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Country report

Czech Republic

2016 update to the European inventory
on validation of non-formal and informal learning

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1 Introduction and Evaluation

1.1 Abstract

This report provides an overview of the system for the recognition and validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning (VNIFL) in the Czech Republic. It is a 2016 update of the 2014 report.

The Czech system of VNIFL is regulated by a specific legislative framework (Act 179/2006) that stipulates the legal conditions and national provisions for the recognition and validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. The backbone of the system is the National Register of Qualifications (NSK). The NSK currently contains 921 Vocational Qualifications in 25 different sectors, ranging between EQF/NQF levels 2 to 7 (Data from March 2016, <http://www.narodníkvalifikace.cz>). From the start of the implementation of the NSK until present, there have been a total of 138 765 Vocational Qualifications awarded (data from April 2016, provided to the researcher by the NSK). The success rate of candidates for VQs is not measured but related data from the NSK information system suggest around 90 %.

The concept of Vocational Qualification (VQ) is the central principle of the Czech VNIFL system. Each VQ is defined by its Qualification Standard (a list of knowledge, skills and competences required for each given qualification) and Assessment Standards (information on assessment methods and procedures for examination). VQs are developed by Sector Councils (29 in total), where representatives of employers, employees, qualification authorities and academic sectors are involved to identify current skills' needs and shortages to be tackled.

Any individual applicant can stand for examination on any chosen Vocational Qualification upon request to an authorised entity. The assessment is competence-based and normally consists of an oral examination, written part and, most importantly, practical demonstration of skills and competences defined in the Qualification and Assessment Standard. The authorised entity issues certificates to successful applicants. Certain VQs can be combined and lead to, after a comprehensive final exam, gaining a full VET qualification through VNIFL procedure.

1.2 Main changes since the 2014 update

The 2014 update found the Czech Republic in a situation where the national system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIFL) had been stabilised through an amended legislative framework and through the consolidated practical deployment of the National Register of Qualifications as the principle delivery of the system's functions.

Between 2014 and 2016, the Czech VNIFL system has continued to build on the underlying concept of Vocational Qualifications (VQs) as primary tools for the recognition and validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. The main developments achieved in this period have been in relation to the number of VQs developed and made available to stakeholders, and to the numbers and composition of VQs gained by the learners. Another development has been further strengthening of cooperation between the public sector (qualification authorities) and social partners, predominantly companies in private sector, to tackle the identified skills' needs. Key projects in this area are described in more detail below in the respective sections of this report.

As described in the 2014 report, the main national framework for VNIFL is set in the 2006 legislation on the Recognition of outcomes of further learning (Act 179/2006). The approach brought about by the Act stipulates the introduction of the concept of Vocational Qualifications that are managed through the National Register of Qualifications (Národní

*soustava kvalifikací – NSK).*¹ The NSK comprises qualifications that relate to the national occupational standards developed in the National Register of Occupations (*Národní soustava povolání – NSP*)² and which can be achieved through an assessment of defined skills and competences regardless of where and how these skills and competences have been obtained by the individual.

The NSK distinguishes two principal instruments that define each Vocational Qualification: a) the Qualification Standard, which provides an overview of the level of qualification, its contents and the list of skills and competences that need to be demonstrated by a candidate applying for the qualification; and, b) the Assessment Standard, which specifies details for each skill/competence item and the assessment methods and procedures.

People who undergo non-formal learning to prepare themselves for these qualifications take the same assessment as people who wish to have their competences recognised without any specific prior training. The qualifications in the NSK are not part of the formal education system, even though the qualifications of formal initial VET may use the same competence descriptions as a basis in their Framework Educational Programmes.

Some Vocational Qualifications in the NSK correspond to specific parts of formal VET qualifications and can be combined in order to get recognised as equivalent of passing a full VET programme. It is relevant to note that a number of qualifications in the NSK can be recognised as fulfilling the legal requirements for “professional competence” of a person applying for a trade licence (*živnost*), thus creating another incentive for people to use the system of VNIFL.

The above Act 179/2006 was amended in 2012, following the experience of the early years of implementation. The main notable amendments are:

- The terminology used for the qualifications was changed: initially these were called Partial Qualifications (*dílčí kvalifikace*), which was found to have negative connotations. The term was replaced by “Vocational Qualifications” (*profesní kvalifikace*);
- The minimum age limit for taking part in the competence assessment was removed;
- A possibility was introduced to recognise parts of Vocational Qualifications already obtained when a person passes a competence assessment for another Vocational Qualification with common competence items. Provided that they have already certified elements of the knowledge, skills and competence required, they can be exempt from parts of the assessment; and,
- The possibility to sanction organisations that would undertake fraudulent assessments and issue certificates was strengthened.

To sum-up, the main developments between 2014 and 2016 have been related to the continuous building on the conceptual and legislative blocks set up in previous years rather than to further strategic or systemic changes. Moreover, the concept of Vocational Qualification has been gaining trust from stakeholders, which is illustrated by the growing interest in validation from both the Public Employment Service and the private sector, as outlined below.

As regards the specific needs for validation of refugees and migrant workers, the Czech VNIFL system does not provide any specific measures or initiatives for these target groups.

¹ <http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/>

² <http://www.nsp.cz/>

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

As noted above, the approach to VN FIL in the Czech Republic is mainly based on passing a competence-based assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences gained by individual applicants in their prior learning and – mainly – work experience. The competences required can also be gained through specific VQ-focused non-formal learning and this can be assessed through the same competence-based process. Therefore, similar to the Finnish approach for example, the competence-assessment is used as both an exit assessment for training programmes for adults and an assessment open to people who did not undergo specialised related training.

Along with the Act 179/2006, which constitutes the legal basis for VN FIL, there is the national Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic that recognises the development of VN FIL as one of its key objectives. The Strategy has been in place since 2007 and the Implementation Plan foresaw fulfilling specific measures by the end of 2015. The evaluation of the measures, outcomes and benefits is currently ongoing. In 2014, the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 was approved, which covers education policy as a whole, including the system of VN FIL.

The substantial policy rationale feeding the VN FIL strategy in the Czech Republic is the agenda of partnership between the education sector, qualification management and employers, with a specific focus on defining skills shortages on the labour market and utilising the VN FIL system to mitigate them. The concept of Sector Councils³ (sektorové rady) is the most important example of this policy. Sector Councils are independent groups of experts in specific sectors set up to realise a system of cooperation on reflecting objective needs of employers with regards to skills and qualifications of the workforce. It should be noted that representatives of employers play a crucial role in the composition of the Sector Councils, while representatives of employee unions, qualification authorities, VET sector, academic sector and HR professionals are also members of each Sector Council. Currently, 29 Sector Councils are operational in the system.⁴

2.2 Validation in education and training

There is a national system for the validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic. The system is focused on the validation of prior learning and acquired skills.

All four stages (identification, documentation, assessment and certification) are recognised as part of the validation system. The NSK provides the basis for identification both on structural basis (relation to the NSP and the Sector Councils) and on individual basis (provision of Qualification Standard descriptions and requirements). The PES is another important stakeholder in the identification stage (see the skills audits section below). The documentation stage is also represented; for example, the National Europass Centre of the Czech Republic, among other instruments, can be seen as contributing to this aspect. Finally, assessment and certification are related to the authorisation system. So-called Authorising Bodies (Ministries and other central authorities) provide authorisation to Authorised Bodies (organisations) and Authorised Persons (individuals) under legally specified conditions to provide VQ examinations, assess applicants and certify successful validation users.

³ <http://www.sektorove-rady.cz/>

⁴ <http://www.sektorove-rady.cz/sektorove-rady>

There are no prioritised sectors as the national approach is comprehensive. However, as previously demonstrated in the 2014 update, certain sectors indicate considerably higher numbers of VQ applicants than others. This imbalance is partially explained by the current labour market trends however the main factor causing the most notable discrepancies is the specific legislation. Some national authorities, for example the Ministry of the Interior, have adopted the concept of VQ in their legislation, thus resulting in a high number of applicants for the Vocational Qualification of 'Security Guard' and related, as the profession cannot be legally performed without the VQ certificate.

Despite initial plans, the validation system has not been fully linked to the system of initial education and VET. Functional links can be seen in the possibility of combining specific Vocational Qualifications to gain (after passing a comprehensive final exam) full VET qualification and a certificate equivalent to one achieved in the initial formal VET system. However, currently this is only the case for some selected qualifications at EQF levels 2 and 3.

Additionally, and mainly through the UNIV programme mentioned below, a growing number of VET schools have adopted the concept of lifelong learning and have been building, in cooperation with qualification authorities and the National Institute for Education, infrastructure and capacities to become fully operational lifelong learning centres in addition to their regular initial education provision functions. Non-formal learning is provided in these capacities to those who are interested in applying for a VQ and would firstly need structured training to complete all skills and competences defined by a specific Qualification Standard.

There is no specific strategy focusing on VNFI in relation to MOOCs and Open Educational Resources. These are seen as possible sources of prior learning, but the system does not structurally discriminate between different origins of individual skill-sets. However, the online portal Education and Work⁵ (*Vzdělávání a práce*), created with public funding including ESF co-funding, contains, among others, information about Open Educational Resources linked to specific job offers, qualifications or sectors.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

Since the 2014 update, the NSK and its Vocational Qualifications have been further incorporated into the national Active Policy for Employment (APE), which is the framework of measures stipulated by the Act No. 435/2004.⁶ One of the key components of the APE is the concept of re-qualification (*rekvalifikace*). It is based on the provision by the Public Employment Service of opportunities for re-training, focusing on people with low or outdated qualifications and those at risk of long-term unemployment.

In recent years, the PES adopted the national policy of VNFI, represented by the NSK, and has been linking re-qualification offers to existing Vocational Qualifications. This provides the beneficiaries of the PES services with the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification in a selected sector, with the related fees covered by the PES in case of the registered unemployed people. Also, the profile and content of any VQ is by definition directly related to the current labour market demands as VQs are created in close cooperation with employers, as explained above in relation to the Sector Councils.

2.3.1 Skills audits

It has been mentioned in the previous section that skills audits can be offered by public employment services under the title "professional and competence diagnosis" - also translated using the French terminology of "bilan de compétences" (*profesní bilanční diagnostika*). Certain categories of unemployed persons can get access to "enhanced

⁵ <http://vzdelavaniaprace.cz/>

⁶ <https://portal.mpsv.cz/sz/zamest/dotace/apz>

support in finding employment": this concerns, in particular, young people (aged below 20) or people who are identified as eligible for such support due to their situation with regard to childcare or their health condition. However, with the development of this instrument, the PES experts can also identify persons at risk due to outdated qualifications or qualifications based on skills and occupation profiles that are superfluous on the labour market. These persons are also eligible for the competence diagnosis. This enhanced support is also automatically offered to all who are registered as unemployed for longer than five months.

People falling into this category work with the PES on developing an individual action plan. The professional and competence diagnosis can be offered as a part of this individual action plan depending on the needs of a specific person.

There is no binding national framework concerning this procedure, either who should have access to it or how the diagnosis should be carried out. Nevertheless, efforts to provide methodological support to practitioners have been developed for more than a decade now. A first methodological guide was published in 2000, largely inspired by the French *Bilan de compétences* model. In the period 2000-2011 a number of professionals were trained. Though this number was not very large there was a network of counsellors trained to work with this method. These were psychologists working within PES offices or external providers of advisory services to PES. However, in recent years, due to restructuring in local PES offices, this service is increasingly provided by external contractors to PES offices. Due to concerns about the quality of the services offered as a result of the PES restructuring, a project was developed in the period 2012-2013. The project aimed at strengthening the methodological basis for this form of work with unemployed clients, creating a national network of professionals active in this field and enhancing their skills and competence (Maříková, 2013). The project resulted in the establishment of a National Association for Professional Diagnosis⁷ in September 2013. Members of this association commit to following a specific methodology and to abide to the association's ethical code. In 2014, there were 35 persons interested in membership of this association. In 2016, there are 27 full members, 12 associated members and 4 associated organisations.⁸

2.4 Validation and the third sector

In the youth sector, there is a policy in place to support VNFI for people who are either youth work professionals or volunteers. Two important EQF-funded national projects have been carried out by the National Institute for Children and Youth. The initial project was called "Keys for Life"⁹ and ran between 2009 and 2013. Its follow-up project was named "K2 – Quality and Competitiveness in Non-Formal Education", running between 2012 and 2015.¹⁰ The first project developed a set of occupational descriptions for a range of job positions related to youth activities, including a competence and assessment framework. A relatively large number of persons in organisations working with young people were reached through this project. The main idea was to support the recognition of competences of workers and volunteers in youth and children organisations, independent of how these were achieved and in which organisation they were active.¹¹ The K2 project aimed at the dissemination of the Personal Competence Portfolio¹², a pilot supplement to Europass CV. Furthermore, four of the occupational descriptions have so far been transferred into Vocational Qualifications within the NSK.

⁷ <http://www.asociace-bilancni-diagnostiky.cz/>

⁸ <http://www.asociace-bilancni-diagnostiky.cz/clenska-zakladna/>

⁹ <http://znv.nidv.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot/>

¹⁰ <http://znv.nidv.cz/projekty/priprava-projektu/k2>

¹¹ For more information see ICF GHK (2013) *Study on the value of youth work. Keys for Life case study*

¹² www.okp.ka2.cz

3 Links to national qualification systems

Qualifications and qualifications frameworks

As was the case in the 2014 update, a Czech National Qualifications Framework is still in development. The main issue remains the integration of different sub-systems into a single overarching framework.

In 2014, the Czech Republic has referenced its national qualifications system to the EQF.¹³ However, the process of evaluation of the referencing and the establishment of a comprehensive National Qualifications Framework is still ongoing and is managed by the Working Group on the Implementation of EQF.¹⁴

Instead of a single qualifications framework, at the moment there are two sectoral frameworks:

- The National Register of Qualifications (NSK) for Vocational Qualifications, which functions as a National Qualifications Framework for CVET; and,
- The Q-RAM, the qualifications framework for higher education. This has developed detailed descriptors for different domains/fields of study in higher education.

As described above, the NSK is closely linked to the procedure for VNFIL as all qualifications in the register have to be achievable through VNFIL.

As was the case in 2014, there is still no clear link between VNFIL and the higher education framework.

General education is not included in the National Register of Qualifications. It is not possible to get recognition for one's competences related to general education through validation of non-formal and informal learning.

For the moment the qualifications framework in development does not open up the possibilities to access programmes through different pathways. The Maturita (upper-secondary leaving examination) is the requirement to enter higher education and no exceptions apply. Higher education institutions can also decide to use specific entry examinations. Completion of compulsory education is in general a requirement to enter upper-secondary programmes. The vast majority of the Czech population have achieved this level.

Credit systems

There is no credit system as such in vocational education and training. However, there are possibilities to accumulate learning outcomes achieved through VNFIL:

- Persons who achieve vocational qualifications through VNFIL can have these recognised in view of passing an assessment for the related full formal VET qualification. As noted above, the vocational qualifications in the NSK are related to the formal VET qualifications. When a person holds all the related vocational qualifications they are exempt from the formal training and can directly pass the final assessment;
- When a person holds a vocational qualification and wishes to pass an assessment for another (related) one, s/he should be exempt from an assessment for those competences that have already been assessed in the first certification procedure.

Data on practical use of the above possibilities is not collected.

¹³ <http://www.nuv.cz/p/evropsky-ramec-kvalifikaci-eqf/prirazovaci-proces>

¹⁴ <http://www.nuv.cz/p/evropsky-ramec-kvalifikaci-eqf/pracovni-skupina-pro-vznik-ceskeho-ramce-kvalifikaci>

See also Nantl, J. (2014): Český rámec kvalifikací. K možnostem, podmínkám a souvislostem vzniku národního rámce kvalifikací pro Českou republiku. Praha, NUV. http://www.nuv.cz/uploads/EQF/2_1_CZQF_study_fin.pdf

ECTS is the credit system used in higher education. As there is no system for VN FIL in higher education, neither is there a defined link to the use of ECTS. Some institutions have institutional practices linking ECTS with their recognition procedures.

4 Standards

The NSK contains Qualification Standards and Assessment Standards used for VN FIL in view of achieving Vocational Qualifications. Each Qualification Standard is defined through a specific set of competences and is accompanied by an Assessment Standard that defines methods and procedures used in examination. These standards are also used as the basis for defining training programmes for non-formal training programmes.

The NSK qualification standards are based on the national occupational standards. The latter are also the basis for formal initial VET qualifications. In the formal IVET qualifications, the occupational standards are translated into national framework curricula.

The above described initiative, in the field of youth work, also described standards for persons working with children and young people in non-formal/leisure education in terms of competence standards. The same format was used as for the NSK, even though these competence profiles are currently not integrated in the NSK.

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

The institutional framework for VN FIL remains unchanged compared to the 2010 and 2014 versions of the Inventory.

Table 5.1 Institutional framework for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in CZ

Function / Process	(Type of) Institution responsible
Qualification and assessment standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approved by the Ministry of Education. ■ Developed by the Sectoral Council. Sector Councils bring together: employers' and employees' representatives, as well as the National Institute for Education (formerly National Institute for VET), National Council for Qualifications and relevant Ministries. The Sector Councils are expected to be proactive in suggesting what new standards are needed and where standards should be updated, based on identified labour market needs.
Conception of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning process	The Ministry of Education and the National Institute for Education. The process and responsibilities of different institutions are defined in the Act 179/2006.
(Carrying out) Assessment of non-formal and informal learning (based on the standard) – for Vocational Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Authorised institutions – these can be schools, private institutions and companies, as well as persons (for example a craftsman can become an authorised person). ■ Some Assessment Standards require the presence of a jury (two or three people). ■ In line with the Assessment Standard and the specified mode of assessment the authorised persons are responsible to choose the most appropriate assessment method, context, tools, as well as the exact definition of the assessment (i.e. the formulation of the

Function / Process	(Type of) Institution responsible question or the assignment, etc.).
(Carrying out) Assessment of non-formal and informal learning (based on the standard) – for complete or comprehensive vocational qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Schools only ■ In line with the regulation and specifications for the specific complete or comprehensive vocational qualification. Note: final examinations for VET qualifications at upper-secondary level are all defined nationally and the same examination applies to regular students, as well as to people who have achieved partial Vocational Qualifications but have not participated in the full formal programme.
Recognition of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. delivery of certificate) – for Vocational Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The certificate is delivered by the authorised person or the jury. ■ Act 179/2006 specifies what information has to appear on the certificate.
Recognition of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. delivery of certificate) – for complete or comprehensive vocational qualifications	<p>Only schools can award complete or comprehensive vocational qualifications – these are the same certificates as those awarded by schools to people who have achieved the qualification through formal education and training.</p>
Quality assurance of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Act 179/2006 stipulates the requirements regarding documentation and archiving of proceedings. ■ Appeals procedure: the applicants can request the authorising body, which is an authorised legal entity (see below), to review the process.
Giving licence to authorised persons/institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This is done by Authorising Bodies, the Ministries under which the given Vocational Qualification falls. ■ Authorisation is linked to a specific Vocational Qualification and is valid for a period of five years. ■ Those interested in becoming authorised persons/institutions need to request authorisation. ■ The process is set in Act 179/2006.
Monitoring and expertise for the overall approach	National Institute for Education (formerly National Institute for VET).

Source: 2014 Inventory on Validation – country report on Czech Republic, updated for 2016 version

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

The technical assistance project for the NSK has a component on information and dissemination.

One aspect of these activities is the maintenance, population and further development of the NSK portal which contains information on:

- Existing qualifications;
- The detailed Qualification Standards and Assessment Standards; and,
- The authorised organisations for a given qualification.

The portal is linked to another portal that people can search to identify either a course or an assessment in an area they are interested in – this is the abovementioned portal Education and Work.¹⁵

As part of its PR activities the project also communicates about NSK and the possibilities to get recognition for skills and competences in national and local media. Furthermore, NSK is being presented at professional fairs¹⁶ aimed at both students and professionals. It is also presented through lectures to students in fields related to human resources¹⁷.

The project UNIV 3¹⁸, realised between 2012 and 2015, aimed at informing individuals, in particular job seekers who could benefit from recognition via NSK. The project also piloted a process of evaluation of candidates' competences when entering a training programme (in particular for re-qualification courses) leading to an NSK qualification. This evaluation takes the form of self-assessment, interview or practical assignment. It is part of the training programme. Depending on the results the duration of the training programme can be shortened.

The employers' representatives engaged in the Sector Councils also inform their member organisations about the possibilities offered by NSK.

Another national project in this area is the POSPOLU project¹⁹, implemented between 2013 and 2015, whose objective was to strengthen the social partnership between VET schools and businesses. It complemented the efforts of the abovementioned UNIV programme to transform VET schools into lifelong learning centres with a significant focus on the functions of the NSK. This project brought 16 individual cooperation arrangements between VET schools and businesses, collected 122 specific case studies on good practices of such cooperation, and organised 30 workshops and 6 conferences on the topic of social partnership (POSPOLU, 2015).

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

In addition to the above described information system, the Public Employment Services and their counsellors guide people towards the NSK and the possibilities it offers. The PES is gradually adopting the concept of Vocational Qualifications as the primary instrument offered to job-seekers in the system of re-training.

6.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

The NSK technical assistance office carries out presentations and lectures aimed at various audiences, including people in human resources, as well as guidance counsellors in public employment services (PES).

In March 2015, an "NSK Roadshow" was initiated to promote information on the Register and on VNFI principles and to disseminate it to regional policy makers responsible for education and training, as well as to representatives of PES, guidance practitioners and other experts in related fields.²⁰

¹⁵ <http://vzdelavaniaprace.cz/>

¹⁶ <http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/Clanky/sektorove-rady-pomahaji-zviditelnit-narodni-soustavy-kvalifikaci>

¹⁷ <http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/Clanky/prezentace-nsk-na-vysokych-skolah>

¹⁸ <http://www.nuv.cz/univ3>

¹⁹ <http://www.nuv.cz/pospolu>

²⁰ <http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/Clanky/%E2%80%9Eroadshow%E2%80%9Cnarodni-soustavy-kvalifikaci-po-cesku-odstartovala>

The year of 2015 has been “The Year of Industry and Technical Education” in the Czech Republic. Therefore, the NSK contributed to the national programme with another set of seminars and workshops for professionals as well as for the general public.

The NSK2 project’s final conference took place in Prague on 19 May 2015 with the title “We’ll Keep Going”.²¹

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In most cases, practitioners in charge of assessment are either teachers or trainers, or professionals in the relevant sector. The assessment committee is often constituted of a mix between teachers/trainers and professionals in the given sector. However, any person can become a validation practitioner provided they comply with the qualification requirements defined in the Assessment Standard. If a person does not have the appropriate pedagogical qualifications they have to pass a preparatory course that is specific for the practice of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

7.2 Qualification requirements

There has been no change in the qualification requirements for validation practitioners since the 2014 update. For each Vocational Qualification the “technical” qualification requirements for the authorised person are specified (e.g. qualification in the occupational field and/or years of practice in an occupation). As a general rule, assessors themselves have to be qualified in the given area.

In addition, general rules are valid for all Vocational Qualification validation practitioners, and these are:

- The person has to be either a qualified education professional, or experienced adult educator, or have passed a specific preparation course for recognition of non-formal and informal learning and work with adults (12 hours of courses).
- The person has to have basic competences in working with computers and the internet.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

The UNIV2 project trained VET school representatives, in particular VET trainers, on how to use the NSK Qualification and Assessment Standards for the purposes of validation of NFIL.

The UNIV3 trained Authorised Bodies and advisors on the use of Assessment Standards, the development of assessment tasks and examination specifications and also on how to guide candidates through the process.

The participation in both projects was voluntary.

8 Quality assurance

The quality assurance framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic has remained the same since 2014. The framework was set out in the Act 179/2006, which stipulates the approach and related regulations for quality assurance. It relies on the following pillars:

- ***The quality of the Qualification and Assessment Standards***

²¹ Final conference presentations are available for download here: <http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/zaverecna-konference-nsk>

These are formulated by bodies that feature a mixture of stakeholders from the labour market as well as from the education and training area (Sector Councils). There is also national level guidance available concerning the process through which these should be designed and how they should be formulated and presented. Furthermore, there is an approval process for the standards by the relevant Ministry.

- ***The quality of Authorised Bodies, their expertise and material equipment***
The overall criteria through which an individual or an organisation can become an Authorised Body or Authorised Person are defined at national level and each Assessment Standard specifies the particular qualifications and equipment that the authorised entities have to demonstrate. They are authorised by the relevant Ministry. The authorisation is limited in time (five years).
- ***Definition of the assessment mode and material equipment at national level***
For each competence defined in a Qualification Standard, several assessment criteria are specified through the accompanying Assessment Standard. For each criterion the mode of assessment is defined and is hence homogeneous across the country. The material needed for assessment is also generally defined at national level.
- ***The requirement to document the execution of the assessment***
It is required that the authorised entities keep documentation of the procedure. It is also required that the assessment process is open to the public.
- ***The possibility for individuals to appeal***
Individuals can request a review of the process and the competent Ministry has to give an opinion on their request.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

The funding of the Czech VN FIL system has three main strands:

- The fees for assessment and certification raised by the authorised entities;
- European co-funding (ESF) for projects developing the NSK and the related activities; and,
- National level funding for the sustainability of the technical assistance of the NSK.

Public funding is used for:

- VN FIL of persons who are unemployed; and,
- The coordination and technical assistance.

The procedure is designed so that the direct costs of the recognition procedure (assessment and assessors) are covered by the applying individuals. Individuals may seek co-funding from their employers in case the re-qualification is requested by the company. The current experience shows that employers are willing to cover the costs of the procedure if the qualification is related to a regulated profession or a licence to practice.

The use of private funding should ensure that the system is demand-driven. During the six years of existence of the system (2009-2015), there have been about 150 000 assessments carried out. This indicates that the fees might not be a major obstacle for individuals to apply for validation procedures.

The technical assistance project was largely (85 %) ESF funded. It was launched in 2009 and ended in 2015. The total funding was CZK 651 million (approx. EUR 26 million)²². This funding included the development of Qualification and Assessment Standards by Sector Councils.

²² <http://www.op-vk.cz/cs/siroka-verejnost/projekty-narodni/projekty-v-realizaci-pro-oblast-dalsiho-vzdelavani/nsk-2.html>

After the end of the EU structural funds programming period 2007-2013 (with the projects lasting until 2015), the funding of the technical support of the NSK, as well as of the continuing development of the system, has become subject to national financing resources to ensure its sustainability over the next period and beyond. Currently, there are discussions in the Czech Republic about possibilities for funding from operational programmes for the ESF programming period of 2014-2020. However, the development of instruments for VNIFIL on national level has not been included among the priority areas of the relevant funding mechanisms.

9.2 Distribution of costs

It is for the authorised persons/bodies to set the fee and, in practice, this varies depending on the qualification and the material needed for the assessment (it can go up to several hundreds of EUR). Initially there was a nationally defined price range set at national level. This was meant to ensure that there are no unreasonable differences in fees charged. However, it proved to be difficult to set in practice and qualifications had a price range from zero to several thousand CZK. Consequently the 2011 review of the legislation abandoned the use of such scales.

When it comes to the equipment needed, the authorised entity has to be able to provide the technical and material conditions necessary for carrying out the assessment. This condition can be satisfied by education and training institutions which have the necessary equipment for teaching but also enterprises which have the equipment for purposes of service/product delivery.

The organisations asking to become authorising bodies have to pay a fee covering the authorisation process. The fee is CZK 1 500 (approx. EUR 60) for each authorisation.

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

There is no further evidence of the benefits of VNIFIL to individuals in the Czech Republic, other than the number of VQs, Sector Councils and the data on the demand for assessment and for authorisation.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

The 2014 report indicates a total of 87 000 Vocational Qualifications awarded. Until April 2016, this number has risen to 138 765. The following table gives an overview of the distribution of these VQs among sectors represented by the different authorising bodies:

Authorising body	Transport	Culture	Regional Development	Industry and Trade	Labour and Social Affairs	Education, Youth and Sport	Interior	Health	Agriculture	Environment	Total
Number of specific VQs supervised	29	14	60	542	15	32	19	8	193	9	921

²³ Ministries, as central administrative bodies, are authorising bodies in the system of the NSK. Therefore, in this line the word „Transport“ stands for „Ministry of Transport“, „Culture“ stands for „Ministry of Culture,“ etc.

Number of authorised entities	14	3	162	295	126	168	254	36	112	2	1172
Number of authorisations ²⁴	23	11	792	1526	281	218	427	94	519	2	3893
Number of authorised examiners	235	32	2310	3638	697	456	742	157	1128	5	9400
Number of VQs awarded to applicants	13	0	8116	12,322	2664	7285	104,971	14	3370	10	138,765

Source: NSK, data provided in April 2016 upon interview with the Head of Department for the NSK, National Institute for Education

9.4.2 Validation users

There is no data collection system set up in the Czech Republic to identify characteristics of validation users based on age, gender, qualification level or citizenship of the beneficiaries of the VNFI process.

9.4.3 Validation and migrants / refugees and other disadvantaged groups

There are no specific arrangements for migrant/refugee groups set up in the Czech VNFI system.

10 Validation methods

There has been no change in the methods used for the validation process since 2014. The assessment takes the form of a complex examination in front of the authorised person or commission. Portfolios are used as complementary materials. The applicant carries out the practical, written and/or oral parts of the assessment in front of the assessors.

The following three main assessment modes are used:

- Practical demonstration, where the person directly carries out the tasks or presents a finalised product, including simulations. This is the main method used frequently where possible and suitable.
- Written assessment, which covers both complex written assignments, as well as tests. (However, the use of tests is limited and recommended in certain circumstances only.) If practical assessment is not possible or not appropriate, written assessment is preferred to oral assessment.
- Oral assessment, which is recommended as a complementary method to practical assessment.

For each assessment criterion the mode is defined in the relevant Assessment Standard. However, these modes can cover several methods.

The most commonly used methods at the different stages of the validation process are indicated in the table below.

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate			
Declarative methods	X		
Interview	X		X

²⁴ A single authorised entity can hold authorisations for more VQs.

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Observation			X
Portfolio method		X	
Presentation			X
Simulation and evidence extracted from work			X
Tests and examinations			X
Other (e.g. e-learning methods) – please specify Written assessments and oral assessments			X

11

12 References

12.1 References

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Books, articles and reports:

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National Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic. Internet:

<http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/dalsi-vzdelavani/strategie-celoivotniho-uceni-cr>

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http://pospolu.rvp.cz/filemanager/userfiles/zprava_souhrnna_grafika_v5.pdf

Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020. Internet:

http://www.vzdelavani2020.cz/images_obsah/dokumenty/strategy_web_en.pdf

National portals and institutions:

Education and Work Portal: www.vzdelavaniaprace.cz

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports: www.msmt.cz

National Association for Professional Diagnosis: www.asociace-bilancni-diagnostiky.cz/

National Institute for Children and Youth: www.nidm.cz

National Institute for Education: www.nuv.cz

National Register of Occupations: www.nsp.cz

National Register of Qualifications: www.narodnikvalifikace.cz

Operation Programme Education for Competitiveness: www.op-vk.cz

Sector Councils: www.sektorove-rady.cz

12.2 Sources

2016 Sources:

- NSK, National Institute for Education
- Public Policy Expert, Ministry of the Interior

12.3 Quality Assurance contacts

- NSK, National Institute for Education
- UNIV3 Project – Validation Processes Support, National Institute for Education



Country report Czech Republic

2016 update to the European inventory on
validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 Council recommendation on validation encourages Member States to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018. These arrangements will enable individuals to increase the visibility and value of their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home or in voluntary activities.

This country report is one of 36 that, together with a synthesis report and thematic reports, constitute the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The inventory is a regularly updated overview of validation practices and arrangements in all Member States, EFTA countries and Turkey. It is a reference point for information on validation in Europe. It is organised around the principles defined in the 2012 Council Recommendation that were further elaborated in the European guidelines for validation. This is its sixth update (2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2016).



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