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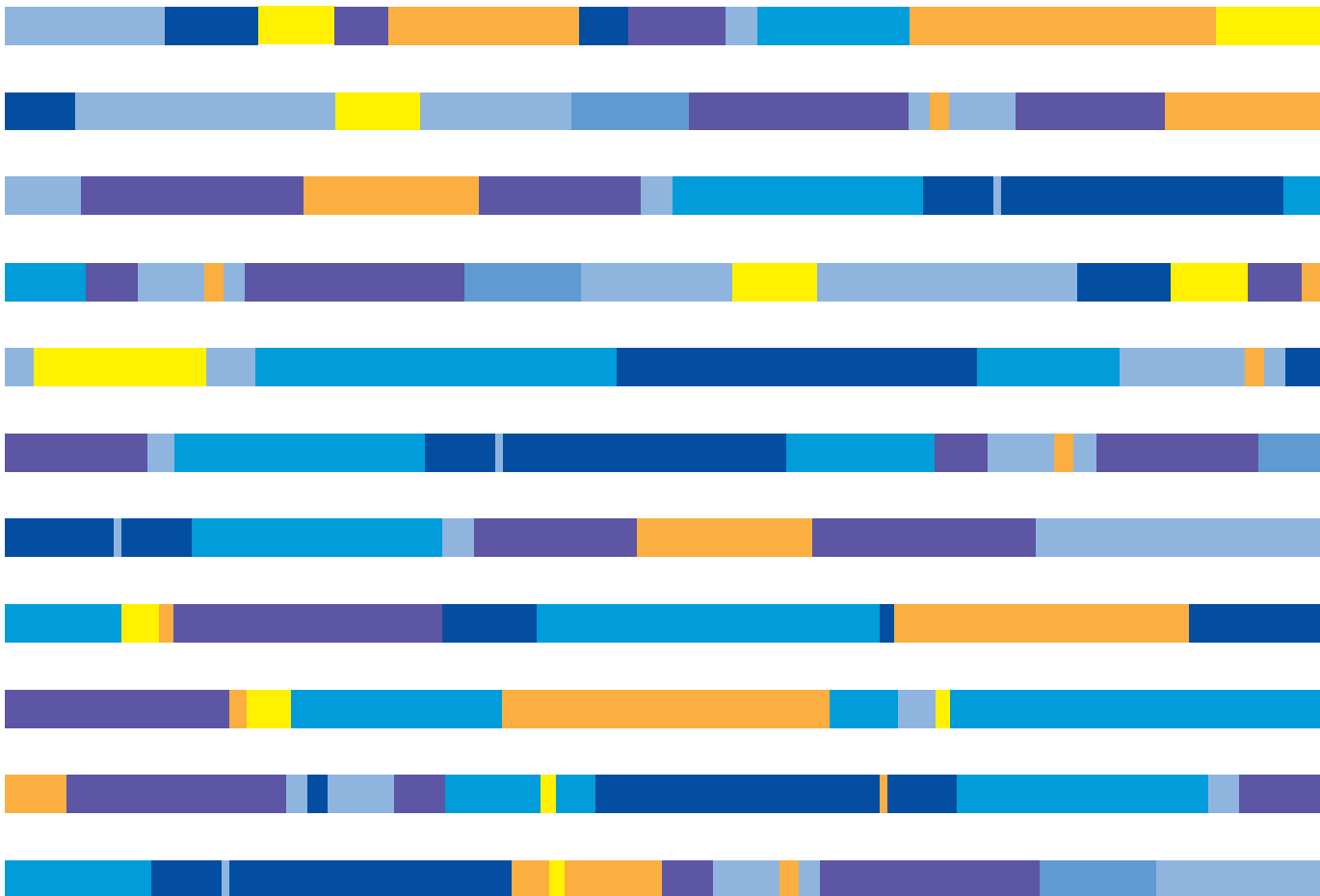
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

COUNTRY REPORT:
SPAIN

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1 Abstract

Education authorities oversee validation in Spain, as established by the New Organic Law on the organisation and integration of vocational training (2022). For the validation of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, individuals go through a process that includes a documentation phase, an advice phase, and an assessment or evaluation phase. Once the competences are validated, they are registered in a national database. In the advice phase, candidates of this procedure decide whether they want to continue with the process or not. A counsellor contacts them to provide support and advise them on possible next steps. Evaluators, assessors, and counsellors need to participate, in some cases, in a training and fulfil specific academic and professional requisites to join the validation process. However, Royal Decree 659/2023, of July 18, which develops the organization of the Vocational Training System, makes the conditions for the accreditation of professional skills acquired through non-formal means more flexible, especially with regard to the conditions and requirements of advisors and evaluators. One of the main changes since 2018 is that micro-credentials are structural and do not need validation when they are issued by a government approved body or institution. Micro-credentials can be combined to build competences. These give access to candidates to Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses or enables them to obtain a Professional Certificate. In higher education, universities oversee validation processes. Regional governments as well as trade unions, chambers of commerce and business associations have conducted awareness campaigns to promote validation. These campaigns are either directed to the general population or to employees of a certain company.

2 Introduction

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training (Ministerium de educación y formación profesional) in Spain defines validation of non-formal and informal learning as the acknowledgement of the learning that takes place outside of schools, universities, and education centres. This learning can take place in a professional environment, during individuals' leisure time or at home (Ministerio de Educación y Formación profesional, 2018).

Validation of non-formal and informal **learning is important in Spain because 48.66% of the active population does not have any formal qualification for their professional competences.**

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is regulated in the new regulation, which is Royal Decree 659/2023, of July 18, which develops the organization of the Vocational Training System, makes the conditions for the accreditation of professional skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

- **Registration.** Applications are sent and collected to the authorities of the Autonomous Communities.
- Once the applications are received. They are ready for validation:
 - **The documentation of individuals' employment and training history is reviewed.** Once the documentation is reviewed and completed, a counsellor gets in contact with the candidate. The counsellor drafts a non-binding report on the suitability of the candidate and submits it to the competent authority. Counsellors receive training to conduct the task and need to fulfil professional and academic requirements. Individuals may drop off the process if they receive a negative report on their suitability.

- **The documentation is assessed**, and individuals may be required to demonstrate a skill or a competence further, as an example, they may be asked to carry out a practical demonstration.
- **In the accreditation and registration** phase, the candidate receives accreditation for each of the units of competence that correspond to one or several professional qualifications. The accreditations obtained are also **registered in a Public Employment Service Registry**. Candidates receive a training plan prepared by their assessment commission that includes guidance on further training in case they wish to obtain an official qualification in VET or a Professional Certification.

Nonetheless, with the new regulation there is no limited number of places to obtain an accreditation. In the 2009-2018 period, a total of 276,552 places were available. Nowadays, the process is permanently open (BOE, 2021). Competences are registered in the **Electronic Register of Assessment of Competences obtained through Work Experience (RECEX)**, (VNFIL Country Report Spain, 2020).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is developed through a national perspective and addresses all levels of education from ISCED 2. Validation is regulated by the Spanish Government with the Autonomous Communities (Real Decreto 659/2023). Autonomous Communities oversee the accreditation and assessment of individual cases of validation and oversee the legislative development. Autonomous Communities identify skills and training needs in the main sectors of the economy (VNFIL Country Report Spain, 2020).

There have been three main changes since 2018:

1. **VNFIL report** was introduced in 2020 in the European Commission.
2. Royal Decree of 2009 (9 March 143/202) was modified in 2021 (see above) and replaced in 2023 by Royal Decree 659/2023.

The goal of these modifications is to establish “micro-trainings” that can be combined and be used to acquire competences and formal education certificates. These micro-trainings will be recognised in the system and will be structural. This means that they will not need validation. In this way, training offers are composed of five levels. The first and smallest level, Grade A is the partial accreditation of competence. The second level is Grade B, the Competence Certificate and Grade C is an Occupation certificate. These grades are all addressed at employed and unemployed people and belong to continuing vocational education and training. They can also be considered as micro-credentials. Grade D includes initial education and training at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Grade E is formed by specialised courses aimed at graduates in continuing education and training. These grades can be incorporated one inside the other. Grade E can be composed of grades A, B, C and D (VNFIL Country Report Spain).

On this, modularization was introduced in Spain in 2002. But, with the organic law of 2023, the system established in 2002 is repealed, and changes to a system in which the new Grades A constitute micro-credentials that can be taken in training canter, without prejudice to the fact that micro-credentials can be obtained through the accreditation of non-formal learning.

Table 2.1 Progress in relation to the Council Recommendation since 2019

Council Recommendation	Status	Comments
1. Have in place (...) arrangements for the validation of non-formal and	In place.	Spain has several official validation procedures.

Council Recommendation	Status	Comments
<p>informal learning which enable individuals to:</p> <p>A) have knowledge, skills and competences which have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, including, where applicable, through open educational resources.</p>		<p>Learning outcomes are assessed against the standards established regardless of how they were acquired (non-formal or informal learning, open educational resources) (Vale, 2019)</p>
<p>B) a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification</p>	In place.	<p>Validation procedures lead either to full or partial qualifications, and/or give access to education and training programmes and to the labour market (Vale, 2019).</p>
<p>2. Include, as appropriate, the following elements in arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (...): identification, documentation, assessment and certification.</p>	In place in two procedures.	<p>The recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning leading to a partial IVET diploma or an occupational certificate, covers all four validation stages. In the process, the candidates receive advice on the documentation presented, and are assessed and finally, accredited and registered.</p> <p>The other procedures in place do not cover all the stages. There is no counselling phase.</p>
<p>3. Apply, as appropriate, the following principles (...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the validation arrangements are linked to national qualifications frameworks and are in line with the European Qualifications Framework 	Partially in place.	<p>The Spanish National Qualification Framework was introduced in 2022 (BOE, 2022). It is equivalent to the European Framework of Qualifications. VET education has a direct equivalence with the EFQ. In addition, the evaluation of the quality of the VET system is conducted following the EQAVET.</p> <p>The Government will introduce soon the referencing planned in the Royal Decree 272/2022 (Vale, 2019).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as on the relevant procedures, are available to individuals and organisations 	To be further developed	<p>Different institutions already provide information and guidance on validation procedures. Individuals can find information about these procedures in the INCUAL (The National Institute of Professional Qualifications) webpage, www.todofp.es portal, the webpage of the National and regional employment services and education authorities. In addition, Madrid is conducting a communications campaign on the benefits of validation. Nonetheless, there are no other communications campaigns and individuals can search for this information.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ disadvantaged groups, including individuals who are unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, are particularly likely to benefit from the validation arrangements (...) 	Not in place.	<p>There are no specific policies that target vulnerable groups. However, women (particularly 40-50 years old women) and long-term unemployed people are particularly concerned by validation initiatives. The Government is funding grants to upskill and reskill the workforce in the Autonomous Communities, particularly the workforce who was left out of a job because the industry they were working in does not exist anymore or is automatised and that at risk of depopulation. The</p>

Council Recommendation	Status	Comments
		<p>Procesos Aula-Mentor is implemented in territories in which there is no training offer. They are implemented with or without professional guidance.</p> <p>The Organic Law of March 2022 targets the equality between men and women and the narrowing of the employment gap in the labour market but does not mention specific actions nor does it mention the unemployed or individuals living in rural areas.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment have the opportunity, in accordance with national legislation and specificities, to undergo a 'skills audit' aimed at identifying their knowledge, skills and competences within a reasonable period of time, ideally within six months of an identified need 	To be further developed	<p>Every individual is entitled to go through a skills audit as stated in the law. However, the time limit should not be more than six months.</p> <p>There is professional guidance in place in which employment services need to conduct unemployed people's skills assessments. This is established in the technical guide for the development of the protocol to the Portfolio of services of Common national employment System (Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, 2022).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by appropriate guidance and counselling and is readily accessible 	In place.	The institutions in charge of each validation procedure provide the corresponding guidance and counselling (Vale, 2019).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ transparent quality assurance measures in line with existing quality assurance frameworks are in place (...) 	In place.	The evaluation of the quality of VET (including the system of validation and accreditation) is conducted according to the EQAVET. The activities involving inspection, evaluation and supervision of the system is carried out by inspectors in the area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provision is made for the development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process across all relevant sectors 	In place.	There are qualification requirements for the professionals involved in the different validation procedures. The procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning involves specific training for validation practitioners (Vale, 2019).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ qualifications (...) obtained by means of the validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences comply with agreed standards that are either the same as, or equivalent to, the standards for qualifications obtained through formal education programmes 	In place.	Standards used in validation are the same to those used for qualifications obtained through formal education programmes (Vale, 2019).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the use of Union transparency tools, such as the Europass 	In place.	All the diplomas currently include the Europass supplement. In the procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through

Council Recommendation	Status	Comments
framework and Youthpass, is promoted in order to facilitate the documentation of learning outcomes		work experience and non-formal learning, applicants are required to present a Europass CV. Youthpass is also accepted as part of the application. The Europass tools are highly used by Spanish students, especially in university and higher VET (Vale, 2019).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ synergies exist between validation arrangements and credit systems applicable in the formal education and training system, such as ECTS and ECVET 	In place.	In university education, validation leads to the award of credits. The procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning leads to the award of 'competence units'. VET curricula are organized in units that can be capitalised and are expressed in learning outcomes. However, credit points are not in use (Vale, 2019).
4. promote the involvement in the development and implementation of the elements and principles referred to in points 1 to 4 of all relevant stakeholders	In place.	Stakeholders are involved through their participation in consultative bodies in education and VET (Vale, 2019) and conduct awareness campaigns (trade unions as an example).
5. promote coordination on validation arrangements between stakeholders in the education, training, employment and youth sectors, as well as between those in other relevant policy areas	In place.	The procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning is characterised by the involvement of a wide range of actors: it involves both education and employment authorities, and it promotes the participation of employers and third sector stakeholders who can have agreements with the authorities for validation. Other stakeholder such as Patronal (business association) and trade attend relevant meetings since 2022 and are consulted on this issue. There is also a strong emphasis on agreeing with stakeholders: CEOE, CEPYME, UGT and SEPE ¹ . These procedures are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training with the Autonomous Communities.

Data taken from this report, based on Vale (2019).

The validation processes have several strengths and limitations to consider:

Table 2.2 Strengths and limitations of the validation process

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of micro-credentials These are structural so they will not need validation. • Focus on addressing Spain's brain drain and the needs of the labour market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability, accessibility and collection of monitoring data on participants in the different procedures and their profiles. • The European referencing (EQAVET) is not yet available,

¹ Business association (CEOE, CEPYME), trade union (UGT) and National Employment Service (SEPE).

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coverage of different validation elements (identification, documentation, assessment, counselling, and certification). • Involvement of both education and employment authorities. • Third sector stakeholders have agreements with the authorities to facilitate the skills individuals acquire in their sector. • Teachers and trainers receive specific training for validation and certification. • The possibility to involve professionals, teachers and trainers in the guidance/counselling and evaluation stages. 	<p>but the Government is working on it.</p>

Data taken from this report, based on Vale (2019).

Validation covers a number of different areas ranging from formal education to migration:

Table 2.3 Connection of the approach to validation with other areas

Area	Connection
Formal education	Accreditation gives access to formal education and in some cases, it is equivalent to having a formal education degree (Grade C and E).
Labour market	RECEX, the Registry for accreditation validates competences acquired through work and competences acquired in dance, music and sports. The accreditation process is managed by employment and education actors.
Third sector	The plan Reconoce helps validate professional competences acquired through volunteering. This is established in the 1224 Law Article 4 (BOE, 2009).
Migration	There is a program for individuals who return to live in Spain. These individuals need to either have the Spanish nationality or they need to have a permanent residency in the country. The Plan de retorno a España for the State secretary of migrations.

Data taken from this report, based on Vale (2019).

3 National perspective

3.1 Overarching approach to validation

Since 2018, there have been a set of changes to procedures in Spain regarding the validation of informal and non-formal learning:

- Royal Decree 659/2023 regulates the validation and certification of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning. This Royal Decree replaces Royal Decree 1224/2009. The Royal Decree establishes that Autonomous Communities should keep a permanent open process to assess and certify professional competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. This covers all the professional competence units included in the Communities' offer and the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications. The Royal Decree establishes that competences should be certified in maximum six months. It includes the promotion of this process by the administrations in charge of this process. The Royal Decree also guarantees the access of employed people to this process by providing them with time off. To validate a competence acquired through professional experience, the candidate needs to have worked 2,000 hours in the 15 previous years. The smallest competences can be validated having worked 1,200 hours. To validate non-formal learning, the candidate needs to have spent 300 hours working on the competence or studying it in the last 10 years prior to the application to the procedure. For the smallest competences, 200 hours can be justified.
- The Organic Law 3/2022 of 31 March (BOE, 2022) sets a National Registry of accreditations of the professional competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. The registry will be managed by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training. This registry will be interconnected with the National Registry of VET, which includes all the centres that provide VET and their educational offer (degrees D and E). VET centres will also be inscribed in the National Registry of non-university educational centres. The Registry is also interconnected to the National Registry of VET Centres. It will connect with registries in the Autonomous Communities and will elaborate reports and studies. The law also describes the procedures for quality management and assessment. This is complemented by the National Catalogue of Professional Competences.
- The Royal Decree 272/2022 of April 12 (BOE, 2022) establishes the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong learning. It addresses lifelong learning and validation as well as all educational levels except for IVET on arts, design, and sports.
- The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training introduced the VNFIL Report on the Implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning. The report addresses the validation and qualification of informal learning.
- Act 2/2006 (BOE, 2006) is the legal basis for the recognition of prior knowledge of adults with regards to competences acquired in **secondary education**. It establishes that educational administrations have the responsibility to periodically organise examinations for adults to be able to obtain secondary education diplomas (covering general education and VET), without having to follow an education programme (BOE, 2006). It also regulates admission exams to VET programmes for those who do not meet the regular entrance academic requirements (Vale, 2019).
- Royal Decree 861/2010 is the legal basis for the recognition of work experience in the form of credits towards an official **university** degree (BOE, 2010). Royal Decree 412/2014 is the legal basis of university admission procedures for adults:

recognition of work experience to access university programmes for people over 40, and access examinations for people over 25 and people over 45 (Vale, 2019; BOE, 2006).

- Languages can be certified in Official Language Schools. Individuals can undertake an exam and have a certification on a given language. The levels accredited are the same as in the European Framework of Languages.

There are several national strategies that address skills. The national VET system is based on a strategic plan that includes the development and weighting of a set of skills. Official bodies and other ministries also have strategies that include skills. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training does not have Individual Learning Accounts. These only exist in the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy. No data has been found on this.

Validation policies are connected to several areas through programmes and initiatives.

The **Plan de Retorno a España** encourages Spanish individuals living abroad to return live and work in Spain. It also applies to individuals who have Spanish residency or nationality. This plan is managed by the State Secretary of Migrations and the National Employment Service (SEPE). The Plan offers support to individuals so that they can build a professional project, it helps them plan their return and offers psychological support. In the third sector, the programme 'Reconoce' helps young people validate the competences acquired through volunteering. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training aims to certify the competences of 3 million individuals.

The following websites help candidates navigate the Spanish system of validation of professional competences and informal and non-formal learning:

- Todofp.es is the website of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training. It offers a detailed explanation of the validation process for VET and includes the platform 'Acredita': <https://www.todofp.es/acreditacion-de-competencias.html>
- The Accreditation Registry (RECEX), (SEPE, 2013). Registry of professional competences and certifications. <https://sede.sepe.gob.es/portalSede/procedimientos-y-servicios/personas/formacion/recex-index/recex-participar/recex-acreditacionProc>
- The National Registry of VET centres and their training offer: <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/catalogo/profesorado/profesorado-no-universitario/registro-actividades-formacion.html>
- Database of National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (CNCP) <https://incual.educacion.gob.es/busqueda-de-cualificaciones>

The stages to validate professional experience and informal and non-formal learning are the presentation of the required documentation, counselling, assessment of the documentation, accreditation and registry. The latter includes a training plan offered to the candidate (Ministerio de Educación y Formación profesional 2021).

1. **The individual applies for validation.** The candidate presents the required documentation to the competent authorities in the Autonomous Communities.
2. **The competent authority revises the documentation provided by the candidate** (professional and academic history) and evaluates the candidate's professional competences. Then, the assessor drafts a guiding report to **advise** the candidate on the next steps the candidate can take.

3. **Evaluation.** The evaluator conducts a detailed evaluation of the documentation presented. The candidate is asked to demonstrate the professional competences that have not been sufficiently proven in the documentation.
4. **Certification/accreditation and register.** If the candidate succeeds in the evaluation, she or he receives an accreditation that can be used nationally. The accreditation refers to each of the competence units that correspond to one or several demonstrated professional qualifications.
5. **Training plan.** Candidates receive a training plan drafted by the evaluation commission on supplementary training that they can take to obtain an Official diploma on VET or a Professionalisation Certificate².

All the validation procedures described above involve an official recognition of competences, approved by the Spanish government or regional authorities. National and regional organisations are authorised to accredit some key competences such as ICT (e.g., ACTIC) or foreign languages (language academies accredit different levels according to the European Languages Framework). Beyond this, private sector stakeholders cannot develop or implement official recognition procedures. However, social agents can request that national or regional labour authorities issue calls for recognition procedures that respond to the needs of certain companies, sectors, or groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market. It is also not possible for **third sector stakeholders** to develop official recognition procedures. However, there have been some initiatives which involve the development of non-official procedures, such as the 'Reconoce' project. This addresses young workers and students.

Validation procedures are part of measures **to upskill and reskill adults** with a low level of skills. The Resolution of the 23 December 2021 (BOE, 2021) addresses the reskilling and upskilling of the active population in the Component 20 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Resolution is particularly directed to strategic sectors and workers living in areas at risk of depopulation. The action has a budget of 87,741,699.74 euros. Small and medium size business and workers with a low level of education are targeted. The sectors concerned are new ICTs, automatised machines and tools and robotics, aeronautical equipment, modern railway transport equipment, energy-based vehicles and new equipment, agricultural machinery, new materials, biopharma and advanced medical products, consumption chain manufacturers, tourism and the hospitality industry, and care services.

Box 3.1 In the Recovery and Resilience Plan

Component 20 of the Plan addresses VET. This measure aims to balance the population's levels of training and the qualification needs of the labour market. It also links VET to lifelong learning. It addresses equality between women and men and the pay gap.

In the measure C 20.1 the Government aims to certificate the competences of 3 million people through 2,075.965 million euros in 3 years. This is also in the 2021 Strategic Plan. The measure aims to train 375,000 workers in digital skills and open 2,250 'Aulas Mentor'. In addition, educators will be trained in digitalisation and sustainability. VET will increase its offer in 56 new degrees and 80% of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications will be updated.

There are no new published Employment policy plans since 2019 (Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, 2015).

Skills audits exist for everyone who wants to validate their competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning and through professional experience as stated in the Royal Decree 1224/2009. Nonetheless, the time limit to ask for a skills

² Título Oficial de Formación Profesional, Certificado de Profesionalidad.

audit is six months. Skills audits are open for unemployed individuals, migrants and refugees who have regularised their situation in Spain. The skills audits are conducted by national or regional authorities and cover the skills in the National Catalogue of Competences.

Data on participation is collected through the Registry of formal accreditation. Data is also collected in the certification of degrees, professional certificates, and other types of degrees.

3.2 Validation in education and training

The Spanish Government regulates the procedures of the national system of validation that are implemented by the Autonomous Communities. The national system of validation covers secondary education for adults, VET, and university education, through different procedures.

For informal and non-formal learning, the validation procedure is processed with the assistance of the 'Acredita' platform, where individuals can assess their skills and know more about the competences they can certify and the outcomes of validation in terms of further training and employability. The main validation procedures in education and training include:

- Compulsory secondary education: the education system provides several procedures of validation of prior learning including exams convened to enable people to obtain the Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education diploma. This diploma gives access to upper secondary education (Vale, 2019).
- Upper secondary education (*Bachillerato*): education authorities organise exams to enable people to obtain the *Bachillerato* diploma. This diploma gives access to the first level of higher education (higher VET and university programmes) (Vale, 2019)
- VET (Vale, 2019):
 - Initial VET only:
 - Exams to enable people to obtain VET diplomas at secondary and higher level.
 - Admission exams to enter VET programmes for those who do not meet the regular entrance academic requirements.
 - Initial and continuing VET: Exemptions for (part of) VET programmes are possible by means of validation of competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning.
- University studies (Vale, 2019):
 - Admission procedures for adults: universities organise admission exams for adults (there are two different types: one for candidates aged over 25 and one for candidates over 45 years old). For those aged over 40, it is also possible to access university with accredited professional experience.
 - Recognition of work experience, or other informal and non-formal learning, as credits towards a degree (bachelor's degree or master's degree). Work experience must be related to the competences inherent to the degree and the number of credits that are subject to validation cannot exceed 15% of the total number of credits that constitute the curriculum (Vale, 2019).

The following table presents to what extent the four stages of validation (identification, documentation, assessment, and certification) are included in the national validation arrangements. The examinations to obtain diplomas in secondary education and VET include an assessment (the exam) followed by certification. The recognition of

professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning leading to a partial IVET diploma or an occupational certificate, covers all four validation stages. The stages 'identification' and 'documentation' are subsumed under one stage called 'counselling'. The admission exams to VET programmes consist of an assessment and a certification phase: participants can request a document attesting their results if they wish so (Vale, 2019).

University admission exams for adults consist of an assessment and a certification phase. The recognition of professional experience for university admission includes a documentation, an assessment, and a certification phase. In these two procedures, participants receive a document attesting their results. The recognition of experience – or other informal and non-formal learning - as credits towards a university degree, includes documentation, assessment, and certification (of a certain number of credits).

Table 3.1 Coverage of the validation stages

Procedure	Stages of validation			
	Identification	Documentation	Assessment	Certification
Examinations to obtain diplomas: Compulsory Secondary Education Upper secondary education (Bachillerato) Initial VET diplomas			X	X
Recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning (IVET and occupational certificates)	X	X	X	X
Admission exams to enter VET programmes for those who do not meet the regular entrance academic requirements			X	X
University admission procedures for adults: admission exams			X	X
University admission procedures for adults: recognition of professional experience		X	X	X
Recognition of work experience (or other informal and non-formal learning) as credits towards a university degree		X	X	X

Data taken from Section 2 of this report.

There are no policies targeting specific groups, however, women are particularly concerned (particularly 40-50 years old women) as well as long-term unemployed people. The Government is funding grants to upskill and reskill the workforce in the Autonomous Communities, particularly the workforce who was left out of a job because the industry they were working in does not exist anymore or is automatised.

The **Procesos Aula-Mentor** is implemented in territories in which there is no training offer. They are implemented with or without professional guidance.

Autonomous communities updated their legislation between 2019 and 2022 following recent national level updated on validation. In 2019, the Canary Islands passed a law on validation and in 2020 the Balearic Islands, and Catalonia followed. In 2021 Aragon, the Basque Country, Cantabria, Castille-la Mancha, Extremadura, and Galicia updated it. In 2022, Andalusia, Asturias, and Castille Leon passed new laws.

Even if the procedures are permanently open, the Autonomous Communities have issued calls for the recognition of professional competences in different sectors in recent years (Vale, 2019). Validation procedures for non-formal and informal learning involve both education and employment authorities. For other purposes, the procedures are implemented only by education authorities or universities.

The procedure for the recognition of competences leading to partial IVET diplomas and occupational certificates covers any type of prior learning. Learning outcomes are assessed against the standards established regardless of how they were acquired (non-formal or informal learning, open educational resources).

3.3 Validation and the labour market

The main validation arrangement in place to help people access the labour market or to support their career development is the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning. There is a common procedure leading to either micro-trainings/micro-credentials and occupational certificates or IVET diplomas in the Royal Decree 143/2021 (see above). Education authorities keep the process for the recognition of professional competences open. Private sector stakeholders cannot develop or implement official recognition procedures.

Nonetheless, the private sector can request national or regional labour authorities to publish public calls to respond to the needs of companies located in their regions or to industries or sectors important for their economies. In short, companies discuss their skills needs and through business associations, they ask the regional governments to open calls to validate specific skills. This usually happens after the national government introduces a new skill in the National Catalogue or after a law passes requiring employees of a certain sector to hold a certificate. These situations are rare but seem to be effective in encouraging employees and other individuals to validate their skills. They can also request public calls to respond to the needs of groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market (Vale, 2019). However, this is not a common practice because the process is permanently open. Some examples of calls for validation that have been requested by the private sector, trade unions or chambers of commerce, are presented below:

- The Spanish Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation is receiving grants to inform, advice and help individuals validate and certify their professional competences. This is regulated by law (BOE, 2022).
- The Department of Education, Culture, Sport of the Government of Aragon, the Confederation of entrepreneurs in Aragon and the Association of Lift companies of Aragon issued a call to certify the professional competences of workers who conduct tasks related to the installation and maintenance of lifts and other equipment and transportation in this sector (Boletín Oficial de Aragón, 2020).
- The Government of Aragon and the Spanish Ministry of Defence issued a call to certify the professional competences of employees working for the Spanish Army through the Employment Office of Aragon in this region (Boletín Oficial de Aragón, 2023). This is funded by the Next Generation EU funds.
- In Aragon, other two calls were issued to certify the professional competences acquired through experience in the Electromedicine sector and the healthcare

sector (Boletín Oficial de Aragón, 2021). It is funded by the Next Generation EU funds.

- The Government of Castilla-Leon published a call directed to forest rangers to certify their competences acquired through professional experience (Boletín Oficial de Castilla y León, 2022).

Collective labour agreements do not often address the recognition of professional competences (Carro, 2016; Cano, 2010). Sometimes, these calls respond to national rules requiring employees of a certain sector to have an official certification to be able to work. These rules can be introduced by European level recommendations. As an example, the Royal Decree 932/2020 of 27 October establishes the professional qualification of the Security and Environment sector and includes it in the National Qualification Framework. This corresponds to the call mentioned above on forests' rangers. The Order 1216/2019 of 11 December creates the VET degree of Clinical Electromedicine and a call to certify these skills is open later (see above) (BOE, 2019). The initiative promoted by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation responds to the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan.

Recognition procedures are funded by national and regional public authorities. Participants pay an administrative fee in most regions. Local administrations, social agents, chambers of commerce and other public and private entities can provide information and guidance of the validation procedures, they can also promote and encourage workers to certify their own competences. They can be funded by the EU, as it is the case with initiatives funded within the Recovery and Resilience Plans (see below). There is an example of a partnership between the Spanish Government and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation through EU funding to promote the accreditation of competences acquired through professional experience:

Box 3.2 Funded by the Recovery and Resilience Plan

The Spanish Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation's call to certify the acquired professional competences of workers in these sectors is funded by the Chamber with grants managed by the Spanish Government. The Chamber of Commerce cannot certify these competences, but the grants allow it to promote the accreditation and inform the employees of this process. The grants managed by the Government are also part of the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plans and therefore, funded by the European Union.

UpSkill Spain is a project launched by Spanish companies that aims to enhance individuals' digital skills in their companies. The project provides training and the necessary digital tools. The objective is to improve employability and competitiveness of Spanish businesses. The project targets new talents already focused on digitalisation and the reskilling and upskilling of employees (Upskills Spain, 2022).

Certification of competences also contributes to create quality jobs and a qualified workforce. The outcomes of validation in the private sector can be used in the education sector because only regional and national public authorities can certify competences according to The Royal Decree 143/2021. The procedure is the same as with other competences as well as the actors involved: education and employment public stakeholders at regional and national level. This includes the identification, documentation, assessment, and certification phases described above.

3.4 Validation and the third sector

Certification of competences is directed, among others, to individuals who acquired professional competences through volunteer work or as interns (VNFIL Country Report Spain, 2020). The Organic Law 3/2022 includes volunteering work inside informal learning (BOE, 2022). The law encourages the collaboration and participation of third sector entities dedicated to job placement.

There are some validation initiatives developed by the third sector in the fields of youth and volunteering.

- The Spanish Law on Volunteering (BOE, 2015) establishes that all organisations are responsible for providing accreditation for activities where young people and volunteers are involved. The aim is to give value to the skills acquired in volunteering, and to acknowledge the value of transversal skills (Vale, 2019).
- Civil organisations, such as the Spanish Red Cross, Caritas, or NGOs for social development organised initiatives to validate the transversal competences of volunteers. The 'Reconoce' project, initially developed by a consortium of three youth organisations, has now evolved to a national level project.

Box 3.3 The Reconoce project

In 2015, a study on validation of competences acquired through volunteering was published, entitled Reconoce. The Confederación de Centros Juveniles Don Bosco [Federation of Youth Centres Don Bosco] (2015) led a network of organisations to promote the recognition of competences acquired through volunteering to improve the employability of young people. The competences assessment is conducted by the entities that form Reconoce, and INJUVE, the national institute for youth. Throughout this project, the network has an online system for accreditation of volunteering. The project has managed 4,578 applications and has 381 evaluators. The certification is done through an app in which the candidate conducts a self-evaluation on his or her competences. The evaluator also assesses the competences of the candidate, and the Audit Team compares the two evaluations and provides a certificate in case of a positive outcome. For this, the candidate has to be a volunteer in an organisation recognised by the project. In addition, to become an evaluator individuals need to fulfil specific requisites, such as a minimum of three years of experience in the volunteering entity. The project is funded mainly by the public administration through INJUVE. It is also part of the Audit Team.

In 2017, a new recognition system for non-formal education, based on the project Reconoce, was approved by the INJUVE and the youth departments of the Autonomous Communities (BOE, 2018). This is presented as a unique system covering the entire youth sector in the country and was fully implemented in 2019 (Vale, 2019). The project Reconoce leads this agreement. The system includes a tracking, surveillance, and control mechanism. For this, the public authorities establish a Monitoring Commission that oversees that the agreement between INJUVE and Reconoce is respected. The agreement is expected to last until 2023.

An example of the National Employment Service's collaboration with the third sector to certify competences acquired through professional experience is the TANDEM Project:

Box 3.4 The TANDEM Project (BOE, 2021)

The TANDEM project is included in the Spanish Recovery and Resilience Plan. The programme is managed by the National Employment Service (SEPE) and offers grants to entities belonging to the third sector. The programme is directed to young people who do not have any qualifications. The project can be operated by public authorities or entities of the third sector. Individuals receive a certificate once their participation in the project is over. The competences or qualification acquired is certified as stated in Organic Law 3/2022. As a result, participants can request a certificate of professionalisation to the competent authorities.

4 Links to credentials and qualifications

The Spanish national qualifications framework aims to boost international mobility and recognition of qualifications in the European Education Area. The Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Lifelong Learning (MECU) covers compulsory education, CVET and IVET, arts-related education, sport education and higher education. It is based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) but there are still some levels that have no equivalence with the EQF yet. The MECU does not include informal and non-formal learning although the Royal Decree (BOE, 2022) contains plans to include it. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training is currently working on the referencing for non-formal and informal learning. The MECU does, however, include the learning outcomes, procedures and certifications that can be obtained with each level.

Validation is integrated within the qualification system and allows individuals to progress and access different levels and types of education. Credentials obtained through validation can be combined to obtain a qualification on the NQF according to the Organic Law 3/2022 (BOE, 2022).

Learning acquired through non-formal and informal means can already be used to acquire qualifications or gain access to learning provisions which will be linked to the framework. This is done through the validation procedures (Vale, 2019). The outcomes of each validation procedure are presented in the following table.

Table 4.1 Outcomes can be achieved through the validation of non-formal and informal learning

Procedure	Outcomes
Examinations to obtain diplomas: Compulsory Secondary Education Upper secondary education (Bachillerato) Initial VET diplomas	Award of full or partial formal qualification
Recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning (IVET diplomas and occupational certificates)	Award of full or partial formal qualification. Award of competence units. Each unit is part of a VET degree (IVET) or an Occupation certificate degree (CVET).
Admission exams to VET programmes for those who do not meet the regular entrance academic requirements	Access to formal programmes. Document attesting the results of the procedure.
University admission procedures for adults: admission exams	Access to formal programmes. Document attesting the results of the procedure.

Procedure	Outcomes
University admission procedures for adults (over 40 years old): recognition of professional experience	<p>Access to formal programmes related to the professional experience.</p> <p>Document attesting the professional experience, the university decides the years of experience the individual needs to have.</p>
Recognition of work experience – or other informal and non-formal learning - as credits towards university degree	Award of credits (ECTS) if the experience is related to the competences in the higher education degree.

Source: ICF based on the legislation discussed in section 2 of this report.

In the case of the examinations to obtain diplomas and the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning, the certificates for the full qualification awarded through validation are the same as those acquired after completing the corresponding training programme (Vale, 2019). The standards of validation and the learning outcomes are the same as in formal education. The value of the competences is the same in the labour market.

Credit systems and unit-based structures

In university education, validation leads to the award of credits. The Royal Decree 1125/2003 established the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Royal Decree 861/2010 establishes the recognition of work experience through up to 15% of the credits of a university degree (bachelor or master) (Vale, 2019; BOE, 2010).

In VET, validation is linked to a unit-based structure, including in the case of upper-level VET programmes (ISCED 5B) which are aligned with the Bologna process and are ECTS-compatible. Official certification of the evaluated competences in the validation process is obtained through a partial and accumulative accreditation. Competence units may be accumulated and transferred, and lead to the achievement of occupational certificates and IVET diplomas. The Organic Law 3/2022 promotes the recognition of ECTS credits between VET education and higher education to ease mobility between these educational levels.

This unit-based system is compatible with the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) principles and technical specifications. ECVET credit points are not used in the country.

Modularisation

Partial qualifications and modularisations are established in the Organic Law 3/2022 (BOE, 2022). Vocational Training is divided into “micro-trainings” (micro-formaciones). As above explained, the micro-trainings are at the same time divided into sublevels. Micro-trainings go from Grade A to Grade E:

- Grade A is the smallest grade and refers to a partial accreditation of competence. It belongs to CVET and is aimed at employed and unemployed people. A partial accreditation of a competence can include one or more competence elements of a professional module found in the Modular Catalogue of Vocational Training, linked to the National Catalogue of Standards of Professional Competences. Passing all partial accreditations of competences of a module enables the

obtention of the corresponding certificate of professional competence, that is, Grade B.

- Grade B refers to Competence Certificates aimed at employed and unemployed people and is part of CVET. Grade B can be composed by Grade A trainings. Passing a Grade B module enables the individual to obtain a Certificate of Competence.
- Grade C trainings are Occupation certificates and can be composed by Grade B trainings. It is equally aimed at unemployed and employed individuals. Grade C is the equivalent of a Vocational Certificate.
- Grade A, mainly, B and C (in some cases) are formed by micro-credentials. When combined, they may, with conditions, result in Grade D trainings that belong to IVET training cycles of basic, intermediate and advanced degrees. These trainings are aimed at students.
- Grade E is accessible from Grade D and refers to specialised IVET courses aimed at graduates.

There is not a maximum number of modules for a qualification that can be obtained through validation. Validation is obtained proving that the competences have been acquired through the above-mentioned procedure of documentation, advice, assessment, and certification.

The goal of this new system is to establish smaller actions inside bigger actions. Micro-trainings are automatically recognised in the system and therefore, are structural. This means that individuals do not need to validate them.

Micro credentials form the smallest degrees (A, B and C degrees) and are structural in education. Micro credentials can be used to attain Grade A B or C certifications.

In the Centres for Adult Education (Centros de educación para personas adultas) there are some initiatives that involve non-formal learning. These initiatives involve the acquisition of basic competences, preparation to official exams, and learning of foreign languages. In VET, students need to validate their non-formal and/or informal learning before starting a VET course. Once the competences validated, they can study the remaining courses to obtain an official VET degree. VET students can only do this before starting the course. This also applies to the learning of languages. A VET student may learn a foreign language by his or her own and certify it passing an exam in the Official School of Languages. The student then does not need to take language related courses in VET.

5 Standards

The following table presents the standards used in the main types of validation procedures and how they compare to standards used for qualifications in the formal education system (Vale, 2019). Standards used in validation procedures are now more similar to standards in formal education than in 2019. The INCUAL and the Ministry of Education and VET are willing to improve the similarities. Nonetheless, there is still work to do in this aspect.

Table 5.1 Standards used in the main validation procedures

Procedure	Outcomes	Comparison to standards in formal education system
Examinations to obtain diplomas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compulsory Secondary Education ■ Upper secondary education (<i>Bachillerato</i>) ■ Initial VET diplomas 	Educational standards: learning outcomes.	Same standards.

Procedure	Outcomes	Comparison to standards in formal education system
Recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning (IVET and occupational certificates).	Occupational units established in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications included in VET degrees and/or Professional Certifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different from those in IVET. The occupational standards are the same but IVET programmes go beyond this (e.g. more content on the theoretical foundations, students' personal development, etc.) ■ Very similar to standards in the occupational certificates. They have the same market value.
Admission exams to VET programmes for those who do not meet the regular entrance academic requirements.	Educational standards	Standards are similar to those used in the process of general admission but just a part of them are applied: those that guarantee that the individual may successfully complete the VET programme.
University admission procedures for adults: admission exams.	Educational standards.	Different to the standards used in the general access procedures which are based on the learning outcomes of upper secondary education. Only part of such outcomes are assessed in the case of adults.
University admission procedures for adults: recognition of professional experience.	Each university determines the standards to be used.	Each university determines the standards to be used.
Recognition of work experience as credits towards university degree.	Each university determines the standards to be used.	Each university determines the standards to be used.

Source: ICF based on the legislation discussed in section 2 of this report and interview.

Occupational standards used in the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning are those included in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications, in the future, National Catalog of Competency Standards. This Catalogue, established by the Spanish Government in 2003, is a key instrument in the assessment and certification of professional competences. It will be replaced in 2023 by the National Catalog of Competency Standards, which will include all the existing standards in the current 2003.

The catalogue consists of 26 professional families (INCUAL, 2022) that cover all the economic sectors. Evidence guides for assessment of professional competences were created with the list of competence units in each occupation. These guides aim to support assessors and evaluators involved in assessment procedures but are of voluntary use (Vale, 2019).

The reference points for validation are competence units used for both VET diplomas and occupational certificates. For the purposes of the recognition of these competences, the evaluation looks at the 'professional performance (*realizaciones profesionales*), performance criteria (*criterios de realización*), unit of competence

(unidad de competencia) and the professional context outlined in each of them' (Alonso, 2010 cited in Vale, 2019).

The competences acquired by students in some non-formal or informal contexts (such as through volunteering) are included in the expected learning outcomes of formal education in the National Catalogue of Competences. The Catalogue was drafted by the General Council of Vocational Education and Training (Consejo General de Formación Profesional) with the participation of the National administration, the authorities of the Autonomous Communities, business associations and trade unions. Validation procedures and standards seem to gather positive opinions from the population.

Validation initiatives are changing with the introduction of the “micro-training” degrees and “micro-credentials”. Validation is now structural and micro-trainings are automatically recognised by the system. These include a new scale of competences. Learning outcomes are already included in the Catalogue. Nonetheless, individuals need to validate their competences if they aim to access a specific educational level (see Section 2).

6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

Official validation procedures are developed and implemented by national and regional public authorities and, where relevant, universities. The procedures involving examinations to obtain diplomas and those referring to university education are under the responsibility of educational authorities and, where relevant, universities. The recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning is the responsibility of both education and employment authorities at national and regional levels. In this aspect, there are no changes since 2019.

Regarding the latter, the Inter-ministerial Commission is the competent body for the coordination and scope of agreements, and for the follow up and assessment of the process (BOE, 2011). The National Institute of Professional Qualifications (The National Institute of Professional Qualifications, *Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones* – INCUAL) is responsible for updating the national catalogue of qualifications and giving support to the procedure of validation. The coordination of the guides of evidence to assess the professional competences is the result of the organisation of teams of professionals (assessors and evaluators) in all professional sectors (Vale, 2019). The team is formed by national authorities and has the participation of business associations and trade unions. There is a strong will to include stakeholders in the processes: CEOE and CEPYME (business associations), UGT (trade unions) and SEPE (National Employment Service).

In each Autonomous Community, there is a regional authority responsible for the process of validation of professional competences. The nature of each entity can vary depending on the regional structure. In the table below, a summary is presented of the entities responsible for validation in each Autonomous Community ('E' stands for education authorities while 'W' for employment authorities). Some of these entities changed their original names since they were founded.

Table 6.1 Regional authorities responsible for the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning (IVET and occupational certificates)

	Government	Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones	E (1999)
1	Andalusia	Instituto Andaluz de Cualificaciones Profesionales	E (2003)
2	Aragon	Agencia de las Cualificaciones Profesionales de Aragón	E (2005)
3	Asturias	Educastur. Acreditación de competencias profesionales	E, W (2021)

4	Balearic Islands	Institut de les Qualificacions Professionals	W (2005)
5	Canarias	Instituto Canario de las Cualificaciones Profesionales	W (2003)
6	Cantabria	Unidad Técnica de Evaluación y Acreditación	W (2006)
7	Castile and Leon	Servicio de las Cualificación Profesional y Aprendizaje Permanente	E (2022) ³
8	Castile-la Mancha	Servicio de Cualificaciones de Castilla-La Mancha	W (2003)
9	Catalonia	Agència Pública de Formació i Qualificació Professionals de Catalunya	W (2021)
10	Comunitat Valenciana	Servicio de Gestión de la Formación y Cualificación Profesional	E (2001)
11	Extremadura	Instituto Extremeño de las Cualificaciones y Acreditaciones	W (2008)
12	Galicia	Instituto Galego das Cualificacións	W (1999)
13	Madrid	Área de Cualificaciones y Certificación de la Competencia	W (2006)
14	Murcia	Instituto de las Cualificaciones de la Región de Murcia	E (2007)
15	Navarra	Instituto Navarro de Cualificaciones	E (2002)
16	Basque Country	Instituto Vasco del Conocimiento de la Formación Profesional	E (1988)
17	Rioja	Departamento de Cualificaciones de la Rioja	W (2008)

Source: Carro, 2016; Vale, 2019

The regional validation authorities are responsible for performance in relation to the agreement on validation approved by the Regional Council of VET, created in each region as a counsellor body and participation entity of social agents for the training of both initial and continuous VET. This committee is responsible for proposing the numbers sectors where there is thought to be a greater need for validation, according to national recommendations and the economic reports (Vale, 2019).

There are several bodies that provide guidance and information of validation processes as well as lifelong learning and career services, education and training and social and employment services at national level (see Section 6).

To obtain validation, an individuals should have the Spanish nationality or be a resident in the country. An individual citizen of the European Union can also have access to the process. The individual should be 18 years old at least.

- If the candidate wants to validate professional experience, they need to have at least 3 years and a minimum of 2,000 working hours in total during the last 10 years. For competence units 1 (basic VET), two years of experience and a minimum of 1,200 hours worked are enough.
- If the individual wants to validate training, he or she needs to have training of 300 hours in the last 10 years. For basic VET, 200 hours are accepted.

The simplification of the procedure and the fact that it can be requested online, encourage provider's motivation to certify individuals' competences. In addition, the validation of competences creates a better qualified workforce and therefore, quality jobs. Since the process is devolved in Spain, regions can also address their economic challenges and labour shortage in a tailored manner.

³ The Castille la Macha authority was established in 2022 in the ORDEN EDU/576/2022, de 27 de mayo, por la que se desarrolla la estructura orgánica de los servicios centrales de la Consejería de Educación.

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

7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising

Validation is promoted in the Autonomous Communities through communications campaigns on TV, radio, and social media. It is also promoted on online platforms dealing with education and in the Official Gazettes. They address the general population. Additionally, awareness-raising campaigns are conducted at regional level:

- Madrid launched a communications campaign in 2021 to encourage workers to certify their professional competences. The campaign included ads in the streets (Comunidad de Madrid, 2021).
- In 2021, the Department of Education of the Government of Navarra launched a communications campaign called “Aprovecha tu experiencia” that translates as “take advantage of your experience” to encourage people with no education diplomas to certify their professional experience (20 minutos, 2021). The campaign was reported in newspapers and in online media.
- In 2022, La Rioja introduced a communications campaign in the radio and on social media to create awareness on the validation processes and to inform people on where they can start the process (La Rioja Government, 2022).

Historically, in Spain, there has not been sufficient awareness-raising of qualifications among low-skilled workers, nor among skilled workers. In the years of quick economic growth – before the 2008 crisis -, some people were not concerned about qualifications and did not understand that qualifications are important for employment (Vale, 2019). Nonetheless, the situation seems to be changing in the last years. The communication campaigns are mostly addressed to employed individuals who do not have any educational diplomas.

The official sources provided by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training and the Ministry of Work, Migrations and Social Security, both of which, using their websites, keep all the information updated regarding the validation of new competences, provide different tools on self-assessment and self-guidance and can be contacted with enquiries. In addition, autonomous regions provide information on their own websites. The Autonomous Communities are also obliged to advertise their specific calls publicly, through their regional Official Gazette and all administrations must fulfil an evaluation and follow-up function together with statistical compilation (Vale, 2019).

Each regional authority is responsible for promoting and disseminating information about validation opportunities. They usually use the official website and some flyers and posters to recruit people when they open calls for new competences. They also organise press conferences to announce new proposals when the agreement of the regional committee of VET has been approved. Trade Unions or business associations are also involved in the dissemination of validation opportunities (Vale, 2019).

No information has been found on measures in place to improve awareness of validation amongst relevant practitioners, or specific approaches to reach out to individuals who are less likely to be aware of validation opportunities. Communication campaigns seem to target a general public. Nonetheless, measures concerning guidance and information are being taken. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training is currently hiring and publishing tenders together with the Spanish Chamber of Commerce to disseminate and promote these procedures among companies associated to the Chamber. These companies will promote

validation procedures among their employees. The Autonomous Communities are doing the same with regional chambers of commerce.

7.2 Information, advice and guidance

Individuals can be informed about the different validation procedures in the following organisations:

- Centres for Adult Education
- Guidance Departments in Secondary and VET Schools (one of the main points of contact for information and guidance)
- Integrated Vocational Training Centres (one of the main points of contact for information and guidance)
- Centres of the public employment service (national and regional)
- Municipalities
- Chambers of Commerce
- Trade unions and business organisations
- Guidance departments in universities (with regards to university validation procedures)
- Website of INCUAL
- Other public and private entities.
- Website TodoFP Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Regarding the procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning, there are sources to help applicants to prepare their involvement in the process. The main tool is a document, developed by INCUAL, called the 'Handbook for validation candidates' updated in 2022. It presents essential information about the process. The handbook offers an overview of the phases of the validation process and offers guidelines to the candidate. INCUAL also updated in 2022 a guide on the general process, as well as guides for evaluators and counsellors. These documents can be downloaded from the INCUAL website free of charge and are addressed to the general population.

Local organisations of youth, women, young workers, immigrants, etc. are also offering information and guidance on validation procedures. The **Procesos Aula-Mentor** is a government programme implemented in territories in which there is no training offer. They are implemented with or without professional guidance. There is a particular focus on the digital skills of the population. As an example, the project "**Aulas de capacitación digital**" addresses the skill shortage in digitalisation and provides adults with digital skills. The Andalusian government has a programme called "**Preparadas**" that targets unemployed women and offers them training on digital skills.

Another interesting experience is the programme '**Incorpora**' managed by Fundación La Caixa (La Caixa Foundation, a social initiative developed by the third bank of Spain) and aims to develop activities for insertion into the labour market of people at risk of social exclusion. 'Incorpora' is a programme about labour intermediation. With this initiative, guidance practitioners give support to people with low incomes and promote the benefits of including this group of people in companies, as part of corporate social responsibility. There is a network of more than 700 centres (with their own guidance practitioners) involved with thousands of companies. This initiative promotes the recognition of transversal competences among people at risk (Vale, 2019).

Individuals can also contact INCUAL via email. The information is concise and easily accessible. Individuals can also contact their regional office of qualifications. Mentoring and counselling is available at the time of validation, the process includes an early advice stage (see Section 2).

No programmes could be found that follow up candidates after guidance interventions.

8 Validation practitioners

8.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In Spain, there are no specific professions relating to validation. In the procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning, validation practitioners (responsible for guidance and/or evaluation) are secondary level and/or VET teachers, trainers, or professional experts). The Royal Decree 659/2023 establishes that evaluators and counsellors who want to certify their professional competences acquired through experience should be:

- Vocational training teachers and vocational training trainers.
- Professionals who are experts in the productive sector and in the professional families in which the standards of competence subject to accreditation are included, who certify work experience in said sector of at least four years. These professionals must pass a specific training course organised or supervised by the competent administrations.

Relevant authorities organise compulsory training courses on the evaluation of specific competences. Additionally, regional authorities select the members of the commissions that evaluate different competences or specialties. These commissions are tailored according to the competences they evaluate. Each commission is formed by a minimum of five individuals accredited to evaluate and are composed of individuals from the training and the productive sectors.

Counsellors cannot participate as assessors/evaluators in the same call for validation. They provide advice to applicants and write a report for the evaluation committee where they present the competence units that the candidate claims to have and the suitability of the candidate to participate in the process. This report is not binding for the evaluation team. Counsellors and evaluators are paid after conducting this task.

In higher education (university programmes) there is no information on the profile of validation practitioners, beyond the fact that validation is carried out by higher education staff.

8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

The requirements for practitioners conducting evaluations in the context of examinations to obtain diplomas or access formal programmes are the same as those for any secondary teacher: a bachelor's degree in the corresponding field, and a master's degree in teacher education.

As stated above, there are several requirements concerning teaching experience and professional experience to become an evaluator and/or counsellor. It is mandatory to have four years of experience in the competence unit or qualification that is going to be evaluated. Depending on the background of the evaluator, this experience can be teaching experience or professional experience. Teachers that are involved in validation are usually secondary level teachers and VET teachers, that is, civil servants.

In the valuation commission, there must be both teachers and professionals with a background in the qualification that is going to be evaluated. The evaluators need to complete a training.

Qualifications and experience (new regulation RD 659/2023):

a) The vocational training teachers and vocational training trainers, who certify indiscriminately:

1. At least four years of teaching experience teaching professional modules of the professional family in which the accreditation process is framed.

2. At least two years of teaching experience teaching professional modules of the professional family in which the accreditation process is framed, and, at least, two years of work experience in the productive sector in which the object of accreditation is framed.

These professionals will be exempt from taking the specific training course, which will be purely voluntary and are considered ex officio qualified to carry out advisory and evaluation functions.

b) Professionals who are experts in the productive sector and in the professional families in which the standards of competence subject to accreditation are included, who certify work experience in said sector of at least four years. These professionals must pass a specific training course organized or supervised by the competent administrations.

The advice and evaluation of an applicant cannot be undertaken by a single person only

The method of training varies by region but follows INCUAL's guidelines and has the same information (INCUAL, 2016):

- The length of the courses for counsellors varies from 3 (for specific situations) to over 100 hours, via three methods of training: in person, online and blended learning. So far, 3,390 practitioners have completed this training.
- The length of the courses for assessors or evaluators varies from 8 to 80 hours, via four methods of training: in person, online and blended learning. So far, 10,121 practitioners have completed this training.

Some Autonomous Communities, such as Catalonia, develop a general training course of 50 hours, followed by 30 hours of specific training for assessors or evaluators, or 10 hours for counsellors.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding and costs

Validation procedures are funded by public budgets from the state budget and regional budgets. For the validation procedure for the recognition of professional competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning, the following stakeholders can fund the procedures to a certain extent: local administrators, social agents, chambers of commerce and other public and private entities.

In most regions candidates pay administrative fees. In some communities, unemployed individuals and victims of terrorism, handicapped individuals, individuals that have large families, victims of gender-based violence and vulnerable individuals, are exempted from paying the fee. The fees can range from 0 euros, to 36.

In 2020, the VET Secretary General provided a total of EUR 3,481,170 to Autonomous Communities to fund activities for the evaluation and accreditation of professional competences. The criteria followed for the distribution of these funds is the following:

- Number of jobseekers who do not have any studies that enable them to find a job.
- Number of jobseekers aged 30 and 64 years old.

- Territorial dispersion of public administrations.
- Dispersion of the active population.

The calculations for distribution of funds were done with data from the National Employment Service (SEPE), the National Institute for Statistics and own data from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training. The following table presents the distribution of funds to Autonomous Communities in 2020 (BOE, 2020):

Table 9.1 Distribution of funds to Autonomous Communities in 2020

Autonomous Communities	Content Evaluation (EUR)
Andalusia	823,085.18
Aragon	99,683.45
Asturias	70,919.24
Balearic Islands	105,568.65
Canarias	214,470.14
Cantabria	42,704.37
Castilla and Leon	214,438.75
Castilla - La Mancha	167.706,48
Cataluña	455.522,56
Valencian Community	408.223,45
Extremadura	99.846,74
Galicia	191.275,00
Madrid	411.475,95
Murcia	104.205,09
Navarra	45.683,68
Basque Country ⁴	0,00
La Rioja	26.361,27
TOTAL	3.481.170,00

Autonomous Communities conducted several actions from 1 September 2020 to 31 December 2021 regarding validation to adhere to the Royal Decree 143 of 2021. With the funding provided, Autonomous Communities organised trainings, promoted the process, opened the process permanently, developed digital apps and databases (the

⁴ Data from the Basque Country is not considered because of its special regime. These activities are funded directly by the Basque Country.

purchase of material is not included in the funding), implemented open and permanent headquarters to inform and register individuals.

The validation arrangements seem to be suitable for Spain. The calculations made seem to consider the main specificities of the Autonomous Communities. In 2019, the process was co-funded by the European Social Fund. However, the funding does not target specific sectors. The distribution of funds within the Autonomous Community is managed by the local/regional authorities.

In higher education, university validation procedures are covered by universities and fees are charged to participants (Vale, 2019).

The Resolution of 20 November 2020 contemplates the collection of information on validation procedures by Autonomous Communities. Nonetheless, no information has been found on these databases.

Some collective labour arrangements include validation of professional competences. However, it is rare and only a few include this. The ones that include validation procedures are usually in the construction sector, elderly care, pest control and healthcare because there are European regulations impacting these sectors. Tourism as an example, does not include validation in its labour agreements (Vale, 2019).

9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.2.1 Validation trends

Calls for validation are permanently open in most Autonomous Communities. In Cantabria, Castilla-la-Mancha, Murcia, and La Rioja there are still deadlines regarding the calls. From 2009 to 2021 there were 231 calls, and 266,646 individuals could submit their application to have their competences validated. No data could be found on how many individuals started and finished the validation process in the last 10 years.

For higher education, the validation of competences is conducted through exams for individuals older than 25 years old who did not pass a university access exam. The number of individuals who accessed university validating their knowledge acquired through non-formal means has increased in the last years.

Table 9.2 Validation trends

	Exam for 25 years-old+		Exam for 45 years-old+		Recognition of professional experience	
	Participants	Success rate	Participants	Success rate	Participants	Success rate
2018	15,640	56%	2,590	60%	1,089	72%
2019	14,793	57%	2,509	56%	706	52%
2020	14,108	59%	2,517	61%	638	52%
2021	15,578	57%	2,674	61%	735	53%

Data taken from the website of the Ministry of Higher Education, University statistics, statistics of the university admission exams

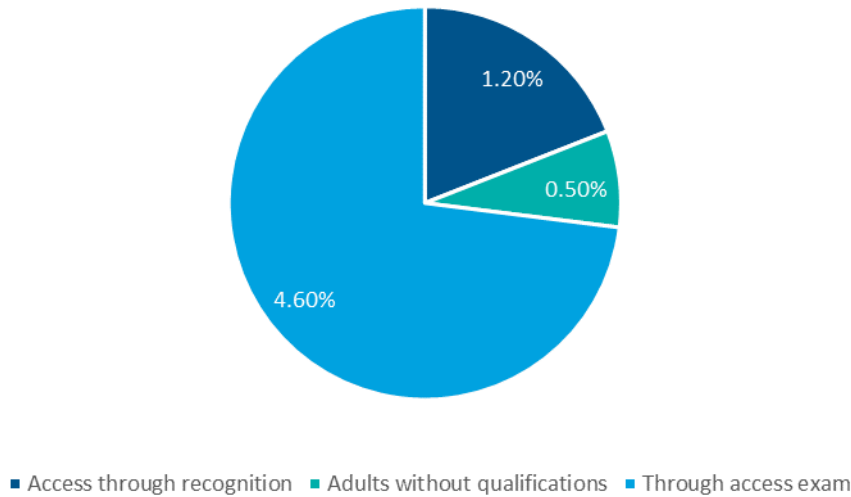
No data has been found on the recognition of professional experience as credits towards a university degree.

9.2.2 Validation users

No updated data on validation users and their characteristics has been found. Nonetheless, 1.20% of VET students accessed advanced VET through recognition of

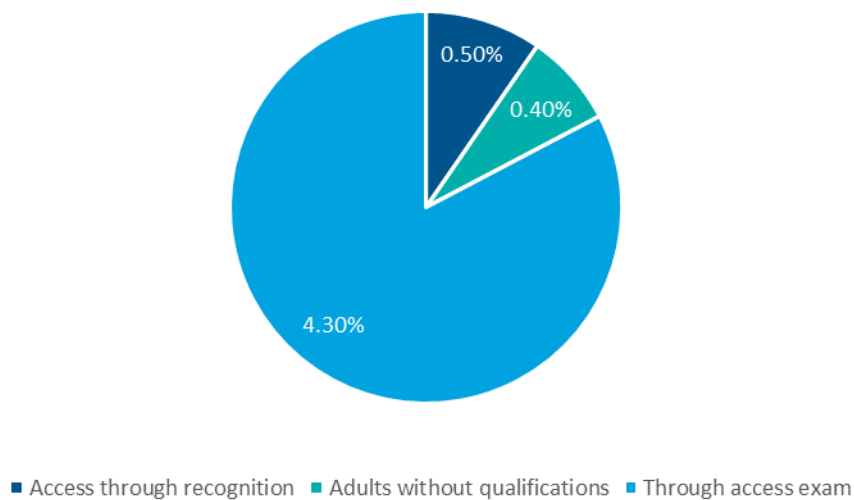
competences. 0.5% of Medium VET students accessed it through recognition of competences.

Figure 9.1 Percentage of Advanced VET degree new students and their way of access 2020-2021



Data taken from the Ministry of Education and VET statistics. Statistics of admission to Vocational Education and Training.

Figure 9.2 Percentage of Medium VET degree new students and their way of access 2020-2021



Data taken from the Ministry of Education and VET statistics. Statistics of admission to Vocational Education and Training.

9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

There are no validation initiatives addressing a specific disadvantaged group. However, all validation procedures follow equal opportunity and non-discrimination principles.

Validation targets unemployed adults and adults with low qualifications. 49% of the Spanish active population lack any formal qualification of their professional competences (VNFIL Country Report Spain, 2020). This is one of the reasons for the recent measures taken in validation. The recognition of professional competences

acquired through work experience and non-formal learning to obtain a partial VET diploma or occupational certificate is the most relevant procedure for this group of individuals.

Apart from unemployed people with low qualifications, the professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning is relevant for migrants as they are highly represented in the care sector (mainly females) and in the construction sector (mainly males). Nonetheless, no data has been found in the number of migrants working in these sectors and validating their competences. This may be because some of them may not have a job contract and/or official papers to access the validation process.

There is no available data on refugees as a group, but there is some data on displaced Ukrainians. There were 26,298 Ukrainian students that arrived because of the war in Spain in May 2022. Most of these are in Valencia (7,276), Catalonia (5,081) and Madrid (3,048). Most of the students arrived registered in secondary education and basic VET (22.2%), only a minority registered to study advanced VET (less than 0.5%). To start and complete the process of the recognition of professional competences, candidates need to demonstrate permanent residence in the country or have a work permit according to Article 11 of the Royal Decree 1224/2009 (BOE, 2009). Those with a recognised refugee status are entitled to a work permit, and so are people who have requested international protection, even if they have not yet received a response to their request. Also, the Spanish regulation in the field of refugees (Law 12/2009), includes the mandatory requirement to develop special training programmes for civil servants and workers to support this group of people. However, no further information has been found on whether this has been put into practice and whether it has covered workers in charge of validation procedures (Vale, 2019).

While there is not a nation-wide programme that supports refugees' access to higher education and the validation of their competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning, some Spanish universities have programmes that address this group of individuals. CRUE, the Conference of University Deans, issued a publication encouraging Spanish universities to welcome refugees in 2017. The Complutense University of Madrid has a programme for refugees to help them access university studies (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2022). The Autonomous University of Madrid has a set of actions to assist refugees, with a specific focus on refugees coming from the Sahara refugee camps (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2022). Other Spanish universities, such as the University of Huelva and the Autonomous University of Barcelona, assist refugees in their access to higher education.

The National Roma Integration Strategy 2021-2030 considers the fact that many Roma people work in street trade. The Strategy develops a set of initiatives to qualify street trade workers by including this profession in the Catalogue of Training Specialities. The goal is to recognise these individuals' professional experience. In addition, the Government will promote awareness-campaigns on street trade to show its economic and social value. The National public administration will follow-up Roma people that work in street trade to collect data and address the negative effects it has on the contribution to the pension system. The Plan also addresses the digital gap of the Roma community. It plans to include training on digital and green skills in the Catalogue of Training Specialities to promote these among the Roma community. Autonomous Communities are equally in charge of establishing specific measures to address employability of Roma people according to the specificities of their territory (Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030, 2021).

No data has been found regarding validation for people with disabilities. Nonetheless, they can participate to the usual procedures.

10 Validation methods

10.1 Methodologies and methods

Methods to validate and certify non-formal and informal learning depend on the outcome of the validation process and the type of learning that is being certified:

- To obtain a diploma without completing an education programme, validation procedure is based on examinations. Autonomous Communities can decide on additional methods depending on the competences that are being assessed. To access higher education, the procedure for adults is examinations. For adults over 45 years old, the procedure also includes an interview.
- Admission procedure to higher education based on professional experience contains a personal interview and a revision of the work experience to ensure this aligns with the degree individuals aim to study. Additional methods can be included depending on the university.
- Recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience and non-formal learning leading to IVET and occupational certificates includes several methods. Most methods include the following steps:
 - Review of the submitted documentation.
 - Self-evaluation test.
 - Delivery of guidelines on the candidate's suitability to continue the process.
 - In-person examinations and simulations to evaluate the competences.

In this process, the candidate must collect all their information on their professional experience and education background. This includes official job contracts that individuals working in the informal economy do not have. In addition, undocumented immigrants do not have access to this process even if they tend to work for sectors that encourage validation, such as construction and elderly care. Documents on the education background of candidates include official titles and/or occupational certificates. Non-formal training such as micro credentials can be included in the portfolio to be evaluated by the relevant authorities since they are structural and are validated. Professional experience and education background need to fulfil the requirements presented above in terms of minimum time. Training needs to be obtained from a recognised and official entity.

- Validation of training offers A, B and C degree. Successful completion of these trainings leads to partial accreditation of competence valid throughout the national territory. It is structural so there is no need for any validation procedure.

The main tools used during the procedure of validation of professional competences are the handbooks published by INCUAL and updated in 2022: the General Handbook of the Procedure, the Guide for the Candidate, the Guide for the Counsellor, and the Guide of the Evaluator. The Handbook and Guides offer information on the requisites to be a candidate, a counsellor, and an evaluator and about the development of the procedure as well as the development of each phase of the process.

No information has been found on the application of methods and how they target groups or sectors specifically.

10.2 Use of ICT in validation

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Education and Training has a platform on the webpage on accreditation of professional competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning. This site is called 'Acredita'. The platform provides individualised assistance to potential candidates. The candidate selects the

competences acquired through professional experience or through non-formal and informal learning and the platform offers the candidate possibilities to study further. The platform also informs the candidate how they can obtain an occupational certificate or IVET diploma with the competences they have. This offers the candidate an overview of the validation process and its outcomes in a personalised way.

Once the candidate's competences are registered, the data on accreditation is transferred to an online registry: Recex. Employment and education authorities have access to this platform. Equally, the process for validation is mainly done online. The documentation process is conducted in person in the competent authorities of the Autonomous Communities since the candidate needs an official signature from the mentioned authorities. The counselling, evaluation and certification phases are online. The process is managed online, and data is collected and monitored in the same way.

11 Quality assurance

11.1 Quality assurance processes

The procedure to validate and certify competences acquired through professional experience includes internal and external, national and regional mechanisms to ensure quality. Regional and national authorities validating these competences must have a quality plan prepared. The quality management systems implemented in the process are compliant with the objectives, outcomes, and principles of the system. In this system, the procedure is assessed as well as the people involved in it and services provided. The procedure is verified through internal assessments and external audits. The Law 3/2022 (BOE, 2022) foresees a cross-ministerial committee that assesses the implementation of the process as well as the realisation of its objectives. The committee oversees the publication of annual reports to propose future improvements. In addition, the General Council of Vocational Training organised a working group to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the procedure above-mentioned. Thirty-two recommendations were made, and they will be incorporated to the regulatory structure of the procedure and to future calls. The trainings that evaluators and counsellors attend include quality assurance content.

Quality assurance mechanisms are established by national authorities and managed by Autonomous Communities. The procedure to validate non-formal learning to obtain qualifications or to access different levels of the education system also includes quality assurance systems in their regulatory structure. In some cases, specific quality assurance committees are operating.

Quality assurance for procedures validating their competences or non-formal and informal learning in higher education is conducted in each university by their internal quality assurance mechanisms. Externally, it can be conducted by Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies that exist in each Autonomous Community.

No information has been found on the quality assurance mechanisms for the third sector or for the labour market on validation of competences.

11.2 Monitoring and evaluation

The validation procedures include monitoring and evaluation processes. Monitoring is carried out for each phase of the procedure. The monitoring process assesses a series of aspects (Vale, 2019):

- The adaptation of the process to its objectives.
- Transparency of the process and accessibility for citizens.
- Suitable number of mechanisms and tools for information and guidance.

- Alignment with the needs for accreditation in society. For this, data is collected from official records and sampling.
- Participation of the social stakeholders.
- Inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- Gender equality in the procedure.
- The implementation of information and guidance mechanisms to help candidates navigate and progress in the education system or in the access to employment for candidates accredited.

The evaluation of the process is equality important and is part of the monitoring process. Relevant authorities evaluate the monitoring reports in each process. The evaluation considers the following indicators (Vale, 2019):

- The number and characteristics of users requesting access to the validation procedures in terms of:
 - Age and gender.
 - Accredited prior training.
 - Employment situation and sector of employment.
 - Nationality.
 - Geographical scope and/or place of residence of candidates.
- Access to the procedure:
 - Tools used in the public call.
 - Promotion of the call.
 - Timeframe of the call.
 - Number of people who leave the process without finishing it.
 - Infrastructure, material and human resources used during the call.
- Outcome of the procedure:
 - Number of accredited candidates in terms of the above-stated criteria to access the process. This includes candidates who obtain the full accreditation and those who obtain cumulative partial accreditation.
 - Number of candidates accessing training paths to complement their accreditation or to continue their education path.
 - Number of candidates who access a job aligned with the competences accredited and the quality of the job in terms of working hours and schedule.
 - Economic indicators including public investments made in the procedure.

All Autonomous Communities conduct a survey to assess the satisfaction and experience of participants in validation procedures. However, no data has been found on these surveys.

12 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust

In Spain, historically, there is a strong belief that individuals should hold certificates that show their knowledge and competences. Exam-type validation procedures have a long tradition in the education and training sector. The recognition of professional experience is less well-known but thanks to communication and awareness campaigns as well as new requirements in certain sectors it is now more popular (Omedes, 2022).

According to the interviews conducted, stakeholders trust the outcomes of validation. Stakeholders such as trade unions and business organisations participated in the drafting of the new regulations. In society, the outcomes of validation appear to be widely accepted but no official data has been found. Chisvert-Tarazona et al. (2019) states that the socio-political context in Spain is favourable to the accreditation of competences. Nonetheless, there is a lack of expectations among the population that

hinders its implementation. The author believes that the accreditation of competences contributes to inclusion.

A benefit of validating competences is the improvement of individuals' working conditions according to the Employment and Qualification Spanish Association. These individuals are also more likely to be hired. AFOREN, the National Association of Employment Training, stated that validation increases individuals' self-esteem (Bosada, 2022). Most importantly, due to new regulations that impact some sectors, individuals who used to be able to work without any diploma now must certify their competences. This happened in the elderly care sectors and the education sector.

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13.2 Sources

- INCUAL
- Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional

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.

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