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

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## **1.0 VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN CYPRUS**

*By Anna Manoudi (ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.)*

### **1.1 Introduction**

The validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus has a relatively high profile on the national policy agenda. Even though there are no national validation initiatives currently being implemented, there is ongoing discussion and research to enable the necessary institutions and systems for validation to be set up in the near future.

### **1.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public authorities**

#### **1.2.1 National**

The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) is the national body responsible for Human Resource development in Cyprus. The HRDA is a semi-governmental organisation governed by a tripartite Board of Directors, including representatives of the government, employers and trade unions. The Authority has been in operation since 1979 and its policies and financial support over the last 30 years stimulated a change in both attitudes towards training and the volume of training. The HRDA places emphasis on continuous assessment of labour market supply and demand; the formulation of strategies to meet the learning needs of individuals in employment and of those seeking employment; and listening to the needs of employers.

In relation to the validation of non-formal and informal learning a new law, which became effective on 1 November 1999, aimed to introduce standards for vocational qualifications and assigned the following responsibilities to the HRDA:

- 1) to define the standards for each professional category
- 2) to oversee examinations and
- 3) to issue certificates.

Implementation of the provisions within this law has not yet started. As a first step, the HRDA has commissioned a feasibility study which is being carried out at the moment and is expected to be completed in August 2004. The feasibility study is intended to establish what systems and structures the HRDA should put in place in order to undertake the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning.

A pilot scheme for the design of occupational standards has taken place for 5 occupations. This scheme was modelled on the UK system of occupational standards and is competence-based, independently of where the knowledge came from.

Apart from the above, a number of EU-funded projects have enabled Cyprus to be involved in other multi-country pilot actions. For example, Cyprus is participating in a Leonardo project entitled "Diaplus", with the purpose of producing a European tool for life-long career

management, which will enable individuals to monitor their career. The Information and Communications Technology sector has been selected for the pilot implementation of the project. Partners from six countries are working to produce a tool that will give to an individual the opportunity to review his/her qualifications, personal and occupational profile, so as to set new goals and plan his/her development accordingly. The tool will seek to appraise all knowledge and skills the individual has gained and ensure the validity of all types of learning.

Significant ESF funds for the period 2004-2006 are also used to co-fund three projects that are indirectly related to the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The three ESF projects aim to train and improve the employability of persons from the following categories:

- 1) economically inactive women;
- 2) young secondary education graduates; and
- 3) unemployed persons.

The implementation of these projects will start in late 2004 and will be run by the local offices of the public employment service. All three projects will aim to provide an individual pathway to work for each beneficiary. In order to achieve this, the PES will seek to – informally- assess whatever knowledge the beneficiaries hold whether informal, non-formal or otherwise. There will be guidelines developed for the PES staff who will be involved in these projects on how to assess prior learning in order to chose the right level of training for each individual.

### ***1.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private sector***

As mentioned above, there is no national system for validation in Cyprus but this may be developed in the near future. The setting of standards at a sectoral level has started for 5 professions. This follows the basis of the UK system, reviewed below in the Inventory by John Konrad.

Apart from that, certain widely used European-wide methods such as the European Computer Driving Licence, are also available in Cyprus. The ECDL in particular is widely accepted.

### ***1.4 Stakeholders***

In terms of other stakeholders that are involved in the development of a future system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, it should be noted that tripartite co-operation is well developed in Cyprus. The debate on developing a validation system has been underway for the past three years. However, the social partners have also chosen to wait for the results of the feasibility study commissioned by the HRDA before resuming discussions on the issue.

## **1.5 Conclusions**

In conclusion, even though there is currently no national system or methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus, the debate in the area is lively. It concerns outlining national policy in this domain for the years 2005-2013.

Future plans in Cyprus are under development and will include the establishment of a comprehensive series of standards, and of the related procedures and mechanisms for the assessment and validation of competences. These prospects are the subject of a feasibility study to be completed in the coming months.

In general, HRDA, the main institution charged with establishing a framework for validation in Cyprus is in dialogue with other countries either directly or through EU-funded pilot projects. Future possibilities include setting up a new institution for accreditation.