

Working group I: Implementation of European tools and principles: a catalyst for lifelong learning

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Presentations: **Qualifications frameworks: catalysts for lifelong learning?**
Jens Bjørnåvold, Cedefop

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning: emerging issues, cost and benefits
Patrick Werquin, OECD

Shift from VET to lifelong learning in the Czech Republic
Jitka Pohankova, the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education (NÚOV), the Czech Republic

The development and implementation of European tools and principles – based on learning outcomes - to improve transparency and comparability of education, training and qualification systems is at the heart of the Copenhagen process. The aim is to remove geographical, institutional and sectoral barriers to education and training and thus promote access to and make progress in the recognition of learning.

Considerable progress has already been made. Abstract concepts have turned into practical initiatives, influencing the content and organisation of countries' education, training and learning systems. Such initiatives include the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the validation of non-formal and informal learning – two instruments on which this workshops will focus – as well as Europass, the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF), the European Credit system for VET (ECVET, under development).

Through these initiatives, the European Union continually inspires and supports national developments. The EQF recommendation (April 2008) invites countries to reference their national qualifications to the European reference framework by 2010 and introduce a reference to the EQF in all new qualifications, certificates, diplomas and Europass documents by 2012. Most European countries have taken action on the basis of this recommendation and are now developing and putting in place National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs). The newly published European guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (November 2008) aim to support the development of such processes in countries, regions and sectors while respecting different models for validation. These guidelines build on the European principles for identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (adopted by the Council of Ministers May 2004) designed to strengthen the comparability and transparency of validation approaches and methods

Member States have thus significantly advanced in implementing European tools and principles. The principles of the EQF, in particular the emphasis on learning outcomes, are broadly accepted; nearly all countries are developing NQFs. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is a priority in almost all countries. But countries are at different stages of development/implementation of tools and still face important challenges. It is essential to find the right response to these challenges in order to enjoy full benefit EQF/NQFs and validation systems can offer.

This working session will address the following questions:

- What is the added value of qualifications frameworks?
- What are the main obstacles hampering progress in developing/implementing NQFs and how they can be overcome?
- How could the introduction of systems of validation of non-formal and informal learning progress at a faster pace? Which barriers need to be brought down?
- What are the benefits and cost of validation of non-formal and informal learning? How can cost be reduced? What can validation deliver and what can it not deliver?