



Country report

Hungary

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

Author: Éva Tót

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1 Introduction and evaluation

1.1 Abstract

Hungary does not have a nationwide validation system based on uniform principles and procedures. The validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes appears in some policy documents as an important tool for lifelong learning but there is no evidence of an explicit national strategy. No strategy has therefore been developed nor is there a comprehensive validation system which covers any education or training sector. There are some fragmented, specific methods and procedures but these have very limited scope in relation to institutional practice.

Sectoral validation development projects were launched in the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan in 2009 (initiated by the government and co-financed by the European Social Fund). The first phase of the project finished in the middle of 2011, the second phase was implemented during the period 2012-2015.

The term, *validation*, is not yet widely known or used. In the adult training sector ‘*assessment of prior learning*’ is the more common term. In the higher education sector, the most used term is ‘*to set-off credits on the basis of work experience*’.

In Hungary, it is difficult to identify a clear model of validation. Although some elements of validation (using different terms) are present in the legal arrangements (in HE, VET and in the adult training sector), these elements lack reference to any explicit policy goals. The focus of development is still the formal education sectors but relationships between these sectors are missing.¹ In the absence of an overall policy on validation, education institutions tend to operate validation autonomously in the framework of the given legal environment. The lack of financial resources at institutional level is a significant obstacle. Social partners are not actively involved in the development of validation.

It is particularly difficult to identify the actors within the Hungarian government whom bear any responsibility for the development of a nationwide validation system. Furthermore the government has not taken a decision as yet to appoint a chief coordinator for the development of a validation strategy.

1.2 Main changes since the 2014 update

The government adopted the ‘Strategic framework for the policy of lifelong learning for 2014-2020’ at the end of 2014.² This document serves as the basis for the measure 3.7. ‘development of human resources with the tools of lifelong learning (LLL)’ in the new national development plan’s Human Resources Development Operational Programme.³ The text refers to the fact that the Hungarian Government – with reference to the Council Recommendation 2012 – engaged in establishing a national validation system for 2018: ‘it is necessary to develop a national model in order to establish a structured system for recognition adapted to Hungarian legal and institutional environment and operating in accordance with European principles’.

The current situation is that discussions are taking place between various professionals and among decision makers in different ministries about the possibility of initiatives on validation but concrete programmes have not yet been launched. Some ideas exist to integrate the validation procedure into reintegration programmes which target early school leavers, or to

¹ Although the government forces HEIs to create links by legally obliging them to recognize modules of VET curricula in HE studies in the same field. However, HEIs are counter interested, and therefore they seek ways to resist.

² See government decision on social strategies 1603/2014 (XI.4)

³ Emberi Erőforrás Fejlesztési Operatív Program (EFOP) <http://nhit.hu/dokumentum/115/EFOP.pdf>

use validation as a tool to connect the VET system more closely with higher education. Policy makers in Hungary are becoming more and more conscious of the importance of the topic but there is still a lack of coordination between the different actors and approaches. Thus the development of validation in Hungary is still dominated by sectoral approaches.

The sectoral validation development project for higher education (in the framework of SoROP⁴ 4.1.3) was completed mid-2015. The first phase of the project (2009-2011) saw the development and dissemination of a validation procedure model for higher education (Derényi and Tót, 2011). In the second phase (2012-2015), the development took place of the National Qualification Framework (5-8 levels). At the same time the detailed issues about validation in the different professional areas of higher education were discussed by working groups composed of HE representatives (teachers and leaders). One of the final products of this project was a 'guide' for HE institutions. The text provides ideas about how to organise the validation process at an institutional level (Tót, 2015).

The VET examination system regulation has been 'open' to validation since 1993 (Law on VET), so it is possible for applicants to take an examination without entering a formal VET programme but in practice this option is not used very much.

A new validation sectoral model⁵ has been proposed by independent researchers in the field^[1] for the VET and adult training sectors. The proposal summarizes all relevant knowledge on validation for a larger public and adapts the validation approach into the Hungarian legal and institutional environment. At the time of writing, the new validation sector model is still a proposition under discussion – there have been no steps to actively take the discussions forward.

Tempus Public Foundation (TPF) is a non-profit organization established in 1996 by the Hungarian Government, with the task of managing international cooperation programmes and special projects in the field of education, training and EU-related issues. The Foundation's VET and Adult Education Unit responsible for ECVET related issues created a web-page in order to stimulate the discussions of professionals on national validation system-building (in relation to the European Council Recommendation 2012). The web-page includes two short expert papers on the French and Romanian validation systems. The aim is to illustrate different approaches and draw lessons from the practices of other countries.⁶

The Hungarian Educational Authority (Oktatási Hivatal) is planning to expand and develop the contents of its website⁷ on the topic of validation so that the wider public has the opportunity to be better informed. One of the main obstacles to validation development is still the 'congestion symptom'. This means that there is pressure to develop too many initiatives in a short period of time (for example by introducing the new approach of defining learning outcomes at the same time as the development of study programmes based on the reception of the learning outcomes approach).

The introduction of the learning outcomes approach is an indispensable condition to the development of NQF and validation procedures. However, this approach is fairly new in the context of education in Hungary so there is little experience to build on although some small steps have been taken.

Dissemination of development project (SoROP 4.1.3) has led to an increase in HE in the number of people having knowledge about validation (goals and procedures). Furthermore the ministry responsible for higher education launched a review process in the middle of 2015. The aim of the review was to rewrite the HE qualifications' national standards

⁴ Social Renewal Operational Programme in the framework of the New Hungary National Development Plan

⁵ See Éva FARKAS (2014)

⁶ The authors are Éva Farkas (Romanian system) and Éva Tót (French system)
<http://www.tka.hu/nemzetkozi/217/dokumentumok-kezikonyvek>

⁷ <http://www.oktatas.hu/kereses?search=validacio>

(educational and outcome requirements) in the form of learning outcomes and in accordance with the descriptor categories of the Hungarian Qualifications Framework. As a result, discussions were generated about the use of learning outcomes and HE professionals were able to share this learning experience.

Progress has also been made in the field of VET. The project SoROP 2.2.1⁸ set out to use learning outcomes to describe VET qualifications in the National Vocational Qualification Register (NVQR) and reference them to the qualifications in the Hungarian National Qualification Framework. As part of the project 800 VET qualifications were described in terms of learning outcomes (with the support of 100 experts). Learning outcomes were described in each state-recognized qualification in line with the descriptor structure of the Hungarian National Qualification Framework. The output requirements of VET qualifications in the form of learning outcomes were rewritten based on existing regulatory documents (e.g. professional and exam requirements and framework curricula), i.e. the work could not result in new outcome requirements and differ from those that have already been accepted for the qualification. Learning outcomes descriptions are not yet used in practice but this initiative is one step towards the implementation of the learning outcomes approach.

The professional programme requirements as a new element of the adult training system was introduced by the Act LXXVII 2013 on adult training in the field of non-NVQR programmes. Training programmes of vocational courses that receive state or EU funding must be based on a programme listed in the register of new adult training professional programme requirements. The electronic register of professional programme requirements in adult training is maintained by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry⁹. A proposal for the inclusion of professional programme requirements in the register may be submitted by any legal entity, unincorporated business entity, private company or self-employed person. The proposal must be submitted exclusively in an electronic form to the body maintaining the register and according to the specified professional structure. Inclusion in the register, or modification and/or cancellation are then assessed and decided upon by a 5-member committee. Three members of the committee are adult training experts delegated by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one by the Chamber of Agriculture, and one by the responsible minister. Function and content of professional programme requirements are similar to the professional and examination requirements stated in the NVQR VET. Professional programme requirements define outcome standards for each module of qualification in terms of learning outcomes based on the descriptors of the Hungarian National Qualification Framework.

The government's policy towards migrants is not concerned with the validation of skills for the time being. Some civil society organizations have for more than a decade undertaken different projects for migrants¹⁰ although their training programmes tend to focus on activities that help to integrate refugees.

⁸ TÁMOP (SoROP) 2.2.1-12/1 project "Improving the quality and content of VET and adult training provision" – Subproject 5: Elaboration of HuQF in VET.

⁹ http://szpk.mkik.hu/_frontend/index.php?module=programkovetelmeny&mid=4

¹⁰ <http://menedek.hu/en/projects>

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Validation as a concept appeared for the first time in the lifelong learning strategy prepared by the Hungarian government in 2005. The topic of validation is still connected to the general idea of lifelong learning which can be seen in the 'Strategic framework for policy of lifelong learning 2014-2020' adopted in 2014 (see Section 1.2).

There have been several legal regulations in existence for a number of years in the adult training sector and in HE which have allowed the application of certain validation techniques. These legal regulations are not applicable to all citizens, i.e. they only allow validation of prior learning outcomes in a given context: in the case of HE students, and participants on the point of entry to adult training programmes.

Until now, the development of validation has focused on the education and training sector.

In the adult training sector, a prior learning assessment scheme was included in the Adult Training Act 2001 but it has not been widely used. The term of validation is not used in this sector. The Hungarian term '*előzetes tudás beszámítása*' comes from the English Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The scheme was introduced in order to customise training provision but the practice is very small-scale and limited due to the contradictory interests of different stakeholders, and also because of the lack of adequate measurement and assessment methods.

Stakeholders in the labour market and business sector are in practice very far removed from the validation development process.

Whilst there have been several attempts to introduce and apply prior learning assessment at systems level, these have not been successful in practice. Prior learning assessment has been incorporated in the practice of adult training in Hungary as an administrative step only. It has not been institutionalised and has not had an impact on the quality of the development of the adult training system; neither has it had an impact on measurement methodology, nor on the culture of methodology adopted in education and by adult educators.

2.2 Validation in education and training

The development project SoROP 3.1.8 (from 2011) addressed the four lowest levels of the NQF, which were linked to general **education** levels. Validation played a relatively modest part in the project beside the tasks related to the Hungarian Qualifications Framework. An overview of the Hungarian and foreign literature was prepared, and interviews were conducted in 22 schools to map the knowledge of general education professionals about validation solutions and their attitudes about the recognition of learning acquired elsewhere. The findings show that some of the schools are open to the principles of this approach but general education actors tend to know very little about the procedure and its application. In the second phase of the project, no recommendation is planned regarding the possible application of validation in general education. The project focused on students' mobility between general education institutions (student transfer), and school principals were asked a few questions about the possibility to integrate migrant children into Hungarian general education.

The first development project on validation (between July 2009 and March 2011) addressed **higher education** (HE) without explicitly suggesting that this sector should be a priority. The project (in the framework of SoROP 4.1.3) aimed at developing a validation model for higher education. It was organised and managed together with the national qualifications framework (NQF) levels developed for HE. Both development initiatives were taken forward under a common project management. Basic principles and the main elements of the validation procedure were prepared. The second phase of this same project was launched in the

middle of 2012 and finished in the middle of 2015. In the second project phase, the goal was to formulate recommendations for HE institutions (HEIs) taking account of the specificities of different branches and study fields. In addition to the formulation of recommendations, another goal was to raise awareness concerning validation issues among staff in higher education institutions.

In higher education, the legislators linked the recognition of informal learning (work experience) to the already operating European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The 11.article of Act 2007 on Higher Education (complementing the Act on HE of 2005) provided that 'The Credit Transfer Committee [in the HE institution] shall be authorised to recognise prior learning outcomes and work experience as the performance of academic requirements. The number of credits recognised on the basis of work experience shall be no more than 30.' HEIs' practice of recognition was based on this statutory provision until 2012. Act CCIV of 2011 and its amendment Act CXXIII of 2012 reformulated the rules of recognition: 'The Credit Transfer Committee is authorised to recognise prior non-formal and informal learning outcomes as well as work experiences – in accordance with specifications stipulated within the scope of the Act and the Government Decree – as the performance of a course requirement. Matters related to the execution of specifications set out under Paragraphs (3) to (6) of Section 49 shall be regulated in the examination regulation by stipulating that the credit defined in the Academic and Examination Rules, however, at least one-third of the credits required for the student to obtain their degree (diploma) – even in the case of the recognition of credits taken in the given institution or in courses taken earlier, as well as prior learning – shall be obtained in their home institution.'

So the possibility to earn credits by validation is explicitly declared, but the 30 credits limitation has been changed. According to the current rule, at least one-third of the credits should be earned in the institution issuing the diploma. The two-thirds that can be earned outside the institution may consist of credits earned by validation. While this provision may potentially increase the number of credits that can be earned by validation, the underlying motivation was essentially the intent to curb a specific unintended trend. Although there are no accurate data available as evidence, there has been a growing number of students who start their studies at an institution where admission seems to be easier, then in their final year transfer to another HE institution in order to acquire a more prestigious degree.

According to observations, the most typical form of validation in HE is granting exemption for prior work experience (based on the HE Act since 2005)¹¹ and/or awarding credit for programme units leading towards a qualification. The idea of recognition of knowledge acquired outside of the institution providing the education is present in HE due to the existence of the credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). The regulated institutional level validation practice is limited to only a few fields or subjects and depends on some enthusiastic innovators (teachers or managers). Teachers in HE have great autonomy to accept or refuse prior learning (to recommend exemption from some administrative requirements). It is also possible to award credit for a programme unit; such recommendations based on evaluation of prior learning by a teacher is officially approved by a formal credit awarding body in the institution).

HE actors identify many barriers. Besides the prevailing attitude of refusing the acceptance of knowledge from outside, teachers' typical arguments emphasise quality assurance. For example, it may be argued that if an institution is responsible for the diplomas issued and prestige is to be maintained, then involvement in the whole process of education provision is needed. Most of the teachers are not really interested in the operation of a regulated validation procedure (the actual 'ad hoc one-man decision' practice is a time saving solution

¹¹ The Act of 2005 expired by the end of 2011. Since then the Act CCIV is applicable.

and fits well with traditions in HE).¹² An open and regulated validation procedure is much more time consuming and expensive (and the stake is relatively small, typically exemption of a course).

In the **adult training sector**, legal regulations have allowed assessment and recognition of the prior learning of entrants to training programmes since 2001. The purpose of introducing this provision was to allow for the customisation of training. While prior learning assessment and recognition was defined as an individual right in the first act on adult training (2001), enacted in 2013, the new Adult Training Act retained this scheme and furthermore made the assessment of prior learning an obligation in vocational education and language training but did nothing to eliminate the circumstances which make its application difficult or impossible in the case of state subsidised programmes. Supported adults (mostly jobseekers) receive social assistance benefits based on their attendance at classes. If their prior learning is recognised and thus they are exempted from attendance, their benefit is reduced, which jeopardises their subsistence. In the experience of adult training providers, recognition of prior learning works well in self-financed programmes (where participants pay a tuition fee), and in the case of programmes ordered by companies, in other words, where there is no subsidy. Also in this example, assessment of prior learning outcomes serves primarily for differentiation of the participants. The assessment is a kind of placement test, which enables teachers to set up more homogeneous groups based on prior learning, and in this sense, it is a tool promoting teachers' work and the efficiency of training. The teacher routinely gives individual tasks to those who possess prior learning while he or she works with the rest of the group.¹³

Training providers have no interest in shortening the training programme if it reduces their income (the price of training). Training generally takes place in groups (usually a minimum of 12). If validation of prior learning applied to many of the applicants, i.e. many customised training plans had to be designed, it would upset the rules of organisation of the training programmes. Due to the fact that most of the training institutions have no relevant experience in the assessment of competencies, managing a grounded recognition process for most of them is still complicated.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

There is no information on any validation related initiatives which have been developed by enterprises.¹⁴ The term validation is not known amongst employers. Although according to interviews made in development projects (SoRop 4.1.3 see footnote 14) employers declared that they take into consideration the outcomes of informal learning (described in CV-s) of candidates during the recruitment process. So the "validation" exists in enterprises' practice but not in a formalized procedure.

The possibilities of validation in the relationships between enterprise and higher education is discussed in a publication (Berde and Móri, 2014). The authors argue that employers and chambers representing employers' interests should make use of opportunities offered by the HE law, since it offers recognition of work experience. They also recommend employers to assess prior learning of their employees before providing internal training. In both cases, authors emphasize the possibility of shortening the training time.

¹² 86 interviews were made in the framework of the second phase of SoROP 4.1.3 project responsible for the development validation model for HE.

¹³ Based on interviews made in the framework of OECD RNFIL project. See in Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning OECD RNFIL Project Country Background Report–Hungary.

¹⁴ This fact was verified by one of the representatives of the National Association of Entrepreneurs and Employers (VOSZ).

2.3.1 Skills audits

The 1991 Employment Act provides for the possibility of career guidance to be extended to all citizens. The purpose of this provision was to help the individuals concerned to make decisions, with the assistance of a professional, about whether or not they needed training or reorientation. Jobseekers' previous career pathways were reviewed, and the qualifications and learning acquired through work experience were identified. This provision is still in force but there is no precise information on the staff employed by Public Employment Service (PES) guidance services. In any case, the employment service provision system has limited capacities to provide this particular service.

In the 2008-2011 period, development of a lifelong guidance (LLG) network was started in the context of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SoROP) 2.2.2 of the New Hungary Development Plan. The project included training of professionals offering career guidance. Eventually the nationwide network was never developed; instead, career guidance is offered by the National Employment Service, although with minimal capacities. However, a number of relevant tools were developed as part of the above mentioned project. These tools were designed to help young people as well as adults to think about the competencies they have, the competencies they lack, any additional training they would need, and the career that would be best suited to them. The electronic questionnaires identifying competencies are available for anybody through the national career orientation portal.¹⁵ The second phase of this project (2012-2015) highlights the advertising and matching function of guidance concerning skills shortages and early engagement in VET.

Career guidance (including the identification of competencies) is also available on the market as a private service. It is offered by consultants who charge fees. A new regulation (ministerial edict) came into force in 2014 based on the outcomes of another ESF-funded project, SoROP 2.6.1.¹⁶ 54 partly new services were identified and developed within the project, validation was not among them.

In the 1990s, regional training centres were established in Hungary. In some of them, foreign consultants were involved in staff development, and the training professionals working in the centres were trained to use the French model of *bilan de compétence*. However, this experimental project came to an end and the model has not been incorporated into the Hungarian system of employment services.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

The main voluntary organisations are open to the validation approach and – on the basis of their international experiences – well informed on the issue. They are familiar with the practices of the voluntary sector in Europe, including the portfolio method. They provide methodological guidelines on their websites.

According to the National Public Education Act (CXC. of 2011), the issue of the secondary school leaving certificate shall be subject to proving the performance of fifty hours of community service; students applying to take the secondary school leaving examinations after 1 January 2016 have to serve proof of community service. HE students will also be required to perform a certain amount of voluntary work in the course of their studies. Although not directly related to validation procedures, these measures are the expression of the fact that educational decision makers consider voluntary work as a learning opportunity, which may lay the foundations for future recognition of voluntary work in the framework of validation. In the Hungarian context this is an important measure for changing attitudes.

¹⁵ <http://eletpalya.munka.hu/kerdoivek>

¹⁶ <http://www.tamop261.hu>

The Voluntary Centre Foundation (ÖKA by its Hungarian acronym) is an organisation established more than ten years ago by five non-profit organisations. The aim of the ÖKA is to support the Hungarian voluntary sector with information, training, counselling and development of different methodological tools. One of these tools is the volunteer portfolio as a method to enable the documentation of competencies acquired in voluntary work. No statistical data on its use are available, but according to the executive manager of ÖKA, it is spreading. This is part of the development of the voluntary culture and at the same time it is a way to raise awareness of the learning content of voluntary work. The brochure on the competence portfolio is available on the website of the organisation.¹⁷

There are no standards for using the portfolio directly on the labour market but the use of Europass is widespread in Hungary (and it gives room to present experiences in volunteering).

3 Links to national qualification systems

The Hungarian Qualifications Framework (HuQF) has been under development in three separate development projects of the Social Renewal Operational Programme (SoROP) (concerning general education, VET and HE). The HuQF was formally adopted by government decision (No 1229/2012) and is being implemented. It is partly operational (Cedefop, 2016). To date no rules have been set out on the link between validation and the NQF¹⁸.

Qualifications from non-formal training programmes will also be included in the NQF according to the Act on Adult Training (adopted in June 2013). The approach is based on broad (general) national level descriptors for all subsystems, and allowing each subsystem to adopt more specific descriptors. These developments are designed to support validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2016).

The problem is that HuQF is based on learning outcomes while education programmes and qualifications are still formulated on the basis of inputs. This is the case primarily in general education and less so in the VET system. Higher education practice is changing but relatively slowly. In addition, in HE there are major differences between teachers and leaders in terms of the structural, content and methodological change and its perception, and also the awareness of the concept of learning outcomes (Vámos, 2010). As the learning outcomes based approach is fairly new in Hungarian HE, a key challenge for the NQF is therefore to introduce this new idea into practice. A key point to add is that the concept of learning outcomes has not so far been used in the terminology of vocational and adult training in Hungary.

According to the current Higher Education Act, it is not possible to acquire a complete qualification through a validation procedure. In the text of the law, the number of credits available by recognition of prior learning are limited (max. two-thirds of all credits).

Experts working in the development project on HE validation model (SoROP 4.1.3) did agree on a limitation (because they consider that opening an alternative route for HE qualifications through validation would be too difficult to put on the political agenda currently). Such an initiative would make the introduction of the validation approach in most of the HEIs more difficult. VET provision is modularised and the qualifications and requirements are described in competences, and therefore VET is closer to the learning outcomes based approach. The VET examination system regulation has been 'open' to validation since 1993 (Law on VET),

¹⁷ <http://oka.hu/cikkek/kompetencia-portfolio-0> or onkentes.hu

¹⁸ Experts participating in the HE validation development project (SoROP 4.1.3) recommended the use of the same standards.

so it is possible for applicants to take an examination without entering a formal VET programme (but actually this option is not used).

As the learning outcomes based approach is fairly new in Hungarian HE one of the main functions of the NQF is to introduce this new idea into practice. A key point to add is that the concept of learning outcomes has not so far been used in the terminology of vocational and adult training in Hungary.

There are some very successful validation procedures in the field of single competence certification.

The European Computer Driving Licence examination scheme provides certification for ICT skills obtained by any means and is based on international standards. It has been applied in Hungary since 1997 as the certification of digital literacy.¹⁹ The ECDL examination system co-ordination is carried out by a non-governmental organisation, the John von Neumann Computer Society (NJSZT). The ECDL programme is also accredited by the Adult Training Accreditation Board. Since the 2006/2007 school year, the ECDL has been recognised as a proper examination and has been integrated into training within various vocational programmes and a growing number of HEIs.

The foreign language proficiency examinations have traditionally been open to learners coming from any learning environment. This means that applicants can acquire a certification (of the level in accordance with their actual language proficiency) without participating in any language training course (that is, they can learn on their own in an informal way). Language proficiency examinations are organised by accredited language centres, which issue accredited language certificates to candidates passing the examination.²⁰

These two procedures represent successful implementation of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, even if such procedures are somewhat isolated cases these procedures relate only to certifying a single competency.

There is a new activity relating indirectly to the topic of validation and HuQF. Hungary participates in NQF-IN project ('Developing organisational and financial models for including non-formal sector qualifications in National Qualifications Frameworks').²¹ The main goal of the project is to provide evidence based support to national governments, EU agencies and key stakeholders in developing policies on including non-formal VET qualification into NQFs. This will be done by: (1) analysing systemic solutions implemented in seven EU countries and (2) developing organisational and financial models related to the inclusion of non-formal qualifications to NQFs. The project will provide opportunity to analyse systematically the non-formal learning sector and its certification mechanisms in Hungary.

Credit systems

A credit system was introduced in Hungary firstly in the HE sector at the beginning of the 1990s. In 1998, the Hungarian Government issued a decree on the introduction of an HE credit system from 2002. The ECTS has been provided for by law since November 2000 and has been applied in practice since the 2003/04 academic year. It is mandatory and is used in terms of both transfer and accumulation. Today almost every higher educational institution applies the credit system in their academic programmes, which are further regulated by the Higher Education Act and its Government Decrees. The Decree provided for the establishment of the National Credit Council to give professional help to the institutions to develop the credit system nationwide and to enhance student mobility through the credit system.

¹⁹ <http://njszt.hu/en>

²⁰ <http://www.nyak.hu/default-eng.asp>

²¹ <http://www.cereq.fr/articles/Version-anglaise/NQF-IN-project>

The validation issue is closely connected to the existing credit transfer system in HE. The current practice of credit transfer reflects the reluctance of teachers in HEIs to recognise knowledge gained outside their own programme (sometimes the rejection concerns also the recognition of knowledge acquired in another programme of the same institution). This is mostly an attitudinal barrier. There are also operational problems with the credit transfer system. It is difficult to compare the learning outcomes of prior learning and the requirements of the HE programme if the requirements are not described in a standard form or (what is often the case) not described in the form of learning outcomes. It was one of the conclusions of the development project on validation in the frame of SoROP 4.1.3 programme (Derényi and Tót, 2011).

A modularised structure of VET qualifications has been operating in Hungary since 2006 but the credit system has not been applied in the VET sector. Due to the openness of vocational education to labour market requirements, the output based orientation of programme description is relatively closer to the learning outcomes approach than in HE or general education.

A development project SoROP 2.2.1 did not produce a validation scheme for the VET sector. The development activity focused on the HuQF (levels concerning the vocational education system) and 800 VET qualifications had been described in terms of learning outcomes.

As the Hungarian VET system does not operate on a credit basis, the ECVET is implemented mostly through EU funded mobility projects (especially Leonardo, from 2014: Erasmus+).

4 Standards

One of the main obstacles for the validation procedure has been that the requirements have been described in an input oriented fashion (not in terms of learning outcomes). Even if the standards are the same, the references for assessment are not described in terms of learning outcomes. This made it very difficult to match the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning with the requirements of study programmes during the validation process. So the problem has stemmed from the way requirements/standards are described. In the last two years the VET and HE qualification standards have been transcribed in learning outcomes form.

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

There is no national institution with responsibility for the coordination of validation development.

The validation model development project for HE (SoROP 4.1.3) recommended the establishment a national Knowledge centre (in order to support and coordinate local developments, to train the future validation providers, to develop methods, to initiate research and to collect information and data on practice), but these recommendations have not been implemented. It is difficult to identify the specific actors responsible for the decision on this issue because of the involvement of different sectoral bodies.

In the absence of an overarching validation policy, there is no government actor that would have exclusive competence in developing the validation system. The current framework of development is provided by EU supported projects, each of which is relevant to a particular sector of education and training.

Three of the projects partially handled the issue of validation. Each examines the options for the simultaneous development of the NQF and validation. The issue of validation is taken up to the largest extent in HE related development projects, while it played a relatively unimportant part in general education and VET projects.

Besides project based development relevant to the whole sector, certain HEIs have experimental validation procedures. Both known experiments are related to SoROP 4.1.3.

The College of Dunaújváros which operates in the northern region of Hungary participated in the first phase of the project as a pilot institution.

The other pilot development project was conducted in Eastern Hungary by the HR Consultant MA programme in the Debrecen University's Faculty of Child and Adult Education. The teacher who initiated the project attended a SoROP 4.1.3 dissemination event, where she was inspired to start a validation project in her own institution. In this respect the Debrecen pilot is a result and direct effect of the dissemination activity related to SoROP 4.1.3.

Intersectoral coordination is a weakness of Hungarian policy-making and implementation in general.

Despite the fact that developments are deployed separately, at the level of sectors, a certain degree of coordination still took place (lead in cooperation by the ministries responsible for employment and education with the support of NQF National Coordination Point). As the development of the NQF features prominently in all three projects mentioned above which are dealing with validation development to a lesser or greater extent, a coordination forum for the implementation of Government-level tasks (e.g. referencing) has been set-up (SoROP 3.1.8, 4.1.3 and 2.2.1).

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

Availability of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is relatively limited.

Validation is closely linked to the educational sector and concern those involved in particular programmes (HE or adult training). Validation in higher education is available for students already enrolled. In the context of various events providing study related information on their studies, they are advised that under the Higher Education Act it is possible to have their work experience validated. Awareness amongst teachers and HE leaders is raised mainly by participation in development projects (SoROP 4.1.3) and through dissemination activities related to the projects. At the end of the first phase of the project (2011), intensive consultations about the topic were staged with over 400 participants. Furthermore, the closing publication of the project found its way to thousands of interested people (apart from the printed copies it has been downloaded from the project website).

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

In the adult training sector, recognition of prior learning is possible upon entry into training. Many adult training providers have some information about this recognition on their website.

In HE institutions, the information provision about the credit transfer and accreditation on the basis of work experiences is the responsibility of learning administration units (there is no systemic collection of information on the practice). In some institutions this is part of the general information day organized for entry students.

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

There are no measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners.

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

As there is no well-established validation system, the profile of validation practitioners cannot be clearly identified.

Based on empirical research carried out in the HE development project started in 2009, in most HEIs validation of learning acquired outside formal education takes place outside the framework of official procedures, in a 'grey zone', and is subject to informal bargaining between teachers and students. The student approaches the teacher and requests validation, and the teacher makes a decision, at his or her discretion, to, for instance, exempt the student from attending classes.

It is teachers that students seek out directly with validation requests. Teachers rely on their experience in making their decisions (as they are generally well versed with the credit transfer system as this is often a starting point for their decision).

The most typical request is to validate work experience (which is permitted by the relevant statutory provisions). The staff of the Registrar's Department assess exemption requests, checking the compliance with rules at institutional level. After that the candidate presents his/her work experiences and the learning outcomes gained from these experiences in front of a jury composed of teachers. The jury decides on the acceptance. (This is the case in the pilot project launched in the first and second phases of SoROP 4.1.3, the registrar of the Dunaújváros College²² took an active part in developing the validation procedure. The other case involved the largest university of Eastern Hungary, where the local experiment was headed by a qualified teacher of the Faculty of Child and Adult Education. In an attempt to create an appropriate background for the acceptance of the pilot project within the university, this teacher wrote her post-doctoral dissertation on validation (Móré, 2013).

7.2 Qualification requirements

As there is no comprehensive regulation, there are no mandatory qualification requirements for validation practitioners.

In HEIs it is mostly teachers and members of administrative staff that are involved in the practice of validation. The teacher, who teaches the course that the individual (student) wants to validate, has to be involved in the validation procedure.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

The SoROP 4.1.3 project, which aimed at developing a validation model for HE, has been operating as a development project and at the same time a collective learning/training programme for a small group of HE actors (participants in development). Nearly 50 individuals (HE teachers and managerial staff) have been involved in the first phase of the project, and more than 60 in the second phase.

Experience shows that there is a need for an extensive preparation programme for stakeholders in all sectors in order to understand the validation approach and to be able to operate the procedure (including guidance).

²² The validation regulation is part of the recognition and exemption practice of the College. The detailed rules are available on the webpage of the College <http://www.uniduna.hu/fooldal/hallgatoi-jogviszony/tantargyak-befogadasanak>

8 Quality assurance

There is no quality assurance framework (or even documentation) specifically for validation.

Under SoROP 4.1.3 (validation development for HE) recommendations have been formulated regarding adherence to the European principles and integrating validation in the institution's overall quality assurance system.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

As there is no overall system of validation there is no national framework for funding of validation activities.

The national investment in a validation system for the time being is the organisation of sectoral development projects (organised in EU funded projects where one-third of the budget is financed by the government).

9.2 Distribution of costs

The costs of prior learning outcomes assessment in the adult training sector are borne by training providers. Training providers themselves are funded by the state, by employers, by participants, or by a mix of these. The procedure itself is free for adult students entering training, regardless of how the training provider is financed.

Costs are basically 'hidden' as there are no calculations regarding the cost items of guidance, assessment or any other related services as such. Providers consider prior learning assessment as part of the training. Providers usually count the hours spent on assessment (test writing and evaluation of the tests) by the trainers in the time frame of the given training programme. So the cost of the assessment procedure is absorbed in the programme fees (paid by the adult learner, the employer or by the government).

The costs of credit transfer in HE are completely borne by the HEIs concerned. The practice is the same as in the case of validation. There are no calculations on effective costs.

As for the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), participants have to pay the fees of the training modules (the cost varies between EUR 15 and 40). Students are given significant discounts and some employers choose to cover the training costs of their employees. Since 2002, the ECDL examination is part of civil servants' training, with funding coming from the national budget. The ECDL is also part of the nationwide (obligatory) education and training of teachers and the cultural professionals programme financed from the national budget.

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

There is no data on the benefits to individuals.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

Not applicable. Validation system is under development. There is no data for analysis.

9.4.2 Validation users

There is no data collection system on validation. According to experience, there is a high occurrence of a kind of validation in a non-open procedure, i.e. when at the end of non-open bargaining between the teacher and the student, the teacher

makes his decision and grants the student exemption from certain requirements (attendance, papers, and examination).

In the pilot initiative described earlier, a few hundred students (approximately) were involved in the open validation procedure (most of them part-time students).

Data on flows are only available for the ECDL examination system. In more than 400 examination centres nearly 100 000 individuals apply for certification per year.

Some credit transfer and validation related questions were integrated into the Hungarian questionnaire of the Eurostudent V data survey. The survey was organized in 2013 and the results published later. 16 745 Hungarian students participated in the data collection (76.3 % full time students, 74.5 % at BA level). 20 % of all respondents declared that he/she tried to make validate/recognize knowledge acquired previously. Unfortunately credit transfer process (credits gained from formal education, ie. from another HE institution) and validation (recognition of learning outcomes gained in non-formal and informal learning) has not been clearly separated in the relating question. The two different procedures have been treated as identical (under the name recognition). While among full time student this proportion was 15%, among part-time (typically older) students the rate was 40.9 %. From all part time students, 3.8 % applied for credits on the basis of their previous work experiences. This rate among the full time students is less than 1 %. These data strengthen the experience that validation mainly affects older, part time students.

9.4.3 Validation and migrants / refugees and other disadvantaged groups

See also Section 1.2.

There was a Migrant Project in the Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development (OFI) in 2012. The target group of the project was adults. The project dealt with recognition of the prior learning of migrants, conditions to support learning and options for information and guidance for migrants. The project established a Migrant Education Centre where 31 people received certificates.²³ The continuation is precarious because the OFI is under reorganisation.

10 Validation methods

As the numbers of validation procedures are very limited, there is no sufficient experience to evaluate which combinations of methods are the most effective ones. But the presentation (normally focused on declarations or on evidence collected from work) followed by an interview / debate is the most common combination used up to now. This practice is related to two pilot activities in two HE institutions.

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- Hungarian Educational Authority
- Kallóné, Eger
- Member of EQF AG



Country report Hungary

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).



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

[visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)
