

European Inventory

on validation of informal and
non-formal learning



European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning ESTONIA

C3342 / December 2007

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Estonia is in the midst of a major transition process involving all sectors: policy, education, the labour market and third sector. The developments of the first decade following the restoration of independence have received considerable support from international cooperation: Estonia has joined the Bologna and Sorbonne conventions establishing a European Higher Education Area as well as the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region and has adopted the Recognition of Foreign Professional Qualifications Act. The national Professions Act setting the foundations for a qualification system in Estonia entered into force in January 2001.

In general, since 1992 Estonia has made constant progress in the gradual establishment and improvement of the education system and related legislation which were among the main priorities during the pre-accession negotiations, membership in the EU since May 2004 and post-membership developments. The legal framework was built up concurrently with changes in the subject matter, including the perceived need to take account of non-formal and informal learning. The recently adopted **Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy for the years 2005–2008** is the most comprehensive document so far concerning lifelong learning issues for adults. It sets out the principle that all strategic national, regional and local documents shall pay considerable attention to contributing to the development of the lifelong learning system, including the recognition of prior learning and work experience, the continuing improvement of the professional qualification system and the need to guarantee the quality and availability of training.

The **Universities Act** and **Applied Higher Education Institutions Act** now allows for accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) in HE curricula. Universities and higher education institutions are developing their internal regulations for implementing APEL, collecting useful information and trying to implement respective best practice. Improvements in vocational education are based on preparing curricula and training programmes according to the nationally developed occupational standards.

In Estonia, APEL is defined as 'Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning'. The Estonian approach is to develop a holistic approach for APEL. Projects such as Transfine and Refine led to a clear understanding that there is a need to assess formal, non-formal and informal learning as a whole set of competencies of a person who is looking for validation.

In the rapidly changing job market one could follow two slightly opposite trends: on the one hand, great attention is still paid to official qualifications / formal training, on the other hand, work experience may be valued more than a university degree. Requirements for professional qualifications are defined for many professions already but work lies ahead to integrate these within the education system and the labour market.

In the national policy agenda one can notice remarkable **trends and discussions** between universities, other educational institutions, the Ministry of Education, NGOs, social partners and employers in conferences and forums as well as in specific workgroups about the need to identify, assess and validate the competences and knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

2.0 PUBLIC SECTOR

Although some early initiatives were implemented by the private sector, legislation and **national policies** concerning various aspects of lifelong education and learning, especially regarding identification, assessment and validation of knowledge and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, **are fairly new** in Estonia. More visible developments at the national level of strategic planning started only in early 2000. For example, the Professions Act setting the foundations for a qualification system in Estonia entered into force in January 2001. The main strategic document – the Lifelong Learning Strategy started to be developed (by an expert workgroup formed by the Minister of Education) in 2001 and was approved only recently, in November 2005 (*Estonian lifelong learning strategy 2005–2008*).

2.1 Policy background

Among the first documents containing reference to lifelong learning for adults were the *National Priorities of Adult Education for 2004-2006* which were adopted by the Estonian Government and enforced as of July 2004. The *National Priorities* were developed and approved in parallel to the Lifelong learning strategy by a wide range of stakeholders, including social partners and the Adult Education Council. The experts formulated recommendations with respect to the national adult education priorities which included the development of the counselling system for adults, including career counselling and a study information database for adults; the development of the system for accreditation of prior and experiential learning and the development of a model for financing adult education, including changes to the taxation system to motivate employers to invest in training for their employees. Financial allocations were set in the State Budget Act accordingly.

Following the latter document, the Ministry of Education and Research and the National Adult Education Council developed a *National adult education development plan for 2005-2008*. One of the chapters of this development plan also directly dealt with the national initiatives for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning and the development of the national regulations and system for APEL guidance and counselling.

By the year 2007, the following legal framework covering various aspects of lifelong learning, including validation of non-formal and informal learning was approved at state level: *the Development Plan for the General Education System 2007–2013* (approved in 2007), *the Development Plan for the Estonian Vocational Education and Training System 2005–2008* (approved in 2005), *the Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006–2015* (approved in 2006), *the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005–2008* (approved in 2005), *the Estonian Research and Development and Innovation Strategy 2007–2013* (approved by the Government in 2006 and approved by the *Riigikogu* in 2007), *the Youth Work Strategy 2006–2013* (approved in 2006) and *the Development Strategy of the Estonian Language*

2004–2010 (approved in 2004) and *The Estonian National Development Plans for introduction of the Structural Funds of the European Union* – single programme documents for 2003–2006 and 2007–2013 (among the main instruments mentioned there for promoting adult education are establishing the system and setting the regulations for the accreditation of prior and experiential learning).

The strategic goals of the *Education and Training 2010* work programme, which also includes validation of non-formal and informal learning, were also taken as the basis when preparing the national *Action Plan for Growth and Jobs 2005–2007*, the *National Strategic Reference Framework 2007–2013* and the *National Operational Programme for Human Resources Development*. The chosen indicators (e.g. the proportion of adults participating in lifelong learning) are used when assessing the implementation of the Government of the Republic work schedule.

Estonian lifelong learning strategy for the years 2005–2008

As the most comprehensive document so far, the Strategy sets out the principles of and need for lifelong learning on a wider scale, but its goals, measures and activity plans focus on adult education. The general goal of the Strategy is to increase the opportunities and motivation of Estonian people to participate in both formal and informal studies in order to improve their knowledge and skills in line with the needs of themselves, citizenship, society and labour market. The Strategy aims to increase the share of participants in education and training to 10 per cent amongst people aged 25–64 by the year 2008. It sets out the principle that for contributing to learning the source documents of all levels and fields of education and legislation must contain the idea of lifelong learning, be founded on common bases, using uniform terminology, be clear and fair to all people who wish to pursue further development, involve as many institutions from all three sectors in providing the training service, create measures for financing lifelong learning and ensuring quality as well as allow for considering any earlier study and work experience in further training and entry into the labour market. The Lifelong Learning Strategy relates to all formal education acquired within the adult education system, provided outside daytime or full-time studies, non-formal education (work-related and popular adult education), the importance of and consideration for informal education, including the development of a system of taking account of recognition of prior learning and work experience (APEL) and the continuing improvement of the professional qualification system as well as the need to guarantee the quality and availability of training.

In order to increase coherence and coordination between the sectoral fields, a document entitled *Smart and Active People 2007–2010* was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) in 2006. This document combines the goals of the further development plans and covers all sectoral strategies and source documents concerning the use of Structural Funds for 2007–2013. The Strategy covers the whole formal education system, non-formal education and informal studies. The development plan

embraces the area of education, youth and language as well as research and development, including: the organisation and development of anything related to all the levels of vocational education, adult education and higher education; youth work (including hobby education) and support for the participation of youth, the organisation of the development and protection and presentation of the Estonian language and culture as well as Estonian foreign language policy. The development plan also serves as the basis for preparing the state budget.

2.2 Legal background

Besides the links between identification and validation of non-formal and informal and formal learning already under the development, initiatives are taken in order to increase the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training. Under the Copenhagen Process, tools and procedures were developed for the attestation and award of professional qualifications which allowed the possibility to validate the results acquired through non-formal and informal learning¹.

The **Professions Act**², adopted in January 2001 provides the basis for the development of the requirements for professional qualifications and the conditions and procedure for the attestation and award of professional qualifications. According to the document, the award of professional qualifications is a procedure where a person displays the level of his or her professional competence. Professional qualifications are awarded on the basis of an application submitted by the person on a voluntary basis. For professions on the lower levels (levels I-II) of professional standards, the qualification attestation does not demand a formal education certificate as a prerequisite. A professional standard of a higher level (levels IV-V) usually requires a diploma of higher education. Methods used for attestation of professional qualifications are a written or oral examination, test assignment and attestation on the basis of documents produced by the candidate or a combination of them. The awarding body is responsible for setting a concrete method and a form of attestation for a certain professional qualification. It also takes into account the results of non-formal and/or informal learning, especially in case of re-attestation of qualification: although indirectly mentioned, among the documents the candidate must submit for the attestation of his / her professional qualifications, a description of professional activities (CV or statements from employers) is included³.

A significant role here is played by the **development of occupational standards** and a qualification system as a whole for which the foundations were set by the Professions Act. The process is led by the Estonian Qualification Authority (*Kutsekoda*) which closely works

1 Implementing the "Education and Training 2010" Work Programme: 2005 Progress Report. Estonia. European Commission. Education and Culture. Lifelong Learning: Education and Training policies. Coordination of Lifelong Learning Policies. Brussels, December 2005.

2 <http://www.kutsekoda.ee/default.aspx/3/menu/264>

³ Ibid.

with social partners and professional councils. For example, between 1998 and 2006 representatives of over 1,500 different institutions (companies, training providers, professional and vocational associations) participated in the active development of professional standards. Three stages are foreseen for the development of the system:

- i. Determining the requirements for contemporary professional skills and their levels; developing professional standards;
- ii. Bringing vocational training into accordance with the requirements for professional skills;
- iii. Determining the criteria, procedures as well as terms and conditions for awarding professional qualifications; developing the system for attestation of professional qualifications.

The progress achieved so far is steady, for example, in 2003, 126 profession standards were certified (34 new processes) and 859 professional certificates were issued, by the end of that year there were 365 profession standards developed In total. By September 2004, professional councils had approved 419 professional qualifications as professional standards and issued 3895 professional certificates and as of January 2005 - 447 professional qualifications and issued 5869 professional certificates¹. By 1 July 2007 there are 655 professional standards approved and 25 057 professional certificates issued in total. Today almost all of the curricula of the higher vocational and higher professional education systems have been compiled on the basis of these standards.

2.3 Validation of informal and non-formal learning within HE and VET

Major changes have taken place in Estonian educational policy, particularly in the last decade. Starting with the reform of higher education according to the principles of the 2001 Bologna Declaration, Estonian Universities recognised the need for accreditation of prior formal learning. This was the second reform of the last ten years and it brought many new qualifications that differed from the previous ones both in purpose and length of study. However, this is just one of the aspects promoting new discussion around accreditation of prior learning and also of work experience.

Together with curriculum reform, there was also a reform of HE institutions. Many previous vocational non-HE institutions were reformed to vocationally oriented HE institutions, which then created the need for transfer of studies between different levels of education.

During the last two decades, the education system and curricula have become much more open, giving greater opportunity to take into account learning that is not exactly connected to the field of studies concerned. Educational institutions in different areas are interested in

¹ <http://www.kutsekoda.ee/default.aspx/3/menu/259>

valuing prior learning and work experience and are implementing the system and procedures for APEL.

Within this context, **the first initiative** was made by the University of Tartu in 2001 with the initiation of its APEL system. In June 2002, an international conference on APEL was held in Tartu with the help of the THENUCE network. This conference and the example of the system at the University of Tartu initiated several discussions in other universities as well as at the Ministry of Education, and later brought along two new projects in the same field. By February 2003, the University of Tartu together with the Ministry of Education had completed a survey covering APEL practices and attitudes across Estonia in all sectors (within the European Transfine project) and as a result the new Universities' Act (approved at the end of January 2003) allowed for 50 per cent of the HE curriculum to be obtained through APEL.

In 2003, the implementation of a system for identification, assessment and recognition of previous learning and professional experience (PLPE), including the possibility to validate both informal learning and work experience, was regulated nationally by the **Universities Act** and Institutions of **Professional Higher Education Act**. The Universities' Act allowed for 50% of the HE curriculum to be obtained through APEL. All educational institutions providing higher education had to develop an internal order of PLPE and apply it from September 2004. Most of the HE institutions have now worked out their internal regulations for implementing APEL.

Validation is facilitated only to students who move to different study programmes inside the same institution and/or between institutions. It is not possible to apply validation in relation to admissions to university – candidates are still required by law to have completed secondary level formal education (in Estonia or equivalent foreign qualifications) in order to apply.

Later the three year inter-university project "Increasing the Competition Capacity of University Graduates through the Improvement of the Quality of Studies"¹, co-ordinated by the University of Tartu and funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) started in August 2005 with the general aim to enhance the competitiveness of university graduates and develop their competences, which will secure their successful participation in the labour market of a knowledge-based society. The project consisted of seven interrelated sub-projects which covered the development of study programmes and training methods, and the promotion of counselling, in-service training and the recognition of formerly acquired knowledge (the APEL project) etc. The project involved a wide range of stakeholders in addition to the public universities and participants included the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, the Rectors' Council, the Estonian Qualification Authority, the Federation of Estonian Student Unions, the Association of Estonian Adult Educators

¹ LÜKKA, <http://www.ut.ee/lykka>

ANDRAS, and the representatives of vocational educational institutions and the institutions of professional higher education. In 2006, the activities were centred on conducting a number of extensive surveys to receive feedback from various sources, including present students and graduates, students who had interrupted their studies, the teaching and support staff, representatives of employers, in-service training coordinators and advisers. In addition, the experience of other countries was carefully considered in each area of activity.

Concerning **vocational education**, the curricula and training programmes are developed in accordance with the professional standards and including the principles relating to the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the study organisation rules of the schools. The results of informal learning are also starting to be considered upon admission to the professional examinations. Vocational education curricula are based on professional standards, which, developed in co-operation with the representatives of employers and employees and revised no less than once in every four years, describe the knowledge, skills and competences required for working in a particular field. The professional standards are learning outcome oriented – i.e., they describe knowledge, skills and competences as an outcome of the learning process. As mentioned above, professional standards are grounded within the frame of reference provided by the state.

Although **progress** is being made, the initial phase was slow and difficult as higher education institutions were more interested in recognising prior certified learning rather than in valuing non-certified or informal learning. The main problems were the reluctance of the academic staff and lack of knowledge in the field of assessment of informal and experiential learning, as well as a lack of quality instruments for the purpose of assessment.

Since **2006**, both universities and vocational education institutions can partially take account of a student's informal and non-formal learning¹. Amendments were made to the Universities Act and the Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act, which among the other things defined the requirement to introduce the common principles of taking account of the informal and non-formal learning in the higher education standard. According to the amendment which will come into force on 1 September 2007, there will be no predetermined restrictions related to the volume of studies for the application of the APEL, providing that when completing the curriculum, the earlier study results in the BA and MA studies are taken into account along with professional experience, keeping in mind the principles set out in the higher education standard and the procedure prescribed by the council of the institution of higher education². A separate working group has been established to develop the APEL principles in the higher education standard – amendments were made in 2007, which came into force on 1 September 2007.

¹Preparation of the 2008 Joint Interim Report on the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 work programme. Member States' contribution. Estonia. June, 2007.

² *Ibid.*

Validation of informal and non-formal learning in the University of Tartu

The University of Tartu is the first in Estonia to have developed a system and procedures for the accreditation of prior studies and work experience and this system is now in the implementation stage. Since summer 2003 an APEL specialist has worked at the University to develop the tools for APEL, information and guidance materials and to establish and develop a counselling and assessment jury system across the whole university.

Three regulations for implementing APEL at the University of Tartu are as follows: the Regulations for Admission, the Study Regulations and the Procedure and fees for considering applications for accreditation of prior learning and work experience at the University of Tartu. Depending on the volume of the accredited subjects or work experience, the application is reviewed either by the lecturer of the given subject or the committee (academic staff only) appointed by the Dean of the Faculty. A particular subject will be assessed by the lecturer, a bigger group of subjects (from 5 credits, or 7.5 ECTS) and the qualification requirements for admission will be assessed by the committee. The student is given a written answer within one month from the date of submission of the application. If necessary, the assessor may demand additional documents, the compilation of a portfolio, an examination or an informal interview. The decisions of accreditation of prior learning and work experience may be contested according to the procedures provided by the Regulations of Studies. Methods used for accreditation of prior learning are summative assessment and credit transfer. In 2007, the rules and purposes of APEL are set out in the Higher Education Standard which requires the Universities to update and uniform their regulations.

The University of Tartu was a partner in two European APEL related projects – VaLEx (Valuing Learning from Experience) and REFINE (REcognising Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education). Local partners in these projects are, for Valex; Universities, the higher education sector and NGOs and for Refine; the higher education sector, the vocational education sector and the youth sector. Activities in these projects are: piloting the use of the portfolio for accreditation of informal and non-formal learning, creating a course program for this and developing support materials for students, counsellors and APEL assessors. A third project – EuroguideVAL (Implementing the Common European principles through Improved Guidance and Counselling based on a common framework for guidance professionals) is finishing in September 2007. The aims of the project are the development of functional and competency standards, training standards and a training course for APEL practitioners.

3.0 PRIVATE SECTOR

According to the state Statistical Office, 63 per cent of enterprises carry out employees' training regularly, 12 per cent have a training budget and 3 per cent of enterprises have an internal training centre. An average of 28 per cent of employees participated in training courses (last updated September 2002).

According to the Estonian Employers' Confederation (ETTK) and the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (EAKL), **social partners have not been very actively involved** in actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications. Their involvement in developing qualifications is most evident in working together in the management board of the qualification authority. They are also taking part in the work of the professional councils.

Since education and learning is closely linked to industrial relations, ETTK and EAKL have acknowledged their important role in activities for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications¹. Considerable improvements in this field were achieved by the project initiated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (the project was funded by the Danish Government through the National Agency for Enterprise and Housing) and implemented between December 2003 and October 2004. It aimed to strengthen cooperation between the governmental institutions and the Estonian business and labour organisations. Among the main participants were the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Foundation for Lifelong Learning Development Innove and the Estonian Chamber of Commerce (consisting of 36 unions). The project developed guidelines and administrative procedures for securing and strengthening a cooperation framework as well as developing and facilitating training courses for both civil servants and experts from business and trade associations.

Currently co-operation with social partners and particularly employers is in continuous evolution. Trade unions have been discussing lifelong learning issues in their meetings and called for these issues to be included in collective agreements and social plans (concluded for collective redundancies in big enterprises) – mostly in connection with employees' opportunities to gain new qualifications, needed within the company (or a region). The preparation of strategic documents and other developments concerning lifelong learning try to involve a wide range of stakeholders and social partners in order to

¹ European Trade Union Confederation, Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe, Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest. Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications. Third follow-up report. March, 2005.

gain broad consensus and commitment to the changes and to encourage new, sustainable developments.

Employers have always appreciated prior formal, non-formal and informal learning upon hiring people and valued work experience as well as other skills, personal characteristics and abilities. The main tool used for first evaluation is the CV and interview as the next step. Most companies have worked out a personnel policy and internal rules for measuring the potential of the applicant, although these are not available publicly.

In the labour market two main trends are evident: on the one hand, great attention is paid to official qualifications in some situations, on the other hand, work experience is valued more than a university degree.

Requirements for professional qualifications have been worked out or elaborated for many professions. Several qualification requirements became more difficult to achieve. In some public service occupations an official degree (Master's degree) enables employees to receive a salary that is higher by 10 per cent.

In many cases, employers value work experience more than a university degree. Several reasons for this can be found, for example, a rapidly changing labour market that values recent work experience over 'old' (i.e. usually that means acquired before 1990) education; many SME (small and medium enterprises) managers have not themselves completed a university degree and therefore do not value it; new and rather liberal regulations have resulted in a plethora of new HE institutions being established during the last ten years which are considered to be of low quality and whose education provision is therefore not valued.

Employers are interested in certifying employees' skills as this is important for staff policy development, for the benchmarking of the company and for competitiveness in the market. As mentioned above, today the main activity is setting occupational standards. The Professions Act provides the basis for the development of the requirements for professional qualifications and the conditions and procedures for the attestation and award of professional qualifications. The representatives of over 1,500 different institutions (companies, training providers, professional and vocational associations) participated in active development of occupational standards between 1998 and 2006.

As assigning a profession is not obligatory and is not directly related to studies in the profession but at the same time, to meet the qualification requirements, it is necessary to complete certain additional training or work independently, one can agree that assigning a profession may be related to APEL.

The award of professional qualifications is a process in the course of which a person attests the level of his/her professional competence and a body which awards professional

qualifications assesses the match to the professional qualifications applied for and issues a professional certificate.

No specific instruments and methodologies have been approved yet for the assessment of non-formal and informal learning; a description of professional activities is mostly used in the form of a CV or statements from employers.

Employers are encouraged to invest in the personal development and training of their employees by an exemption from income tax of the study and training costs.

4.0 THE THIRD SECTOR

No information has been obtained on Estonian third sector organisations which are engaged in developing methodologies for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. However, a range of different third sector organisations have either a vested interest in policies dealing with the validation of informal and non-formal learning or are acting as providers of non-formal learning:

- There are some very active NGOs, such as the Association of Estonian Adult Educators (ANDRAS), the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association, the Estonian Education Forum and Estonian Association for Personnel Development PARE, that are the main links between formal, non-formal and informal education, employers and the public sector.
- The Association of Estonian Adult Educators (AEAE) ANDRAS is an Estonian non-governmental organisation, which unites the representatives of different branches of adult education and aims to increase the competence of its members in the field of andragogics. The Estonian Education Forum's (*Eesti Haridusfoorum*) main activities are the development of a concept of education policy based on as extensive social agreement as possible, and the promotion of social partnership with the public sector.
- The Estonian Association for Personnel Development (PARE) connects human resource professionals. PARE draws attention to the importance of human resource management in society, gathers and mediates human resource management know-how, creates opportunities for personnel staff for professional development and regular exchange of information.
- The youth sector is interested in this topic as well, they have organised a conference about valuing informal learning and are involved in a number of projects.
- NGOs representing all of the most important interest groups in educational policy are taking an active part in forming the educational policy, executing educational research, organising training, seminars and conferences and gathering and distributing information concerning adult education. The main aim of the NGOs is to support democratic processes like participation, partnership and social agreement in Estonian education policy. They have co-operated with different public and private organisations, including the Ministry of Education, to compose the concept and strategic plan for the Estonian education system. One of the main forms of activity is the annual educational forum process - a set of conferences where the situation of education in Estonia is discussed and where the education and labour policy principles of Estonia are developed, specified and improved. Such an approach enables the moulding of a consensus among different interest groups as regards the draft resolutions prepared by experts, which should result in the realisation of the adopted resolutions.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

According to national regulations in Estonia it is possible to apply APEL in some cases but it has not been regulated in detail. If there are any regulations for the application of APEL at all, then these are internal regulations for a given institution. For example, the Universities Act and Applied Higher Education Institutions Act now allows for accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) in HE curricula. Universities and higher education institutions are developing their internal regulations for implementing APEL, collecting useful information and trying to implement respective best practice.

As the process of the accreditation of prior and experiential learning started only in recent years, there is no qualitative or quantitative information on the results of the initiative yet. Some research is carried out on mapping non-formal education /adult education and through an ESF-funded APEL project.

In the national policy agenda one can notice remarkable trends and the Ministry of Education together with other stakeholders has prepared some important documents connected with validation of non-formal and informal learning such as the Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2005-2008 and the Professions Act (2001).

In the sphere of higher education, the University of Tartu is working as a promoter in this field. There are different activities involving co-operation between Universities as well as other educational institutions and the Ministry of Education and Research for development of APEL tools and practices in Estonia and to promote the APEL Network in Estonia. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research, the University of Tartu has launched an ambitious project financed by the European Social Fund (LÜKKA, www.ut.ee/lykka), to develop a national APEL system. The project and the envisaged system encompass also other universities, applied higher education institutions, vocational education institutions, qualifications agencies, and employers' associations. The project aims to develop APEL tools and practices, promote APEL networking in Estonia, provide advanced training to APEL assessors and set up and implement a system of quality standards for APEL. Thus, the coming years may be expected to speed up progress in many aspects of validation.

Employers agree that there is a need to develop common criteria for recognising APEL in Estonia. The State has started to create an official system through legislation such as the Professions Act but there is no vision of the system in its entirety yet, though people are aware of the need to create uniform principles and tools to simplify comparison of qualifications. The development of the Estonian Qualifications Framework and level descriptions (including HE qualifications) – will be adopted in 2009.

The third sector has taken an active role and is working together with other sectors in forming education policy in Estonia.

Although existing information and practical experience in validation of non-formal and informal learning is as yet rather limited, Estonia is now in an active position in the development of the system, tools and procedures for recognition of prior and experiential learning and has a framework in place to enable further progress to be made in the years to come.