

# European Inventory

on validation of informal and  
non-formal learning



# **A European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning**

## **Poland**

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# Contents

PAGE

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Review of existing initiatives: Public sector.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Background – vocational and general education and training in Poland .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Assessment and certification mechanisms in IVET and CVT .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Other established validation practices.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Policy development.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.5</b>	<b>The development of a Qualifications Framework.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.6</b>	<b>The Academic sector .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Review of existing initiatives: the Third Sector.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>20</b>

# 1.0 Introduction

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Although a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning does not yet exist in Poland, many elements of such a system are already in place. It must be highlighted that formal education still holds a dominant position in the Polish education system. At the same time, there is a wide recognition of the importance of validation of informal and non-formal learning. The legal environment has also been gradually adjusting to meet changing demands in this respect.

Whereas validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning de jure depends on the systemic and legal arrangements which are being introduced only on a gradual basis, de facto validation subsystems often already exist in certain crafts and other sectors. There is an abundance of examples of innovative initiatives in the third sector, as well as interesting analytical and development projects in academic institutions. Many of these initiatives have been supported by EU programmes.

Overall, there are provisions for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in place. However, one cannot speak yet of a coherent and transparent system in the lifelong learning perspective.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, pp.60-61.

## 2.0 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector

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### 2.1 Background – vocational and general education and training in Poland

Polish initial Vocational Education and Training (VET) has undergone a comprehensive reform of a systemic character, which has not yet been fully finalised. It has been aimed at ensuring flexibility of education; linking vocational education to the needs of the labour market, and ensuring the quality of education and comparability of qualifications.

The reform process, as well as the very transition to the free market economy, had a major impact on patterns of participation in education and training in Poland. There has been a shift in the interest of students from vocational to general education and participation in general education has almost doubled since 1990, reaching 36% in 2001/2. However, vocational pathways are still predominant and approximately 60% of the relevant age groups undergo VET at secondary level. Reform has facilitated the vertical permeability of the system. Horizontal permeability, however, is still limited, as transfers between different types of schools are only possible at the initial stage of the educational cycle. Curricular reform has supported the modularisation of study programmes but putting them into full usage in practice is still very much in progress<sup>1</sup> - by 2005, there were 53 modular programmes in place<sup>2</sup>. By 2007, an additional 131 modular programmes were created with support from the European Social Fund (Sectoral Operational Programme – Development of Human Resources 2004-2006).<sup>3</sup>

As far as Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) is concerned, in spite of a number of motivating mechanisms in place, participation in CVT is still relatively low in comparison with the EU average. The participation rate in education and training of the adult population (aged 25-64) in Poland was only 5.6% in 2006 compared to the 9.6% EU27 average<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Zelloth, H. Et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.73. Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. 2004. QCA Consortium. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> National Strategy for Development of Education 2007-2013, Ministry of Education and Sport, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Information provided by E. Rudomino, Ministry of Education and Sport, Poland

<sup>4</sup> Eurostat, 2007

## 2.2 Assessment and certification mechanisms in IVET and CVT<sup>1</sup>

Since 1999, vocational school graduation has been separated from the acquisition of the vocational qualification. The system now allows graduates to continue their education at a higher level, whether or not they have taken a vocational examination. The title of 'qualified worker' or worker with equivalent qualifications in a given occupation has been granted to graduates of basic VET schools and one-year post-lyceum schools who have successfully passed the relevant vocational examinations. The title of technician or equivalent is given to occupations, where graduates of technical secondary schools (technicum), post-lyceum (postsecondary) schools have successfully passed the initial VET examination. Both titles, certified with diplomas, are obtained irrespective of the form in which the education took place (daytime, evening, weekend, extramural, or based on out-of-school examinations).

In the reformed system, the responsibility for certification, evaluation and the issuing of maturity and vocational title diplomas lies with Regional Examination Commissions. These Commissions are coordinated by the Central Examination Board, appointed by the Minister of National Education. The system combines both internal and external assessment.

In June 2002 an external standardised competence test on completion of primary school and an external examination at the end of the third year of the new lower secondary/gymnasium, both conducted by regional examination commissions, were introduced for the first time. Although the results of both of these tests do not determine a pupil's progress, the results obtained by pupils are recorded on individual school certificates.

The new maturity examination, introduced in 2005, is composed of a part taken internally at the school (oral examination) and an external part (written examination). The first external vocational examinations (*egzamin potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe*) took place in 2004 and were taken by 20,066 candidates from 2-year vocational schools, of which 12,609 passed (63%)<sup>2</sup>. In 2005, the number of those taking the exam almost doubled (43,651 candidates) as the exam was also taken by those leaving 3-year vocational schools<sup>3</sup>. Examinations are based on the requirement standards defined for given occupations by authorised institutions (e.g. schools, enterprises). The occupational

<sup>1</sup> This section is mainly based on the text of the Country Monograph (Zelloth, H. Et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002), extended/updated where applicable.

<sup>2</sup> Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2004). Egzamin potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe dla absolwentów dwuletnich zasadniczych szkół zawodowych. Informacja ogólna o wynikach [Translation]

<sup>3</sup> Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna (2005). Egzamin potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe dla absolwentów dwuletnich i trzyletnich zasadniczych szkół zawodowych. Informacja ogólna o wynikach [Translation] The aggregate data on results for all occupations were not available (only for 11 occupations).

titles of apprentices and foremen are acquired through an examination committee operating with a chamber of crafts.

In 2003, on the basis of the regulation of the Minister of Education and Sport, the standards for external examination requirements were developed for 75 occupations<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, it must be stressed that these external exams are solely for school-based education and include initial VET but not the continuing education system<sup>2</sup>. However, there are some exceptions to that rule, whereby a candidate can be a young worker (*pracownik młodociany*) and attend complementary classes while still working<sup>3</sup>.

It is also worth noting that under certain conditions, those who attend school-based VET can be exempted from taking the written part of the final school examination, provided they took part in inter-school competitions in a given subject and either entered the finals or obtained the first prize<sup>4</sup>. An appropriate note is made on the candidate's diploma. Similar provisions exist in general education, where the exemption from the exam at lower secondary level can be granted for those who took part in a competition in a relevant subject and either qualified beyond the regional level of the competition or were one of the finalists. The exemption can be granted upon presentation of a certificate stating the pupil's achievement and is equivalent to obtaining the highest grade of the written part of the final school exam. At upper secondary level, the achievement of the prize in the competition also results in exemption from the final exam (maturity exam resulting in ISCED 3 qualification) and achieving the highest possible grade in that exam either in written or oral part<sup>5</sup>. The list of competitions allowing the exemption is announced by the director of the Central Examination Commission at least 2 years before the planned examination.

The current continuing education system encompasses public and non-public establishments functioning within and outside of the school system. External examinations confirming the vocational qualifications acquired represent one of the links between the system of initial vocational education and training and the continuing education system<sup>6</sup>. The separation of the qualification examination from the fact of attaining formal education

<sup>1</sup> 5. Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu z dnia 3 lutego 2003r. w sprawie standardów wymagań będących podstawą przeprowadzania egzaminu potwierdzającego kwalifikacje zawodowe. (Dz.U. z 2003r. Nr 49, poz. 411) [Translation]

<sup>2</sup> Information obtained from the representative of the Central Examination Commission

<sup>3</sup> An interview with the representative of the Ministry of Education and Sports

<sup>4</sup> Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu z dnia 7 września 2004 roku w sprawie warunków i sposobu oceniania, klasyfikowania i promowania uczniów i słuchaczy oraz przeprowadzania sprawdzianów i egzaminów w szkołach publicznych (DzU nr 199, poz. 2046 z późniejszymi zmianami)

<sup>5</sup> Central Examination Commission website: [www.cke.edu.pl](http://www.cke.edu.pl) and Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne (publishing house) website: [www.wsipnet.pl](http://www.wsipnet.pl)

<sup>6</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.12.

is a first step towards the creation of the possibility for a standardised validation system of qualifications, achieved in formal vocational education or in non-formal learning<sup>1</sup>.

Adult education in the regular school system, allowing adults to continue their school education after it has been interrupted or when they are already in employment ('second-chance') is largely a copy of the formal initial vocational education system, with traditional pathways leading to the same recognised certificates and qualifications. The system of extramural examinations (*egzamin eksternistyczny*) introduced the possibility of officially recognising skills at primary, lower and upper secondary school level, and awarding a school leaving certificate corresponding to the maturity exam (ISCED Level 3) without the requirement of attending classes in school<sup>2</sup>. This system covers all types of schools<sup>3</sup>. A recent example of a qualification that can be gained through the system of extramural examinations is the Laboratory Diagnostician qualification, where the 2006 amendment to the existing legislation introduced extramural examinations as an alternative to the existing attendance-based training in the field of medical analysis<sup>4</sup>.

Early school-leavers, lacking a school certificate, may have their vocational skills, acquired on-the-job, certified by state committees (appointed by school headmasters) and receive the title of qualified labourer or master in the given occupation. The completion of a vocational or post secondary school is no longer tantamount to receiving a vocational title but only denotes skills acquisition. Skill certification is made possible by passing an examination organised by one of the regional examining boards set up in 1999 by the Ministry of National Education. In practice this means that an adult who wishes to acquire vocational qualifications does not have to finish a vocational or post-secondary school. He or she is able to acquire these qualifications in the out-of-school system or at work. To gain formal recognition of these qualifications the candidate has to pass an examination<sup>5</sup>.

CVT out-of-school (courses, seminars, workshops, guided self-study, on-the-job training, apprenticeships) is provided by enterprises, NGOs, and different training and education centres, but also schools. Qualifications attained in the out-of-school system (including qualifications acquired in the process of work) may be validated by taking examinations, organised by state examination commissions. There are also examination boards

<sup>1</sup> Modernizacja kształcenia ustawicznego i kształcenia dorosłych w Polsce, jako integralnych części uczenia się przez całe życie. Raport opracowany dla Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu. (Modernisation of vocational education and continuing training in Poland as integral part of lifelong learning. Report prepared for the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm University, Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB, p.50

<sup>2</sup> An interview with the representative of the Ministry of Education (August 2007)

<sup>3</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.5

<sup>4</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.5

<sup>5</sup> Report on VET system in Poland, 2001, National Observatory, ETF., p.72

appointed by employers (e.g. chamber of crafts), which certify equivalent qualifications providing for the title of journeyman or master craftsman in a profession<sup>1</sup>.

An important element of the CVT system are the Centres for Continuing Education (*Centra Kształcenia Ustawicznego – CKU*), which are multifunctional public education facilities offering education, further education and training to adults, in both in-school and out-of-school forms (including awarding qualification titles and the organisation of extramural examinations). The CKUs also provide training courses, commissioned by labour offices, and advisory services for teachers and trainers involved in adult education. They play an important role in preparing and implementing modern curricula and methods in adult education<sup>2</sup>. Vocational courses taken by accredited institutions can be accepted as a part of vocational training for adults, provided they are run in accordance with a teaching programme accepted by the Minister of National Education.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.3 Other established validation practices

There are some other long-established practices of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Poland. For instance, in the training and examinations for craftsmen and candidates for particular degrees in craftsmanship, in accordance with the 1989 Crafts Act. The Act (1989 Dz. U. No. 17, item 92 with subsequent amendments) stipulates the conditions for carrying out examinations for craftsmen for the degree of apprentice and foreman in crafts, which is recognised by employers and State administration on a national level<sup>4</sup>. These examinations can be taken by both young people who have completed vocational education and training in crafts and adults wishing to validate their knowledge and skills acquired through work or theoretical training<sup>5</sup>.

More recently, procedures for validating skills and competencies for 20 medical professions have been under negotiation and a draft act has been adopted in March 2007<sup>6</sup>. This validation initiative falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, in certain occupations (e.g. security worker, engineers and technical staff in the electrical power sector, work safety and hygiene technicians and officers) sector entities and professional associations issue and deliver state-recognised certificates following

<sup>1</sup> Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.53-54

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Information provided by E. Rudomino, Ministry of Education and Sport

<sup>4</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Institute for Terotechnology in Random 2002, ETF

<sup>5</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.6

<sup>6</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.5

<sup>7</sup> Information provided by E. Rudomino, Ministry of Education and Sport

training and examinations organised within the respective occupation or craft<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the regulation in the field of categories, founding principles, changes and cancellation and principles of functioning of teacher training institutions (2000, Dz. U. No. 85), allows under certain conditions (e.g. number of hours, practical training) the application for recognition of the retraining vocational course of teachers as the completion of the qualification course<sup>2</sup>.

Some voivodship labour offices provide evaluation of vocational skills and experience gained in non-formal contexts, making use of the French model the *bilan de competence*<sup>3</sup>.

Some pedagogical tertiary schools make various attempts to introduce subjects related to the diagnostics of vocational knowledge and skills, acquired in both formal and non-formal contexts, into the curriculum of studies in pedagogy of labour<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.4 Policy development

The authorities attach great importance to continuing education. This is demonstrated in a document entitled 'Development Strategy for Continuing Education Until 2010', adopted by the Government on 8 July 2003<sup>5</sup>. The overriding aim of the Strategy is to outline the direction of development of CVT in the context of the concept of lifelong learning and the development of a knowledge-based society. The implementation of the Strategy is intended to ensure individual development for everyone through easier access to continuing education and training and improving its quality, and to promote an active approach, increasing the employability of individuals. The Strategy outlines tasks for state administration and local governments, scientific and educational institutions and social partners, foundations, associations and other non-governmental organisations. It may also provide a basis for developing ministerial (branch) programmes for the development of continuing education in order to systematically improve the professional qualifications of human resources in view of social and economic needs<sup>6</sup>.

With regards the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning, the Strategy targets the implementation of numerous elements which are vital for the system. It recognises 'the necessity of building a more human-friendly system of access to all levels, forms and methods of gaining knowledge and developing skills. It should have the

<sup>1</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. An analysis of the first responses by the candidate countries, ETF, 2002, p.3

<sup>2</sup> [ipe.pl/archiwum/+/html/pyt/uznanie.php](http://ipe.pl/archiwum/+/html/pyt/uznanie.php)

<sup>3</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Strategy for the Development of Continuous Education until the year 2010, Ministry of National Education and Sports, adopted by Council of Ministers on 8th July 2003, pp.4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.12.

following features: 'openness, diversity, permeability, comparability, transparency and recognition of qualifications'. In particular it aims to develop a system of examination, confirmation and recognition of qualifications acquired in school and non-school forms and in a non-formal way, with the inclusion of self-study and experience gained in the process of work; the establishment of professional qualification standards as one of the elements of ensuring quality in continuous education; the creation of a system of voluntary accreditation of institutions conducting continuing education in non-school forms; the modification and enrichment of the continuous education programmes offered, with particular emphasis on modular programmes; the creation of the bank of modular programmes for school and out-of-school training; the preparation of vocational counsellors for the educational system and the labour market, etc.

Some other policy documents, including earlier ones, also refer to the objective needs in establishing a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

*The National Employment Action Plan for 2002* included actions taken to implement the unified qualification validation system for both the formal (school) and non-formal (out-of-school) systems, to compare the vocational achievements of pupils, to develop the national list of vocational qualifications based on occupational requirements, carrying out accreditation of vocational training programmes for the labour market and accreditation of the non-formal training providers of such programmes<sup>1</sup>.

*The Sectoral Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources* (National Development Plan for the years 2004-2006) aimed to strengthen the system of continuous education of adults by accreditation of institutions conducting CVT in the out-of-school system and by the development of distance learning.

*The National Strategy for Employment Growth and Human Resources Development for the years 2000-2006* contains new proposals for activities, of which a very important one is the creation of appropriate conditions for the operation and formation of a flexible and efficient model of continuing education.

*The Strategy for Development of Education 2007-2013* underlines the necessity of creating a system for recognising and validating competencies acquired outside of the formal school system, diversifying continuing education provision both for those with low

<sup>1</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Ministry of Education and Sports. 2002, ETF

qualifications and disadvantaged groups and those with higher qualifications, in order to allow them to upgrade their skills<sup>1</sup>.

The Act of 27 June 2003 Amending the Educational System Act and Some Other Acts (Journal of Laws 137/2003, item 1304) introduced the accreditation of establishments offering continuing education activities and teacher upgrading centres. The amended Educational System Act defines more strictly the organisational framework for continuing education and specifies the types of schools and establishments which may offer this type of education. Furthermore, the Act ensures permeability between the formal school system and the out-of-school system<sup>2</sup>.

Regarding the validation of proven work experience, Poland introduced legal provisions and procedures by a joint ministerial decree (MoNE and MoLSP) in 1993, providing for the award of formal qualification titles through state examination commissions. This applies to persons wishing to confirm the level of qualifications they have acquired not in the course of school studies, but resulting from their professional experience<sup>3</sup>. In 2006, new legislation introduced specific arrangements whereby professional/vocational skills acquired through employment can be validated through qualification examinations. The new regulation also introduced the possibility of validating partial qualifications obtained as a result of completing training in a non-school setting, and of recognising partial qualifications obtained in this way by adults who take up study in schools for adults providing vocational education and training<sup>4</sup>.

## **2.5 The development of a Qualifications Framework**

From the point of view of some basic characteristics of qualification standards (flexibility and universality of the system, objective evaluation of learning outcomes and their comparability) numerous analyses produced so far in this field<sup>5</sup> indicate that a system of vocational qualifications in Poland does not yet exist. But there are elements of a system, such as centrally prepared curricula for certain professions, the system of administration of public education at the central and regional level, the system of final examination, the system of qualification examinations (extramural and separated from the actual process of education and training), work towards the harmonisation of the two classification system

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Education and Sport (2005). Strategy for Development of Education 2007-2013 available at: [http://www.nauka.gov.pl/mein/\\_gALLERY/16/18/16188/strategia\\_2007\\_2013.pdf](http://www.nauka.gov.pl/mein/_gALLERY/16/18/16188/strategia_2007_2013.pdf) (Accessed 8 August 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.7

<sup>3</sup> Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.54

<sup>4</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.6

<sup>5</sup> e.g. by the Institute of Educational Research; also see: Kwiatkowski, S., Sepkowska, Z. (eds.). Budowa Standardów Kwalifikacji Zawodowych w Polsce. (Construction of qualification standards in Poland).. ETF, MEN, MPiPS, KUP, BKKK. Warszawa – Radom 2000; also Butkiewicz, Model Polskich Standardów Kwalifikacji Zawodowych. (A Model of Polish Vocational Qualifications). In „Edukacja i Praca” i ITeE. Warszawa, 1995.

(that of vocation fields and of occupations), system of documentation of the achievements of students (though without competence-based evaluation) etc.<sup>1</sup>.

The creation of National Qualification System and National Qualification Framework became one of the priorities in the new Operational Programme – Human Capital 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund.

There are ongoing efforts to develop a system of standards that would facilitate comparison of qualifications, certificates and diplomas acquired in the formal as well as the non-formal system of education. In 1998, a basic methodology for the design of standards of vocational qualifications was developed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as part of a European Training Foundation (ETF) initiated project<sup>2</sup>. Standards for eight professions have been designed using this methodology. Between 2002 and 2004, as a result of the Phare project, work relating to another 40 occupations has been completed and an internet database with the defined standards and modular vocational education programmes has been created<sup>3</sup>. At present, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is involved in a project primarily aiming at broadening the standards catalogue and promoting its wider use. The project lasts from 2006 to 2008 and will involve preparation of standards for 200 occupations and carrying out a large information and promotion campaign among employers. The project also envisages research into the usage of the occupational standards by their potential users<sup>4</sup>.

In 2001 unification of the two following official systems of occupations/professions have been finalised: (i) Classification of occupations and specialisations used by the Ministry of Labour and the Central Statistical Office for statistical purposes (contains some 1,800 occupations<sup>5</sup>); (ii) Classification of vocational fields used by the Ministry of Education as a basis for designing vocational education for the relevant professions (contains 202 broadly conceived fields<sup>6</sup>).

The state may only recognise the qualifications and certificates (skilled manual worker, technician, etc.) that fall within the classification of vocational education fields. The

<sup>1</sup> Modernizacja kształcenia ustawicznego i kształcenia dorosłych w Polsce, jako integralnych części uczenia się przez całe życie. Raport opracowany dla Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu. (Modernisation of vocational education and continuing training in Poland as integral part of lifelong learning. Report prepared for the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm Universitypp. Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB. Pp. 49-50

<sup>2</sup> Kwiatkowski, S.M.; Symela, K. Standardy kwalifikacji zawodowych. Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.11; the Internet database can be found at: <http://www.standardyiskolenia.praca.gov.pl/> (Polish version only) (Accessed 8 August 2007)

<sup>4</sup> The information on the project, which is carried out by external organisations which were awarded a public contract, can be found on the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' website: <http://www.mps.gov.pl/index.php?qid=502&#407> (Accessed 8 August 2007) (Polish version only)

<sup>5</sup> Information provided by E. Rudomino, Ministry of Education and Sport

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

development of a coherent system of standards is one of the priorities of the Strategy for the Development of Continuing Education until 2010. The implementation of this objective is made more difficult by the fact that, in Poland, there still is not an institution responsible for the development and quality of qualification standards, or for the development of a national system of qualifications. The design of standards related to vocational examinations is the responsibility of the Central Examination Board<sup>1</sup>.

In 2006, the Minister of Science and Higher Education established a Working Group on the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, whose work will primarily focus on obtaining comprehensive information on the competencies acquired by graduates through individual educational paths, on access to opportunities to further learning, ensuring that the educational programmes are defined on the basis of learning outcomes and increasing the diversity of educational programmes to better respond to the labour market needs<sup>2</sup>.

## **2.6 The Academic sector**

The method of the record of achievement is discussed in the literature<sup>3</sup> as a flexible and therefore promising initiative, which allows for 'portable' competences. Several Polish organisations had an opportunity to join the work of a European consortium of institutions on elaboration of a competence management tool entitled 'The European Record of Achievement' (EuroRecord) targeted at the engineering industry<sup>4</sup>. On the Polish side, the work was joined by: Kielce University of Technology, Warsaw University of Technology and Polish Association for Continuing Engineering Education.

EuroRecord is a software-supported tool for planning and recording individual training and development needs with the support of mentoring and guidance, in dialogue with the employer, designed to record prior learning achievements and to link it to the individual strategy for personal and professional development and advancement. The tool supports a credit system recognising continuing training courses, experiential learning and accreditation of in-company training. It is targeted at individual employees, employers, universities and professional organisations.

The EuroRecord helps individuals to manage their professional development and career by providing a methodology for the documentation of competences, identification of the

<sup>1</sup> Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. QCA Consortium, 2004, pp. 25-26. [http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country\\_Report\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.5

<sup>3</sup> see e.g. Mrówka, B. Kształcenie ustawiczne a doskonalenie umiejętności profesjonalnych [Continuing training and improvement of vocational skills]. Studia Europejskie Mar-99, p. 126. [http://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/wydawnictwo/Kwart\\_1999\\_3/Mrowka.pdf](http://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/wydawnictwo/Kwart_1999_3/Mrowka.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The project was coordinated by European Society for Engineering Education, [www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/](http://www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/).

requirements for further learning and with the subsequent design of the development plan. The method records learning achievements and professional development, regardless of where and how they occurred.

The Institute for Sustainable Technologies in Radom is very active in the initiation of and participation in projects which develop aspects of the validation of competences attained through informal and non-formal learning, such as:

- A project in the framework of the PHARE SIERRA/APPLE Programme: System Procedures and Solutions for Vocational Qualifications Recognition in the European Union Countries and in Poland,
- The pilot project PL/99/1/086604/PI/I.1.1.A/FPI of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme: Methods and Procedures of Vocational Qualifications Accreditation at the European Labour Market,
- The pilot project of the “The Jean Monnet – Poland Action” Programme: „Comparativeness of Vocational Qualifications on the Polish and European Labour Market” PL98/0071;
- The pilot project PL/00/B/F/PP/140179 of the Leonardo da Vinci programme: European Bank for the Development of Modular Curricula and Educational Technologies – EMCET de Bank<sup>1</sup>

The latter project, EMCET de Bank, European - Bank for the Development of Modular Curricula and Educational Technologies (2001-2003) - was developed in a European consortium of seven partner institutions. Apart from the Institute for Sustainable Technologies in Radom, several other Polish institutions were involved: Association of Technical Schools, Upper Silesia Education Centre and FESTO DIDACTIC. The project developed a modular approach, which took into account the training needs of participants based on the formative assessment of their competences. The system is based on clearly identified criteria and standards, which feed into the accreditation system of training providers for young people and adults. A further element of the system is a certification model along with the certificate supplement<sup>2</sup> - the validation of qualifications attained in formal or non-formal modular training. This system is supported by the elaborated computer database; and ‘Centres of Competences’ which among others serve trainers and individuals in their exploration and development of flexible offers and paths in vocational education<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Institute for Terotechnology in Radom 2002, ETF

<sup>2</sup> The supplement explains the scope and character of the course of the modular training.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.itee.radom.pl/programy/emcet.htm>

Poznań University of Technology carries out two projects aiming to certify skills acquired in non-formal settings in the area of telecommunications. The persons who possess the right skills and pass an online exam can obtain a certificate, without the necessity of attending school-based training. The projects are carried out under the Leonardo da Vinci programme<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> ET2010 Report Poland, p.6

### 3.0 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector

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The aim of the empirical survey of the Department of Labour Resource Management of the Warsaw School of Economics (2003); among Polish firms which have their headquarters in other European countries was to find out whether these firms use any standards (and which ones) in the provision of CVT. The results showed that qualification standards are not used by Polish firms in the provision of CVT. Enterprises use standards (profiles, descriptions) of competences. Also the standards of assessment of competences achieved by prior learning (informal and non-formal) are not widely known to Polish firms. The survey demonstrated a lack of awareness and understanding of solutions, commonly applied by European companies in this field, among the Polish firms<sup>1</sup>.

In some industries, however, special standards are set and work-based learning courses are easily recognised by other enterprises across the sector. Such an example is banking,<sup>2</sup> with the system of qualification standards. The sector also enjoys the presence of the project European Foundation Certificate in Banking (EFCB), represented in Poland by the Gdansk Academy of Banking, WIB and MSBiF. Accredited members of the European Bank Training Network elaborated the certification system, representing 17 countries including Poland. There are minimum competence requirements set for the recognition of the qualification. The certificate is linked to the Polish system of qualification standards in the banking sector. It is targeted at those who have the qualification 'independent employee in banking' and at those who do not possess vocational qualifications in the system of standards. Those already qualified in banking may take a simplified examination. The certificate allows for comparability on the European labour market and supports the mobility of the workforce. The first exam in Poland took place in December 2004. Polish institutions also offer training for preparation for the exam<sup>3</sup>.

Polish literature in the field of CVT specifically pinpoints the construction sector<sup>4</sup> where a model of continuing vocational training of construction workers includes self-training and training aimed at upgrading of skills in the out-of-school system of CVT<sup>5</sup>. The same sector employs the *Model of professional qualification structure and new methods of promotion*,

<sup>1</sup> Kwiatkiewicz, A. Standardowe rozwiązania w dziedzinie ustawicznego kształcenia kadr a praktyka firm europejskich w Polsce. (Standard solutions in the field of continuing training and practice of European firms in Poland). In 'e-mentor', No. 2 (4), April 2004, pp. 24-30

<sup>2</sup> Responses of NARICs on Questionnaire ICE & PLAR.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gab.com.pl/efcb/>

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Francuz, Wł. M. Budowniczowie. Zadania zawodowe, Kształcenie, Doskonalenie. (Construction workers: professional requirements, training, upgrading of skills). Politechnika Krakowska im. Tadeusza Kościuszki. Kraków 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Modernizacja kształcenia ustawicznego i kształcenia dorosłych w Polsce, jako integralnych części uczenia się przez całe życie. Raport opracowany dla Ministerstwa Edukacji Narodowej i Sportu. (Modernisation of vocational education and continuing training in Poland as integral part of lifelong learning. Report prepared for the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm University. Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB

*certification and mutual recognition of managerial skills according to EU requirements.*<sup>1</sup>

The model was developed in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci project by a consortium of institutions represented in Poland by the Institute of Construction Engineering and Management at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of Warsaw University of Technology, Construction Management Education Foundation, and Polish - British Construction Partnership. The main goal of the project is to develop a system of mutual recognition of managerial skills in construction, comparison and certification of managerial qualifications in the European construction industry. The project is built on the achievement of the previous projects in the construction sector, which aimed to recognise the need for managerial qualifications of construction personnel, recognition of applied systems of education, certification of the personnel and accreditation of studies in European Union. The following activities occurred in the framework of the follow-up project:

- Discussion and acceptance in an extended group of partners of the project final version of areas and structure of managerial knowledge in construction, necessary for different levels of qualifications and all types of managerial function in construction, in order to certify engineers and accredit courses,
- Creation of a guidebook for a comparability of all components of certification and accreditation systems in the form of curricula-qualification modules. These modules will describe content-related qualification requirements. Selected sets of these modules will become a compendia of knowledge for different levels of qualifications and different specializations,
- Comparable analysis of curricula, education methods and certification requirements in selected countries of the European Union,
- Creation of uniform certification criteria of managerial qualifications and accreditation of studies, preparing to fulfil managerial functions in various areas of the construction industry and different levels of required qualifications,
- Preparation of models and organisation of complementary studies (especially "distance learning" system), which are necessary to standardise qualification levels and process of specialisation of construction managers in different countries, according to agreed criteria of certification and MBA postgraduate studies in Construction Management and Real Estate Management,
- Preparation of uniform and detailed conditions and procedures of managerial skills certification and accreditation of studies assuring these qualifications, which are necessary to establish an organization called "European Construction Management Club", that will conduct and coordinate process of certification and accreditation on a European scale.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.il.pw.edu.pl/~itiopb/leonardoll/info-eng.htm>

Another example of a sector initiative is the certification system of the Polish Welding Centre of Excellence in Gliwice. The system is accredited by the Polish Centre for Accreditation (PCA) in the scope of welding products, management systems as well as welding and NDT personnel certification. It is authorised by the European Federation for Welding, Joining and Cutting (EWF) in the range of qualification and certification of welding personnel as well as certification of quality systems according to series of EN 729 standards. The Centre is authorised by the International Institute of Welding (IIW) in a scope of welding personnel qualification. Among others, the Certification Centre offers qualification and certification of welding and NDT personnel, which includes:

- i. Qualification and certification of welding personnel on the basis of the PCA accreditation and authorisation of IIW and EWF in the following categories:
  - a. International Welding Engineer/European Welding Engineer,
  - b. European Welding Inspector,
  - c. International Welding Technologist/European Welding Technologist,
  - d. International Welding Specialist/ European Welding Specialist,
  - e. International Welding Practitioner/ European Welding Practitioner,
  - f. European Welder.
  
- ii. Certification of NDT personnel competence on the basis of the PCA accreditation in the following methods of testing:
  - a. visual inspection,
  - b. liquid-penetrant inspection,
  - c. magnetic particle inspection,
  - d. radiographic examination,
  - e. ultrasonic testing.

Certificates are issued in welding production, castings and forgings, production and processing of metals, pre-operation and operation testing of plants, objects and structures.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.is.gliwice.pl/en/certification.html>

The Polish Psychologists Society (PPS) provides recommendations, licences, and permissions for performance of training or consultations for the PPS members with complete higher education studies. The certification approach takes into account previous non-formal training and practical experience, including specific case studies. Below there are some examples of certificates, licences and recommendations offered by PPS:

- therapists and supervisors in therapy (over 500 certified specialists are included on the list to date);
- PPS trainer (3 degrees; over 500 recommended trainers and supervisors are included on the list to date);
- Recommendations to psychologists who apply for provision of expertise in courts (59 recommended experts to date);
- Certificate of the consultant in the clinical child psychology (35 certified specialists included on the list to date).<sup>1</sup>

The aforementioned examples at sector level are not exhaustive and many more initiatives can be found there. It is necessary, however, to raise transparency about the rules for granting certificates by various institutions and organizations – their procedures, competence requirements etc, as education authorities often decline to accept certificates recognised by the environment, as in some cases certificates of the Polish Psychologist Society.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ptp.psychologia.pl/>

<sup>2</sup> Korab, K. Report at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/III/life/report/candidate/poland\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/III/life/report/candidate/poland_en.pdf). Department of Strategy and Development, Ministry of National Education, p.4

## 4.0 Review of existing initiatives: the Third Sector

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There are about 47,000 non-government organisations in Poland, 15,000 of which offer social help. All of these organisations employ only a limited number of paid personnel with most of the work carried by volunteers (approx. 2 million).

The third sector in Poland is rather active in taking the initiative towards the validation of informal and non-formal learning. One of the reasons for this is that many non-governmental organisations, associations and societies (e.g. Polish Red Cross, Union of Polish Scouts, Caritas, voluntary workers organisations, houses of culture, associations 'Open doors', 'Semper Avanti', 'Tratwa') offer their membership and beneficiaries the possibility of learning by doing and other forms of informal and non-formal learning. In particular, activities in the framework of charity, voluntary works and in other forms of practical experience grant possibilities to attain a set of entirely new competences and knowledge, and the workers are particularly interested in their validation. This and the problems linked to informal and non-formal learning in general was a subject of the conference organised by the National Agency of the Programme Youth in December 2004<sup>1</sup>.

The Volunteer Centre is a professional operation which matches individuals wanting to volunteer with organisations and groups who are interested in benefiting from the services offered by volunteers<sup>2</sup>. An integral part of the Volunteer Centre's programme is organising and conducting training sessions for groups of volunteers and co-ordinators. The Centre has developed a special training method for this purpose offered throughout Poland.

The Volunteer Centre in Warsaw has initiated Regional Volunteer Centre network-building in Poland. Currently, the network comprises 17 Centres operating in different parts of the country. All Regional Volunteer Centres apply the same standards of work and are linked by mutual commitments<sup>3</sup>, as expressed in the 'Karta wolontariusza' ('Volunteer's card').<sup>4</sup>

The project 'Assessing voluntary experiences: identifying, evaluating and validating skills and qualifications acquired through volunteering as an informal learning for a professional purpose' was supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme (2003-2006) and involved the Volunteer Centre on the Polish side of the European consortium. Associations may be the ideal place to get accustomed and trained to novel and innovative solutions and

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wiadomosci.ngo.pl/labeo/app/cms/x/89865>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iriv.net/>; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iriv.net/>; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.fip.ngo.pl/programy/st\\_dok/4.pdf](http://www.fip.ngo.pl/programy/st_dok/4.pdf)

practices, to experiment or acquire new skills. For volunteers, a voluntary experience may lead or facilitate a professional career. Identifying and evaluating the skills and qualifications acquired through volunteering in the associations should be the way to recognize and validate this informal learning. It should be very useful for people who have no professional experience to face with a first activity (young people) and for people who have been kept away from the labour market to renew a professional activity (parents who have raised their children, sick people when they have recovered, former prisoners). The project's objectives were to:

- identify and evaluate the skills and qualifications required and acquired in volunteering;
- validate these skills and qualifications in a professional perspective<sup>1</sup>

The Non-Governmental Organisations' Trainers' Association (STOP) implements a jointly developed certification system aimed at increasing professionalism of the occupation of trainers for NGOs. Working for non-governmental organisations, STOP sometimes received signs of discontent; relations of unprofessional and even unethical activities in the training provision and thus decided to provide competence standards for NGO trainers supported by a certification system. STOP hopes to ensure quality of service provision by its members and by those means to increase the trust and motivation of NGOs in training<sup>2</sup>.

There is a description of the competences of a trainer of STOP with a list of minimum entrance competence requirements. The certification system is prepared for STOP members. STOP trainers are expected to be able to identify training needs, prepare training and evaluate its results, apply active learning methods, and have to implement training in accordance with the specific needs and situation of the group. The system has elaborated a 3-stage procedure of certification. The concept is based on sharing competences and evaluation by supervisors on the basis of actual training delivery. It distinguishes 2 degrees of certificates, where the higher amount of actually taught hours (practical experience) is demanded for the higher degree. The set of required documents along with the assessment by the supervisor goes to the Certification Commission of STOP; which takes the final decision. The certificate is valid for 5 years. During the first three months after obtaining the certificate the trainer has to provide a feedback on the experience and from clients.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iriv.net/>; [www.eEuropeassociations.net](http://www.eEuropeassociations.net).

<sup>2</sup> <http://free.ngo.pl/stop/>

## 5.0 Conclusions

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A great deal of efforts have been made in the framework of the reform process in initial VET and - more recently – in policy development and implementation of CVT. The introduction of modular training, extramural qualification examinations and work in the field of harmonisation of vocational and occupational standards all create good preconditions for a well functioning system where formal education can gradually become integrated with non-formal out-of-school training. From the point of view of an individual a real possibility exists in obtaining a recognised qualification without the necessity to undergo formal education in this field. Informally attained competences and experience can thus be validated and recognised. The system, however, is still in the process of change and adaptation. Many aspects of the reform are yet to be implemented. It is therefore very difficult to give an objective evaluation of the real situation.

Similarly, the development of a National Qualifications Framework is still in its early stages although there are ongoing efforts to develop a system of standards that would facilitate comparison of qualifications, certificates and diplomas acquired in the formal as well as the non-formal system of education. The development of a coherent system of standards is one of the priorities of the Strategy for the Development of Continuing Education until 2010 as well as the Operational Programme – Human Capital 2007-2013, and in 2006, the Minister of Science and Higher Education established a Working Group on the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The development of a NQF is an important element in the development of education and training systems across Europe and should take place alongside and in alignment with validation initiatives.

The importance of the validation of informal and non-formal learning is widely recognised in Poland, it is present in the political agenda as well as in expert discussions. However, a wealth of examples of initiatives in the academic circles, at sector level as well as among non-governmental organisations and public associations is accompanied by limited information and lack of awareness at a company level. The engagement of companies in the provision and development of validation of informal and non-formal learning can be facilitated through the enhancement of transparency and reinforcement of the systemic character of activities in this field.