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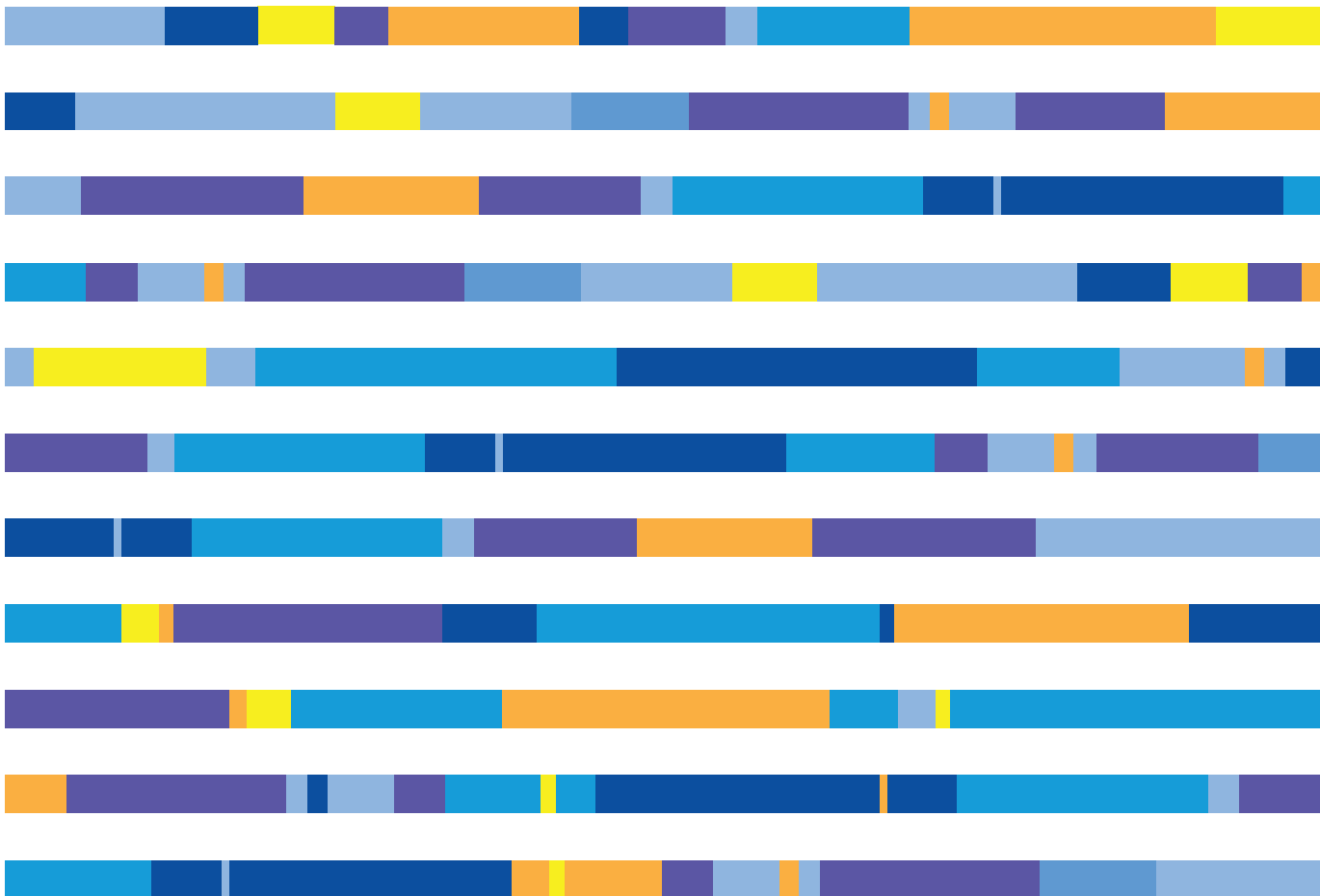


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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

COUNTRY REPORT:
GREECE



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1 Abstract

Validation activities are coordinated by EOPPEP, the competent institution for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Greece. EOPPEP has been building parts of a framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) over the past few years, for the time being focusing on the validation of CVET.

EOPPEP is also responsible for quality assurance of Career Guidance in Greece. On the other hand, guidance services, training to the unemployed and employment services are offered by the Greek PES (OAED-DYPA). Dialogue and cooperation between EOPPEP and OAED-DYPA on validation of NFIL already exists and can be improved further. In the meantime, each organisation pursues different approaches to validation of NFIL, EOPPEP via occupational standards and OAED-DYPA via the international standard ISO 17024 for the certification of persons.

The prominence of validation of NFIL in public awareness could also be improved further in Greece. Even though informal and non-formal learning represent a number of learning pathways, such learning is not adequately valued and recognised in society. In relation to validation of informal learning in particular, a cultural shift would be required in favour of learning outcomes, to support steps towards recognition and validation, as no comprehensive system exists to date.

2 Introduction

Validation in Greece is developed mainly from a national perspective with a focus on a handful of occupations. EOPPEP, pursuant to the provisions of Article 1 of its foundation law 4115/2013, is the designated national certification body for the input and output of non-formal education, therefore acting as the national authority for validation. It is also the national contact point or reference point of various European networks, namely: the National Coordination Point of the European Qualifications Framework, the National Centre for Europass, a member of the European Euroguidance Network, the National Reference Point of the European Network for Quality in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) and the ECVET. EOPPEP has been building parts of a framework for validation of NFIL, so far focused on the validation of CVET.

EOPPEP holds responsibility for the certification of national occupational profiles and works on the development of occupational profiles with the active contribution of the social partners, with increasing emphasis on learning outcomes regardless of the learning path.

Key progress made since 2018, includes Law 4763/2020 which foresees the certification of programmes offered by Lifelong Learning Centres (KDVM) and of KDVM learning outcomes by EOPPEP. However, the regulations defining the functioning of the certification system are currently still pending.

There are advantages in having a single legal framework for validation and one competent national authority (EOPPEP) that covers all sectors in that transparency and consistency can be ensured, and because the authority aims to become increasingly visible and the first point of contact for citizens. However, there are also disadvantages in this approach in that some fragmentation may occur. While occupations are included in validation at a relatively slow pace, other government agencies circumvent the framework and introduce alternative approaches to validation of NFIL. An example is the international standard ISO 17024¹ which is used

(¹) ISO/IEC 17024:2012 contains principles and requirements for a body certifying persons against specific requirements, and includes the development and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons (source: <https://www.iso.org/standard/52993.html>)

by the PES for validation services offered to unemployed persons and jobseekers and in the validation process for gas technicians² developed by the knowledge-intensive subsidiary of the Aristotle University (τεχνοβλαστός).

3 National perspective

3.1 Overarching approach to validation³

In order to better understand the developments and state of play in the validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) in Greece, it is important to highlight the definitions used in the country, regarding initial vocational education and training (IVET), vocational education and training (CVET), lifelong learning, non-formal learning and validation.

Box 1: Definitions of key terms in the Greek context

Lifelong learning includes both formal and non-formal education and training , as follows (as per Law 4763/2020):

- Second chance schools (SDE) (General Formal Adult Education).
- Vocational Training Schools (ESKs or Ε.Σ.Κ in Greek) (formal education, ISCED 3).
- Vocational Apprenticeship Schools (EPAS) of the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED - DYPA) (formal education, ISCED 3).
- Institutes of Higher Vocational Training (former Institutes of Vocational Training- IEKs, now SAEK as of 2024) (formal education, ISCED 4 and 5). SAEK can either be public or private, and vocational training lasts 5 semesters (including one semester of internship).
- Vocational upper secondary school degree and certificate (EPAL)/general upper secondary school certificate (GEL) (HQF level 4).
- Post-secondary Cycle of Studies – Apprenticeship Class, lasting 11 months.
- Lifelong Learning Centres (Kentra dia Viou Mathisis – KDVM) (non-formal learning). Lifelong Learning Centres can be public or private.
- Centres for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (Kentra Epimorfosis kai dia Viou Mathisis - KEDIVIM) of public Tertiary Education Institutes.
- Colleges (Kollegia) (non-formal learning). Colleges are private. Private providers must meet specific criteria to receive licencing.

Non-formal learning:

According to Law 4763/2020, non-formal education concerns learning with some sort of learning support that is materialised through planned activities with regard to cognitive aims and the time disposed for learning. It may concern programmes related to vocational skills, adult literacy as well as the basic education for early school leavers⁴.

Compared to the definition provided by the 2012 Council Recommendation for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, it is underlined that non-formal learning does not have the same definition in Greece⁵, although this definition has been aligned post-

² <https://acta-edu.gr/certificate/eidikos-se-themata-fysikou-aeriou/>

³ The European Commission provide a brief overview of what a National Skills Strategy is and what it entails. See here for further information: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1507>

⁴ Eurydice Greece, last updated 16 May 2023 (<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/greece/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>)

⁵ “The term ‘non-formal education’ is a direct translation from the terminology in Greek legislation and does not have the same meaning as the term ‘non-formal learning’ as defined in the 2012 Recommendation on the

2020. Up until 2020, non-formal education in accordance with Greek legislation (Law 3879/2010 and Law 4386/2016) used to also include IVET in addition to CVET and adult learning (meaning that non-formal education included IVET systems such as the former IEKs (now SAEK) and the post-secondary VET fourth year after graduating from the Vocational Upper Secondary School (EPAL), named 'Apprenticeship Class'). However, this changed with Law 4547/2018 and Law 4763/2020, whereby non-formal education now includes CVET and General Adult Education.

Informal Learning

Law 3879/2010 defines informal learning as the learning activities that take place outside an organized educative framework, through life, within the framework of leisure or professional, social and cultural activities. It includes any sort of self-education by printed material or by internet use or by using a computer or diverse educative infrastructures. It also includes the knowledge, skills, and competences that a person acquires through work experience⁶.

Validation:

The word 'certification' (*pistopoihsh*) is mainly used across processes and national policy documents; it may regard documentation that attests that learning took place; but may also imply 'assessment' and 'validation'. Experts suggest that for 'validation' another term should be used in Greek (*Epikirosi* or *Egyropoiisi tis mathisis*), to imply assessment and equivalence in learning outcomes.⁷

These definitions shape the way non-formal learning, and its validation are handled in Greece. The above definitions are also used in this report, when discussing national policy documents and processes.

As described in the Eurydice Greece report (last updated 16 May 2023), according to law 4115/13, EOPPEP constitutes the national body for the accreditation of both inputs and outputs for non-formal education and informal learning. In particular, EOPPEP develops and implements comprehensive national systems for the accreditation of non-formal & informal learning and provides scientific and technical support in designing and implementing the vocational guidance national policy, as well as the provision of such services in Greece. A key priority of EOPPEP is to cultivate cooperation and coordination of guidance services at all levels, whether guidance is given in schools or by the Public Employment service.

EOPPEP coordinates quality assurance in non-formal learning as follows:

- a) inputs: Providers with accredited infrastructures, providing VET programmes based on accredited occupational profiles, and employing certified Trainers for Adults pursuant to the provisions of the Ministerial Decision regarding matters related to General Education⁸.
- b) outputs-learning outcomes: accredited knowledge, skills and competences acquired via non-formal & informal learning pathways and certification of qualifications,
- c) vocational guidance & counselling services: viable services & tools for supporting citizens of every age, as well as educational information tools according to the latest ICT applications.

Validation on Non-formal and Informal Learning", and as updated in 2015. In Greece, non-formal education refers to the educational activities outside of the formal educational system.

⁶ Eurydice Greece, last updated 16 May 2023 (<https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/greece/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>)

⁷ <https://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/>

⁸ MD ΓΠ/20082/ΦΕΚ Β' 2844/23-10-2012

There are certain advantages to having a legal framework for validation and certification, and a single national authority (EOPPEP) that covers all sectors in that transparency and consistency can be ensured, provided that the authority is becoming visible, and citizens know that will be the first point of contact for them in validating their NFIL. However, there are also disadvantages in that some fragmentation may be occurring if a single authority is causing bottlenecks. If the framework is rigid and validation processes for occupations are developed at a relatively slow pace, Ministries from some sectors may circumvent the framework and introduce validation processes via Ministerial Decisions. Such an example is the validation process for natural gas technicians delivered by agencies/ Certification Bodies attached to Universities (such as for example, the Aristotle University Training and Assessment Centre, ACTA⁹) and made possible by Ministerial Decisions of the Ministry of Development.

In CVET, Law 4547/2018 and Law 4763/2020 stipulates the validation by EOPPEP of programmes offered by Lifelong Learning Centres (KDVM) and the validation of KDVM learning outcomes, yet follow-up regulations specifying these processes are still pending.

Specific legislation also makes provisions for EOPPEP to be able to certify specific occupations:

- EOPPEP operates and manages a series of certification processes and maintains the relevant registers of certified professionals for: a) private security guards and b) hairdressers and manicurists and pedicurists.
- Certification of the professional competence of Technicians of Refrigeration Installations, in accordance with EU Regulation 2015/2067 through Joint Ministerial Decision published in the Government Gazette 1186, vol. B 26.03.2021.

Greece's National Skills Strategy was published by the Ministry of Labour and Greece's Public Employment Service (DYPA - OAED) / National Skills Council in June 2022¹⁰. The strategy does not assign a prominent role to validation. It focuses primarily on the development of green and digital skills in the Greek labour market but without specific references or emphasis on validation. Validation of the training that unemployed people receive is the final stage of interventions foreseen in the national strategy. The Greek PES (DYPA), supports several training programmes, for example on the acquisition of green and digital skills, where the last step of the interventions is the validation of such training in order for the beneficiaries to complete the programmes¹¹.

Up until the adoption of the above strategy, there was an absence of an overarching skills strategy and the bulk of policies focusing on skills development were implemented under the auspices of authorities and bodies operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Education Religious Affairs and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (the General Secretariat Of Vocational Education, Training & Lifelong Learning and the Public Employment Service respectively). Additionally, skills initiatives have often been co-financed by EU funds in the past, notably by the Operational Programme "Human Resource Development, Training and Lifelong Learning". The most relevant investment priorities of this OP included: a) "Improving equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in the context of formal, informal and non-formal structures, upgrading of workforce knowledge and skills and promoting flexible learning opportunities, including through professional orientation

⁹ <https://acta-edu.gr/certificate/eidikos-se-themata-fysikou-aeriou/>

¹⁰ <https://ynergias.gov.gr/stratigiki-gia-tin-anavathmisi-ton-dexiotiton-tou-ergatikou-dynamikou-kai-ti-diasyndesi-tou-me-tin-agera-ergasias/>

¹¹ <https://voucher.gov.gr/project/view-dypa>

and the certification of acquired qualifications” and b) “Improving the relevance of education and training systems to the labour market, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for predicting needs in skills, adapting curricula and establishing and developing systems of work-based learning, including dual systems of learning and apprenticeships’ (EIEAD, 2020). For example, one project under this Operational Programme completed in 2022, included the training with certification of the training and promotion into jobs of 60.000 unemployed aged 30-49 in technical skills for cutting-edge industries¹².

Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) were introduced in Greece in September 2022, through Law 4921/2022¹³ and they are named Individual Skills Accounts. Validation features in the key aims of the Individual Skills Account which are to:

- records existing and acquired skills through training and skills upgrading programs in which citizens participate,
- provides the employed and unemployed with a budget to spend on training to improve their skills and employability, and
- enables citizens to demonstrate the skills they possess, including work experience, participation in training.

The Individual Skills Account will have a value of EUR 1,500 vocational training rights granted to both unemployed and employed beneficiaries and this can be broken down to:

- Fixed amount of EUR 1,100 provided to all beneficiaries, regardless of social criteria.
- Plus up to EUR 400 granted on the basis of social criteria (gender, age, special groups) giving additional resources to women, young people aged 18-29 and population groups facing greater barriers to entry into the labour market (e.g. people with disabilities). Beneficiaries must redeem his monetary/credit units exclusively for guidance counselling and/or training and/or validation/certification services from providers belonging to the Register of Eligible Providers of Continuing Professional Training of the PES. A digital portal is also under preparation for individuals to manage their individual skills account.

In terms of validation in CVET, Law 4921/2022, Article 39 makes the following provisions¹⁴ which have opened the way for the PES (OAED-DYPA) to certify trainings for unemployed people, aside from the validation and certification that EOPPEP carries out:

The certification of those trained in the context of continuing professional training is carried out by independent Certification Bodies, which are:

- a) Accredited according to Standard ISO/IEC 17024 or
- b) certified based on the current institutional framework, in particular article 50 of Law 4763/2020 (A´ 254), to grant certificates or
- c) software or technology companies, which provide relevant certifications that are internationally recognized in the labour market. The invitation for a program of subsidized continuing professional training may provide that the certification of the

¹² <https://www.voucher.gov.gr/project/download-doc/id/37>

¹³ <https://ypergasias.gov.gr/energopoiointai-oi-atomikoi-logariasmoi-dexiotiton-gia-epangelmatiki-katartisi-anerгон-kai-ergazomenon-me-ofelos-eos-1-500-evro/>

¹⁴ <https://www.kodiko.gr/nomothesia/document/786575/nomos-4921-2022>

trainees is done exclusively by a Certification Body, which is selected for this purpose, in accordance with the applicable assignment procedure of Law 4412/2016 (A´ 147).

2. With the certification, it is confirmed that the trainee has acquired the knowledge or skills related to the subject of the training attended to a sufficient degree.

3.2 Validation in education and training

EOPPEP is the certification authority, that is, the authority responsible for the quality assurance of the certification of qualifications in Greece. It was created in November 2011, merging three pre-existing organisations in a single organisation dealing with both inputs (infrastructures, trainers etc.), guidance, and outputs/certification¹⁵.

In 2010, the Lifelong Learning law (Law 3879/2010) recognised non-formal and informal learning as part of lifelong learning and the providers of such learning as parts of the National Framework for Lifelong Learning. The law also introduced new organisations and empowered decentralised authorities.

The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports and EOPPEP are responsible for inputs in non-formal learning, whereas EOPPEP is the responsible organisation for the outputs. Validation in IVET (SAEK, former IEKs) and certification of the qualifications of IVET graduates has been prioritised in previous years, while IVET was classified as non-formal learning in Greece. Upon successful participation in qualification exams, graduates are granted Diploma of Vocational Education and Training specialty, at level 5 of the Hellenic Qualifications Framework and EQF. Since 2020, IVET is classified as formal learning, hence, the focus on the validation of NFIL has shifted on validation of CVET.

Validation in non-formal learning (CVET)

The same process is followed by graduates of the Centres for Training and Lifelong Learning operated by and within higher education institutions (HEI) and vocational training offered by the Lifelong learning centres belonging to the social partners. The Lifelong learning law allowed those institutions to run Centres for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning (*Kentra Epimorfosis kai dia Viou Mathisis - KEDIVIM*) within HEI that are recognised to offer non-formal learning. After the completion of each training programme, participants receive a certificate of participation and a training certificate. Research shows that participants are assessed either through weekly tests or only through final examinations. Each Centre for Training and Lifelong Learning within a higher education institution determines the way participants are assessed. Training programmes are very often taught exclusively through e-learning, such as examples of courses provided by the National Kapodestrian University of Athens, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the University of Pireaus.

The 3879/2010 Act identified institutes/research bodies of the most significant social partners¹⁶ as institutes providing lifelong learning services, thus including them in the National Lifelong Learning System. These stakeholders provide CVET opportunities to their members and/or to employees of their members. The relevant training programmes are relative to professions and sectors. After the completion of the

¹⁵ The term 'inputs' refers to Occupational profiles, study programmes, IVET training guides, teaching methods, teachers/trainers qualifications and course duration. The term 'outputs' refers to the outcome of the above processes, which is the certification of qualifications and which is not to be confused with learning outcomes.

¹⁶ The Institute of Labour (IN.E.); The Centre for Education Policy Development (K.A.N.E.P.) at the Confederation of Greek Workers in Greece (G.S.E.E.); The Small Business Institute (I.M.E.) at the General Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Tradesmen in Greece (G.S.E.V.E.E.); The Social Multi-Centre and Trans-Balkan Institute for Public Administration Senior Management Associations of Civil Servants (A.D.E.D.Y.).

programme, participants are provided with a certificate of attendance (KEK GSEVEE a). The successful completion of some of these training programmes is linked to the advancement of professional rights (for example, Energy Inspector is eligible to be included in the relevant national registry) (KEK GSEVEE b).

It should also be noted that Law 4186/2013 on the Restructuring of Secondary Education recognises distance learning as equal to traditional learning, and any private or public institution that offers non-formal learning can choose this type of learning. If a distance learning training programme relates to an entire specialisation, then the graduates receive an Attestation of Training and can sit the EOPPEP Certification examinations provided that they fulfil specific prerequisites for each specialty (as per paragraph 5 of Article 25 of Law 4186/2013).

Online Greek Qualifications Register

EOPPEP has established the Greek Qualifications Register online: <http://proson.eoppep.gr> and <http://proson.eoppep.gr/en> upon its responsibility for the creation and development of the HQF and its referencing to the EQF and under the supervision and coordination of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports. It comprises the qualifications classified in the HQF and referenced to the EQF, together with information based on a unified description standard suggested by the European Commission, to allow for uniformity in the structure of information concerning qualifications among European countries. The Qualifications Register is linked to the European Portal 'Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe' (<http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus>).

To date, 1,048 qualifications have been included in the relative registry. These qualifications are structured as follows:

- Level 8: 139
- Level 7: 339
- Level 6: 348
- Level 5: 164
- Level 4 Q55
- Level 3: 1
- Level 2: 1
- Level 1: 1

During 2017, the National Qualifications Register was highlighted as good practice at the EU level. In future, it is planned for the awarding bodies to gain access to the Qualifications Register upon EOPPEP's authorization, with a view to directly updating the qualifications they award and adding new qualifications.

Development of a National Certification System of Outputs¹⁷

The development of a National System for Certification of Outputs (outputs are not to be confused with learning outcomes) is one of the strategic objectives of EOPPEP (EOPPEP, b). This is a very important step, considering the focus of the national education system on inputs.

The National System aims at certifying qualifications that the Greek state is interested in and that are expected to boost employment. The certification is implemented according to criteria and processes that ensure that the certified qualifications correspond to the requirements of the relevant certified occupational profile (*Epaggelmatiko Perigramma*). Under this framework, professionals that do not hold a formally recognised qualification/title, regardless of the way they have developed their professional knowledge-skills-competences, are able to apply to EOPPEP for certification.

¹⁷ <https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/el/qualification-certificate/certificate-of-qualifications/development-national-certification-outcomes>

Regarding the state of play for the Certification of Qualifications for Continuing Vocational Training, the system is regulated for the following groups:

- a) Certification System for Adult Trainers, pursuant to the provisions of GG B' 2844/23-10-2012 Ministerial Decision, in force;
- b) Certification regulatory framework for Security Guard Professionals with no formal qualification, pursuant to the provisions of the GG B/2899/29.10.2012 in force;
- c) Certification system for hairdressers and nail care technicians, pursuant to the provisions of GG B' 5854/B/17-11-2022 Common Ministerial Decision, in force (to be implemented in 2024);
- d) Certification prerequisites and process for port loaders, pursuant to the provisions of GG B/749/01.04.2013 Common Ministerial Decision, in force;
- e) Certification System for Career Guidance Counsellors, pursuant to the provisions of the GG B/6174/14.02.2022 Common Ministerial Decision, in force

Certification of the teaching competence of Adult Trainers in non-formal learning

Since 2014, adult trainers in non-formal learning (as this is defined in Greece) need to have certified educational competence/proficiency to participate in non-formal learning programmes funded by public Greek and EU resources (Law 4115/2013). The certification process is accessible by all individuals who meet specific criteria: in order to enrol in the certification examinations organised and managed by EOPPEP, the applicant has to meet certain criteria regarding educational attainment or proven adult training experience. More specifically, the individual must initially submit an electronic application in the dedicated information system that is accessible from the EOPPEP website. According to their educational and/or professional status and following an evaluation process of their application, candidates are categorised in one of the following three certification paths¹⁸:

- a) Direct Certification, in case the candidate meets certain criteria such as having a qualification at Bachelors level in the field of lifelong learning or adult education or continuing education and training;
- b) Eligibility to participate in certification exams: most participants fall under this category, as the criteria are very broad, varying from specific educational titles to a minimum 150 hours of relevant experience of teaching adults¹⁹;
- c) Eligibility to participate in certification examinations, only after successful completion of a 100-hour training course, the trainer programme offered by training providers belonging to the public or wider public sector. This last category regards applicants with no relevant professional/adult training experience and no relevant qualification in the field of adult learning.

Certification examinations include both a theoretical and practical part and are aimed at ensuring the candidate meets the relevant knowledge, skills and competences, described in the respective certified Adult Trainer Occupational Profile. The practical part of the assessment includes the candidate delivering a 20-minute mock-up adult training course to a group of other candidates, supervised by an EOPPEP-appointed competent person and evaluated by two assessors. The details of this assessment stage are explicitly described and analysed on EOPPEP's website (EOPPEP, c). Additionally, a relevant ministerial decision defines the requirements for training programmes for adult trainers.

¹⁸ <https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/el/how-to/teacher-certification-educational-attainment-lifelong-learning-ill-adult>

¹⁹ According to EOPPEP

There are over 26,000 Adult Trainers certified by EOPPEP and candidates for this certification. The certified Adult Trainers are enrolled in EOPPEP's Register for Certified Adult Trainers and eligible to teach in non-formal learning training programmes.

Focus on specific sectors

Currently, sectoral focus is operationally implemented for:

- Certification of private security personnel
- Certification of hairdressers-barbers and manicurists-pedicurists
- and for the licensing of specific technical occupations (plumbers, technical works machinery operators, liquid and gas fuel installation and welding, certification of technicians who work with fluoride greenhouse gases, and the register of recognised examiners of train drivers).

Training Certification System for employees in the wider public sector

Another attempt at certifying learning outcomes from non-formal learning relate to the development of a Training Certification System for employees in the wider public sector. The relevant law (Government Gazette no. 1592/30-9-2010) introduces the System and aims at certifying the knowledge acquired by public servants through seminars/trainings delivered by the National Centre of Public Administration and Local Government²⁰, other public sector schools, public universities, technological institutes (TEI) that belong to tertiary education, the European Institute of Public Administration, the Social Polycentre and the Inter-Balkan Institute of Public Administration. All training and training structures should be certified by a Central Certification Committee. Regarding the certification of participants' knowledge and competences, the law defines that it is based on the learning objectives included in the plan of training. The assessment-certification is managed by the training institutions mentioned earlier. It could include multiple-question tests or open questions, case studies, or assignments that participants have to complete. If successful, participants receive a Certificate of Accreditation which is linked to training points. It should be noted that promotions in the public sector take into consideration these points. Unsuccessful participants receive a certification of participation. More than 500 training programs of public bodies have been certified by the Central Certification Committee to date.

Validation of Greek language competence

Non-formal learning in Greek (for foreigners) and other languages can be validated through examinations offered by the Greek Language Centre of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport. The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning plans and implements programmes for the teaching of Greek as a second language to foreigners. The Secretariat also runs procedures for certifying the knowledge of the Greek language and elements of Greek history which are a prerequisite for assigning migrants the status of 'long-term residents'. A special Unit has been created for this certification procedure through the Presidential Decree P.D. 18/23 February 2018.

The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport, through the Greek Language Centre (Greek Language Centre, a) also offers the National Language Certificate that any individual can take through examinations, regardless of how the language skills have been obtained (Law 4018/2011, Article 16). This certificate is not linked to formal education and there are no restrictions regarding participation in examinations, so self-learning, informal learning or any type of learning is acceptable.

The Greek Language Competence Certificate has six levels, following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe. This Certificate is recognised in the public and the private sector and is also mandatory for

²⁰ <https://www.ekdd.gr/en/ekdda/training-accreditation/>

people applying for public sector positions. There is thus an increased interest from applicants to receive the A2 grade (basic knowledge) certification which is increasingly being demanded as a pre-requisite for public sector jobs such as municipal cleaners, taxi drivers and nurses, professions which are in demand from foreigners. Special exam dates are available for these 'Greek Language A2 Certification Exams for Special Professional Purposes', in January, May and October of every year.

As far as trainers for the Greek language are concerned, even though it is felt that it is important for trainers to have formal qualifications, there is the possibility for trainers with at least one year of relevant experience to participate in the "train the trainer" programmes offered for those interested in supporting applicants through the process leading to the recognition of Greek language competence.

Informal learning

The validation of informal learning is not yet well developed in Greece, as there is no evidence of an official framework, neither in the public nor in the private sector. However, some steps have been taken in this direction. In vocational training schools, students that complete the third year of studies and can prove a minimum number of wages/employment hours are not obliged to attend the fourth study year, the apprenticeship year. These individuals can directly take the certification exams of EOPPEP. In this way, the professional experience of a student is recognised as equivalent to part of the curriculum. The same holds for students in SAEK (former IEK) structures (IVET): if minimum wage/hours thresholds are met, students can opt to skip the semester of traineeship. This cannot be regarded as a validation process but is an initial step towards the recognition of informal learning in formal education processes.

3.3 Validation and the labour market

The Greek public employment service (PES), renamed DYPA in 2022 through Law 4921/2022 (it was previously named OAED), provides services to unemployed individuals regarding their entry to the labour market. In this context, unemployed individuals can visit DYPA to develop their individual action plan, assisted by employment counsellors. The latter record the individual's profile (studies, previous work experience etc.) and taking into consideration the individual's career aspirations, design the individual action plan (IAP) towards employment. Steps in the plan may include further training, and existing job positions are suggested. Next steps are jointly agreed, but it is the individual's responsibility to carry them out, while the IAP does not certify or validate the unemployed individual's knowledge, skills, and competences or link them to a qualification level. However, for the CVET courses supported by the PES, validation takes place primarily via the ISO 17024 certification of persons. This approach has become increasingly common in recent years. As already mentioned above, Law 4921/2022, Article 39 makes provisions allowing the PES (OAED-DYPA) to accredit trainings for unemployed people according to the Standard ISO 17024.

The PES piloted an Integrated Active Labour Market Policies programme which was implemented in the Employment Promotion Centre KPA of Eleusis, incorporated validation in a holistic approach for integrating unemployed people in the labour market. The Ministry of Labour, Social Security & Social Solidarity and the PES collaborated with the World Bank and DG REFORM of the European Commission. The pilot targeted unemployed aged 45-65. Eleusis was chosen because of high unemployment in older age groups as well as the existence of development opportunities given the dense network of companies operating in the area. 917 beneficiaries took part. The stages followed by the program were as follows:

Stage 1: Contrary to usual practice, the initial activity was not done by announcing a training program, but by diagnosing skills deficiencies in the region's businesses. This

diagnosis was based on the use of available data by the EIEAD. Then, 10 professional specialties were identified that local businesses showed interest in and where they had job vacancies (e.g. office clerks, salespeople, wholesalers, storekeepers, waiters, truck drivers).

Stage 2: Profiling took place, whereby each beneficiary chose a specialisation among the 10 identified and a personalized intervention was designed. The beneficiaries were classified into 4 categories: a) placement in subsidized jobs for those who had the relevant prerequisites, b) job placement, sponsored by the PES for the acquisition of the necessary professional experience. If the beneficiary needed to upgrade basic skills (language, maths, digital skills), combined with the development of horizontal skills such as communication, teamwork etc, they attended a special 120-hour training program (151 beneficiaries participated). If beneficiaries needed to upgrade their technical skills (840 people) they participated in a modular vocational training programme and an internship lasting 7 months or 5 months. DYPA created a special register of businesses and internship positions available. DYPA then designed bespoke training programs which were implemented by KDBM. The acquired knowledge and skills were certified, in collaboration with DYPA and the beneficiaries were placed in employment. The pilot was able to address chronic weaknesses of the system, such as inadequate diagnosis of the skills needs of enterprises, the inadequate use of Individual Action Plans of the unemployed, the non-tailored provision of training, and the difficulty of KDVMs to find appropriate companies to offer internships and the validation of the skills acquired through theoretical and practical training. Despite its successful outcomes, the pilot was not mainstreamed.

Smaller scale EU funded projects with a validation element are also supported in some sectors. For example, EOPPEP has participated in “Live skills”, an Erasmus+ project around art management and live performance. The objective of the project is to support workers, in a sector where their jobs are in danger of being lost, to develop entrepreneurship skills. The project includes a skills gaps analysis, training courses based on learning outcomes, and creating the infrastructure to validate the learning of participants in the project. The project will not validate learning per se, but is creating a basis for the development of validation later (which cannot be completed during the lifetime of the project due to short timeframes, but can be completed at a later stage).

Another Erasmus+ project that EOPPEP has participated in, is the ASAP project in the publishing sector, as the sector moves from paper to e-publishing. Skills gaps analysis, developing training programmes following the ECVET principles, and developing the infrastructure to eventually validate the learning are among the interventions of the project. All Erasmus+ projects foresee provisions for the dissemination and sustainability and exploitation of results. For EOPPEP, this dissemination of results takes place within the organisation and can be used to feed into a framework for validation at a later stage.

EOPPEP has also participated in the ERASMUS+ project “Develop National Networks of Adult Education Providers in the field of Entrepreneurship- ENTRnet”. The project is a transnational cooperation of partners from Greece - Italy– Belgium (Flanders) and Romania, with the aim to develop a transnational Network of Adult Education Providers to promote European cooperation in the field of Entrepreneurship in VET. In terms of the project EOPPEP developed an e-learning platform comprising courses in the field of entrepreneurship, offering open educational resources (OER) for adults, to improve training, based on the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework EntreComp.

A current Erasmus+ project that EOPPEP also participates in is the TourX: CoVEs for the Tourism Industry”. The TourX project aims to explore an integrated process for the development of Continuing Professional Training curricula in the Tourism Industry based on cutting-edge competences with high demand in the Sector. These short-

term programs will be linked to a methodology for assessing expected learning outcomes, which may lead to the acquisition of Micro-credentials. The Micro-credentials acquired by learners will be integrated and reflected in a digital, flexible Individual Learning Account, as means of verification of the learning outcomes achieved.

Another recent initiative in the area of validation in the labour market is a new institutional framework for the certification and supervision of IT knowledge certificates that EOPPEP introduced in March 2023²¹ through the Joint Ministerial Decision 33198/K6/2023 (published in the Government Gazette 1961/2023)²². EOPPEP sees this update of the institutional framework governing the certification, operation and supervision procedures of IT knowledge certificate awarding bodies, as a major step towards the quality upgrade of the validation of non-formal learning in Greece. The validation process will also contribute to improving the digital skills of Greece's human resources and to creating employment opportunities.

Finally, EOPPEP, has been tasked with developing an integrated system for the assessment and validation of prior learning (AVPL). In this context, EOPPEP has requested technical support to the European Commission and the OECD through the Project 21EL28 "Support to the Design of a National Framework for Quality Assurance of Non-Formal Education and the Assessment and Validation of Prior Learning in Greece" under agreement REFORM/IM2021/009. This project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by the OECD, in cooperation with the European Commission's Directorate General for Structural Reform Support.

One of the main outputs of this project is outlined in a document that presents a set of policy recommendations developed by the OECD, in collaboration with EOPPEP, DYPA representatives and of the social partners, for the introduction of a new AVPL system in Greece. These proposals are based on the results of an analysis of existing Greek practices and regulations linked to AVPL and certification of prior learning in Greece, an extensive review of European best practices on AVPL and on discussions with the Project's Advisory Group.

Recommendations are structured around two main themes: (1) developing, establishing and implementing an AVPL system in Greece, and (2) encouraging and supporting participation in the system.

Validation and the third sector

In the third sector, there is no specific framework for validation. However, some organisations develop their own validation systems: for example, the Greek Red Cross offers Train the Trainers opportunities for all specialisations of interest (such as lifeguards). The offered training and its certification are linked to specific international criteria. The diploma earned at the end has a validity of five years and examinations are required for its renewal.

3 Links to credentials and qualifications

Qualifications and qualifications frameworks²³

²¹ https://www.alfavita.gr/ekpaidevysi/412445_eoppep-neo-thesmiko-plaisio-gia-tin-pistopoiisi-kai-epopteia-pistopoiitikon

²² <https://www.alfavita.gr/sites/default/files/2023-03/%CE%9A%CE%A5%CE%91%20%CF%80%CE%BB%CE%B7%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%86%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B7%CF%82%20egkyklios%20tmhma%20d%281%29%20%281%29.pdf>

²³ Information provided by EOPPEP

The Hellenic Qualifications Framework (HQF) was adopted in December 2015 and the referencing to the EQF was adopted in November 2016. The HQF comprises eight levels, as in the EQF, defined in terms of learning outcomes for knowledge, skills, and competences. Key definitions in Greek have been developed to facilitate the adoption of the Framework, and a broad range of qualification types have been identified and integrated within the Framework. The Framework has been designed to incorporate all formal qualifications.

Credit systems

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is used in higher education. The law on higher education (Law 4009/2011) introduced changes whereby curricula are to be defined in learning outcomes in accordance with the EQF, and the use of ECTS is introduced for doctoral programmes. However, validation of non-formal and informal learning is not yet established in higher education.

The 3879/2010 law foresaw implementation of the European Credit System in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), but the system has not been implemented. EOPPEP was identified as the National Contact Point. Nonetheless, the latest law on the reform of technical and vocational education explicitly recognises that vocational education curricula will be shaped according to ECVET credits and where available, to the occupational profiles developed by EOPPEP. The latest legislative developments have triggered awareness raising events on ECVET. Nonetheless, the 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, indicates that the concept of ECVET points was generally not applied and ECVET did not lead to the development of an European credit system in VET. Therefore, the 2009 ECVET Recommendation will be repealed and the ECVET provisions and principles will be taken forward on the basis of the proposal of 2020 and mainstreamed into other EU policy instruments.

Micro-credentials

Adult learning stakeholders in Greece are beginning to see the usefulness of micro-credentials in adult learning and are starting to develop research projects to study how they can be incorporated while others are developing training programmes offering micro-credentials. For example, academic experts are in the process of designing EU co-funded projects, for example through ERASMUS+, for the study of micro-credentials and what opportunities may exist for obtaining micro-credentials through validation. EOPPEP, also, being the designated EQAVET National Reference Point, has recently launched a three-year (2023-2026) project co-funded by ERASMUS-EDU-2023-EQAVET-IBA under the title “Continuing Vocational Training link to Micro- Credentials” and distinctive title “Micro- CVET”. The main aim of the project is to initiate and establish an innovative research approach towards a potential link of the relatively new concept of micro-credentials with CVET, in light of the parallel establishment and development of the Hellenic Qualifications Framework (HQF), the National Certified Occupational Profiles and the prospective Curricula Framework which are expected to be attached to each certified Occupational Profile and the system, which is currently under development, for the Certification of CVET programmes and also, on a second level, for the assessment and recognition of prior learning. Other examples of training programmes offering micro-credentials are the adult training courses offered for free to their members, by the Hellenic Institute of Crisis and Disaster Management. The Institute see the value of micro-credentials in supporting the provision and recognition of skills and implement learning activities complementing the systems of professional qualifications they provide in Greece and Cyprus. The learning activities cover 10 specialisations in health, security and civil protection. To date (February 2023) the Institute has issued 220 Qualification Certificates, 510 Education Certificates, 2,330 Training Certificates and 1,355

4 Standards

There are currently 4 occupations where certification is possible on the basis of the recognition of prior experience, that is, security personnel, trainers of adults and hairdressers-barbers and manicurists-pedicurists) where the standards used are the occupational profiles (*Epaggelmatika perigrammata* in Greek). The certification for cargo loaders and refrigeration technicians (*psiktikoi technikon egatastaseon*) has also been developed. It should be underlined that the social partners are closely involved in the development of occupational profiles (there are 202 certified occupational profiles in place covering a wide spectrum of occupations) and in the development of certification processes (which so far include processes for the validation of prior learning for security professionals, hairdressers-barbers and manicurists-pedicurists, refrigeration technicians, cargo loaders and trainers of trainers). This, in effect, validates the certification process that EOPPEP operates. More specifically, according to the institutional framework for the certification of Occupational Profiles, representatives from the competent authorities and from organisations of social partners participate in the opinion-issuing Committees.

Occupational profiles include descriptions of the tasks, job functions, necessary knowledge, skills, and competence for each occupation or specialty and indicative ways to assess them. Possible pathways towards the attainment of the profiles are also included.

These occupational profiles are certified by EOPPEP. According to the organisation, these profiles (EOPPEP d):

- Are for occupations with a high demand in the labour market;
- Are included in the national database of accredited professional profiles;
- Lead to the development of vocational education and training programmes that respond to labour market needs;
- Promote the upgrading of knowledge, skills and competence;
- Contribute to the recognition of vocational skills in the labour market;
- Contribute to the promotion of lifelong learning;
- Support the credibility of vocational education and training.

Regarding the current and in progress update of Occupational Profiles, EOPPEP, in collaboration with the social partners and stakeholders, participates in a co-financed (ESF OP "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning") project for the development, updating and certification of 163 OPs and programme frameworks, 25 pilot programmes, the updating of the institutional framework and the development of an Integrated Information Tool for the Management, Deposit and Promotion of Professional Profiles and Curricula Frameworks

Aside from EOPPEP plans to introduce standards, the ISO 17024 standards on 'Personnel certification' have been increasingly used in the labour market to verify the competences gained through training programmes promoted by the Greek Public Employment Services (OAED - DYPA). This **certification of persons**, is being increasingly used in a range of CVET programmes attended by unemployed persons (for example, for financial planners, public accountants, safety professionals, non-destructive testing experts, supply and purchasing management professionals, the construction industry, health care professionals etc) (ISO <https://www.iso.org/news/2012/07/Ref1625.html>).

5 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

Institutional Framework

In Greece, there is currently no comprehensive national framework on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, EOPPEP is the competent institution for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and has been building parts of the framework over the past few years, focusing on the validation of CVET.

The Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, is the overall competent authority in education in Greece, especially with respect to formal education. The 2010 Lifelong Learning law introduced more participatory decision-making bodies and procedures, introducing the Lifelong Learning Committee. This committee, responsible for IVET and CVET (and therefore, non-formal learning), involves representatives of ministries, authorities relevant to qualifications, occupational profiles and guidance²⁴, prefectures and local authorities, as well as representatives of the main social partners.

Regarding Continuing Vocational Training, EOPPEP is the responsible authority for the certification exam of students having completed training at Lifelong Learning Centres (KDVM). According to article 58 of Law 4763/2020, successful attendance of a certified KDVM programme leads to the granting of a certificate of attendance and certification, according to article 50 of the same law, where applicable.

The supervision of the providers of 'non-formal education', both public and private, as well as the authority to define their educational framework falls under the responsibility of the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training & Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports. In this respect, Accreditation of 'Input' (providers of Initial and Continuing Vocational Training, Occupational profiles, learning programmes for Continuing Vocational Training) falls under the responsibility of EOPPEP and of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports while Certification of 'Output' (certification of graduates of Continuing Vocational Training, certification of qualifications) falls under the responsibility of EOPPEP (Law 4186/2013, art. 17, paragraph 2, having also regard to the provisions of article 50 of the law 4763/2020).

Allocation of responsibilities (at national, regional, local, social partner, provider level) according to the different aspects of validation

EOPPEP is the responsible authority for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Stakeholders are highly involved, although indirectly, in the validation processes in place (called certification - *pistopoihsh*), since they are represented in the respective "Central Committee for the Certification of Vocational Education and Training" (KEEPEK).

The Lifelong Learning law introduced decentralised Lifelong Learning Committees on a regional (prefectures) level. The law empowered prefectures to develop their specific lifelong learning programme, distilling the national one.

According to the 4186/2013 law reforming secondary education, public and private providers of non-formal learning can be established across the country, and as representative authorities of the General Secretariat of Lifelong learning, at prefectural level. Official bodies of technical professions will be able to run certification procedures, as EOPPEP does, after receiving an appropriate licence from the above authorities. As the implementation of the new law matures, more information and insights will be available to allow for the evaluation of the process.

²⁴ These authorities have been merged into EOPPEP in 2011.

It should also be considered that there are in place new institutional frameworks, regarding certification of qualifications for certain occupations, namely: a) Recognition of examiners of Engine drivers and candidate engine drivers (Common Ministerial Decision 49045/5005)²⁵; and b) Licensing examinations regulations for technicians of liquid and gas fuel, plumbers, technicians of engineering installations, and welders (Common Ministerial Decision 411/14). The certification covers examinations in theory and practice, that are organised and quality assured by EOPPEP, as in the case of trainers of adult learners.

There is no evidence that validation of non-formal and informal learning takes place in formal education. Higher education institutions are autonomous and can create a Lifelong Learning Centre (KEDIVIM), so these Centres can be found across higher education institutions in Greece. According to par. 5 of Article 113 of Law 4957/2022, the KEDIVIM of HEIs are periodically evaluated and certified by the National Authority of Higher Education every five years, as per specially designed criteria and indicators to ensure the quality of the programmes that they organize and offer. They are also evaluated according to the Internal Quality Assurance System of each HEI.

This highlights that the importance of validation of non-formal learning is gaining momentum in higher education, even by small steps.

Education and training providers

Training providers do not take part in the validation process. Since the only official certification process is the one run by EOPPEP, training providers in IVET or CVET only provide attestations of vocational training to their participants. In order to obtain and sustain their operational licence, private providers are obliged to conform to specific regulations regarding their infrastructure and trainers.

Private sector actors (including social partners)

Social partners collaborate with EOPPEP in the development and certification of occupational profiles. Moreover, they participate in all competent examination committees that provide certification of qualifications (e.g. for the licensing process of technicians, which is carried out by the Prefectures, a representative of the respective federation participates in the examinations committee and can be supported by a representative of the Technical Chamber). Equally, in the case of IVET (IEKs) graduates' certification, representatives of Chambers, professional bodies, social partners and scientific organisations participate in the Central Committee for the Certification of Vocational Education and Training (KEEPEK).

Additionally, representatives of social partners participate in the Board of EOPPEP: a) one representative of the General Confederation of Workers of Greece (GSEE) b) one representative of the employers' organisations (EOPPEP, f) and c) one representative of the General Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Merchants (GSEVEE).

One of the aims of EOPPEP for the coming years is to increase the dialogue and the actual involvement of the social partners in the wider sense (i.e. to include more stakeholders such as representatives of young people) in the design and implementation of a framework for validation.

Coordination between stakeholders

The social partners are involved in the development and certification of occupational profiles that are linked to the validation of non-formal learning through the EOPPEP examinations. These examinations are designed by EOPPEP but other relevant bodies can be included, such as the Centre for Security Studies (KEMEA) of the

²⁵ By 2016, there were 29 Recognised Assessors of Train Drivers'.

Ministry of Civil Protection and Public Security which is closely involved in the certification procedures for security professions.

Validation activities are coordinated by EOPPEP and EOPPEP is also responsible for access to quality Career Guidance. On the other hand, guidance services and employment services are offered by the Greek PES (OAED-DYPA). Within this framework, dialogue and cooperation between EOPPEP and OAED-DYPA already exists and can be improved further (source: interviews).

Next steps on validation appear to rely heavily on EU funds, as underlined by relevant projects and initiatives either being planned or already in place. Aside from EU funded initiatives, EOPPEP is gradually developing validation processes for more occupations.

6 Outreach, awareness raising, provision of information, advice and guidance

6.1 Outreach and awareness-raising

Outreach measures and promotional activities are increasingly linked to national skills policies and strategies, particularly the European Year of Skills, Europass, Euroguidance, the Skills OVATE tool and Making Skills Count. EOPPEP also operates a National Portal for Lifelong Career Guidance (EOPPEP, g <https://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/>).

Individuals can be informed on the process of certification through the website of EOPPEP. However, no specific awareness-raising practices or initiatives have been found, specifically aiming to increase awareness of opportunities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

EOPPEP, as the national centre of the Euroguidance network and via its dedicated portal has developed outreach information tools for vulnerable groups, such as NEETS, Individuals with disabilities, refugees, immigrants, Roma and homeless persons, among others²⁶.

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

EOPPEP offers IAG services to young people and adults alike, free of charge and is the overall responsible authority for access to quality career guidance. During the programming period 2014-2020 (ending at the end of 2023), EOPPEP promoted the link between certification and lifelong learning guidance, focusing on unemployed individuals to facilitate their re-entry to the labour market.

EOPPEP, through its Directorate for Vocational Guidance and Counselling is committed to promoting relative information to professionals and practitioners, thus promoting participation in various European and National Networks. In parallel, several online tools that facilitate the overall awareness-raising and knowledge exchange of practitioners and beneficiaries have been developed and launched, while providing vocational guidance e- services. These include the following.

- **A National Database of Learning Opportunities, 'PLOIGOS'** (<http://ploigos.eoppep.gr>), developed in 2009 by the Euroguidance Centre of Greece, provides information to Greek and European citizens (students, job seekers, parents, guidance counsellors, teachers etc.)

²⁶ See [Ευάλωτες Ομάδες Στόχου \(eoppep.gr\)](http://eualwtes.omades.stogou.eoppep.gr)

about learning opportunities of all types (General Education, Vocational Education and Training, Special Education etc.). PLOIGOS is connected to the European Portal for Learning Opportunities and Qualifications in Europe (<http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en>) promoting educational mobility throughout the European space.

- **The Interactive Guidance Portal for young people** was developed by EOPPEP in 2012 and is widely used by students, young people and guidance practitioners. Tools available include values and decision making tests, e-portfolio development, 'Ask the counsellor' service etc.
- **The Lifelong Career Development Portal** (<http://e-stadiodromia.eoppep.gr/>) is a recently developed Lifelong Career Development Portal, providing career development services and mobility information targeted towards adults and includes digitised career tests, E-Counselling Services, E-Lifelong Career Portfolio Development Tool, Career & Mobility information Resources, and a Career Management Skills Section).

The IRIS Lifelong Career Guidance e-forum (<http://guidanceforum.eoppep.gr/>), organised and maintained by EOPPEP.

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The practitioners implementing validation practices, namely the certification examinations for adult trainers for non-formal learning (practical part) include 'Assessors' who can be employees of EOPPEP or other authorized persons, that are competent for the implementation, coordination, and assessment of lifelong learning activities, adult education and training and employment promotion. 'Assessors' can also be experts in lifelong learning, labour market and/or vocational education and training. EOPPEP's Register of Assessors, supervisors, auditors and experts is the pool of practitioners that participate in multiple certification/licencing/supervision processes which are managed and implemented by EOPPEP, according to the provisions of each distinctive institutional framework. There is also a supervisor, appointed by EOPPEP involved in the validation practices overseen by EOPPEP. At higher level, EOPPEP staff members design and implement validation procedures for increasing numbers of occupations.

For the examinations held regularly for the certification of private security personnel, which are organized by EOPPEP in cooperation with KEMEA (as described earlier), the written tests are corrected and graded by KEMEA Assessors under the supervision of EOPPEP. Pursuant to the new institutional framework (G.G. B' 4491/25-08-2022) the written test sheet comprises multiple choice questions while a repository of questions and answers has also been developed.

7.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Before their involvement in the assessment/examination stage of the certification process of EOPPEP, Assessors and Supervisors attend a short, focused training course run by EOPPEP.

KEMEA also trains Supervisors and Examiners so they can participate in the certification process of professionals in security services without a recognised vocational qualification.

7.3 Qualifications and experience

Applications for the certification examinations of adult trainers in non-formal learning are initially screened by Assessors. As stated earlier, according to the relevant legislation, these Assessors can be employees of EOPPEP or other public authorities that are competent for the implementation, coordination, and assessment of lifelong learning activities, adult education and training and employment promotion; experts in lifelong learning, labour market and/or vocational education and training come from the Registry of Assessors of EOPPEP. All assessors should have tertiary education qualifications (Government Gazette no. 2844/23.10.2012).

The Assessors of the written tests in the theoretical part and of the practical part (teaching simulation) and interviewers who are already included in the Assessors Registry need to have a Master's degree or PhD in one of the following fields: Pedagogy; Adult Training; Lifelong learning; Continuous Education; Continuous VET; Continuing Education; Education Policy; Human Resources Management or Training. Additionally, they need to have five years of professional experience and/or significant teaching experience in relevant fields and attend relevant training run by EOPPEP (EOPPEP h).

Assessors, however, are not allowed to evaluate candidates that they have trained in their role of training adult trainers.

The Centre for Security Studies (KEMEA) sets requirements for Assessors and Supervisors for the examinations of professionals of private security without prior formal qualification. KEMEA runs a Registry of Supervisors and Examiners.

Overall, the minimum requirement to be included in the KEMEA Registry is to have a tertiary level qualification in a field relevant to the topics under examination. At least five years' professional experience is also mandatory (KEMEA, b). In a call for Supervisors and Examiners, KEMEA asked for active or retired members of the Security Forces and Armed Forces or trainers in those Forces who are graduates of tertiary education and have at least five years of professional experience, and strong ICT skills. The candidates should have studied law, sociology, criminology, psychology, medicine, nursing, or other relevant specialisms.

8 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

8.1 Funding and costs

Validation is not recognised as a national framework for specific funding. EOPPEP, as the leading institution in validation is a legal entity of private law and is self-funded, so does not burden the state budget. The development of a coherent System for the Certification of Outputs and the development/amendment of other national Certification Systems are also co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Distribution of costs:

Strategic objective of EOPPEP is to minimise the costs of the certification processes it oversees, both for the organisation itself and for the individuals participating. This is done by getting rid of paper processes, having as many of the elements of the process as possible taking place online and by keeping the individual's participation costs to a minimum.

To participate in the certification examinations organised by EOPPEP, the certification examinations for professionals in private security services cost EUR 150, of which EUR 100 goes to EOPPEP and EUR 50 to the Centre for Security Studies (KEMEA), an entity of private law on security studies of the Ministry of Civil Protection. Individuals that fail in previous certification examinations and re-sit the examinations must pay EUR 100 (EOPPEP, i). The cost of the certification examinations for

hairdressers-barbers and nail artists is also EUR 150 and the amount is lost if the individual does not take part in the exams.

For a non-native speaker to take part in the examinations towards the various levels of the Greek Language Competence Certificate, they need to pay EUR 90 for levels A1, A2, B1 and B2 (basic and intermediated levels) and EUR 100 for Levels C1 and C2 (advanced). Participation in the 'Greek Language A2 Certification Exams for Special Professional Purposes' also costs individuals EUR 90²⁷ (Greek Language Centre, May 2023).

In terms of outputs and outcomes:

Overall, formal certifications from public bodies are highly valued in the Greek labour market and society. Therefore, it can be expected that individuals who successfully sit the EOPPEP certification process benefit significantly.

According to national experts, individuals who have been certified by EOPPEP as professionals in private security services have easily found employment, some of them even abroad. More generally, the EOPPEP certification of private security personnel has helped regulate the labour market for private security personnel. Before the EOPPEP validation procedure, anyone could be licensed to work as private security personnel, some not knowing how to react in crisis situations, with tragic results.

Regarding the validation of foreigners in Greek language, their benefit is explicitly recognised in the related legislation: the Greek Language Competence certification is a prerequisite to obtain a 'long-stay' permit in Greece and it must be submitted along with the relevant application to the Ministry of Interior. Also, the Greek Language Competence is a requirement to practise several professions in Greece - anyone who wishes to obtain a professional/vocational licence must demonstrate sufficient knowledge of the Greek language. The level of competence in Greek is determined by competent authorities for each licence and is adjusted to the demands of the profession, (According to Presidential Decree 38/2010 that transposes the EU Directive 2005/36/EK).

8.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

8.2.1 Validation trends

- **Certification of teaching competence of Trainers for Adults of non-formal education:** there are over 25,000 Certified Trainers of Adults, enrolled in EOPPEP's Register for Certified Adult Trainers and eligible to teach in non-formal learning programmes. According to the latest examination figures from 2021, a total of 5,190 candidates were enrolled in 37 Examination Centres across Greece. Of these, 3 152 (success rate 87.99%) succeeded in the exam and were included in the Register of Adult Educators. The success rate in the Theoretical part is 89.97% and the Practical part is 80.84%.
- **Certification of private security personnel:** EOPPEP in cooperation with KEMEA, over the period 2012-2022, has conducted national level certification examinations for Private Security Professionals twice a year. In numbers, over the past 10 years (2012-2022), 63980 candidates have participated in the validation process and 60928 have been successfully certified by EOPPEP as Private Security Professionals. These individuals were previously not in possession of any recognised occupational title.

²⁷ <https://www.greek-language.gr/certification/node/15.html>

- **Certification of technicians, who work with fluorides greenhouse gases (in cooling, air conditioning, firefighting, etc.):** To date, this certification has been awarded to 270 certified technicians.
- **Register of recognised Examiners of train drivers:** EOPPEP maintains the register of recognised Examiners of train drivers. The register currently includes 29 recognised Examiners of train drivers. Recognised Examiners of train drivers can work in all Member States of the European Union.
- **Greek language certification:** The overall number of persons interested in obtaining the certificate has been increasing over the past three years. The table below shows the number of persons taking the exam every year, as well as the success rate. The table shows that success rates have climbed above 80% in recent years.

Year	Number of candidates	Success Rate
2013	3 802	71.12%
2014	3 935	79.42%
2015	3 810	81.15%
2016	4 102	83.49%
2017	4 667	82.25%
2018	5 163	82.64%

- **ECDL certification:** Some 40000-50000 persons receive ECDL certifications for Office skills every year. These persons are certified by institutions licensed by EOPPEP to provide these certifications (source: EOPPEP interviews).
- **Cargo loaders:** Similarly, some 4500 persons were certified during 2022 as cargo loaders by institutions licensed by EOPPEP to provide the certification (source: EOPPEP interviews).

When discussing trends in the number of validation beneficiaries, it is useful to note that EOPPEP is also responsible for the validation of a large volume of IEK graduates. The body of people with IEK certification has been steadily increasing since 2012 when the exams were first introduced. However, since 2020, Initial Vocational Training through IEK is no longer part of non-formal learning in Greece, hence this sort of validation is now outside the scope of this Inventory.

8.2.2 Validation users

EOPPEP maintains analytical records and electronic data on the number of applications and examination participants for every specialism, under each examination period and per prefecture. The organisation also keeps records of the members of the examination committees, various demographic and other specific data, as well as maintains an integrated Register of Examiners and Assessors. This data is however, not published. EOPPEP however maintains various public search engines/databases and registers of certified individuals e.g., trainers of adults, security guards, technicians qualified to work with fluorides greenhouse gases, and recognised Examiners of train drivers.

8.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

No specific examples of initiatives involving migrants/ refugees have been identified, aside from the well-established process for the certification of Greek language competence, which has been widely used by migrants in Greece since 2006, and which facilitates access of migrants to - generally low-skilled - jobs in the public sector.

The Greek PES (OAED-DYPA) supported a pilot profiling initiative in the Kallithea local employment office (KPA) for unemployed people which was intended to record the skills of unemployed people including migrants and help them upgrade their skills. The initiative was primarily targeting low-skilled unemployed people, offering opportunities for basic skills training to the low skilled and offering language training to migrants who did not speak Greek. This was intended to be mainstreamed during 2018-2019 but ended up not being mainstreamed.

There are also EU funded projects with a validation element, which Greece participates in but these can operate in isolation as they are not necessarily seen as test beds for possible future mainstreaming. Both EOPPEP and DYPA regularly participate in such projects that may for example involve developing tools for the recognition/validation of skills of refugees and migrants, such as the 'Just Like Home' Erasmus project.

9 Validation methods

9.1 Methodologies and methods

Based on the description above, three of the four stages of validation take place: documentation, assessment, certification. Identification is the exception. Overall, the focus lies in assessment methods. Regarding the certification of adult trainers of non-formal learning by EOPPEP, e-portfolios are developed and used as a documentation method. E-portfolios may include teaching programme planning, development of teaching material, video-taped teaching of the applicant and electronic files from e-learning teaching experience. When applying for the certification process for adult trainers, individuals need to provide documentation that proves, among others, their minimum teaching experience. The identification of adult trainers' qualifications and experience is evidence-based. The e-portfolio is a standing feature of the certified trainer status and is under continuous elaboration. It includes all the qualification titles/awards, all occupational and teaching experiences, and is an integral part of the 'ID' of a certified trainer.

Assessment in Greece traditionally involves written tests. This seems to be the main methodology in most relevant (although not comprehensive) processes of validation that one can currently find in the country. Nevertheless, for professionals of private security without formal qualifications and adult trainers of non-formal learning, assessment also entails a practical part, which involves oral tests, case studies' analysis, demonstration of skills and competences and also teaching simulation.

In the assessment stage for adult trainers, the practical part also involves a presentation of a teaching plan (simulation of teaching, through a 20-minute implementation of a teaching plan by the examinee in a group of nine co-candidates, who undertake the role of 'trainees'). The presentation is assessed in situ by two competent assessors. A video is recorded in case the candidate should be reassessed. After the presentation, the examinee is interviewed by two Assessors and the Supervisor.

For CVET programmes examinations take place exclusively through written tests, while Language Certificates are awarded through both oral and written tests.

The following table presents the main methods used, under each validation stage that leads up to certification:

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate			
Declarative methods			

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Interview			X
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			

9.2 Use of ICT in validation

EOPPEP is increasingly using ICT-based tools to support the management of validation processes. For example, in the validation processes for hairdressers and nail artists which are being implemented in 2023 for the first time, the validation processes are supported by an IT system which allows to easily confirm the identities of candidates, involved candidates completing applications online, and will soon incorporate a system for booking the assessment examinations. The adult trainers' certification process is also facilitated by an integrated IT system. The results are documented on the IT system. The advantage of increased use of ICT tools is increased efficiency, as EOPPEP is able to serve the needs of thousands of applicants. EOPPEP, also, issues most of the Certificates in digital format (e-prosonta), providing also e-services for the verification of validity of each individual Certificate (see also, https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/el/eprosonta_diplomata)

10 Quality assurance

10.1 Quality assurance processes

Since 2013 EOPPEP is one of the first public entities in Greece that is certified in Level 1 of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) (EOPPEP e). This means that the organisation and its activities are quality assured.

Quality assurance systems

The certification examinations that EOPPEP runs for professionals without formal qualifications are developed based on already certified vocational/occupational profiles. As described above, these profiles are used as qualification standards. As they have been developed through consultation and collaboration with all major social partners, research centres/think tanks and the competent national authorities (since 2011 EOPPEP, previously EKEPIS) the process and mainly the outcomes (certification) can be considered as approved by stakeholders. The stakeholder representatives are also involved in the examination committees for the certification of SAEK (former IEK) graduates, Apprenticeship-Class EPAL graduates, EPAS of DYPA graduates, adult trainers of non-formal learning, professionals of private security services, technicians in specific technical occupations and since 2023, hairdressers and nail artists. Although EOPPEP leads all these examinations and its employees are involved as supervisors of the examinations, the process is designed

to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged. This is why these certifications have high acceptance in the private sector as well.

As far as the examination stage of the process is concerned, supervisors are accountable for ensuring that the pre-set process takes place as foreseen. For this reason, they observe and report back to EOPPEP all the stages of an individual's examination. EOPPEP determines the steps the Supervisor should take if there are issues and problems during the process.

National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning, 'π3'

A key development in recent years (although not new anymore and refers to the recent DG REFORM OECD PROJECT) has been the procedure of updating and legally establishing a National Quality Assurance Framework for Lifelong Learning, 'π3', denoting "quality, always and everywhere". This is an integrated model for excellence in VET and concerns VET providers including self-assessment. The model is based on and follows the guidelines of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, as a new methodological tool, intending to support VET providers in further improving their educational services. In essence, the National Framework for Quality Assurance in LLL, 'π3', is the main means by which the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, will coordinate the role of all VET organisations towards the improvement of quality and the alignment with the national policy as well as the European strategy "Europe 2020". Between 2016 and 2018, the model has not been fully implemented for all VET providers. A Quality Assurance (QA) process has been developed over the past two years but is not based on 'π3'. EOPPEP has done the groundwork and is ready to implement the 'π3' model as soon as the green light is given for it, as a political priority. EOPPEP also is aligned to the mandate of the 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience and has launched several initiatives towards quality assurance, mainly as the national reference point of EQAVET.

10.2 Monitoring and evaluation

EOPPEP has monitoring mechanisms in place to track the take up of validation practices and success rates. Hence the indicators used mainly concern number of candidates applying for a validation process and numbers of successful candidates. However, the impact of validation practices on users is not evaluated in detail. While the impact of validation practices on certain users is significant if they are only allowed to practice their profession once validated (as is the case for private security personnel) this has not been evaluated as part of comprehensive data collection on validation.

All certification processes that EOPPEP implements are quality assured, in terms of in- situ auditing by competent groups of auditors, appointed by the Board of Directors of EOPPEP and comprising EOPPEP officials and also experts which are drawn from the Register of assessors, supervisors, auditors, supervisors and experts, maintained by EOPPEP.

11 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust

Developments over the past decade underline that there is a clear focus in Greece towards complying with EU frameworks and Directives, while upgrading existing systems. However, there appears to be a societal and labour market preference for formal qualifications and traditional assessment methods, such as written tests. The lack of validation practices in formal education also underlines this. The authorities emphasise that, given the financial constraints faced during a prolonged economic

crisis, developments towards VNFIL have had to be prioritised across multiple sources of learning and have had to focus on validating forms of IVET and CVET, which (IVET) up until 2020, was defined as non-formal learning in Greece. Over the past few years, validation processes for more occupations are being developed, albeit at a relatively slow pace.

As already mentioned, even though informal and non-formal learning represent a number of learning pathways in Greece, such learning is not adequately valued and recognised in society. In relation to validation of informal learning in particular, a cultural shift would also be required in favour of learning outcomes, to support steps towards recognition and validation.

In terms of specific initiatives:

- Validation processes have helped increase the quality of human resources employed in certain occupations for which validation processes exist. For example, this is the case for private security personnel, an occupation that anyone could practice in the past, and which only validated individuals can now practice.
- EOPPEP is of the view that since the SAEK (former IEK) (IVET), Apprenticeship Class of EPAL and EPAS- DYPAs' graduates' examinations have been developed in cooperation with the social partners, this is a reason why the certifications have high acceptance in the private sector.
- The Greek language competence certificate is also increasingly recognised in relation to positions in both the public and private sectors and is increasingly sought after by non-native Greek language speakers.

The prominence of validation in the public debate can still be improved. As noted in a recent report (DiaNOEsis, 2021), the mismatch between training and employment in the Greek labour market manifests itself in three main ways:

- a) low absorption in the labour market of the unemployed who complete training programs,
- b) limited use in workplaces of the knowledge and skills acquired through training,
- c) lack of validation and recognition in the labour market of professional qualifications acquired through training.

In relation to this last point a key weakness identified in the report is that the validation/certification of knowledge and skills (if available) is usually limited to examining the theoretical knowledge acquired during training. What is not assessed through practical assessments is the development of skills related to the profession gained by the person being assessed and this is an area that could be further improved. However, to address this point, EOPPEP recently initiated the 'Micro-CVET' project, co-financed by ERASMUS+, to explore the integration of Micro-Credentials (MCs) with Continuing Vocational Training (CVET). Aimed at aligning with the Hellenic Qualifications Framework, the project spans 2023-2026, focusing on innovative research and curriculum development.

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12.2 Sources

Please include the name of the interviewees and organisations approached in the production of the 2023 country update. You may also list details of any relevant meetings, conferences, workshops where you gathered information contributing to this report.

Please note that the name of the interviewee will not appear in the country report. This information is required by the Steering Group for quality assurance purposes only.

Please do however check with the interviewee that they agree for the name of their organisation to be referenced in this country report

- National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance EOPPEP X 6 contacts (names: Ioanna Lytrivi who was Chief Executive Officer of EOPPEP up until April 2023, Antonis Glaros, Thomas Daskalakis, Vivi Bazra, Vicky Bouldi, Dimitris Gaitanis)
- Education expert at Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports (name: Maria Kapniari)
- Greek Public Employment Service (OAED – DYPA) (name: Athina Lazou)

Examples

Box Certification for hairdressers-barbers and nail artists

According to EOPPEP²⁸ fought to expand the beneficiaries of the certification for hairdressers-barbers and hand and foot technicians (i.e. nail artists) to individuals with work experience. Law 4957/2022 of 21 July 2022 now allows either those who have participated in a CVET course of 600 hours in hairdressing or nail techniques OR those with proven work experience of at least 3 years (or 900 daily wages) through dependent or independent employment, in a hair salon or barber shop and/or in a business that provides hand and foot care services (for Hand and Foot Care Technicians) or by presenting a certificate of previous service from a Local Government Organization. Teaching experience in their subject is also accepted and taken into account as previous work experience.

EOPPEP organises the examination process. The cost is EUR 150 per specialisation, and this cost is not returned if the candidate ends up not taking part. The legislation was introduced in 2022, with the first examinations taking place in May 2023.

The validation processes are supported by an IT system which allows easily confirming the identities of candidates, completing applications online, and will soon incorporate a system for booking the assessment.

This very recent validation procedure is expected to help better regulate the labour markets for hairdressers and nail artists because going forward, only validated individuals will be able to obtain a license to set up a hairdressing or nail salon.

Source: interviews, and EOPPEP

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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

This report is part of the 2023 update of the [European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). The inventory provides a comprehensive overview of validation practices across Europe, covering 32 systems in EU-27 Member States and EFTA countries.

The European inventory is the product of a long-standing cooperation of the European Commission, Cedefop and ETF on the field. The inventory was endorsed by the [Council recommendation of 2012](#) on validation and works together with the [European guidelines](#) as a tool to support countries in developing and implementing validation arrangements.

A rich source of information, the inventory informs dialogue and learning between countries and stakeholders developing and implementing validation in Europe. Our key objective is to support Member States so that more learners and workers can acquire and make visible new skills, which will support their career and further learning and improve their quality of life.

**CEDEFOP**European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
Postal address: Cedefop service post, 57001 Thermi, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu
