderate user fees for all for participation in the education programme. Assessment is made after entry and is, thus, covered by the fee.

In the ordinary education system, the following changes have come into force. Within general upper secondary education a more flexible credit transfer system was introduced in 2005, based on an assessment of the individual student's prior learning. The objective of this system is to give the students

the opportunity to receive credit transfers for previously completed studies, periods of stay abroad, etcetera, and therefore be granted admission to subjects at a higher level or extra optional subjects or – if the particular credit transfer is very substantial – a reduced advanced level course load. Assessment is made after entry.

Since the year 2004, the limitation of entry pertaining to age limit of 25 years has been removed from the Vocational Education Training programme for adults VEUD- *VoksenErhvervsUddannelse*. However the possibility to be evaluated and get accredited for the vocational education programme based on previous education and/or work experience continues to exist.

Since 2003, within initial vocational education and training individual competence assessment has been a general principle and recognition of non-formal and informal learning mandatory. Together with a contact teacher (or tutor), apprentices draw up a personal education plan describing all their learning objectives and how to attain them. The personal education plan is based on an assessment of trainees' competencies and outlines an individual pathway through the VET system. Flexible pathways (personal education plans) adapted to the apprentice's actual ('real') competencies may shorten education periods (i.e. provide exemptions), but they may also lead to longer education pathways adapted to individual needs. Equally they may lead to additions in order to enable the apprentice to acquire additional qualifications. In connection with the 2004 amendments of legislation, similar provisions of individual assessment of competencies now apply at the Basic Social and Health Education Programmes (*Sosu-skoler*).

In June 2004 the Government decided to change the restricted admissions system for higher education, with effect from summer 2007. The objective of the new admissions system was, firstly, to encourage and assist young people to complete their studies faster and reduce the time between completing their advanced levels and continuing their studies at tertiary level. Secondly, it aimed to strengthen the course-specific qualifications of the successful applicants in order to reduce the drop-out rate. The two-quota system was renewed so that:

- Quota I, which is based on the results from the qualifying examination – with minor adjustments – continues to be the main admission route to study programmes where admission is restricted.
- Quota II was changed and now applies to certain selected studies and provides a small group of applicants with a further chance of admission after a reduction in the quotient, including adjustment for any relevant course-specific skills enhancement. For all studies, this quota permits admission of students following individual assessment and entrance examinations or similar.

With respect to the other new sub-group, Quota II, the educational institutions are still able to admit students following individual assessments and entrance examinations or a similar basis that corresponds to it. Thus, Quota II provides opportunities for prior learning assessment of the individual applicants.

### 1.2.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

According to a report on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, published by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004, experiences with competence assessments and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the adult vocational training (AMU) and in the basic adult education (GVU) sectors show that the individual achieves a more targeted education. Furthermore businesses find that it is easier for them to develop an education plan when it is based on a concrete assessment of the competencies of the individual. An extensive evaluation of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the VET system is being prepared by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA). The EVA has recently carried out an evaluation of the Basic Adult Education programme (GVU), which also relates to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. One of the main findings was that the assessment of prior learning is conducted differently in different institutions providing the programme. According to the report, this is due to a lack of common systems and tools for assessing prior learning. At the moment the Ministry of Education is considering ways and means to follow up on EVA's evaluation.

Since the new system of recognition of non formal and informal learning in relation to adult education and continuing training came into force only recently (on 1st August 2007), it is perhaps too early to make any statements on or draw any conclusions from the experiences.

The standards for recognition are the course/programme regulations of the modules or education programmes, for which a person seeks to achieve recognition.

## 1.2.2 Purpose

### 1.2.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning?

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning after competence assessment may result in the following:
- entrance qualifications for an education/training programme,
- a shorter study plan ('credit' in an education programme,
- documentation of competencies/qualifications in relation to part of an education programme, with the purpose of using this documentation for entry to further education and/or the labour market, and
- recognition in relation to a full education programme, if possible, with the purpose of using this documentation for entry to further education and/or the labour market.

## 1.2.3 Structure/ organisation of recognition

### 1.2.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

The assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning currently exists in various forms across the different education sectors. The procedure, thus, depends on the educational programme,

which the non-formal and informal learning is assessed in relation to. For instance, in VET programmes, it is likely that practical tests in workshops will be used as a means of assessment, while in higher education, documentation and academic tests will be more frequent. In all programmes, however, the assessment approaches converge.

*Main steps in a general procedure*
According to the new legislation each competency assessment within the adult education and continuing training programme needs to include:
- guidance and clarification, i.e. the educational institution should provide information such as their options, regulations and obligations in the process,
- collection of documentation, e.g. documentation from employers, proof of participation in seminars, training activities, liberal adult education activities, voluntary work, and
- competence assessment, i.e. reviewing the documents, structured interviews, observation, asking the learner to complete a practical task, tests.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*
The instruments used for assessment and recognition include the following:
- reviewing the documentation presented,
- structured interviews,
- observation,
- asking the learner to complete a practical task, and
- tests.

## 1.2.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

The institutions that provide the education in question are in charge of the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Within VET programmes, the national trade committee for a particular programme has the authority to decide on exemptions from programme requirements regarding internships/trainee programmes that exceed four weeks, with exemptions of up to four weeks being within the authority of the college. Social partners are equally represented in the bipartite trade committees.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*
The assessors are selected from amongst the staff at the educational institutions in charge of the programme, which a person has wished to be assessed in relation to.

*Selection of the Assessors/jury*
The management of the institution decides on the composition and selection of the assessors in the institution. Normally, the assessors possess teaching skills within the relevant subject area and/or extensive experience in guiding and counseling students.

## 1.2.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning after competence assessment may result in the following:
- entrance qualifications for an education or training programme,
- a shorter study plan ('credit' in an education programme,)
- documentation of competencies/qualifications in relation to part of an education programme, with the purpose of using this documentation for entry to further education and/or the labour market, and
- recognition in relation to a full education programme, if possible with the purpose of using this documentation for entry to further education and/or the labour market.

Thus, the recognition may result in one of the following documents:
- letter of admission,
- individual education plan,
- certificate or diploma for part of, or a whole programme if the non-formal/informal learning meets the requirements of specific modules within the learning programme, and
- documentation that recognises prior learning, but that does not correspond to a specific certificate or diploma.

The documents are issued directly by the education institutions.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
See the answers in the above sections.

## 1.2.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies in Denmark

The certificates or diplomas are recognised on a national level.

## 1.2.3.5 Standards used for both recognition of non- and informal learning?

Individuals can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed on the basis of pre-defined standards such as descriptions of the content and aim of the programme as well as regulations specified in the individual education programme area.

Competence assessment is always based on the goals and admission requirements of the individual education programme, or the subject area standards within general adult education and upper secondary subjects for adults.

## 1.2.3.6 Cooperation between higher education institutions in Denmark regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

The new National Centre on Competence Development[7] (see also below) has taken several significant steps in order to establish networks and cooperations regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. However, these are still in the development stage.

## 1.2.3.7 Quality assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

In Denmark a specific body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures does not exist. Denmark does not have common methods of assessment, which can be applied or adapted to all educational environments. Instead it has different practices that are carried out in different ways in a variety of settings to ensure that quality standards are achieved.

From 2007 the Ministry of Education has become responsible for establishing further rules for educational institutions regarding "goals, frameworks, conditions and information requirements" for carrying out competence assessment. In each part of the education system, it is the individual institution that has responsibility for assessing the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The newly established National Knowledge Centre of Competence Assessment has, as its primary task, from August 2007 onwards, the gathering, developing and spreading of knowledge on assessment of competencies for the benefit of a number of stakeholders, including:
• educational institutions,
• professional organisations,
• third sector organisations,
• guidance centres,
• private and public businesses, and
• citizens.

It is believed that, in the future, a national and all-encompassing approach to validation is likely to be implemented.

As of August 2007, it is possible to appeal to the Qualifications Board against decisions regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the Adult Education System. Indeed the Qualifications Board is an appeals committee for decisions regarding credit transfer and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Danish education programmes. In accordance with Act no. 556 of June 6th 2007, of 1st August 2007, the Qualifications Board considers appeals against decisions made by Danish education institutions regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in relation to admission requirements at Higher Adult Educational programmes and in relation to admission requirements as well as programme content for Higher Education for Adults and Diploma Programmes within the system of higher education for adults. The board consists of a chairman, who is professor in Law, lic.jur., and a series of experts who, together, possess expertise within all the areas of education that come under the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The chairman and the members are appointed by the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, for four years at a time. The members who possess expertise within education programmes that come under the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Education are appointed following a recommendation from the Minister of Culture or the Minister of Education, respectively. In each case, the Board consists of the chairman and at least two experts. In this way, the chairman participates in the consideration of all cases, while the experts vary according to the subject area which the decision concerns.

*What body/institution guarantees the quality of the APL assessment?*
The education institution and the Ministry of Education.

## 1.2.4 Future

### 1.2.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

In Preparatory Adult Education, it is now possible for a student to have an assessment of prior learning carried out, in order to verify whether the programme being considered is appropriate for the student. However, if it is not relevant, it is possible to refer the student to another, more relevant, course. Assessment is made after entry and the education programme, including assessment, is free for all students.

General Adult Education at lower secondary level (single subject courses) run parallel to, although are not identical with, the initial basic education for the youth group and are offered to all persons of 18 years of age or older. An assessment of the individual's knowledge and qualifications in relation to the subject may result in placing the student at a relevant entrance level. There is a moderate user fee for all for participation in the education programme. Assessment is made after entry and is, thus, covered by the fee.

As from August 2008, adult education centres and other educational institutions offering general education courses that fall under the regulations on non-formal and in-formal assessments shall offer all citizens who are eligible for their general education courses an individual competence assessment in relation to the education goals, without simultaneous admission to the education programme. This aims to recognise prior learning for the purpose of issuing a competence certificate for a subject or a well-defined part of a subject (as per legislative amendment 2007). Also from 1st August 2008, the Qualifications Board has been handling appeals against decisions in connection with recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

# 1.3 England

<span style="color:blue">The English Analysis Framework has been prepared by UK NARIC.</span>

As the education systems in the United Kingdom are not homogenous, operating separate qualifications frameworks and offering different awards, it is necessary to analyse the countries included in this report - England and Scotland - in separate sections.

## 1.3.1 General context

### 1.3.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning was introduced through pilot projects in the early 1980s and further popularized, then formalised in the 1990s through the introduction of institutional policies. National guidelines on RPL in higher education were published in 2004 by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in order to ensure greater parity of access for individuals with non-traditional HE-entry qualifications or experience.

The first access courses (courses for adults with few or no formal qualifications, that can be used for admission to HE) were established in the late-1970s. Many of these were set up to encourage entry to teacher training for people with a wider range of backgrounds than the traditional types of students who were attracted to teaching. Over the years, the success of these early courses led to the development of courses in other areas.

In the 1987 White Paper, Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge, the Government identified Access to Higher Education as "the third recognised route to HE", and sought to extend Access to HE provision through a national framework for the recognition of Access to HE courses.

A national framework of qualifications has been in existence since 1989. The QAA has been responsible for the national framework for higher education qualification (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1997.

### 1.3.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The introduction of RPL came primarily as a response to the fall in the traditional HE-attending population. Higher education institutions needed to find a way to recruit new and different students, specifically those with non-traditional (and therefore often non-formal or informal) educational backgrounds.

The emerging agenda for higher education in the United Kingdom promotes lifelong learning, social inclusion, wider participation, employability and partnership working with business, community organisations and among HE providers nationally and internationally. Consequently, higher education

institutions are increasingly recognising the significant knowledge, skills and understanding which can be developed as a result of learning opportunities found at work, both paid and unpaid, and through individual activities and interests.

## 1.3.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

From 1980 to 1986 the Learning from Experience Trust grew out of a collaboration between the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and three other bodies: the Further Education Unit (FEU); the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and the American Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).

In the early 1980s hardly anyone in the UK had heard of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. There was no practice of it anywhere and most academics were dismissive of it. Two reports, however, from the CNAA and the FEU established the basis for subsequent development of APEL.

Jack Mansell, the Chief Officer of the FEU, realised that APEL had potential for the changes in further education he was promoting. He commissioned Curriculum Opportunity, which was a survey of entry qualification for courses in further education, to investigate the possibilities for APEL. It was distributed to all further and higher education institutions and went through two editions.

Edwin Kerr, Chief Executive of the CNAA at the time had established the Development Unit within CNAA. It commissioned access to higher education: non standard entry to CNAA first degree and DipHE courses, a survey of entry qualifications to CNAA awards.

CNAA's Development Services then commissioned what became The Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning. This was a report of doing APEL for real in ten CNAA associated institutions covering most of the curriculum (Mathematics and Science were attempted later, but with less success). The report was, in effect, a handbook on how to conduct APEL. Both publications went to all higher education institutions.

The Wates Foundation funded the first formal course for APEL run jointly through Goldsmiths' College, University of London, and what was then Thames Polytechnic (now Greenwich University) in 1982. It was called Making Experience Count and in time served as a reference point for others' initiatives.

After six years, it was clear that the exploration stage at PSI needed to be followed by a development programme. That was the purpose of the Learning from Experience Trust, launched in 1986.

At the same time, the CNAA's Credit Accumulation and Transfer Registry (CATS) was established to enable students to transfer easily from one institution to another, as well as provide stopping-off points for those who wished to interrupt their studies. Its regulations stipulated the number of credits that were required for a degree. And taking a revolutionary step, it authorised the award of academic credit for APEL at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Through CNAA's national academic standing, the Trust was therefore able to establish that APEL was a valid and reliable academic procedure in higher education.

The Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning (the Guidelines)[8], published in September 2004, have been drawn up by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education at the request of individuals and

groups within the HE community, in order to help ensure that this important activity can be conducted with a high level of security and in the light of the best current practice.

There are no specific policies relating to the recognition of prior learning, although the most pertinent agenda that has come to the fore recently in Britain is that of lifelong learning. In line with the European 2007-2013 agenda for lifelong learning, the UK too is looking to increase HE participation and to encourage the return to education of those who have left the system, or who never formally became a part of it.

Additionally the Education and Skills element of the Draft Legislative Bill 2008-2009 highlights the need to strengthen workplace skills training over the coming years. This non-formal aspect of training could also be fed into RPL processes.

### 1.3.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

It is hard to ascertain from current sources which sectors use RPL more successfully than others. It is more widely used for adult learners wishing to return to HE (particularly for credit transfer purposes) or HE-entry level qualifications.

## 1.3.2 Purpose

### 1.3.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

Currently the main purposes for issuing certificates/reports for recognition of both non-formal and informal learning are the following:
- access to vocational or higher education study programmes,
- exemption from certain modules or units of a recognised qualification, and
- motivating potential learners.

## 1.3.3 Structure/ organization of recognition

### 1.3.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

Several recognition procedures currently exist in both FE and HE, although all HEIs should follow the guidelines that have been drawn up by the QAA (see previous section). However these guidelines refer more to institutional quality assurance practices and ensuring fair application and assessment procedures, rather than detailinging specific RPL procedures. Consequently a diverse range of approaches and practices for the accreditation of prior learning has evolved across the HE sector.

The main mechanisms used to recognize prior learning include:
- focused interview or viva[9,]
- portfolio of evidence,

- recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning (RARPA)[10],
- completion of a piece of work and a reflective account/diary of the learning achieved, and
- completion of the usual assessment used to demonstrate learning in the module/course/programme for which equivalence is being claimed.

All of these mechanisms are intended to be learner-centric and facilitate progression and achievement of all individuals. Furthermore they all involve the identification of learning, collecting evidence and comparing learning with pre-defined outcomes/levels within the English education system.

As there is no standard RPL procedure, it follows that there is no uniform certificate. This is compounded by institutional autonomy and the right of the institution to accept whomever it chooses onto its courses.

According to the Guidelines drawn up by the QAA, RPL approaches "typically include policies and practices designed to accredit learning and achievement that occurred:
- and has been previously assessed and certificated,
- in a work/community-based or related setting, but is not a formal part of that experience,
- at some time, prior to the formal HE programme on which an applicant is about to embark,
- concurrent with participation in a HE programme, but is not a formal part of that experience,
- through experience and critical reflection, but was not part of a formal learning programme."

The Guidelines are not a 'how to do it manual' and do not provide models of practice or a detailed account of approaches and procedures to be followed. They are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. The purpose of the Guidelines is to encourage HE providers to explore, with their partners and stakeholders, a range of issues that can emerge when developing and refining approaches to the accreditation of prior learning.

Indeed the Guidelines encourage the consideration of a number of forms of RPL procedures, in order that the most appropriate one can be chosen according to the experience of the candidate.

*Main steps in a general procedure*
While the overall procedure may vary from one institution to the next, the main steps in the process(es) of recognition are frequently:
1) identification of prior learning,
2) formal coding of this learning/experience, and
3) assessment of competences by approved mediator.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*
The assessment of portfolios is widely used by HE providers. Guidance on portfolio preparation can helpfully address such factors as the nature and volume of the evidence to be included, requirements as to its currency and any necessity for independent verification of evidence. An HE provider may also wish to include guidance on the language in which evidence should be presented, together with guidance on any translation requirements and responsibilities.

## 1.3.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

It is the responsibility of the admitting institution to undertake the RPL process. In higher education, guidelines are provided by the overarching accreditation body, the QAA, but it is not directly involved in the recognition process.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*
Normally there is no jury. Rather the process is undertaken by an approved assessor who forms part of the department that deals with RPL applications. Nevertheless it is imperative that both the institution and the applicant are fully aware of the responsibilities of the staff involved in the RPL application evaluation.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*
The selection of the assessors depends on the individual institution, as well as the requirements for assessing the individual's competencies.

## 1.3.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

A variety of reports/certificates are issued by FEIs and HEIs in England.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
The certificates have no legal basis, however there should be no reason why a certificate issued for a programme that represents a standard on the national qualifications framework but that has included elements of non-formal or informal learning should be treated any differently to the final certificate for a qualification issued for a full programme of formal learning, as long as the non-formal/informal learning is clearly marked. Indeed the QAA states in Principle 3 of its Guidelines that "prior experiential and/or certificated learning that has been accredited by an HE provider should be clearly identified on students' transcripts."

## 1.3.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within England

There is no formal mutual  recognition of the certificates or reports on a national level, however (as noted in the section above) there is no reason why institutions should treat certificates issued partly or fully on the basis of RPL any differently to those issued following a period of formal learning.

## 1.3.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning

Non-formal and informal learning may be assessed in line with the learning outcomes or competences that have been identified by the HEI for specific courses. These outcomes should be broadly in line with the subject benchmark statements and programme specifications that have been drawn up by the QAA and that should be followed by all HEIs in England.

### 1.3.3.6 Cooperation between higher education institutions in England regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

As the QAA states that "the terminology, scope and boundaries used by an HE provider in its policies, procedures and practices for the accreditation of prior learning should be explicitly defined in information and guidance materials", it can be assumed that there is not a great deal of inter-university co-operation in this area.

### 1.3.3.7 Quality assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

The QAA is responsible for quality assurance in HE more generally and has also developed guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning. However these guidelines do not in themselves guarantee the quality of assessment procedures for RPL, rather they should be used as a reference to ensure just and transparent procedures.

Institution-internal QA procedures serve to ensure that applicants for RPL credits are treated equally, but these are not standardised from one institution to the next.

There is no overarching body that guarantees RPL assessment quality.

## 1.3.4 Future

### 1.3.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non- and informal learning

Upcoming and expected changes are:
- Increasing co-operation between HEIs/VET providers with reference to RPL mechanisms and procedures,
- widening participation in post-compulsory education and in HE in order to achieve 2010 governmental goals, and
- use of RPL in enabling learners with 'non-traditional' credentials to [re-]enter education.

# 1.4 Scotland

The Scottish Analysis Framework has been prepared by UK NARIC.

## 1.4.1 General context

### 1.4.4.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In formal terms, the Core Principles and Key Features of RPL that have been developed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority were published in 2005. These Principles were developed within the context of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and support the practice of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of the wider Scottish Lifelong Learning agenda.

### 1.4.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The SCQF Core Principles and Key Features of RPL aim:
- to provide guidance to learning at post-16 level,
- to provide consistency and therefore confidence in users,
- to support the practice of recognition as part of the Lifelong Learning agenda,
- to encourage a range of approaches to RPL, taking into account different sectors, whilst remaining non-prescriptive,
- to ensure the focus of the process is the learner, and
- to recognise a continuum of learner needs.

### 1.4.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

RPL has been introduced in the health sector, through the Scottish National health Service (NHS), early education and childcare, as well as in other less-specific environments that are listed in section below.

### 1.4.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

The recognition of non- formal and informal learning is considered to be a success in the following fields:
- community learning and development,
- voluntary sector learning providers,
- workplace learning and training providers,
- guidance providers,
- employers, and
- health [care].

## 1.4.2 Purpose

### 1.4.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

Currently the main purpose(s) of issuing certificates/reports for recognition of both non-formal and informal learning are:

• personal and career development (formative),

• supporting transition between informal and formal learning (formative),

• gaining credit towards recognised study programme (summative), and

• gaining entry to study programme (summative).

## 1.4.3 Structure/ organisation of recognition

### 1.4.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

No one uniform procedure for recognition exists, although all RPL processes contain an element of reflection and identification of learning outcomes and level, which relate to the purpose of the application for recognition.

*Main steps in a general procedure*

As no single process exists, in this section a specific example (which can be deemed to be a reasonably accurate representation of the process followed by some institutions) has been chosen. In the case of the University of Abertay, the following elements are included in its Procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning:

• each application has a co-ordinator, an advisor and an assessor,

• the advisor will provide advice and guidance to the applicant in order to ensure the best possible outcome. In general the support provided will involve:

  • encouraging reflection,

  • helping to identify the sources of learning, and

  • helping with the selection of the evidence of learning,

  • providing feedback on the presentation of the submission,

• the advisor will also provide subject-specific advice that focuses on the subject matter of the learning. This involves:

  • advising if the subject matter is likely to be at the level claimed,

  • clarifying the meaning of the learning outcomes within modules and programmes as well as agreeing the student's own learning outcomes,

  • agreeing on the structure of the submission and the criteria for assessment,

  • advising on which types of evidence are appropriate to the learning outcomes and the level of analysis required,

  • advising how to relate the learning from experience to the learning outcomes,

  • advising on the amount of credit to be claimed, including consideration of whether the success of subsequent study may be put in jeopardy by missing out on the opportunity to study specific

modules against which credit might be claimed, and

- the assessor will assess and authenticate the details contained in the application, then will be able to match the amount of specific credit that can count towards the award.

This procedure is broadly reflective of the main steps on a national level, in that the application is overseen by designated co-ordinators or advisors and that it is very much applicant-oriented. Furthermore the use of national SCQF credits reflects common practice across Scotland.

*Instruments used for the assessment and recognition of informal and/or non-formal learning include:*

- reflective account,
- project work,
- structured interview,
- assessment-on-demand,
- mapping of learning outcomes,
- profiling,
- Europass CV/Language Passport, and
- portfolio.

All of these require the gathering and presenting of evidence. Additionally learning providers dealing with RPL may need to consider:

- initial guidance on the RPL process,
- supporting learners in the reflective process,
- mechanisms for gathering and presenting evidence (the least resource-intensive),
- recognition process for RPL claims,
- monitoring processes,
- support for staff, and
- integration of RPL provision within QA systems.

## 1.4.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

It is the higher or further education institution only that is involved in an application for RPL for entry on to a specific course or for credit exemptions.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*

There is not usually a jury involved. Often there is a department, or section within a department, that deals with applications for RPL. Within the section or department, designated members of staff deal with applications for the recognition of prior learning, be it non-formal or informal. To this end, these staff members are frequently subject or sector-specific. At the University of Napier in Edinburgh, for example, the following job roles are involved in a RPL claim:

*RPL coordinator*

Each school or Faculty has an RPL coordinator. When an applicant is thinking about making an RPL for credit claim, contact should first be made with the RPL coordinator who will explain the  RPL process.

*RPL adviser*

The RPL coordinator will identify an RPL adviser (eg. a module leader) who is a subject expert in the area where the applicant wishes to make a claim. The RPL adviser will help the applicant prepare a claim for assessment.

*RPL assessor*

The RPL assessor is a subject specialist who will not normally be involved in the preparation of the RPL claim. He or she will assess the claim, through the most appropriate means, which may include written work, practical or oral presentation.

## 1.4.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

The format of certificates varies according to institution (at HE level, that is) although if credit is awarded, the final certificate is in the standard national format with RPL credit highlighted. For example, according to the University of Abertay "all successful claims for credit will be recorded on the student records system and will be presented to the relevant programme assessment boards. All credits awarded will be recorded on the student's transcript." In this case, therefore, the non-formal or informal learning would be noted alongside the formal elements of the course.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*

If the recognition of the prior learning experience results in a credit rating on the SCQF, then the qualification (or part of a qualification) will be recognised on a national basis, given that the referent is nationally recognised and understood. This does not, however, form a legal basis for recognition, given that HEIs and other education institutions are autonomous bodies and, as such, are not required to accept students into courses. They develop and apply their own admission criteria, against which each individual is assessed.

## 1.4.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within Scotland

As above, if the recognition results in a credit rating on the SCQF, the qualification should be recognised and accepted by other institutions (in line with their own admission criteria) as it is nationally referenced.

## 1.4.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning.

The recognition process for RPL for personal/career development may involve:
• mapping the outcomes of learning within the SCQF, or a notional levelling of learning, in order to identify possible progression routes to build on that learning. This mapping or 'notional levelling' may be undertaken by comparing the outcomes of learning to the SCQF Level Descriptors; core skills or National Occupational Standards (NOS), and
• identifying and further developing core skills gained through prior informal learning as part of bridging activities to ease the transition between informal and formal learning.

### 1.4.3.6 Cooperation between higher education institutions in Scotland regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

No formal co-operation has been identified.

### 1.4.3.7 Quality assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

The SCQF guidelines state that both summative and formative recognition should take place within the context of clearly defined quality assurance mechanisms.

The SCQF Core Principles and Key Features of RPL outline some widely applied assessment criteria to assist staff in determining whether evidence presented is satisfactory and appropriate. The criteria comprise:

- acceptability: appropriate match between evidence and learning outcomes – is the evidence reliable and valid?
- sufficiency: of breadth and depth of evidence, including reflection, to demonstrate achievement of claimed learning outcomes,
- authenticity: of evidence – does it definitely belong to the learner who is claiming it?
- currency: of learning. Has the learning been kept up-to-date?

Additionally the Principles state that external assessors or verifiers may be used as part of the institutional monitoring process.

## 1.4.4 Future

### 1.4.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non- and informal learning

RPL processes are expected to become fully integrated into organisational QA systems to ensure transparency, consistency and reliability. The SCQF Strategic Plan 2007 - 2011 states that one of the main aims of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership is to extend the recognition of prior informal learning during this period.

RPL processes are expected to be incorporated into curriculum design – explicitly addressed at programme approval stage, with learning outcomes expressed in a way that enables their achievement through a variety of learning pathways. This also supports the encompassing approach of the SCQF, which outlines its goals, as set by the Scottish Government, as follows:

"The goal that the Scottish Government has given the SCQF Partnership in Skills for Scotland requires us: to move quickly to ensure that the SCQF embraces more learning opportunities by increasing the number of credit rating bodies; facilitating the inclusion of work based learning programmes and encouraging the recognition of informal learning. This is a goal with which we wholeheartedly agree, and we look forward to achieving it in the coming years"[11].

# 1.5    Ireland

The Irish Analysis Framework has been prepared by UK NARIC.

## 1.5.1 General context

### 1.5.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The development of RPL in Ireland can be traced back to the government committee report on Adult Education of 1973, which recommended that adult education should come within the remit of the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA, now HETAC) and that within the context of developing programmes, there should be a facility to recognise prior work-based learning. The issue was taken up within the context of developing credit systems within higher education, which was stepped up with the introduction of its credit system. Since then, reports and policy proposals from the adult education community in particular have underlined the importance of accreditation of adult education programmes at all levels and the need to develop RPL to fully recognise learner achievements and embed them in the qualifications system.

The White Paper on Adult Education, Learning for Life (2000) addressed the question of accreditation of prior learning and work-based learning. It identified a need to streamline and simplify processes, to develop more flexible forms of certification and assessment (such as modular, outcomes-based and credit-based systems) and to provide systemised support to guide learners through these processes. It recommended that the idea of a national training programme for learning assessors be explored. This would allow for enhanced provision and meet the guidance and assessment needs of learners. Whilst the overall approach to improving RPL has been subsequently followed, the specific suggestion for a national training programme has not been implemented.

### 1.5.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

Among the main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced are:
- it supports alternative learning pathways and helps move towards a Lifelong Learning society (this is a later objective that reflects the European promotion of lifelong learning),
- it recognises the importance of lifelong learning and of the demand to develop alternative routes into education and training, to qualifications and to offer more flexibility for adult learners,
- it promotes the equity of access and participation in higher education in particular, and provides alternative entry routes and pathways to programmes and qualifications,
- statutory regulation concerning qualifications required for the workplace and continuing professional development needs have been introduced,
- changing demographic factors that have put pressure on most higher education institutions to broaden their learner profile,
- greater availability of funding for RPL activities, and

- greater availability of information and guidance to adults to enable them return to education and training by identifying appropriate education and training programmes. Services include the Adult Education Guidance Initiative and Qualifax.

At present, in 2007, these factors are still relevant. The development of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) creates a new context for RPL. It aims to facilitate and encourage RPL through action at national level, by awarding bodies (the awards Councils, FETAC and HETAC, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the universities) and by providers of education and training.

## 1.5.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

A number of national initiatives have been implemented in the 1990s, most especially since the introduction of the National Framework of Qualifications in 2003, which aims to advance the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

### *Historical Context - Higher Education and Training*

The early impetus for the accreditation of prior experiential learning stemmed from the 1973 Adult Education Report which promoted this as a means to facilitate increased participation. It recommended that the NCEA, whose remit was to promote, co-ordinate and develop higher education outside the university sector, accredit adult education courses. The NCEA's initial policy (1978) on the matter did not lead to significant take-up. In the 1980s, following the Commission on Adult Education Report, 1984, the NCEA took further steps to develop a credit system and, in 1987, developed further its policy on 'work experience and experiential learning'. Under this policy, students could achieve credit for a maximum of 25% of the quantity of learning on any approved course through prior experiential learning. The NCEA was also prepared to approve arrangements for exemption for relevant work experience. Again, take-up of this option in the 1980s was low. At that time, higher education institutions were mainly concerned with accommodating increasing numbers of school leavers.

In 1993, the NCEA published a policy on Prior Experiential Learning which defined the concept, the extent of exemption or credit to be granted for it and set out guidelines and criteria for the process. Following this, the policy was widely promoted and seven pilot projects were organised. Subsequent to these projects, practice developed within institutions. In the university sector, RPL activities, where they emerged, focused primarily on adult and community education programmes and access for mature students, but were not generally widespread.

### *Historical context - Further Education and Training*

In the 1990s, a number of bodies in the further education and training sector (which includes basic education, community and adult education, vocational education and training other than primary, post-primary or higher education and training) developed RPL actions and practices. These bodies included FÁS (the national training and employment authority), Fáilte Ireland (the national tourism development authority), and the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA). Following the establishment of the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) in 1991, which encompassed the former awarding bodies in the sector, a policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning for the sector as a whole was agreed (2005) and work continues to be actively done in this area.

Successive government reports on adult education and reports from organisations representing the sector called for the development of mechanisms and support for the accreditation of prior learning. The Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning (2002) also noted the importance of APEL and that the then emerging national qualifications framework should support this. It also noted that action in the workplace to identify the knowledge, skills and competence necessary to execute tasks associated with specific occupations would facilitate access to the accreditation of prior learning.

From the late 1990s onwards, the development of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and policies on access, transfer and progression were seen as key elements in advancing the national RPL agenda. The importance of RPL and the need to address policy, funding and technical issues surrounding it was raised in consultations on the development of the Framework. The NFQ was introduced in 2003 and seeks to recognise all forms of learning, through an integrated and flexible system. The framework explicitly aims to recognise all learning achievements including prior learning. It does so by:
• establishing a national point of reference or basis for RPL  -  learning outcomes,
• promoting alternative pathways to qualifications, and
• promoting a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications.

The NFQ and the new architecture of awards being developed in both further and higher education and training  – including credit systems, major, minor, supplemental and special purpose awards – are also more conducive to RPL in that they extend the number and diversity of reference points for recognising prior learning achievements.

Specific initiatives were taken by the NCEA to develop RPL practice in the higher education institutions within its remit. Also, across all higher education institutions, involvement in EU-funded projects on RPL acted as a catalyst for practice. The Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL in FE and HE were issued in 2004 by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

### 1.5.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

The introduction of statutory regulation was a key factor in the development of RPL for cases where existing workers who had not achieved the relevant qualifications needed to be certified in order to continue to operate in certain sectors. The general need for certification of skills on the part of employees and employers was a driving factor behind schemes to accredit prior learning in the retail, construction, childcare and craft sectors. The introduction of higher standards or qualifications as a requirement for professional practice is, in some cases, a catalyst for RPL.

## 1.5.2 Purpose

### 1.5.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

The main purpose(s) of issuing certificates/reports are in Ireland:
• entry to study programme, leading to a recognised award,

- credit towards award or exemption from certain programme requirements,
- eligibility for full award,
- facilitates employment, although not necessarily through qualification, and
- HETAC and FETAC can directly certify RPL applications, as can training and learning providers recognised by these councils.

## 1.5.3 Structure / organisation of recognition

### 1.5.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

There are guidelines in place for RPL in HE and FE, but no defined recognition procedure that all learning providers or councils must adhere to.

*Main steps in a general procedure*
According to the NQAI's 2005 National Principles and Guidelines for RPL, the following process should be in place in all FE and HE institutions:
- guidance and support should be available for applicants and all involved in the processes of recognition of prior learning,
- an appropriate appeals mechanism should be in place,
- recognition of prior learning processes should be easy to understand, fair and transparent, and be conducted in a reasonable timeframe,
- the recognition of prior learning processes should be organised in such a way that they do not create barriers for the applicant, and
- appropriate resources to support the processes for the recognition of prior learning should be in place.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*
A variety of assessment instruments are used in the evaluation of prior learning, including:
- portfolio,
- interview, and
- examination.

The guidelines on assessment from the NQAI's 2005 National Principles and Guidelines for RPL include the following:
- assessment criteria for the recognition of prior learning should be published, made explicit to applicants, and applied consistently and fairly,
- assessment criteria should be based on learning outcomes of awards or standards of knowledge, skill and competence set out in the National Framework of Qualifications and by the relevant awarding bodies, and
- assessment and verification mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning should be appropriate and fit for purpose.

### 1.5.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

While the situation in Ireland is not overly complex, a number of institutions are involved in the recognition of prior learning at different levels of education. These are addressed separately below.

*Role of Awards Councils*

There are two strands to the RPL activities of the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). Under the first, they set out policy for providers who offer education and training programmes leading to their awards (or to providers who have delegated authority to make their own awards) and oversee the implementation of RPL by these organisations. They also make awards directly to learners on the basis of RPL. In 2006, HETAC published the Recognition Policy, Criteria and Process for a Direct Application to HETAC for a Named Award (see www.hetac.ie). HETAC has made three awards directly to learners on the basis of RPL (a Master's Degree, 2005; a Doctoral Degree, 2006 and an Ordinary Degree, 2007). In mid-2007 three further applications were being processed. HETAC has also developed an overall policy on experiential learning concerning providers. It is refining this policy and its approach to direct applications for awards in the light of experience.

Providers who offer programmes leading to HETAC awards have the responsibility to facilitate RPL for learners. These providers include the Institutes of Technology, private colleges and others, including the Garda College and Military College. Most Institutes of Technology have adopted or are operating RPL based on HETAC policy and the national RPL policy and guidelines. Much of the current RPL activity can be traced back to the first APEL policy published by HETAC (formerly NCEA)  and it is worth noting that a range of practice and experience exists across the sector.

In 1993, for example, the Garda College developed a Bachelor Degree at a senior level based on experience in various ranks and assignments. This programme is up and running to date. Furthermore, Cork Institute of Technology introduced an RPL policy in 2005. This sets out the purposes of RPL, principles and rules that apply (e.g. concerning the award of credit, grading, awards classification and ceilings). The RPL policy has been introduced for an initial two year pilot period following which it shall be reviewed. As far back as 1996, the same institution established the Department of Education Development (DEIS) with a remit that included the development of RPL policy and practice as well as provision of support. This is the only higher education institution that has such dedicated institution-wide support structures in place. DEIS has dedicated RPL officers who offer support for registered students who are seeking credit or exemptions for their prior learning (whether accredited or experiential). Over the period 2000 – April 2007, the total number of portfolios for RPL assessment submitted to date is 1060. Some 260 portfolios were submitted in the academic year 2006/07 (to April 2007).

In the area of further education and training, FÁS, Fáilte Ireland and the NCVA have operated a range of different processes for the recognition of prior learning since 1990. In 2005, FETAC, which took over responsibility for qualifications in the sector as a whole, agreed a policy on RPL and published draft guidelines on RPL. At the same time, FAS introduced a fast-track apprenticeship scheme for semi-skilled electricians with a great deal of professional experience. The RPL process for this scheme was conducted through an assessment panel.

FAILTE - the National Tourism Development Authority runs a scheme called 'get your experience recognised', which is a portfolio-based RPL initiative that involves no written assessment. It covers the following sectors: retail, teleservices, meat trade, childcare, construction skills.

*Role of universities and Dublin Institute of Technology*

The individual universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology, who are autonomous awarding bodies as well as providers, are each responsible for RPL in their respective areas. In drafting the national principles and guidelines on RPL mentioned above, the authority requested that each institution would consider them in the context of developing their own procedures. In this context and that of facilitating access, transfer and progression in general, DIT has put in place a framework for RPL.

In the universities, the purpose of RPL is limited to entry to programmes, credit towards or exemptions from programme requirements. To the extent that RPL occurs, it is generally not regarded as a core activity for institutions, instead that activity tends to be localised in particular centres or departments. The extent of practice also relates to overall institutional contexts and priorities concerning student intake (ranging from those where demand remains high and where there is less pressure to develop further access routes, at one end of the spectrum, to those who face falling student enrolments or who place increased emphasis on meeting the needs of part-time and mature students).

Much of the focus of RPL at institutional level in higher education is on the accreditation of prior certificated learning. Activity concerning the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, usually known as the accreditation of prior experiential learning, ranges from broad frameworks and institutional policies (implemented in DIT, 2006; the University of Limerick, 2006, and National University of Ireland, Galway, February 2007, with plans to introduce this in University College Dublin later in 2007), to general use of RPL for access for particular student groups (e.g. adult learners/mature students) and specific practice in fields such as nursing, adult and community education, as well as continuing professional development for the workplace. Institutional level policies emphasise quality assurance – the need for quality assurance is also the driver for institution-wide policies. The practices of RPL in general stemmed from individual departments or centres, in response to better meeting student needs, attracting diverse groups of students, meeting regulatory requirements for certification and/or participation in research projects in the area of RPL.

An example of an institutional approach to RPL is that in operation in DIT. It has, in the context of the National Framework of Qualifications and national principles and guidelines, set out a broad framework to support RPL through establishing a dedicated RPL unit, which aims to develop operational principles and policy to be applied across all faculties. It is intended that RPL should build on existing practice, where it is available for non-standard and exceptional case entry and for entry at advanced standing. It should be available for all levels of education and training for the purposes of entry to programmes, credits and/or exemptions from programme requirements. The issues to be addressed include embedding RPL in quality assurance, assessment, appeals, coherence of awards, documentation and records, staff development, guidance and support for staff and applicants and liaison with the relevant stakeholders.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*

In the further education and training sector FETAC agreed a policy on RPL in 2005 that outlined the roles of jury and assessors that are required for a fair and consistent assessment of non-formal or informal learning to take place. These roles are as follows:

- FETAC,
- provider,

- mentor,
- assessor, and
- external verifier.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*

The education providers select the appropriate staff to fill the mentor and assessor roles and ensure the standard of the external verifier, whereas FETAC accredits the provider offering the RPL evaluation.

**FETAC**

FETAC is required by the Act to ensure that procedures for access, transfer and progression determined by the authority are implemented by providers. Its role is to ensure that its awards facilitate the recognition of prior learning, by devising guidelines with regard to its awards and which will include arrangements to enable providers to facilitate learners through the recognition of prior learning. Entry to a programme or the granting of credit or exemptions can be achieved by meeting the FETAC requirements on recognition of prior learning in quality zssurance, programme validation and for monitoring and evaluation.

**Provider**

The role of the provider is to implement the procedures of recognition of prior learning to ensure access, transfer and progression of learners and facilitate learners through the RPL process. Providers will require personnel to assist the facilitation of prior learning, which includes mentors, assessors and verifiers.

**Mentor**

A mentor is a key support for learners in the facilitation of the recognition of prior learning process. The support to be provided includes:
- providing information and advising the learner on the RPL process for entry to programmes, for exemptions and a full award,
- assisting with the determination of eligibility of a learner for entry to programmes, exemptions and attainment of an award as appropriate,
- helping the learner to analyse the standards for an award in terms of his or her prior knowledge, skill and competence and the matching of these to the learning outcomes of the award,
- advising the learner on identification and gathering of evidence,
- identifying the learning gaps in terms of knowledge, skills and competence for an award,
- co-ordinating the RPL process (in a centre, workplace, etc), and
- acting as a liaison between with the assessor, provider and awarding council.

**Assessor**

The assessor is central to the implementation of RPL for the purpose of the learner achieving an award. Providers, as part of their quality assurance procedures will require assessors to accurately assess the evidence of candidates against the standards of FETAC awards. RPL is a mode of assessment and like all assessment modes needs to be fairly and consistently applied. In order to facilitate RPL, assessors will need to be trained and experienced in their specific field and in assessment requirements for the award. Assessors are expected to:
- assess (i.e. judge) the learner's evidence against the national standards outlined in the award standards,
- make recommendations for either an award, or entry to a programme, or an exemption to the learner,

the provider and to FETAC as appropriate. In the case of learners applying to FETAC directly for recognition of prior learning FETAC will engage the services of providers, mentors and assessors. FETAC proposes to charge a fee for the processing of individual applications for the recognition of prior learning.

**External Verifier**

The process of assessment of a candidate's evidence will need to include external verification to ensure consistency and compliance with national standards. Assessment of prior learning is a mode of assessment, therefore external verification will ensure the standard for the award is met and the overall creditability of FETAC awards is maintained. Providers will ensure that this requirement will be met in their quality assurance policy and procedures on assessment.[12]

## 1.5.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

There is no standardised template for RPL certificates and reports. However, while RPL for access, credit and exemptions is generally practiced, the concept of making full awards on the basis of RPL is a relatively new one for Ireland (although there is some international practice of this). The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 sets out that learners may seek awards directly from HETAC or FETAC without having participated in specific programmes.

The various roles and responsibilities of the authority, awarding bodies and providers for RPL are set out in the authority's policies and procedures. The authority's main role is to encourage the continuation, expansion and further development of processes for RPL and to promote the co-ordination and harmonisation of these by providers. The role of the Awards Councils is to develop their award systems in support of RPL, to ensure that providers implement procedures concerning the development and publication of statements of arrangements in respect of programmes for RPL and to monitor practice and in managing direct applications for awards.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
RPL assessment can be used to assist the entry of individuals into further or higher education, or the workplace. The certificates issued, however, do not form a legal basis for acceptance.

## 1.5.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within Ireland

Where awards or modules are referenced to the NFQ or give credit towards a qualification at a particular level of the framework, the NFQ level or award will be recognised by other institutions.

## 1.5.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning

The NFQ level descriptors are used as a benchmark for recognising prior informal or non-formal learning.

### 1.5.3.6 Cooperation between higher education institutions in Ireland regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

The practices of RPL in general stem from individual departments or centres in response to a wish to better meet student needs, thus attracting diverse groups of students, and facilitating participation in research projects in the area of RPL. Nevertheless, neither formal/legal cooperation nor recognition agreements are currently in place.

### 1.5.3.7 Quality Assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

The NQAI National Principles and Guidelines for RPL, 2005 detail the quality procedures to which HEIs and FEIs should adhere. They do not, however, state how an institution should undertake an RPL assessment. This is the decision of the institution, in line with its own requirements and admission procedures.

There is no body that guarantees the quality of RPL assessment.

## 1.5.4 Future

The 2007 OECD Report on informal and non-formal learning states that there is "little systematic evaluation of RPL practice". Indeed the number of learners applying for RPL, particularly in access to HE, remains small.

At a national level, government agencies, representatives of employers and trade unions are considering the potential of RPL to meet up skilling and training needs in the workplace in various ways. There is not, as yet, a concentration on RPL as such but, as indicated in earlier sections, it is seen to have a role in the general context of meeting the national skills strategy, lifelong learning agenda and the national workplace strategy. It is a means, for example, of recognising existing skills and experience and therefore can be used as a stepping stone to further learning. Finally, learning and training providers should follow recently published guidelines on RPL with a view to ensuring greater consistency and coherence across the country.

# 1.6     The Netherlands

The Dutch Analysis Framework has been prepared by Nuffic.

## 1.6.1 General Context

### 1.6.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

References to establish a system of recognition of non formal and informal learning emerged in the mid 1990s. The Dutch name is 'Erkenning van Verworven Competenties', or EVC (recognition of acquired competences).

EVC was first mentioned as a topic in the discussion paper 'Blijven leren' (keep learning, 1993) issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture as a possibility to make education more accessible to adults. In 1994 a commission (commission Wijnen) was established to advise the government on the recognition of informally gained competences. The Commission's advice was positive in that it acknowledged that it was both desirable and possible to introduce a system of recognition of competences. The government was also positive, but emphasised that such a system should be implemented within the existing structures. Due to a lack of adequate support, this first wave of enthusiasm faltered.

In 1998 the government launched a new initiative to examine the recognition of competences in the context of 'employability'. A broad working group was established, that published its ideas in 2000 in the paper 'De fles is half vol' (The bottle is half full). In this paper it was emphasised that EVC is an important instrument for lifelong learning and employability. Apart from making the gaps visible between what a person can do and the formal quality requirements, EVC should also be used as a tool to further develop the knowledge and skills of individuals.

A concrete initiative following the report has been the establishment of a Knowledge Centre EVC (Kenniscentrum EVC). The mission of the knowledge centre is to inform about EVC, to stimulate its use, to improve the quality of EVC and to make EVC known to a wider audience. The starting point is 'to enrich knowledge by sharing knowledge'. Beside a network function the centre has the task to collect, examine and disseminate information concerning EVC. The centre contributes to a broad discussion about EVC that has led to the establishment of a quality code, which will be discussed below.

*Higher Education*
The use of EVC in higher education has gradually become practice over the last few years. However at its start, the usability of EVC in higher education was doubted. Among the first initiatives at political level was the establishment of the (abovementioned) commission Wijnen (1994). The recommendation of this advisory committee of the government was to situate the implementation of EVC - then still referred to as 'EVK' - within the ROC's (Regional Training Centres). In the period 1994-1998 several initiatives were

undertaken to gain experience in the area of recognition of non–formal and informal learning. In the government's autumn consultation of 3 December 1998 the cabinet called the social partners to develop activities aimed at employability and the strengthening of the working population. One of those activities was the use of EVC. In 2000 the higher education and research plan (HOOP) was explicitly mentioned as a manner to increase the intake to higher education. EVC was seen as a helpful instrument to fight the shortage problems within several specialists sectors, among which are education, care and technical subjects. Also EVC is considered an important instrument to involve new target groups into higher education by offering tailored training routes. This concerns employees returning in their former jobs, employees and highly skilled expatriates. At the end of 2000 a brochure was issued at the request of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science with suggestions for colleges and universities on how to implement EVC.

## 1.6.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The very first report from 1993 mentioning EVC was initiated to enlarge access to higher education. However, fairly soon afterwards (already during the discussion of the 1993 report) the advantages for access to the job market became more prominent as an argument in favor of EVC. As is mentioned in the above section EVC was used, for example, as a tool to fight shortages of employees in certain sectors of the labor market. Through the use of EVC, employees with a background in another profession could enter a new profession with only little additional training (depending on the outcomes of the assessment).

## 1.6.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

Since its establishment, the knowledge centre EVC has fulfilled an important role in promoting and stimulating EVC. But as more had to be done to foster the use of EVC, the government decided in 2005 to establish an interdepartmental Project Directorate Leren & Werken ('Learning & Working') to stimulate the use of EVC within the framework of Lifelong Learning. The result was a powerful stimulation policy, consisting of financial support to third-parties to set up EVC projects in different fields. The two main starting points of the Project Directorate are:
• citizens should respect Lifelong Learning, in order to be able to optimise their opportunities to participate in the knowledge-based economy, and
• citizens will need, therefore, to both reinforce as well as bring variety into their careers.

The Project Directorate was financed by both the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science, and Social Affairs. Further involved are the Ministries of Agriculture, Economic Affairs, Finances and (by then) Integration.

On 7 September 2007 both the State Secretaries of Education, Culture and Science, and of Social Affairs decided to continue the work of the Project Directorate. Following this decision a new action plan has been established with ambitious objectives for the coming years, which include the promotion of EVC and initiatives in various sectors.

*Higher Education*
In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several initiatives started in the higher education sphere with the aim of

easing admission to certain professions. The HBO-raad (the Council for Universities of Applied Sciences) initiated this 'flexibility' in order to increase the number of qualified employees at HBO level within the higher education sector. As part of this project an intake assessment has been developed for HBO nursery teacher education. The interview assessment has been developed in close cooperation with all 19 HBO training programmes and has been tested in five regional pilots in which colleges and care institutions cooperated closely. As a result of this assessment, HBO institutions can offer shortened nursery teacher training programmes.

In the sector of the education and training of teachers, EVC has been introduced and familiarised as a means to introduce employees with a background in another profession to become a teacher at primary and/or secondary schools. Through an 'aptitude' test, candidates with a minimum level of education at a university or university of applied sciences can identify if they possess the minimum competencies to start as a teacher, while at the same time being enrolled in a dual training route to fully qualify for a teacher's diploma. This route implies that they must take (and pass) an assessment within two years of beginning the training to prove that they are competent. The aptitude tests take place in arranged assessment centres. The costs for the aptitude research are generally carried by the employer of the candidate. EVC is also applied within secondary teacher training when the candidate is taking a part-time course. In those cases the higher education institutions themselves perform the EVC assessment. Some people would point out that it is sometimes arguable if this is indeed EVC, or simply that a new label has been given to the already existing exemption policy of an institution.

With the shift towards a competency based curriculum, the question is also raised on assessments undertaken independently of the learning path. The different methods of assessment frequently play a role in the EVC procedure. Within the university world, it is discussed whether academic competencies can be acquired outside the walls of an academic institution. EVCs are still hardly applied in this sector of higher education - with exception of the 'Open Universiteit'.

Important impulses for the further development of EVC within higher education are the temporary stimulation regulations from the government towards EVC in HBO (2006 and 2007).

### 1.6.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

In the recent years of its existence, the success of EVC has mostly been related to the sectors where there has been a shortage on the labor market and EVC has been used as an instrument to fight this shortage.

Furthermore the following information might be useful as a background to understand the situation in The Netherlands. The recognition of formal and informal learning (EVC) has had a longer tradition on the level of vocational training and education, than it has had within higher education. Furthermore, within higher education there is a distinction between universities of applied sciences at one hand, and universities at the other. Within the universities of applied sciences there is a growing number of EVC initiatives of which some are financed through the Project Directorate (see above).

In the case of the universities however, the 'Open Universiteit' is the only university which provides EVC

procedures for its candidates. Hereby it should be taken into account that this university is different in its character to other Dutch universities as it is focused primarily on offering educational programmes to older people who already have some educational experience.

As regards to the employment market, there are no specific sectors where EVC is considered to be more successful than another. The success of such projects also relates to the level of education for which EVC procedures are available; as has already been mentioned, there are more procedures available within vocational training than within traditional academic education.

## 1.6.2 Purpose

### 1.6.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

The main purpose of EVCs is both the access to education and access to the labor market. Most of the EVC initiatives are organised within the context of employability and lifelong learning, in which access to both education and labor market are central.

## 1.6.3 Structure/ Organisation of recognition

### 1.6.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

In principle, each higher education institute in The Netherlands is free to decide how to structure its RPL procedure. However in general, an RPL procedure should consist of at least three main steps, which are mentioned below.

Furthermore, the Knowledge Centre EVC has developed a standard procedure for the recognition that includes several obligatory steps to be taken in a procedure (see above). Providers of EVC procedures can register themselves as 'recognised providers' at the EVC knowledge centre (as mentioned in the above) when they are offering EVC procedures. In other words, an organisation cannot be a 'recognised provider' by the Knowledge Centre EVC when it is not following the criteria for an EVC procedure (as laid down in the EVC quality code) as suggested by the Knowledge Centre.

*Main steps in a general procedure*
The EVC procedure can be subdivided in to several phases. However, every procedure contains at least the following three elements:

1. identification or recognition: the phase in which competencies are made visible. An important instrument in this phase is the portfolio,
2. appraisal or appreciation of these competencies: besides a portfolio-interview, other appraisal instruments can be used to gain a better picture of the level on which certain competencies are mastered. Examples of other instruments are: the practice examination, the interview, the simulation, the 'prove of competence' and the observation, and
3. recognition of competencies: if the valuers believe that minimum competency standards have been reached, recognition can be granted by supplying a diploma or certificate or granting exemptions.

Experiences with EVC procedures in practice have demonstrated that it is important to inform participants well in advance about procedure and the instruments that will be used. Good preparation can be realised by means of supplying an information brochure and/or the holding of an initial interview conversation.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*

The following instruments are used in the three phases mentioned:

1. In the Identification or recognition phase competencies are made visible. An important instrument to do so is the portfolio of the candidate. Such a portfolio provides an overview and 'proof' of the competencies the candidates gained. The portfolio serves as a basis for an interview.

2. The second phase consists of the assessment of the competences. After a portfolio interview, other instruments can be used to get a better appraisal of the level on which competences are mastered. Examples of other instruments are: practice exam, interview, simulation and observation.

3. The third phase consists of the actual recognition of competences. The assessors agree on a minimum of what a competence contains and a threshold above which someone can be deemed to possess that competence. The competences can be recognised by issuing a diploma or certificate for exemption.

## 1.6.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

The education institution carrying out the EVC procedure is the main institution involved in the recognition process. The knowledge centre EVC is indirectly involved in so far as the EVC provider should be registered at the EVC centre if it uses the EVC logo and is a registered EVC provider.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*

The assessors are involved in the 2nd and 3rd step mentioned under procedures in the above. The quality code does not mention how they should be composed, this remains the decision of the institution. However their roles and responsibilities are indicated. Impartiality and independence are considered to be crucial for the assessment and this should be reflected in the roles and responsibilities of the assessors involved. It is of importance to avoid the mixing of roles and responsibilities. Independence can be strengthened by training and by taking part in a learning network.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*

The institution carrying out the EVC procedure(s) also selects the assessor. The institution determines what competencies an assessor should have. The EVC quality code, which was mentioned in the above section, does not refer to specific competencies the assessors should possess.

## 1.6.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

An EVC procedure as described in the above sections results in an EVC report. Such a report gives an overview of the assessed competences in relation to the standards used. Though there is a standard format issued by the Knowledge Centre EVC, it is not obliged to use this format and as such formats can differ from institution to institution.

Reports are issued by education/training institutions and their EVC knowledge centers, or departments within the institution that is responsible for EVC.

The EVC report has a value on its own and can lead to:

1) improvement (or maintenance) of its position on the job market,

2) exemption of (part(s) of) a training within the sector, branch or training recognised by the specific professional association,

3) the issuing of a diploma or certificate recognized by the sector, branche, or the specific professional association, and

4) exemption from (part(s) of) a recognised educational training by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The responsibility of the actual granting of the exemption lies with the institution.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
This depends on what the EVC procedure will result in. It could lead, for example, to advanced standing or exemption from part or all of an education or training programme, or it could facilitate entry to the labour market.

### 1.6.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within The Netherlands

As mentioned in the above section, a report only has value on its own as the examination board of the institution will make a final decision on the extent of the exemption given. Thus the report of education/training institute X will not be automatically recognized by education/training institute Y. It will be the responsibility of education/training institute Y if they are willing to accept this.

In case the EVC report has led to the issuing of a certificate or diploma, this will be valid within the relevant sector and branch, for the professional association and for other recognised education/training institutions.

### 1.6.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning

The EVC Quality Code (see below) states that a standard should be used that has been agreed upon with the relevant working field, or in case of an education institution, the level set by a certain programme within the faculty for which the EVC procedure is carried out.

For EVC procedures regarding access to education, the standard is based on the competencies which correspond to the particular training and individual programme within the institution.

### 1.6.3.6 Cooperation between Higher Education institutions in The Netherlands regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

As mentioned, there is no systematic cooperation in The Netherlands between higher education institutions if the report was not followed by the issuing of a diploma (and in some cases certificates).

### 1.6.3.7 Quality assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

The institution carrying out the EVC procedure, together with the EVC knowledge centre are responsible for the assessment procedure.

*What body/institution guarantees the quality of the APL assessment?*
The quality of the APL assessment is guaranteed by the EVC Quality Code, which has been mentioned in the above section and will be briefly discussed here. The EVC Quality Code is the result of an agreement between the government and the social partners in 2006. The government stipulated that the knowledge centre EVC would develop a quality framework for the EVC procedure which, in turn, would result in the issuing of a covenant.

The EVC Quality Code has been developed by the knowledge centre EVC in cooperation with the Quality Examination Centre (KVE) and the NVAO (Dutch Flemish Accreditation Organisation) to safeguard the quality of EVC. It lays down principles and is a basis for the quality of EVC procedures. Furthermore, it is based on European principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and is meant as a guideline for organisations who would like to apply for EVC.

The Dutch/Flemish accreditation organisation NVAO guarantees the accreditation of the education institutions, but does not guarantee the quality of the RPL assessment directly.

## 1.6.4 Future

As mentioned in the above, both the State Secretaries of Education, Culture and Science, and of Social Affairs decided to continue the work of the Project Directorate. The action lines are formulated in the Workplan 2008-2011. Regarding EVC, one of the main goals is to continue the set up EVC pilot projects in the technical, education and care sectors. Another aim is to foster the set up of 'Leerwerkloketten'. In short, Leerwerkloketten are centres on a decentralised level that bring together partners from that region. One of their activities is to cooperate in the setting up of EVC projects.

# 1.7 Flanders

The Flanders Analysis Framework has been prepared by NUFFIC.

## 1.7.1 General Context

### 1.7.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In Flanders the recognition of formal and non-formal education began at a local level in Adult Education Centers (*Centra voor volwassenenonderwijs*) following the decree of March 1999 with the aim of providing exemptions in formal education and bridging training pathways. The procedures were formalised in the decree on adult education of September 2007.

In 2000 the action plan for lifelong learning Lifelong learning on the Right Track was presented, resulting in a interdepartmental working group to present recommendations and an action plan to operationalise the recognition of acquired skills. Recommendations led to a series of pilot projects in 2003 and 2004. The partners involved in this plan included:
• Flemish departments of Education, Employment, Culture and Economic Affairs,
• Flemish Employment and Training Service,
• social support services,
• academics,
• social partners, and
• representatives of the education, social and economic councils.

Upon request of OECD a background study was carried out by the Flemish authorities on the state of the art concerning the recognition of acquired skills or EVC in Flanders. Following a study visit in May 2007, OECD published The Country Note on Flanders as part of the thematic review of the Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal learning (RNFIL) in December 2007.

In higher education in Flanders the accreditation of prior experiential learning was decreed by three rulings in the national legislation (Decrees of 2003, 2004 and 2006) which translated the European Bologna Declaration into the legal framework of the Flemish higher education system. The concept of RPL is defined in one of the decrees as "the combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes acquired through learning processes for which no diploma was awarded" (Vlaams Parlement 2004). The decree also defines the basic elements of RPL, including the standards and the methods to be used for assessing competences.

### 1.7.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The main reasons for the introduction of RPL were to improve access and develop an integrated approach to lifelong learning. In higher education the decree on flexibility in higher education focuses on student

mobility and the introduction of wider possibilities for adults to enter or re-enter higher education in the course of their lives and therefore enhance employability.

## 1.7.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

The recognition process of non-formal and informal learning in higher education was defined by the 30 April 2004 decree on flexibility in higher education, in line with the Bologna Process. Implementation of this decree in higher education has been taking place since September 2005.

Beyond higher education, recognition and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning has developed in separate systems in other social domains: the professional context and the social sector. The accreditation of non-formal and informal learning in the professional context was put into practice with the introduction of testing and accreditation centres in the summer of 2006.

There are a number of RPL projects in the social sector, in adult education, in volunteer organisations and in the youth sector. The first pilots on RPL in Flanders started in 2003, which have since led a communal recommendation on RPL to the Flemish policy makers in 2004 (DIVA, 2004) by the different social partners involved.

*Time scale development:*

| | |
|---|---|
| March 1999: | First procedures for recognition initiated locally in Centres for Adult Education. |
| July 2000: | Flemish government approves action plan for lifelong learning; Life long learning: The Right Track. |
| Nov. 2001: | Pact of Vilvoorde: agreement of government and social partners to develop Flanders as a learning society, in which lifelong learning is properly embedded. |
| January 2002: | Working group on recognition of acquired skills (RAS/EVC) presents recommendations. |
| April 2004: | Higher education: decree on flexibility in higher education (linked to Bologna Process) comes into force. |
| April 2004/sept 2005: | Departement of Labour legally introduces certificate of professional competences. |
| 2004: | RPL recommendation to Flemish government by the different social partners (DIVA 2004). |
| Sept 2005: | Implementation of RPL procedures in higher education. |
| June 2007: | Decree on adult education: includes the introduction of 13 consortia responsible for the coordination and implementation of RPL policy within the adult centres. |
| Sept. 2007: | Recognition practice in Adult centers implemented (by decree). |

*Present developments:*

Research is now being undertaken by the University of Ghent[13] with the aim of further professionalising the RPL field through the:

- preparation of a survey of the tools in use in RPL assessment procedures in all domains (education, labour market, youth, culture and sports),
- development of quality criteria for RPL assessment, and
- setting up a professional network for RPL experts.

The objective of the project is to build a website for APL professionals to be launched in autumn 2008. Following recent legislation, government and social partners have agreed on an 'agenda for competences' (competentieagenda 2010) which defines 10 action points to mobilise all parties – including the working force – to discover, develop and deploy talent. Further development of instruments and procedures for RPL constitute an integral part of this programme. 38 million euro has been allocated to this programme, which will run from 2007 to 2010. One action point focuses specifically on actions to further promote the 'proof of experience' (ervaringsbewijs) in order to meet the needs of the labour market.

### 1.7.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

The proof of experience certification is recognised and valued by the sector (social partners and sector specialists) on the basis of a common structure provided by the government. The flexibility decree of 2004 lays down standards, procedures, methodology, maximum cost and quality assurance requirements. In 2005 the government also worked out a code of conduct to which all examination centres must comply. This instrument for quality assurance protects the client and legitimises the RPL procedure, courtesy of a transparent common standard that can be used throughout Flanders.

At present, recognition of non-formal learning leading to the award of an *ervaringsbewijs* (proof of experience) is available in six fields in the secondary vocational sector:
- coach driver,
- attendant in after-school child care,
- call-centre operator,
- house painter, and
- crane driver.

And, in the course of 2007, the following sectors:
- hairdresser,
- hairdresser shop manage, and
- removal men (both packers and porters/carriers).

As there is a shortage in the labour market in these areas it is not yet clear whether the certification provides added value, therefore more experience and analysis is required.

Though not much evidence is yet available, information on the target groups in higher education have so far shown that procedures have been most successful with candidates who already possess a diploma of higher education. Positive experiences have been reported primarily in higher professional education, particularly in the fields of paramedical professions (nursing, midwifery), social work (special education professionals, social workers), agricultural and biotechnology, building and architecture.

Little information is currently available on the recognition of non-formal learning with the aim of awarding credit in the traditional research oriented academic programmes in higher education.

## 1.7.2 Purpose

### 1.7.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

In Flanders there are three major types of certificates issued, each with their own purpose and target group:

1. *ervaringsbewijs* (proof of experience): Its aim is to increase employability and access to the labour market, including regulated professions,

2. *bekwaamheidsbewijs* (proof of competence): This is issued in higher education and its main purpose is access, allocation of credits for exemptions and/or the awarding of full degrees, and

3. *leerbewijs* (proof of learning): Aimed at social participation and personal development, reflecting the formative track of RPL. There is no objective to focus on the formal accreditation of the learning process in view of access to formal education or the labour market.

## 1.7.3 Structure/ Organisation of recognition

### 1.7.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

There are several procedures for recognition in the various domains (economic/labour market, social and (higher) education) and these differ from one domain to the next. Procedures may also differ within the domain: Higher education offers two procedures:

1. Recognition of prior learning (EVK – Erkenning van Verworven Kwalificaties) based upon proof of formal learning. The objective is to facilitate students' mobility between learning and training institutions and to open new opportunities for students from a lifelong learning perspective. There are three conditions for EVK: 1) a formal learning path, 2) a successful assessment and 3) a certificate attesting the learning path and assessment. The responsibility for this type of recognition lies with the higher education institution that organises the programme that the applicant wishes to gain admission to or credit towards. Assessment and recognition are offered by the academics responsible for the programme on the basis of the documentation provided by the applicant.

2. Recognition of competences gained through professional and personal experiences (EVC – Erkenning van Verworven Competenties). Through this procedure, the HEI can recognise knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired via learning processes which are not necessarily formal. Responsibility for this type of recognition is at the discretion of the associations (one of the five) and not the HEIs. The associations have to set up a recognition service and define a procedure in order to do this.

*Main steps in a general procedure*
General RPL (EVC/EVK) procedure in higher education involves the following steps:

1. EVK procedure:
- matriculation (at institution),
- application (at departmental level),
- presentation of documentation by student,
- assessment by academics responsible for the programme, and
- recognition granted by programme coordinator.

2. EVC procedure:
- information and guidance,
- application,
- identification of the elements of competences gained through experience,
- assessment of skills, and
- recognition granted by the association.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*

For detailed information please refer to the annex which includes the procedures (and instruments) in place in the Association of Ghent.

The following instruments are common to these procedures:
- structured conversation/interviews,
- direct observation,
- evaluation of information,
- evaluation based upon interpretation of presented facts or statements related to theoretical models,
- knowledge testing/skills tests, and
- portfolio.

## 1.7.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

By law, RPL procedures must be available to students and potential students in institutions of higher education and centres for adult education. Within the field of higher education in Flanders the Associations[14] (confederations of a university and at least one non-university higher education institution) are responsible for the recognition process. Other organisations involved are: test centres for the awarding of proofs of experience, (national) examination commissions, NARIC centres, associations and centres for youth and sports.

Within higher education, the Associations have set up independent organisational structures for the assessment of RPL. Setting up a recognition service and a procedure is a legal reuiqrement.

There are five associations:
1. The Catholic University of Leuven Association (Associatie Katholieke Universiteit Leuven),
2. The Ghent University Association (Associatie Universiteit Gent),
3. The Antwerp University and Colleges Association (Associatie Universiteit en Hogescholen Antwerpen),
4. The University Association of Brussels (Universitaire Associatie Brussel), and
5. The University-Colleges Association in Limburg (Associatie Universiteit-Hogescholen Limburg).

Each association has a validating authority. In most cases this is the board of the association or an independent body/RPL committee appointed by, or under supervision of, the board.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*

In most cases assessment is carried out by a jury of at least two assessors in higher education. However, the organisation and appointment of juries/assessors differs depending on the Association, as is

demonstrated below:

- Ghent: Two independent (appointed) assessors,
- Brussels: jury consisting of internal and/or external assessors:
    - one expert in the field from the program/department involved,
    - at least two experts in programmes of comparable level either from the programme, the institution or the association, and
    - at least one education scientist from the institution or association.
- Leuven: At least 2 independent assessors,
- Limburg: Jury consisting of at least two – internal or external – assessors, and
- Anvers (/Antwerpen): A jury consisting of at least three assessors

For examples of the role of the jury, please see annex 5.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*

Assessors are appointed by the authorised body/validation council of the Association(s). In the case of the Antwerp University and Colleges Association the jury is composed and then presented to the validating authority for approval.

In addition, the requirements that an assessor has to fulfill differ according to the institution. In most cases selected teaching staff undergoes additional training as an RPL assessor, covering such areas as the portfolio, RPL methodology, interviewing techniques and assessment guidelines.

## 1.7.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

In Flanders there are three major certificates issued in three domains: labour, education, and the social and cultural sector. There is a distinction both in terms of purpose and target group in all these areas. A number of other awards of somewhat lesser stature are also mentioned below.

1. *Ervaringsbewijs* (proof of experience): The certificate is awarded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the aim of increasing employability and access to the labour market, including regulated professions.
2. *Bekwaamheidsbewijs* (proof of competence): The certificate is awarded in higher education by the Association in order to grant access to a programme, allocate credits for exemptions and/or award full degrees.
3. *Leerbewijs* (proof of learning): The certificate is awarded by any recognised centre for socio-cultural or adult education. It focuses on social participation and personal development and reflects the formative track of RPL. There is no intention of providing formal accreditation of the learning process in view of access to formal education or the labour market.

**Others**:

1. *Bewijs van Toelating* (admission certificate): The certificate is awarded in higher education by the Association, after an RPL procedure in lieu of a secondary school certificate, with the aim of providing access to designated programs.
2. *Titel van Beroepsbekwaamheid* (certificate of professional competences): The certificate is awarded

by the Department of Labour. The objective is to recognise professional experience through a new kind of qualification which is not based on education and training, but the ability or the capacity to carry out tasks.

3. Certificate of Participation: It is based mainly on self-assessment practices rather than on institutional or formal assessments. It is a new certificate intended to valorise the individual's involvement in voluntary work.

4. Training Certificate: This is intended to attest participation in learning and training sessions. The scope of this certificate is limited to the description of objectives and content of the programme.

5. Certificate of Competences: Awarded by the institution having "employed" the individual. This certificate describes the competences acquired by the individual and guarantees the quality of the assessment.

6. Certificate of Performance: Issued by a local organisation or institution, this certificate describes the activities and tasks performed by an individual in voluntary work, the length of her/his participation and the competences demonstrated.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
1. In higher education: *Bekwaamheidsbewijs* (Proof of Competence):
Within an Association and/or institution the RPL award leads to direct exemption and/or abridged programmes. Within one Association a student may transfer directly to another institution which offers the same programme as recognised competencies are directly transferable. It does not, however, imply automatic exemptions. The assessment of the competencies is directly related to the competencies defined by the original programme and these may differ from the competencies defined in a comparable programme or curriculum at another institution, even within the same Association. Within the Association there are no binding regulations or obligations to accept each others proofs of competence. It is not yet known whether RPL awards have a civil effect on the labour market.

2. The *ervaringsbewijs* (proof of experience) was originally introduced to improve employability. The focus so far has been on a few professions, with the aim to alleviate shortages in those sectors. It is not clear yet whether the certificate really provides added value in a job application procedure. However, there is clear evidence of added value for both employer and employee in two instances: firstly, when the assessment of safety issues is included in the validation and this is laid down in the award and secondly, in those cases where an award contributes to the evidence that personnel have been trained appropriately.

## 1.7.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within Flanders

No there is no national regulation concerning the recognition of certificates among the certifying bodies (see above). In some cases – as in the Association Leuven – steps are being taken to recognise certificates in the same fields among institutions, for instance in nursing. The most important requirement is that the competences defining the programme are similar or at least comparable between programmes.

### 1.7.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning

In higher education the standards in the assessment are based upon the competencies as defined in the individual programmes within the institutions. For the proof of experiences the standards are set by the the Flanders Social and Economic Council (SERV).

### 1.7.3.6 Cooperation between Higher Education institutions in Flanders regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

As yet there is no cooperation between HEIs in Flanders regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

### 1.7.3.7 Quality Assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

The flexibility decree of 2004 has set the benchmark for RPL procedures in higher education for the Flanders region. The decree lays down the most important elements, such as standards, procedure, methodologies, the maximum cost and quality assurance. It also stipulates that the procedure must provide guidance for the applicant, standards for the quality of the assessors, guarantee the protection of the privacy and personal integrity of the applicant, include an internal appeal procedure and stipulate that the assessor and counselor may not be one and the same person. In this way the Flemish government provides a common structure and ensures a minimum quality guarantee throughout Flanders

In higher education the Board of the respective Associations is responsible for the quality assurance of the RPL procedures. This is laid down by law. Associations should also provide evidence of quality assurance which will be checked periodically, although no official quality assurance agency has been officially appointed so far.

## 1.7.4 Future

### 1.7.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non- and informal learning

At the moment of writing, a survey is being carried out by Karine Janssens of the University of Ghent, commissioned by the Flemish Government with the aim of:
• drawing up an inventory of the RPL assessment tools in use within the different fields (education, labour market, youth, culture and sports),
• developing quality standards for RPL assessments,
• establishing a professional network of RPL experts,
• launching a website for RPL experts to further the professionalisation in the field.

At the level of policy, the National Council for Higher Education recommends closer cooperation and synergy in the field amongst the Associations. Moreover, the Ministry of Employment, Education and Training is implementing a comprehensive qualification structure for the broad world of education and

employment, in which the Proof of Competence (bekwaamheidsbewijs) and the Proof of Experience (ervaringsbewijs) should get their place. However since the Flemish Qualification Framework has not yet been completed, the future of this development is not clear.

One of the issues that has been raised in this context is whether the introduction of a new formal RPL certificate within the Qualifications Framework is desirable. It might in that case further strengthen the existing degree structure, rather than shifting the focus from degrees to lifelong learning and possibly undermine the essential objective of RPL.

# 1.8 Wallonia

The Wallonian Analysis Framework has been prepared by CIEP.

## 1.8.1 General Context

### 1.8.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In vocational training, recognition of non-formal and informal learning refers to the validation of competences. It has been applied in adult education or "social advancement training" (*enseignement de promotion sociale*) since the 1980s.

On 24 July 2003, the consortium for the validation of competences (CVDC) was set up following an agreement between five public institutions of vocational training:
- Bruxelles-Formation,
- Enseignement de promotion sociale,
- Forem,
- IFAPME, and
- SFPME.

Through the consortium, procedures have been implemented allowing citizens to validate their competences acquired outside formal education and training. Through the validation, applicants will receive a title of competences which is a legal document recognised by the three French-speaking entities.

In higher education recognition of non-formal and informal learning was introduced by the Act of 5 September 1994 in universities and by the Act of 5 August 1995 in the hautes écoles (non-university higher educations institutions). Universities were then authorised to organise, under specific conditions, access to a limited number of second cycle programmes to individuals who do not possess the required degree, as well as to grant exemptions in order to reduce the length of certain programmes. Concerning the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by the hautes écoles, the Act specified more precisely the recognition procedure: in the case of entering a second cycle programme, applicants have to demonstrate at least four years of professional experience as well as the required knowledge and skills through an assessment procedure. In case of benefiting from exemptions, applicants have to demonstrate at least three years of professional experience and then the exemptions can exceed 20% of the total programme. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Art Colleges was introduced by the Government Act of 17 July 2002 and only concerns access to a second cycle programme based on professional experience.

### 1.8.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

The main reasons for introducing recognition of non-formal and informal learning are listed below in terms of European, national and institutional level.

At global and European levels:

- Lisbon Strategy and knowledge-based society,
- importance of lifelong learning,
- student-based education and training, and
- approach based on learning outcomes.

At national level:

- unemployment rate is inversely proportional to the level of education,
- need to foster increased participation in adult education and training, in particular for those who have left the system, and
- democratisation of education and training.

At institutional level:

- The missions of higher education defined by law include the service to society. In this perspective, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning responds to this specific mission.

## 1.8.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Art Colleges was introduced by the Government Act of 17 July 2002 and it concerns only the access to a second cycle programme based on professional experience.

The Act of 31 March 2004, also known as the "Bologna Act", introduces the terminology Valorisation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE) for higher education. VAE is defined as a process of assessment and recognition of knowledge and competences of an individual wishing to enter a higher education programme. However, articles 53 and 60 distinguish between two types of VAE:

1  VAE for admission, to second cycle programmes or to non-degree granting training programmes (mostly formation continue or "continuous training"). To be admitted to a Master's programme, applicants have to prove five years of professional experience. The Government is authorised to set up minimaum conditions for admission as well as the organisation of examination, while HEIs are responsible for procedures.

2  VAE for exemptions, to all higher education programmes, which allows students to reduce the length of their studies. However, the length of programmes leading to the delivery of an academic degree cannot decrease below 60 credits. Therefore, applicants to this type of VAE will never be granted an academic degree based only on this procedure.

## 1.8.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

It is difficult to identify which sectors successfully use the recognition of non formal and informal learning. Higher education, and more precisely adults wishing to return to HE, is certainly the sector where the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is most widely used. In this context, university academies

have developed different projects whose main objective has been to define harmonised RPL procedures in terms of terminology, process, stakeholders and their functions.

## 1.8.2 Purpose

### 1.8.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

As explained previously, in the framework of the VAE, HEIs do not any kind of certificates, diplomas or documents as a testimony for the recognition/validation of prior learning or work experience. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning, therefore, has the following purposes:

- entering a second cycle programmes,
- granting exemptions,
- granting credits, and
- reducing the length of a programme.

## 1.8.3 Structure/organisation of recognition

### 1.8.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

As previously explained, there is no common procedure for HEIs who offer VAE. However, different projects have been developed by university academies in order to define harmonised procedures through standards and guidelines.

*Main steps of a general procedure*
In their preliminary remark, university academies reiterate the importance of adopting a student-centered approach, where individualised learning paths are taken into account. University academies recommend a procedure comprising six main steps:

1. information and reception. Applicants for VAE need quality information, preferably centralised at the French Community and HEI levels,

2. orientation and positioning. Applicants would have the possibility to explain their plans more in details, with the help of centres of information/orientation. The competent authorities would then have the possibility to determine if the application is acceptable and valid,

3. Contractualisation. The contract is double-sided: on the one hand, HEIs commit themselves to analysing, assessing and deciding on the outcome of the application; on the other hand, the applicant must be fully committed to the process as well,

4. assessment. The jury will evaluate and take a decision on the non-formal and informal learning presented in order togain recognition,

5. transmission of results.The jury formally transmits the results of the assessment and may offer recommendations regarding the future study programme of the applicant, and

6. support. Applicants need special support during each step of the process. Most of the applicants are indeed adults returning to higher education, therefore it is important that VAE remains a positive experience for the applicant.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*

The Jury de valorisation is defined in articles 53 and 60 of the "Bologna Act" as the body recognising and adding value to the professional and personal experience of the applicant. The jury is fully competent in its responsibilities.

## 1.8.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

The following institutions are involved in the recognition process:

- HEIs. HEIs are the first actors involved in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. As previously mentioned, HEIs are responsible for the operational implementation of VAE. Moreover, HEIs should also play a major role in the dissemination of information to the applicants and to the other stakeholders involved. Coordination and consultation at institutional level will facilitate the harmonisation of procedures, the exchange of good practices and information, the collection of data concerning VAE, etcetera,
- Ministry of the French Community – DG Non-compulsory Education and Scientific Research. The Ministry of the French Community should play an interface role with non-institutional stakeholders, facilitating the cooperation between those stakeholders, and
- advisory bodies. Advisory bodies from institutions (such as Interuniversity council of the French Community of Belgium, General Council for Hautes Ecoles, High Council for Higher Artistic Education, High Council for Architectural Education, Education and Training Council, etc.) have a crucial role to play in the cooperation and dialogue between institutions. These bodies have already invested their efforts carrying out specialised studies on the subject.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*

The *Jury de valorisation* is defined in articles 53 and 60 of the "Bologna Act" as the body recognising and adding value to the professional and personal experience of the applicant. The jury is fully competent in its responsibilities.

The jury will evaluate and take a decision on the non-formal and informal learning subject to recognition. The jury formally transmits the results of the assessment and may give recommendations regarding the future study programme of the applicant.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*

The jury is selected by the department of the HEI in charge of recognition of non-formal and informal recognition.

## 1.8.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

As previously explained VAE only refers to accessing second cycle programmes and non-degree granting training or being granted exemptions. Therefore, there are no certificates/reports issued by the responsible authority.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*

When entering a second cycle programme via a VAE procedure, the student will graduate with the same academic degree of master as any student who has completed a second cycle programme through

"classical" paths (i.e. via a bachelor degree). The effects are therefore exactly the same. However, the VAE also allows applicants to enter continuous training which constitutes non-degree-granting programmes.

### 1.8.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within Wallonia

Currently no formal mutual recognition of RPL certificates exists, but it is likely that institutions within the same association will accept the decision of a different institution for entry on to a very similar programme.

### 1.8.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning

The standards used for assessing the non-formal and informal learning are the requirements (in terms of competences and learning outcomes) of the programme for which the applicant wishes to gain entry or exemptions.

### 1.8.3.6 Cooperation between higher education institutions in Wallonia regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

Cooperation and dialogue between HEIs are essential for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Since 2006, each of the three university academies has carried out pilot projects in order to facilitate exchange of good practices and information, which in turn will help to define harmonised procedures and common tools, amongst others.

### 1.8.3.7 Quality assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

National legislation does not specify any particular quality assurance mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning procedures. Since academic authorities are responsible for the organisation and implementation of the RPL procedures, those authorities are expected to guarantee the quality of the procedures.

As previously explained, HEIs are responsible for the quality of the procedures. There is so far no centralised body in charge of RPL in higher education.

## 1.8.4 Future

### 1.8.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non- and informal learning

There are no expected changes regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. However, in the recognition process more stakeholders should be involved in the near future.

- HEIs. As previously discussed, HEIs are responsible for the operational implementation of the VAE. Moreover, HEIs should also play a major role in the dissemination of information to applicants but also

to the other stakeholders involved. Coordination and consultation at institutional level will facilitate the harmonisation of procedures, the exchange of good practices and information, the collection of data concerning the VAE, etcetera.

- Ministry of the French Community – DG Non-compulsory Education and Scientific Research. The Ministry of the French Community should play an interface role with non-institutional stakeholders, facilitating the cooperation between those stakeholders.

- Advisory Bodies. Advisory bodies from institutions (such as the Interuniversity Council of the French Community of Belgium, General Council for Hautes Ecoles, High Council for Higher Artistic Education, High Council for Architectural Education, Education and Training Council) have a crucial role to play in the cooperation and the dialogue between institutions. Those bodies have already invested their efforts by carrying out specialised studies on the subject.

# 1.9 France

<span style="color:blue">The French Analysis Framework has been prepared by CIEP.</span>

## 1.9.1 General context

### 1.9.1.1 When recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In France, the foundations of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning were laid in the thirties. In 1934, access to the title *titre d'ingénieur diplomé* became possible through presenting a practical case in front of the "*Commission des titres d'ingénieur*".

In 1984/1985, it became possible to use professional experience to obtain an exemption to enter a higher education course. Later, in 1992, a law regarding the "validation des acquis professionnels" authorised applicants to be exempted from a part of a programme for which he/she had applied, on the basis of prior professional experience. Ten years later, in 2002, a new law was passed (the *loi de modernisation sociale*) which introduced "*validation des acquis de l'expérience*", or recognition of prior competences. Other ministries in charge of qualifications extended this initiative of the Ministry of Education to their own qualifications.

### 1.9.1.2 Main reasons why recognition of non- and informal learning was introduced

In 1934, industries and engineers concluded a mutual agreement with the creation of the diploma "*diplôme d'ingénieur diplômé de l'Etat*" because many people who had been trained before 1934 were technicians but not engineers. After the crisis of 1929 there was a need for engineers, therefore the decision was made to have technicians work as engineers as they knew the occupation, and thus award them the qualification of engineer to reflect this status.

In 1992, there is a great interest for the process of "validation des acquis professionnels", but the mechanism was not well known by those who were most directly involved, i.e. people that were already working. Moreover the process was rather time consuming. However doubts surrounded the quality of the diplomas obtained through this process. The reason for introducing the new law in 2002 was the gap between the new generation of employees who had obtained a higher formal degree than older people and these older people around the age of 50, who had considerable work experience but a lower formal level of education.

The lifelong learning system is poor and doesn't assist individuals with professional development. There is also an international and European context related to this subject especially with the publication of the white paper "teaching and learning" and the introduction of the National Vocational Qualifications Framework. According to this law, degrees do not depend on the way they are obtained. This represents a different way of thinking about evaluation: there are no more grades, rather there are competences

acquired through professional experience. The qualification is thus seen through professional activities, not only academic knowledge.

### 1.9.1.3 Main developments since the introduction

Nowadays it is possible to request RPL for a full qualification in a lot of fields and at many different levels.

### 1.9.1.4 Sectors in which recognition of non- and informal learning is considered a success

Several sectors are using validation des acquis de l'expérience and the procedure has been deemed successful in the following sectors:
- building,
- defence, and
- social care.

It has been more difficult to introduce validation in nursing, infrastructure and accounting.

## 1.9.2 Purpose

### 1.9.2.1 Purpose(s) for issuing certificates/reports of recognition of non- and informal learning

Previously, the purpose of awarding RPL was to give access to a profession which needed a higher qualification than the one which people typically obtained through their initial training. The French government stated that many new technologies which changed frequently need to be used in many professions and furthermore that the competencies gained in these areas was not necessarily through formal courses, but in the workplace.

## 1.9.3 Structure/ organization of recognition

### 1.9.3.1 The recognition procedure: uniform or pluriform?

There is no harmonised procedure for recognising non-formal and informal learning, rather the process is different for each diploma in each institution and incurs varying costs. However, there is one unique document, CERFA.

*Main steps of a general procedure*

For the applicant the main steps consist of:
1. to determine the diploma to be applied for,
2. to consult an advisor or a specialised person in charge of VAE to help with the application procedure,
3. to give the file to the institution,
4. to pass an oral exam with the diploma jury, who decide whether or not the applicant will be awarded the diploma,
5. the decision may be examined by a national jury for all the diplomas of the institution, and

6. the applicant can obtain the complete qualification, be awarded exemptions for some units or can be failed.

For the institution in higher education the main steps consist of:

1. the board of the institution define the internal rules, and
2. the jury is either the same jury as for formal learning and studies the cases at the same time, or the jury meets especially to listen to applicants and takes a decision in the framework of the decisions taken for formal learning, or the jury meets case by case, one after the other.

*Instruments used for assessment and recognition*
There are no harmonised instruments for the process. However for all applicants there is a personal file, which must be presented to the jury upon completion. The length of this file differs depending on the qualification being applied for. In the case of a Master's degree, the file is expected to be around one hundred pages in length.

The jury of the diploma needs to have specific criteria for assessing each diploma in each institution and be familiar with the new logic for the evaluation: not academic knowledge but competences through activities are required. The jury has to determine what is missing in comparison with the diploma awarded through formal learning. There is a need for consideration of the lifelong learning process and about modules, in addition to professional experience.

## 1.9.3.2 Institutions involved in the recognition process

All educational institutions are involved in this process if they want to be.

*Involvement of a jury or assessors*
The jury is composed of professionals and teachers/researchers of the programme.

*Selection of the assessors/jury*
The director of the institution selects the jury, whereas the board determines the process for each diploma. The competencies that are required from the jury members are different according to their background: if they represent the professional body, they must exercise the profession concerned by the diploma; if they are teachers, they have to know the profession. Everyone must be fully up to date in their particular field.

## 1.9.3.3 Types of certificates/reports issued

Jury members issue a recommendation for the person who makes the final decision, who is the head of the institution. There is no harmonised report nor final certificate.

*The civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition*
The rights are exactly the same as those awarded to individuals holding a diploma obtained through formal learning.

### 1.9.3.4 Mutual recognition of certificates/reports between the certificating institutions/bodies within France

A certificate issued as a result of non-formal or informal learning is considered in the same way as its formally acquired counterpart, therefore would be recognised by institutions and employers in France.

### 1.9.3.5 Standards used for recognition of non- and informal learning

There is no national standard for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It is worth noting, however, that HEIs assess the competences gained through prior learning and experience against the learning outcomes defined for formal programmes.

### 1.9.3.6 Cooperation between Higher Education institutions in France regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning

There are sometimes exchanges between higher education institutions but there is no obligation to have them.

### 1.9.3.7 Quality Assurance: The body responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures

The institution which awards the diploma is responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures. Further, both the institution and the quality assurance body are indirectly involved when they assess the quality of the institution.

## 1.9.4 Future

### 1.9.4.1 Upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non- and informal learning

There will be an extension of RPL to all the fields of qualification in the future, although for regulated profession it will take time.

Part II

# The evaluation phase

# 2.1  The sample certificates

1. Sweden (2)
2. England
3. Flanders
4. Netherlands
5. France

## 2.1.1 Sample certificates - Sweden

### 2.1.1.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the analysis framework in part 1, according to the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (chapter 6, § 7-8), a student may receive credit for knowledge and skills acquired outside of the formal higher education system or in the course of working activities, if the knowledge and skills that the student cites are of such a nature and of such scope that they essentially correspond to the educational programme towards which they are intended to give credit. The higher education institution is also to consider whether previous education or activities can be accepted for credit.

These sections of the Higher Education Ordinance are illustrated in the two Swedish sample certificates, chosen to be examined during the evaluation panel meeting.

It should be noted that these examples are not representative of all RPL certificates issued by Swedish HEIs. There is no national uniform system for the issuing of RPL certificates. Even within a HEI, different types and formats of RPL certificates may be issued, depending on the faculty or department where the decision was taken. What should be underlined here is that even if the types and formats differ, the formal decisions taken on – for instance - RPL by or within the HEIs (according to the delegation rules in force) are official and can always be requested by any interested party. This is due to the Swedish principle of public access to official documents. Furthermore, the student in question has the right to appeal against the official decision in question, should the student be dissatisfied with the outcome. The decision maker is always obliged to state this in the decision and to provide a reference to the appeals board.

In the cases where proof of RPL is given in degree certificates, complementary information on the programme of study can be found in the Diploma Supplement, which is to be issued in English and will contain not only a description of the Swedish Higher Education System but also details of the programme in question and, for instance, referral to other information sources[15].

To conclude, it should be noted that the possibility of recognising non-formal and informal learning has, as of yet, been utilised on a relatively limited scale by Swedish HEIs. Furthermore, students are far from always being aware of this possibility to ask for RPL. This also explains why it has been quite difficult to find sample certificates.

*Sample Certificate 1: Malmö högskola, Validation for a Teaching Qualification (annex nr 4)*

The document was issued by Malmö högskola, a Swedish state HEI. This document concerns a decision by the HEI on giving a person credits for previous educational and professional experience. The person had applied to have his prior learning recognised in relation to the requirements for a teacher qualification at this HEI. The RPL decision was directed and addressed to the applicant. The decision is probably not primarily meant to be for the information of a third party, e.g. another HEI. The decision is valid if this person continues his studies towards the given teaching qualification at this HEI. Should the person want to continue his studies at another HEI, he would have to apply to that institution to have his prior learning credited again. Another Swedish HEI might, or might not, accept the RPL credits given to him by Malmö högskola.

The certificate/decision report comprises two pages. The first page contains:
- logotype of the HEI (HEI address and decision maker's contact information is included at the bottom of the first page of the original document, issued in Swedish),
- name and address of the applicant (this information was deleted),
- name and title of the decision maker at the HEI,
- date when the decision was taken,
- information on what the application concerns,
- information stating that representatives for the teacher education department have performed the validation (where validation is the translation of the Swedish term for RPL),
- result of the validation/RPL,
- validation/RPL decision, including information on how many extra credits must be studied in order for a specific teaching qualification to be awarded. In this case a teaching qualification needed in order to qualify to teach in vocational subjects (vehicle engineering programme) in upper secondary school. For this qualification a total of 180 higher education credits (ECTS) are required, including a general area of education studies comprising 90 ECTS and relevant higher education comprising 90 ECTS or equivalent education. Extensive professional/vocational experience is also required for admission to the programme, and
- signature, name and title of the decision maker.

The second page contains:
- logotype of the HEI,
- name and title of the decision maker at the HEI,
- date when the decision was taken, and
- validation record/RPL protocol listing the professional experience/education and the corresponding higher education credits (equivalent to ECTS credits) given. (10 credits have been given for "Various education according to appendix". Please note that this appendix to the decision was not included with this sample, but it could be retrieved from the archives of the HEI)

*Sample certificate 2: "Degree of Bachelor of Education for Teaching in Pre- School, Pre-School Class, Leisure Centre for School Children and Compulsory School, Earlier Years", awarded by the Uppsala University (annex nr 2)*

The document is a degree certificate which includes the contents of an official transcript of an academic record. It is issued in Swedish and English by the Uppsala University, a Swedish state HEI.

The degree is the "Degree of Bachelor of Education for Teaching in Pre-School, Pre-School Class, Leisure Centre for School Children and Compulsory School, Earlier Years" in the field of study "Children and Learning", awarded by the university.

The duration of the programme was 3.5 years. It comprised – in accordance with what was stated in the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance – "at least 140 credit points" within the Swedish pre-Bologna system (equivalent to 210 ECTS). The basis for the crediting of 65 credit points on the basis of RPL is stated in footnotes, where reference is given to the formal decision – date, registration number and department - which is official and can be requested by any interested party.

At the time of conferral the degree certificate would have been supplemented by a Diploma Supplement (please see above).

The degree certificate is proof of qualified teacher status in Sweden and the holder of the degree is entitled to be employed as a teacher on a permanent basis within the Swedish State School System.

## 2.1.2 Sample certificate - England

The English certificate that was chosen for inclusion in the evaluation panel session was a transcript issued by the University of Salford (annex 4), following successful completion of a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Product Design and Development. This is a sample certificate, therefore does not include the actual personal details of the individual mentioned, but offers all the information that would appear on a real-life transcript from this institution.

The certificate comprises two pages: the transcript and an information/explanatory page. The transcript contains the following information:
• student's name,
• student identification number
• HESA[16] number,
• school (within the university),
• student's date of birth,
• framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level,
• programme of study title,
• awarding institution,
• teaching institution (in some cases this can be different from the above),
• list of modules, including the following information:
    • year taken,

- • module code,
- • module title,
- • level,
- • credit rating,
- • mark,
- • credit awarded, and
- • information,
- other learning (such as key skills in this instance),
- signature (of person certifying the learning, such as the vice chancellor),
- contact telephone number (of the institution), and
- date of issue.

The additional information for students on the second page details regulatory information about the awarding of credit and appeals procedure, while the explanatory information acts as an annex to the transcript, listing the language of instruction and assessment, how the marks are calculated, the degree classification system at this institution and a key to abbreviations.

This certificate was chosen as it clearly indicates the module that has been assessed via APEL and provides the evaluator with additional information that is key when formulating an assessment. Furthermore it displays some typically English characteristics, such as the lack of ECTS points and use of the FHEQ rather than a European reference point, which can also be used to formulate recommendations for certificates more generally.

It is worth noting, however, that this certificate is not representative of all RPL certificates issued in England, rather it demonstrates how one institution chooses to represent the achievement of learning outcomes. As it provides a considerable amount of information, relatively speaking, it offers the evaluator the opportunity to make a fairly informed decision.

In addition, it is necessary to explain why only an English certificate has been chosen for evaluation. As explained above, each HEI operates its own RPL evaluation procedures and displays the outcomes of this assessment in different ways on its certificates and transcripts. Furthermore, it would be fair to state that RPL processes are not necessarily embedded into the work of all HEIs, meaning that sourcing information and sample certificates is not an easy task. Consequently it was not possible to find an appropriate example of RPL certification in Scotland for use in this project. This experience was also mirrored in Ireland, where RPL processes seem to be even less widespread.

## 2.1.3 Sample certificate - Flanders

### 2.1.3.1 Introduction

With the implementation of APL procedures in Flemish higher education following the Decree of 2003, the associations of institutions of higher education[17] in Flanders are required to introduce certification of APL. Since APL procedures are considered to be the responsibility of the institutions, no national certification is available or is expected to become available.

Issues regarding the RPL process include:

a. The status of the document: is it 'awarded' by the institution, the department or 'only' by the programme director?

b. Should it be transferable to other similar programmes and/or provide sufficient information to make exemptions or ECTS equivalent credits possible in other programmes?

c. Competencies confirmed are generally directly related to the specific competencies required in a specific programme. In what terms should the competencies in the certification be described?

For the time being, certification in this field is considered an internal matter, awarded in view of institution-internal use only. Yet questions concerning the quality, validity and reliability of the document were taken into consideration when comparing with formats of certification in formal education.

In the example provided by the *Associatie Universiteit Gent* (University Association of Ghent) the APL certificate *Bewijs van Bekwaamheid* provided reflects a number of characteristics, which are mirrored in the certification of formal education qualifications. These include:

• logo and name of the association and the institutions involved,

• title of the certificate,

• issuing authority,

• name and personal data of candidate,

• enumeration (in general terms) of competencies obtained,

• reference to the regulation of APL procedures in the regulations of the institution/association,

• reference to the standards in place,

• signature of person in charge for the validating authority within the institution, and

• seal.

In the supplement (annex) attached the competencies obtained are elaborated in detail, including further reference to the standards and the regulation on the assessment of APL. The supplement is also signed by the person in charge for the validating authority within the institution.

## 2.1.3.2 Recommendations

The present document was issued for internal use. Should a document of this nature become available for transfer purposes its validity would gain by adding:

• reference to national legislation and, optionally, reference to official regulation of the association and quality assurance in place,

• signature of the president/dean of the association and validating authority, and

• seference to exemption(s) in terms of ECTS or diploma obtained on the basis of the competencies assessed.

## 2.1.3.3 Diploma supplement

In the Diploma Supplement a separate section should contain information on APL procedures, quality assurance, the level at which APL was assessed, the nature of the programme for which exemption/certification on the basis of APL is sought, the exemptions granted in terms of ECTS credits,

tools, instruments, learning outcomes in terms of competencies and the competencies attained by the applicant. This document should provide information in a schematic form, avoiding too much written text. It should contain a reference to the APL contact point at the institution for further information.

Quality assurance information should be provided through a statement from the institution, asserting that it complies with international/European good practice in the assessment of APL and also providing a reference to the standards and procedures in place at the institution.

# 2.1.4 Sample Certificate - Netherlands

## 2.1.4.1 Introduction

The Dutch Higher Education sector is divided into 'academic' or research orientated universities on the one hand, and 'universities of applied sciences' on the other. As mentioned in the analysis framework, the recognition of prior learning (EVC) is much more developed in universities of applied sciences than it is at the research oriented universities. Consequently a 'certificate' from a university of applied science has been chosen for the evaluation.

The document is an assessment report for a Socio-Legal Study course and has been issued by the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA), a Dutch HEI. The HvA is one of the major universities of applied sciences within The Netherlands. It is also one of the Dutch HEIs that has a Centre for Recognition of Prior Learning (EVC) and developed an expertise in this over the last years. For these reasons the certificate from the HvA has been chosen.

In this regard a qualifying note should be made that each HEI in The Netherlands is responsible for its own design of an EVC certificate, as has been indicated in the analysis framework. Therefore, although this certificate is representative in that it follows the guidelines set by the Knowledge Centre EVC (see analysis framework), certificates from other institutions can look different to this one.

## 2.1.4.2 Description information

The document (annex 6) is a translation from English into Dutch and contains the following four sections and appendix:
1. in section 1, information on the candidate is given, including name, place of birth, contact details and employer's name. Additionally the purpose of the APL procedure is mentioned, which is in this case is entry to the Socio-Legal study course,
2. section 2 explains the procedure and the assessment. As such it explains the standards, methods and instruments that are used,
3. section 3 contains the actual assessment of 12 basic competencies of the Socio-Legal study course. Due to the length of the assessment report (12 pages) only a selection of the 12 competencies assessed have been translated: namely paragraphs 3, 8 and 12. The competence assessed in the particular paragraph, is defined through different tasks/activities.
4. section 4 contains the conclusion of the assessment, a summary of the degree to which the competences assessed are demonstrated: fully, partially, not at all, and

5. further included at the end of the assessment report is an Appendix. Following the assessment report and its conclusions, an Exam Committee will decide if the person will be allowed to enter the study programme and, if so, how many ECTS will be awarded. This decision will be based on a comparison of the competences demonstrated by the candidate and the competences that can be acquired in the programme.

If the person pursues his/her studies successfully, it will say on the diploma that the exemption has been given on the grounds of RPL (EVC).

## 2.1.5 Sample Certificate - France

There is no real certification in higher education in France relating to the validation des acquis de l'expérience (VAE), or recognition of prior learning. Instead each individual who wishes to gain a partial or full exemption from a recognised national qualification must compile a dossier, in which the relevant professional experience is detailed. This dossier is then assessed by a jury, which evaluates whether the candidate possesses the competences, skills and knowledge required to be awarded the diploma, title or certificate requested. The jury then issues a recommendation of full, partial or no validation depending on the relevance of the information submitted.

Due to the length of the documentation related to the recognition of prior learning in France, it was not feasible with the time schedule to evaluate an entire dossier. Furthermore, due to the heterogeneous nature of the documents submitted, it is not possible to present more than a generic overview of the content and structure of a RPL dossier.

According to guidelines[18] offered to VAE candidates, the dossier should offer an opportunity to present an analysis of the candidate's career, presenting each relevant activity separately and focusing in more detail on problematic situations encountered. This analysis should demonstrate what the candidate has learned from a certain situation, what the outcome was, what new opinion he or she has formed based on the results, what competences have been acquired and how they would be transferable to a different situation.

The format of the dossier should not be neglected. Indeed the finished document should include, amongst others:
- cover page, which conforms to a standard model provided by the appropriate authority,
- introduction and conclusion,
- list of acronyms used,
- list of bibliographical references,
- numbered and referenced annexes, if required, and
- marked confidential, if requested.

In terms of presentation, the document must be clear and well organised. It should be personalised, written in the first person and including opinions with appropriate justification, such as 'I did not agree with….because…'. A CV should be included to act as a chronological point of reference and an overview of all the work experience detailed in the dossier.

Finally, the analysis ought to be presented in terms of time (i.e. chronologically), multi-dimensionally, but also scientifically using, where possible, words from the workplace but also those used in the specific disciplines concerned.

## 2.2  Evaluation meeting

This chapter will report on the outcomes of the evaluation meeting which was held on 22nd May 2008 in Cheltenham, United Kingdom.

The evaluation meeting was attended by credential evaluators from all of the four project partners: Nuffic, UK NARIC, French NARIC and the Swedish NARIC. This meeting followed the kick-off meeting, which had been held on February 11th 2008 in the Hague, The Netherlands.

The objectives of the evaluation meeting were the following:
- to evaluate a sample of certificates in relation to:
    - format,
    - quality assurance,
    - value/credits,
    - assessment and standard tools, and
    - good and best practices,
- to discuss and formulate recommendation.

At the evaluation meeting certificates from each of the following countries/regions were evaluated:
- England,
- Flanders,
- The Netherlands, and
- Sweden.

In the months before the evaluation meeting, each of the partners had searched for one or two example certificates from the countries of their research. That this was not always an easy task is demonstrated by the fact that there were no examples available for some of the countries/regions in which the study was being carried out. Furthermore it appeared that for France the actual APL reports from the jury that assesses the portfolio of candidates are not available to the public, therefore the portfolio itself was taken into account for evaluation purposes.

There appeared to be different kinds of documents in which the informal/non-formal learning experience was laid down. The evaluation of each of these documents was carried out following a pre-designed questionnaire. First, each of the certificates was introduced by the project partner responsible for the country of origin of the document, after which the evaluation panel had 20 minutes to evaluate the document using the above-mentioned questionnaire (annex 7). Following this period of individual evaluation, ten minutes was allocated to discuss any observations. These observations will be presented by topic in the following sections of this report[19].

### 2.2.1  Format

Overall it was noted that the formats varied greatly and that there were different types of documents in which the non/informal learning experience was presented. The types of documents which have been

found in this study are:
- APL certificates,
- diploma transcript with exemptions indicated on the basis of APL,
- RPL portfolio, and
- report of the RPL assessment.

It is also noteworthy that even though there is some uniformity on a national level, the document issued when RPL is awarded can differ within the same country.

In terms of good practice, it was considered appropriate to have a clear lay out presenting the necessary information and references to information in a clear and succinct way. Furthermore a clear description of competences and a good structuring of competences (where appropriate) was also recommended. Simplicity was appreciated, providing sufficient information and/or a reference where additional information could be obtained, for example on procedures. This point is elaborated in the remarks regarding quality assurance below. In the case of a transcript including other courses, it was considered helpful that it was clearly stated which course or module was recognised by RPL.

Examples of bad practice included formats that did not have a clear layout and were missing key information, such as date of award and address of issuing institution. One of the reports was so detailed and provided so much information on standards and procedures that it was considered to be too complicated for practical use, even though the information available was considered to be of value.

## 2.2.2 Value / credits

There were different ways in which the assessment was given value. In some cases the assessment resulted in the awarding of credits, either for a course, or a total was given for all the competences assessed together. It was considered to be a shortcoming that in cases where credits were awarded, the grading mark was not explained and/or the credits were not presented as ECTS. Indeed where credits were indicated, it was agreed that a conversion to ECTS points would be useful as a footnote or in an annex. It was noted that there was not always an indication of the level of the RPL assessment, as this was considered valuable information, especially in view of developments such as the European Qualification Framework. In cases where work experience was mentioned, it was suggested to describe this in terms of competences.

## 2.2.3 Quality assurance

In almost half of the cases there was no explicit mention or reference to quality assurance on the document. It was recommended to have such a reference or, in cases where the quality is not directly, but more indirectly assured through a body, to make a reference as to where this information can be found. As a suggestion it was also mentioned to put this information in an annex to the RPL document.

Some of the certificates lacked information on the general RPL procedures, how the RPL was achieved and what quality standards were adopted by the institution issuing the document, including the status and background of the assessors and the institution. Furthermore there was sometimes no reference found to

general internal or external quality assurance procedures regarding the RPL. This also raised questions in cases where the awarding and teaching institution appeared to be the same. In other cases the reference to quality assurance appeared in the presented format, and/or the information seemed to be available from the institution upon request. It was recommended, and therefore can be considered to be best practice, to make this information transparent and available.

## 2.2.4 Assessment and standard tools

Closely linked and connected to the question of quality assurance is assessment and the instruments used for assessment. It appeared that, except for one certificate, it was not sufficiently stated in the documents which assessment instruments were used. Furthermore (and probably as a result of this) it was not sufficiently clear what the relationship was between the competences assessed and the instruments used. On all documents it was generally considered to be adequately clear what body carried out the assessment, although it was not always indicated what qualifications the assessors that carried out the assessment possessed, although this is also not always the case when it concerns the assessment of formal learning either.

An explanation of the assessment procedure and information about what standards and instruments are used was considered to be good practice. A reference to where the information is available was considered to be very helpful, especially as the assessment and tools often involve providing detailed information which cannot be included in an RPL document.

## 2.2.5 General recommendations

In the light of the above, and the differences in national practice, the evaluation panel formulated the following preliminary general recommendations:
- a clear layout of the RPL report, providing key and explanatory information (e.g. date, place) is encouraged, to foster international recognition,
- the document should at least contain information on the procedures, assessors and quality assurance agency, or a link to this information,
- transparency of information on the part of the institutions is seen as a necessity in order to be able to assess the RPL documents, and
- an annex similar to the diploma supplement could provide additional explanatory information regarding, for example, the RPL procedure, standards and the explanation of marks.

# 2.3  Recommendations

As mentioned in the introduction, besides providing the country reports on the current state of play of non-formal and informal learning, one of the main objectives of the project was to formulate a number of recommendations for credential evaluators (on how to evaluate RPL certificates/reports for transferability purposes) and for the issuing institutions and bodies (on how to make these certificates/reports more transparent for evaluation purposes). Consequently, following the evaluation meeting and its outcomes, all project partners reflected further on the formulation of final recommendations. These conclusive recommendations are presented below in sections 2.3.1 (for institutions and issuing bodies) and 2.3.2 (for credential evaluators).

A number of basic principles for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning certification was agreed by the project consortium. In the first instance, it was decided that good practice concerning the awarding and recognition of RPL certificates should be developed within the existing frameworks for recognition, such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to which the recognition processes for formal learning should also adhere.

Awarding institutions should provide clear, transparent and easily accessible information on the RPL certificates issued. Any additional relevant information on the RPL process could be included in the Diploma Supplement (or a similar supplement to the certificate), thus facilitating the assessment of the certificates by competent recognition bodies, higher education institutions, employers and others.

Furthermore, the partners concurred that the aim of evaluations should be to assess RPL qualifications/ certificates on the strength of the skills and competencies they convey rather than on the way in which the qualifications/certificates were earned. A RPL certificate issued by an approved/ accredited HEI should be awarded the appropriate recognition, unless substantial differences can be identified. The quality of the qualifications awarded should not be questioned, even when the academic degree or certificate has been achieved through RPL.

Finally, the subject of quality assurance (QA) was discussed. As recognised HEIs are evaluated and approved/accredited by a national quality assurance organisation, it is important that networks of QA organisations (ENQA, etc.) and HEIs cooperate closely to develop, establish and recommend a set of common QA standards regarding RPL. Such a Code of Good Practice would not only support the validation work of the HEIs but also assist in the development of greater mutual understanding and trust of RPL procedures, thereby leading to the fair recognition of RPL certificates.

## 2.3.1 Recommendations for Institutions and Bodies

It is recommended that the document format and annexes of RPL qualifications follow the format of formal education qualifications. The RPL certificate should be clear, brief, specific and contain key information.

The project showed that it is important that the information in the  RPL document includes, for example, the following items:
• the level at which the RPL was assessed,

- the profile of the course/module/programme for which exemption/certification/crediting on the basis of RPL is sought, and
- the exemptions granted in terms of institutional/national credits and/or ECTS credits.

The project also showed that it would be useful if the document could provide information in a schematic form. In addition, the idea was raised to add an annex, e.g. a document similar to the Diploma Supplement, that could provide information such as:

- learning outcomes of the course, defined in terms of competencies (e.g. NQF level descriptors),
- brief, but specific, details on the RPL assessment procedures (including instruments, methods and standards) and a link to quality assurance processes where possible,
- reference to the RPL contact point at the institution who could supply further information if required, and
- a glossary for key terms and abbreviations, so that the certificate is comprehensible.

## 2.3.2 Recommendations for Credential Evaluators

The project partners commented on the key features required of a certificate of full or partial non-formal/informal learning in order to be able to assess it in line with their own recognition procedures. The most important of these recommendations can be found below:

- ensure that the information presented on the RPL certificate is similar, in content and format, to certificates issued following a period of formal learning, to ensure consistency in evaluations,
- identify the standards against which the non-formal or informal learning has been assessed, as these are often a key indicator of national level, especially if they are based on NQF level descriptors or other standards,
- check that the format of the certificate complies with national or institutional norms,
- when evaluating RPL certificates, credential evaluators should adhere to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the RPL relevant paragraphs in the Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications[20] adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, and
- if the abovementioned requirements are met, evaluate the RPL certificate accordingly.

*Further Research*

This study has been a first exploration into the international recognition of certificates of non-formal and informal learning assessment in higher education and has offered a number of recommendations to credential evaluators and institutions/issuing bodies on the basis of the findings of the research and evaluation phases.

One of the realities the project team was faced with during the project was the variety of national practices towards RPL as well as different kinds of certificates issued. The project team therefore recommends that future research will focus on trying to identify whether the recommendations of this study can be extended, and could cover a wider geographical coverage, ideally the whole NARIC network. Such a study could, for example, focus on investigating what further information (if any) each NARIC would require to be able to evaluate a RPL certificate and then formulate recommendations on how this should be done. Furthermore this work could contribute to a common understanding within the NARIC network on how to use learning outcomes to recognise formal, non- and informal learning, which in turn will contribute to improved, more transparent recognition practices in general. The results of this study could be taken as a starting point for such research.

# Annex 1

## Analysis Framework

ENIC/NARIC Study on Formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning

### I General Context

a) When was the recognition of non formal and informal learning introduced?

b) What has been the (main) reason why non formal and informal learning was introduced?

c) What have been the main developments since? (e.g. introduced in other fields, new policies)

d) In which sectors is the recognition of non formal and informal learning considered a success and in which sectors less? Why?

### II Purpose

a) What is/are currently the main purpose(s) of issuing certificates/reports for recognition of both non formal and informal learning? (e.g. access to higher education and/or labor market?)

## III Structure/ Organization of recognition

a) **Is there 1 uniform procedure or are there several procedures for recognition?**

i) *What are the main steps in this process/ in the processes?*

ii) *What are the instruments used for assessment and recognition (in each process)?*

b) **Which institutions are involved in the recognition process of non formal and informal learning?**

i) *Is there a jury or are there assessors involved, and if so, how are they composed?*

ii) *Who selects the assessors/jury?*

iii) *What are their competencies?*

c) **What kind of certificates/reports are issued by what kind of institutions/bodies?**

 

*i)     What are the civil effects in terms of academic and professional recognition?*

 

d) **Is there recognition of certificates/ reports within the country between the certificating institutions/bodies?**

 

e) **What are the standards used for both recognition of non formal and informal learning?**

 

f) **Is there cooperation between Higher Education institutions in the particular country regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning?**

 

g) **Quality Assurance: What body is responsible for the quality assurance of the assessment procedures?**

 

*i)     What body/institution guarantees the quality of the APL assessment?*

 

## IV Future

h) **Are there any upcoming or expected changes regarding the recognition of non formal and informal learning regarding the question asked above? (E.g. in policies, target groups, procedures, standards?)**

 

# Annex 2

Sample Certificate:
Sweden (No 2)

# Examensbevis *Degree Certificate*

## Lärarexamen

avsedd för undervisning i förskola, förskoleklass,
fritidshem och grundskolans tidigare år

*Degree of Bachelor of Education*

*for Teaching in Pre-school, Pre-school Class, Leisure Centre*
*for School Children and Compulsory School, Earlier Years*

Namn *Name*

Personnummer *Civic registration number*

har i enlighet med bestämmelserna i högskoleförordningen (SFS 1993:100)
om grundläggande utbildning uppfyllt fordringarna för att erhålla examensbevis
avseende lärarexamen, 140 poäng, avsedd för undervisning i förskola, förskoleklass,
fritidshem och grundskolans tidigare år.

*has, in accordance with the Decree of 1 July 1993 (SFS 1993:100) concerning*
*studies at Swedish Universities and University Colleges, been awarded the degree of*
*Bachelor of Education, 140 credit points, for Teaching in Pre-school, Pre-school Class,*
*Leisure Centre for School Children and Compulsory School, Earlier Years.*

På rektors uppdrag
*By request of the Vice-Chancellor*

Kurser och betyg förtecknas på följande sidor.
*Courses passed and grades obtained are indicated in the following pages.*

2007-04-17
Datum för bevis *Date of issue*

Universitetet kan verifiera äktheten av bevis.
*The University can verify the authenticity of certificates.*

Präglat sigill *Embossed seal*

# Examensbevis *Degree Certificate*

Kurser ingående i lärarexamen, 140 poäng
Inriktning: barn och lärande

*Courses included in the degree of Bachelor of Education, 140 credit points*
*Field of Study: Children and Learning*

| Kurs<br>*Course* | Poäng<br>*Credit points* | ECTS-poäng<br>*ECTS credits* | Betyg*<br>*Grade** | Datum för betyg<br>*Date* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elever med behov av särskilt stöd, särskilt med anledning läs- och skrivsvårigheter<br>*Pupils in Need of Supportive Education Due to Readning and Writing Disabilities* | 12 | 18 | Godkänd<br><br>*Pass* | 2002-04-10 |
| Yrkeserfarenhet, 10 poäng<br>*Vocational Experience, 10 credit points* | 2 | | | |
| Lek och lärande<br>*Play and Learning* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2003-06-17 |
| Didaktik med inriktning mot grundläggande matematik I<br>*Didactics and Basic Skills in Mathematics I* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br><br>*Pass* | 2004-06-01 |
| Läs- och skrivutveckling - hinder och möjligheter<br>*Reading and Writing Development-Obstacles & Possibilities* | 4  5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br><br>*Pass* | 2006-02-02 |
| Natur, äventyr, rörelse som pedagogiskt hjälpmedel, A-nivå [3]<br>*Outdoor, Adventure, Physical Movements as Pedagogical Vehicle, Basic Course* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br><br>*Pass* | 2006-05-16 |
| Att vara lärare i förskolan<br>*To be a Teacher in Early Childhood Education* | | | | |
| Samverkan för lärande och utveckling<br>*Co-operation in Teaching and Development* | 5  5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br><br>*Pass* | 2004-12-13 |
| Planering och utvärdering som lärares verktyg<br>*Planning and Evaluation as a Tool for the Teacher* | 5 | 7.5 | Väl godkänd<br><br>*Pass with distinction* | 2005-02-25 |

3(4)

# Examensbevis *Degree Certificate*

Kurser ingående i lärarexamen, 140 poäng
Inriktning: barn och lärande

*Courses included in the degree of Bachelor of Education, 140 credit points*
*Field of Study: Children and Learning*

| Kurs<br>*Course* | Poäng<br>*Credit points* | ECTS-poäng<br>*ECTS credits* | Betyg*<br>*Grade** | Datum för betyg<br>*Date* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barn- och ungdomsvetenskap A<br>*Child and Youth Studies* | | | | |
| Att vara barn i det moderna samhället<br>*To be a Child in the Modern Society* | 5 | 7.5 | Väl godkänd<br>*Pass with distinction* | 2005-02-24 |
| Barns vardag i förskolan, förskoleklassen och skolan<br>*The Everyday Life for Children in Pre- School, Pre-School Class and Compulsory School* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2006-01-24 |
| Lärande för hållbar utveckling<br>*Education for Sustainable Development* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2006-06-01 |
| Barns olika sätt att lära<br>*Childrens Different Styles of Learning* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2006-08-25 |
| Yrkeserfarenhet (10 poäng)<br>*Vocational Experience (10 credit points)* | | | | |

## Allmänt utbildningsområde *General Field*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Undervisning i ett samhällsperspektiv<br>*Teaching in a Changing Society* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2004-03-29 |
| Utveckling, samspel och hälsa [3]<br>*Development, Interaction, Health* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2005-11-25 |
| Yrkeserfarenhet (10 poäng)<br>*Vocational Experience (10 credit points)* | | | | |
| Specialpedagogiska perspektiv 1<br>*Special Education from different Perspectives 1* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2004-06-21 |
| Didaktik med inriktning mot yngre barns utveckling och lärande<br>*Didactics in Early Year Education* | 5 | 7.5 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2005-06-09 |
| Yrkeserfarenhet (10 poäng)<br>*Vocational Experience (10 credit points)* | | | | |
| Examenskurs<br>*Examination Course* | 10 | 15 | Väl godkänd<br>*Pass with distinction* | 2006-12-21 |
| Lärarexamensarbete<br>*Project - Assignment, Teachers Education* | 10 | 15 | Godkänd<br>*Pass* | 2007-01-31 |

4(4)

# Examensbevis *Degree Certificate*

Kurser ingående i lärarexamen, 140 poäng
Inriktning: barn och lärande

*Courses included in the degree of Bachelor of Education, 140 credit points*
*Field of Study: Children and Learning*

\* Som betyg används något av uttrycken godkänd eller väl godkänd.
  För kurser markerade med [1] ges endast betyget godkänd.
\* *The following grading system has been applied: Pass, Pass with distinction.*
  *For courses marked with [1], only Pass is given.*

[2] Tillgodoräknat tillsammans med validering från yrkeserfarenhet 15 poäng som Specialisering 20 poäng
    enligt beslut 20 mars 2007 (Dnr I___ ___ ___) vid Pedagogikums kansli.
    *Credit given together with evaluation from vocational experience 15 credit points (22.5 ECTS credits)*
    *corresponding to a Specialization 20 credit points (30 ECTS credits) in accordance with a decision passed*
    *20 March 2007 (Reg. No. PEKI 2007/250) at the Administrative Offices at Pedagogikum.*

[3] Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm.

[4] Tillgodoräknat som Tvärvetenskaplig kurs 20 poäng enligt beslut enligt samma beslut som ovan.
    *Credit given corresponding to Interdisciplinary course 20 credit points (30 ECTS credits) in accordance with the*
    *same decision as above.*

[5] Tillgodoräknat tillsammans med validering från yrkeserfarenhet 10 poäng som inriktningen Barn och
    lärande 40 poäng enligt samma beslut som ovan.
    *Credit given together with evaluation from vocational experience 10 credit points (15 ECTS credits)*
    *corresponding to 40 credit points (60 ECTS credits) in the field of study Children and Learning in accordance*
    *with the same decision as above.*

[6] Tillgodoräknat tillsammans med validering från yrkeserfarenhet 10 poäng som Lärares arbete A, 20 poäng
    enligt samma beslut som ovan.
    *Credit given together with evaluation from vocational experience 10 credit points (15 ECTS credits)*
    *corresponding to Education – Theory and Practice A 20 credit points(30 ECTS credits) in accordance with the*
    *same decision as above.*

[7] Tillgodoräknat tillsammans med validering från yrkeserfarenhet 10 poäng som Lärares arbete B, 20 poäng
    enligt samma beslut som ovan.
    *Credit given together with evaluation from vocational experience 10 credit points (15 ECTS credits)*
    *corresponding to Education – Theory and Practice B 20 credit points (30 ECTS credits) in accordance with the*
    *same decision as above.*

# Annex 3

**SWEDEN**
**Sample certificate No 1**

*Translation from the Swedish language made by the Swedish NARIC*

(page 1 of 2)

*(Logotype of Malmö högskola)*

MAH/Teacher Education
Upper secondary school teacher training programme

University Lecturer

April 2, 2008

## Validation for teaching qualification

ꞌX has applied for assessment of his competence in relation to the requirements for qualification as teacher in upper secondary school in subjects specific for the vehicle engineering programme.

ꞌX refers to his professional experience in the motor vehicle branch.

Representatives for the teacher education have examined the application for validation and certificates concerning the professional experience.

The group has validated ꞌX:s educational as well as professional experience to be corresponding to relevant tertiary education comprising 30 ECTS credits.

Decision: X can be given credit for 30 of the 90 credits required for the teaching degree. The remaining 60 credits must be supplemented by further studies within the higher education system before a teaching degree can be conferred.

For the Validation group at
Teacher Education

Case officer

(page 2 of 2)

*(Logotype of Malmö högskola)*

MAH/Teacher education
Upper secondary school teacher training programme

University Lecturer

April 2, 2008

## Validation record

| Professional experience/education | Validated to (credits) |
| --- | --- |
| **Education** | |
| Various education according to appendix | 10 |
| **Professional experience** | |
| Mechanic, Car & Service 1978-1983 | |
| Mechanic, Military Workshop in Skåne 1983-1990 | 10 |
| Inspector, the Motor-Vehicle Inspection Co. | |
| Manager, Military Workshop | 10 |

MAH / Lärarutbildningen
Gymnasielärarutbildningen

██████████

Universitetsadjunkt

2008-04-02

**MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA**

Ej

## Validering för lärarexamen.

███████████ ansöker om validering av sin kompetens i förhållande till krav för lärarexamen för arbete som lärare i gymnasieskolans karaktärsämnen med inriktning mot fordonsprogrammet.

███████████ åberopar yrkeserfarenhet från fordonsbranschen.

Lärarutbildningen har granskat ansökan om validering samt intyg från åberopad yrkeserfarenhet.

Gruppen har validerat ██████████ erfarenheter, såväl de utbildningsmässiga som yrkesmässiga, till att omfatta relevant högskoleutbildning om 30 högskolepoäng.

Beslut: Att ██████████ kan tillgodoräknas 30 högskolepoäng av de 90 yrkesteoretiska högskolepoäng som krävs för lärarexamen. Resterande 60 högskolepoäng måste således kompletteras genom ytterligare högskolestudier innan lärarexamen kan utfärdas.

För valideringsgruppen vid
Lärarutbildningen

Handläggare

107

MAH / Lärarutbildningen
  Gymnasielärarutbildningen

Universitetsadjunkt

2008-04-02

**MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA**

## Valideringsprotokoll

| Arbetslivserfarenhet/utbildning | Validerad att motsvara poäng |
|---|---|
| Utbildning | |
| Diverse utbildningar enl. bif. förteckning | 10 |
| | |
| Arbetslivserfarenhet | |
| Mekaniker, Bil & Service 1978 - 1983 | |
| Mekaniker, Miloverkstaden Skåne 1983 - 1990 | 10 |
| Besiktningsman, Bilprovningen 1990- 1997 | |
| Föreståndare, Miloverkstaden | 10 |
| | |
| Summa | 30 högskolepoäng |

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# Annex 4

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | | | | **School** | | | |
| Andrew George Nash | | | | Art and Design | | | |
| **Student Number** | | **HESA number** | | **Date of Birth** | | | |
| 509928275 | | 8453678398226 | | 19 February 1978 | | | |
| **Programme of Study** | | | | **FHEQ Level** | | | |
| BSc (Hons) Product Design and Development | | | | Honours | | | |
| **Awarding Institution** | | **Teaching Institution** | | | | | |
| University of Salforc | | University of Salforc | | | | | |

Transcript

| Year | Module Code | Module Title | Level | Credit Rating | Mark | Credit | Info |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 00/01 | W20010025 | Design Awareness | 1 | 20 | 66 | 20 | |
| 00/01 | W20010031 | Design Activity | 1 | 10 | 38 | 10 | R,C |
| 00/01 | W20010034 | Balancing Technology | 1 | 10 | 59 | 10 | |
| 00/01 | W20010016 | Computing & Design I | 1 | 10 | P | 10 | APEL |
| 00/01 | W20010103 | New Product Development | 1 | 10 | 56 | 10 | |
| 00/01 | W20010055 | Materials and Manufacturing | 1 | 20 | 59 | 20 | |
| 00/01 | W20010023 | Design Project 1 | 1 | 20 | 63 | 20 | |
| 00/01 | W20010056 | Cultural and Historical Perspectives on I | 1 | 20 | 57 | 20 | |
| | | | **Level: 1** | 120 | 58.33 | 120 | |
| 01/02 | W20020088 | Product Design Factors | 2 | 20 | 62 | 20 | |
| 01/02 | W20020019 | Presentation, Media and Modelling | 2 | 20 | 64 | 20 | |
| 01/02 | W20020020 | Enabling Technology | 2 | 10 | 22 | 0 | R |
| 01/02 | W20020064 | Interface Design | 2 | 20 | 54 | 20 | |
| 01/02 | W20020021 | Design in Context | 2 | 20 | 71 | 20 | |
| 01/02 | W20020094 | 20th Century Design | 2 | 10 | 60 | 10 | |
| 01/02 | W20020027 | New Product Development II | 2 | 10 | 34 | 0 | |
| 01/02 | W20020041 | Computing and Design II | 2 | 10 | 66 | 10 | |
| | | | **Level: 2** | 120 | 56.99 | 100 | |

**Other Learning**
Key skills are delivered through modules on the programme

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Signature** | **Contact Number** | **Date of Issue** |
| A N Other | 0161 295 XXXX | 6 July 2003 |

*Information for Students*

Any module which has been taken but not awarded credit must be retrieved in accordance with the academic regulations of the University. Your school will inform you of the details

Where you have been awarded credit for a module through compensation (C) you may choose to be resssessed or to retake the module in accordance with the academic regulations of the University. Your school will inform you of the details.

Students are permitted to appeal against a decision of a board of examiners If you are contemplating the possibility of an appeal you are advised to contact your personal tutor or programme tutor, or the undergraduate office in Academic Division. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the registrar within 10 calendar days of receipt of this transcript

*Explanatory Information*

The language of instruction and assessment is English

The programme mark is normally calculated as:
  25% Level 2 mark + 75% Level 3 mark

Degree classification is normally based on the following thresholds

| minimum programme mark | class of honours degree |
|---|---|
| 68.5 | First |
| 59.0 | Upper Second |
| 49.5 | Lower Second |
| 40.0 | Third |

*Key*

| APEL | credit awarded by Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning |
|---|---|
| APL | credit awarded by Accreditation of Prior Learning |
| C | credit awarded by Compensation |
| FHEQ | Framework for Higher Education Qualifications |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| PSB | Professional or Statutory Body |
| R | mark achieved at Reassessment or Retake |

Draft Sample 0.6a, CR, 11.11.03

# Annex 5

1

**Validating Body: The Ghent University Association (AUGent), Belgium**

**CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION ('BEWIJS van TOELATING')**
**via the ADMISSION PROCEDURE of the**
**Ghent University Association for the academic year 2007-2008**

*The candidate must submit this document when **registering** with one of the AUGent institutions, along with:*
- *Certificate of proof of an exploratory interview with an academic supervisor ('Bewijs oriënterend gesprek met een trajectbegeleider')*
- *If needed, one or more documents to show that the candidate satisfies any specific conditions for admission laid down by the institution and/or for the course, as set out in the course rules and regulations (the 'onderwijsregeling').*
- *Copy of the portfolio.*

This document confirms that:

**Candidate's personal details:**
First name:                          Surname:
Place and date of birth:

has **passed** the admission procedure that was jointly organised by the members of the Ghent University Association.

This admission procedure is regulated by the AUGent procedure for admission via examination for the AUGent institutions' Bachelor study courses ('AUGent-Procedure voor toelating via onderzoek voor Bacheloropleidingen van de AUGent instellingen') published by the Validating Body of the Ghent University Association.

This certificate is only valid for **registration for one of the AUGent institutions' Bachelor study courses**. It is neither a substitute for nor equivalent to a certificate of secondary education.

Along with this certificate, the candidate will receive a 'Summarised Report' consisting of:
- the portfolio assessments
- the feedback from the admission test

Ghent, Belgium, 4 April 2008

For the Chairman of the Validating Body of the Ghent University Association, Mr. Paul van Hauwermeiren.

Stamp of Validating Body

Beatrijs Hollebosch, Secretary of the Validating Body of the Ghent University Association

TOEL/KAND/4

2

**Ghent University Association**

**CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE**
**('Bewijs van Bekwaamheid')**

The Validating Body of the Ghent University Association recognises that ……………………………….. (name) born
in Ghent, Belgium on …………………….(date)
has acquired the following competences:

1. Obtaining information on the help that a patient needs, and critically interpreting the relevant information.
2. Performing and adjusting a targeted and appropriate physiotherapeutic examination of the patient/person requesting help, doing so in the contrasting domains of rehabilitation and physiotherapy (to a beginner's standard)
3. Interpreting the collected data relating to the request for help and the related physiotherapeutic examination, and coming up with the follow-up physiotherapeutic diagnosis, doing so in the contrasting domains of rehabilitation and physiotherapy (to a beginner's standard)
4. Drawing up a physiotherapeutic treatment plan, where possible in conjunction with the patient, doing so in the contrasting domains of rehabilitation and physiotherapy (to a beginner's standard)
5. Performing a methodical physiotherapeutic intervention and critically evaluating it, and if necessary adjusting it, doing so in the contrasting domains of rehabilitation and physiotherapy (to a beginner's standard)
6. Maintaining a critical and honourable professional attitude, this to include showing scientific curiosity, intellectual honesty, and problem-solving reasoning.
7. Recognising and applying methods of reasoning used in rehabilitation sciences and physiotherapy.
8. Communicating about and with patients in writing and verbally.
9. Ability to collaborate, communicate and use problem-solving reasoning, making it possible to work in (multidisciplinary) teams.
10. Understanding the structure and functioning of the healthcare sector.
11. Understanding health risks and the effects of prevention.
12. Demonstrating social responsibility.
13. Demonstrating respect for cultural diversity.

These competences were examined in line with Section 1.3 of the Ghent University Association's procedure for recognising Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) ('Eerder Verworven Competenties/EVCs').
The standards used are the final competences for the rehabilitation sciences and physiotherapy course ('Revalidatiewetenschappen en kinesitherapie') at Ghent.

Signed on behalf of the Validating Body,                    [Stamp: Ghent University Association, Validating Body for APL]

[Signature]

Name of mandated person: Prof. Philip Roosen
Job title: Chairman of the Ghent Revaki study course committee
Institution: Ghent University Association

- Ghent University
- University College Ghent
- University College Arteveldehogeschool
- University College West Flanders

# Annex 6

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
(Erkennen van Verworven Competenties/EVCs)

## APL REPORT
(Rapportage EVC)

Socio-Legal Services
(Sociaal Juridische Dienstverlening)

Bachelor of Laws

Name of candidate:      P. Persoon
Date:      28.09.2007
APL report number:      S0012

**Recognised APL Provider**

### 1. Profile of candidate

Surname:      P. Persoon
First name(s) in full:      xxx
Address:      xxx
Date of birth:      xxx
Place of birth:      xxx
Employer:      xxx
Job title:      xxx
Tel. nr.:      xxx
E-mail:      xxx

APL start date:      1.11.2007
Date of assessment interview:      18.12.2008
Assessors:      Mr. M. Gerrebrands
      Ms. M. Neve

### Purpose of the APL procedure

The candidate wishes to obtain the degree for the Socio-Legal Services (Sociaal Juridische Dienstverlening) study course and possesses the relevant work experience for the area covered by and standard of this study course. The purpose of the APL procedure is to draw up a list of the competences that the candidate already possesses in practice and of those that need to be developed or further developed in order to obtain the bachelor diploma of higher vocational education ('HBO-bachelordiploma'). Once this information has been mapped out, the exam committee can decide whether any exemptions can be granted.

### 2. The APL procedure and assessment

### The assessment standard

The competences acquired by the candidate have been compared with the competence profile drawn up for the Socio-Legal Services study course that has been set down by the board of the institute for the course in question

and validated in the light of the relevant sphere of action. The competence profile is included in Appendix A of the OER (Onderwijs Examen Regeling i.e. study course exam rules and regulations) for the course in question.

The APL assessment standard for the Socio-Legal Services (SLS) course at the HvA (Hogeschool van Amsterdam university college) is based on the HBO bachelor standard (see above) and is directly derived from the list of course competences for the above SLS course at the HvA. These course competences are in turn derived from the national SLS course competences. More information on the national domain competences and course competences can be found in the data bank at ww.hbo-raad.nl under the heading Opleidingscompetenties 1. Economie, Domeincompetenties Bachelors of Laws (Course competences 1. Economics, Domain competences Bachelors of Laws).

**Explanation of methods used**

The APL procedure consists of the following phases:

    I.       Familiarisation and advice
    II.     Identification and evaluation of competences
    III.    Recognition of competences

1. APL Quickscan (optional)
2. Registration form
3. Introductory interview with APL advisor
4. Compilation of portfolio
5. Portfolio review
6. Assessment interview
7. Feedback and assessors' provisional opinion
8. Drafting the APL Report: assessment of competences
9. Exam committee decides on its assessment, including a declaration of the rights this grants in respect of the academic programme to be pursued

The familiarisation and advice phase will establish the course for which APL can be applied and the action that the candidate must take in this respect. Personal goals and arrangements will be set down.

The candidate will then compile a portfolio for assessment purposes. This is a folder containing documents that demonstrate the experiences and qualities needed in respect of the competence profile for the SLS course. The portfolio will include a self-assessment, documentary proof of this, and objective thoughts on specific scenarios and on the candidate's own conduct.

The portfolio forms the basis for the assessment interview that is conducted with two assessors. The purpose of this assessment interview is to assess the extent to which the candidate actually possesses the necessary competences. The self-assessment and the documents in the portfolio are used to assess the context within which the various job-related tasks and acts were performed and their difficulty, the approach taken by the candidate, the knowhow and skills needed in this respect, the degree of autonomy and self-reliance when performing job-related tasks, the results achieved and the transfer to other scenarios.

This report quotes a rating for each competence. The possible ratings are:

- fully demonstrated, i.e. the candidate possesses the competence to at least the standard required for accreditation
- partially demonstrated, i.e. the candidate partially possesses the competence, but further development is needed in order to reach the HBO Bachelor standard, and
- not demonstrated, i.e. the competence is undeveloped or only poorly developed, or else the candidate has provided no proof because this competence is irrelevant.

The exam committee for the SLS course will use this final rating to establish which exemptions (if any) can be granted to the candidate and which further academic programme is to be pursued should the candidate register for the course. These matters are set out in the appendix to this report in the exam committee's APL declaration.

**Deployment of APL instruments**

The APL procedure uses the following instruments:
  a. Registration form and introductory interview in order to establish the course to which the APL applies
  b. A portfolio, which includes:
  • Candidate's name and address
  • Desired aim of the APL
  • Description of work experience and training
  • Self-assessment, related to the assessment standard being used
  • Documentary evidence to underpin the self-assessment, which evidence must include practical examples. These examples are provided in the form of job-related products that the candidate has created at work. Should these be absent or no longer present then it will be sufficient to describe a best practice. The candidate will be expected to use the special STARR form to provide brief notes for each job-related product, along with his or her objective thoughts on the situation in which the product was created.

If relevant, the portfolio may also contain the following material to supplement the practical examples:
  • Diplomas, degree or other certificates or testimonials of training and study courses pursued where knowhow and skills were amassed that are relevant to the self assessment components.
  • Assessments by third parties, such as managers, customers and/or colleagues.
  c. An assessment interview, in the form of a criterion-based interview.

**3. Advising on and coaching clients in respect of socio-legal issues**

The main issue here is the extent to which the candidate is able to advise and guide clients in respect of the latter's request for help. These requests may relate to a range of socio-legal issues.

This relates to the ability to perform the following tasks:

| |
|---|
| - to clarify and analyse a client's request for help or initial position, in order to establish the actual problem |
| - to translate the client's problem into a matter of law and/or to recognise that it is not a matter of law |
| - to draw up a list of a client's legal options, taking the law and the client's personal interests into account |
| - if necessary, to refer a client to the most suitable institution |
| - to estimate the likelihood of success for the various judicial and non-judicial options |
| - to have an advisory talk with a client |
| - in the role of case manager, to guide and support a client |

The ability to properly advise and guide a client means that the candidate must not only be able to act competently in legal matters but must also have social communication skills and be informed about the social map (i.e. 'map' of social services).

**Appraisal**

| | |
|---|---|
| Legal skills | * partial: relevant basic skills have been acquired; can perform the above activities within standard scenarios |
| Communication | * partial: can carry on asking questions in order to assess a client's personal position; possesses the necessary interview and advisory skills, as long as the situation is not too complex |
| Knowledge of social map | * is well-informed about the social map |

APL Report [name of candidate]     page 4 of 6     4
HvA APL Centre - Socio-Legal Services course

### 8. Directing the handling of complex problems in a multidisciplinary consultation process

Here, the assessment focussed on the extent to which the candidate is able to act as a case manager for a client should the latter have a complex problem whose solution requires the involvement of multiple disciplines and organisations. The candidate is able to draw up an action plan, assign responsibilities and monitor the organisations involved, and can ensure that the client's interests are looked after in all respects.

This relates to the ability to perform the following tasks:

| |
|---|
| - to make an assessment and use it to draw up a client profile |
| - as a client's case manager, to draw up a plan of action for those matters that require a multidisciplinary approach |
| - getting institutions to coordinate their work, allowing for an integrated, cohesive approach. |
| - to coordinate and monitor the work being done by the various institutions to tackle the various parts of the problem |

Proper direction means that the candidate is skilled in legal matters, knows the tasks, procedures and responsibilities of the various institutions involved, works methodically and communicates effectively.

### Appraisal

| | |
|---|---|
| Legal skills | * not demonstrated: candidate has not had any experience of using this skill |
| Methodical way of working | * not demonstrated: candidate has not had any experience of using this skill |
| Communication | * not demonstrated: candidate has not had any experience of using this skill |
| Knowledge of an organisation's tasks, procedures and responsibilities | * not demonstrated: candidate has not had any experience of using this skill |

### 12. Professional development

What is assessed here is the degree to which the candidate is able to guide the broad professionalization of himself/herself and his or her profession. The candidate is responsibility for his or her own actions.

This relates to the ability to perform the following tasks:

| |
|---|
| - to think objectively about the socio-legal profession and the methods used |
| - to make a contribution to the further professionalization of the socio-legal profession, for example through publication |
| - to adjust his/her own professional conduct to the requirements of a specific situation |
| - to guide the development of the way I work, including the objective consideration of my own role as a professional, and to tailor my own conduct as necessary |

Professional development requires socio-legal skills as well as the ability to empower yourself, think objectively, and understand social responsibility.

| | |
|---|---|
| Socio-legal skills | - candidate possesses basic skills and knows about current developments in own sphere of activity, with candidate needing to develop in a broader socio-legal context |
| Ability to think objectively | - candidate possesses basic skills, can think objectively about own conduct in respect of a (limited) number of skills, with development being needed in order to be able to use additional 'objective thinking' techniques and work in a broader socio-legal context |
| Empowerment | - candidate possesses basic skills: is able to improve own approach, takes a pro-active approach, can develop further in terms of autonomy and results-driven approach |
| Understanding of social responsibility | - not demonstrated; does not yet think objectively about social responsibility |

## 4. Conclusion

| Competence | Degree to which competence has been accredited ('x' marks the type of accreditation) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Implementation of legislation and regulations | o fully | x partially | o not | demonstrated |
| 2. Informing about rights, objections and appeals | x fully | o partially | o not | demonstrated |
| 3. Advising and guiding clients | o fully | x partially | o not | demonstrated |
| 4. Care assessment and mediating with institutions | o fully | x partially | o not | demonstrated |
| 5. Supporting the client and protecting his/her interests | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 6. Mediating and guiding the parties in the case of disputes in an extrajudicial procedure | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 7. Coaching clients and volunteers | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 8. Directing the handling of complex problems in a multidisciplinary consultation process | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 9. Developing policy and contributing towards innovation | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 10. Developing preventive activities | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 11.Performing coordinating and managerial activities | o fully | o partially | x not | demonstrated |
| 12. Professional development | o fully | x partially | o not | demonstrated |

APL Report [name of candidate]       page 6 of 6                    6
HvA APL Centre - Socio-Legal Services course

**Appendix: APL declaration by the Exam Committee**

Based on the results of the APL assessment, the exam committee of the Socio-Legal Services (SLS) course declares that Ms. P. Persoon:

- can be admitted to the Socio-Legal Services course at the HvA university college
- is granted exemption in respect of the full foundation programme and thus has obtained 60 of the 240 ECTS (European Credits)[1].

Ms. Persoon can directly join the intake for the main phase of the course. This means that given a standard study workload, Ms. Persoon can be expected to complete the SLS degree course in three years.

Once she has registered for the course, Ms. Persoon must come up with a Personal Development Plan (PDP) on a regular basis that will set out the ways in which she will further develop her competences. She will be assisted in this by a course counsellor who will be assigned to her.

For a maximum period of one year after the signing of the APL report, rights may be derived from this declaration in respect of the Socio-Legal Services course at the HvA university college.

Chairman of the Exam committee for the Socio-Legal Services course
Mr. W. Hendriksen

Institute of Higher Legal Education
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# Annex 7

**Evaluation Country:**

Open questions and numbers ranging from 1 to 5

1 not existing
2 poor
3 sufficient
4 good
5 very good

**Document**

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The formulation of the competences assessed are presented in a clear, brief and specific way | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. The language used is clear and understandable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. There is a clear relation between the competences assessed and the standards used | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. It is clear from the document which competence level/level of learning outcomes have been reached | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 5. It is written on the document when it was issued | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. It is written on the document how long the document will be valid for | ☐ | ☐ |

**Assessment and Standard Tools**

|  |  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. | It is clearly stated in the document which assessment instruments are used | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. | There is a reference to the assessment standards used | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9. | It is sufficiently clear from the profile what the relation is between the competences assessed and the standards used | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. | It is clear from the document what body carried out the assessment | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 11. | It is clear from the document what the qualifications are from the assessors that carried out the assessment | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

|  |  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 12. | It is written on the document who carried out the assessment (the names of individual assessor(s)) | ☐ | ☐ |
| 13. | There is a written approval of the institution (e.g. signature Dean) | ☐ | ☐ |

**Quality**

|  |  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | A reference to quality assurance is made on the document (e.g. professional body guaranteeing quality assurance, logo) | ☐ | ☐ |

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OPEN ANSWER

15. What questions does the document raise
in relation to quality assurance?

**Value, Credits**

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 16. Are the competences assessed translated into credits or other units? | ☐ | ☐ |

**Good and bad practices**

OPEN ANSWER

17. What can be considered the best
practices related to this document?

18. What can be considered bad practices, if any?

19. What information is missing on the document, if any?

# Endnotes

1   Non-formal and informal learning is understood here as the learning (e.g. competencies) gained outside the formal learning process, see further section on methodology.

2   For more information, see www.enic-naric.net.

3   The content and format of the analysis framework was agreed by all partners at the kick-off meeting in The Hague, The Netherlands.

4   All countries are included, except for Norway.

5   Accreditation may be understood as a process that can only be undertaken by an accrediting body, which may be a little misleading as HEIs do not fit this description per se, but in many countries have the right to apply their own procedures to validate non-formal or informal learning in accordance with their own standards and requirements.

6   A Statute/order/decree that is decided by the Government.

7   Knowledge centre and evaluation function, www.nvr.nu.

8   www.qaa.org.uk

9   A viva, or viva voce, is an oral examination at a university intended to assess the candidate's knowledge and understanding of a particular subject area.

10  The Recognition and Recording of Progress and Achievement (RARPA) describes a particular approach to a significant part of the quality assurance systems of providers in the post-school sector for non-accredited provision. The term 'non-accredited' in this context describes all provision in the Learning and Skills sector that does not lead to a qualification or to an externally-accredited certificate (from www.niace.org.uk/Projects/RARPA/Default.htm).

11  SCQF Partnership, Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011.

12  Taken from www.fetac.ie/rpl/RPL_Policy_and__draft__guidelines.pdf.

13  Led by: Karine Janssens, Department of Education.

14  An association is an authority organising, on a geographical basis, cooperation between a university and several colleges providing vocational education and training programmes.

15  For further information please refer to www.hsv.se/publikationerarkiv/lagarochregler/ hogskoleverketsforfattningssamling/20075.4.5ed111281136ce97c148000265.html.

16  Higher Education Statistics Agency, the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education in the UK.

17  An association is a confederation of a university and at least one non-university higher education institution.

18  Guide pour la construction du dossier de Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience en vue de l'obtention d'un diploma de l'enseignement supérieur deliver par un établissement relevant du ministère chargé de l'agriculture, Minstère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche, March 2006.

19  This is also based on the outcomes of and scores on the questionnaires.

20  Recommendation on Criteria And Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee at its second meeting, Riga, 6 June 2001).

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