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

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CONTENTS

Comment [CA1]: Table of Contents automatically generated from Headings

1.0 VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN POLAND ... 1

By Olga Strietska-Illina (Independent consultant).....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector	1
1.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector	11
1.4 Review of existing initiative: The Third Sector	14
1.5 Conclusions	15

1.0 VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN POLAND

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1.1 Introduction

Although a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning doesn't exist in Poland, there are many elements of such system already in place and the preconditions are created. The legal environment is also gradually adjusting to meet changing demands. The Polish system of initial and continuing education and training has gone through a substantial reform process, which has not yet been finalised. In fact we are dealing with 'a moving target' when it comes to the situation in validation of informal and non-formal learning in Poland. Many features have been introduced very recently and thus their effectiveness and usage cannot be evaluated.

Whereas validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning *de jure* depends on the systemic and legal arrangements ensured gradually, *de facto* validation subsystems often exist in certain crafts and other sectors already. There is abundance of examples of innovative initiatives in the third sector as well as interesting analytical and development projects in the academic institutions. Many of those initiatives have been supported by EU programmes. It is important that the Polish government at the policy level and Polish society at various levels recognise the objective importance of validation of informal and non-formal learning. Though improvement of individual's situation's within the labour market and of the overall economic competitiveness of the country.

1.2 Review of existing initiatives: Public sector

1.2.1 Systematic and legal provisions at the national level

Polish initial 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 needs of the labour market, and ensuring 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 participation in education and training patterns in Poland. There has been a shift in the interest of students from vocational to general education. Participation in general education has almost doubled since 1990 reaching 36% in 2001/2. However, vocational path still predominates and approximately 60% of the relevant age groups undergo VET at secondary level. The reform facilitated the vertical permeability of the system. The horizontal permeability, however, is still limited, as transfers between different types of schools are only possible at the initial stage of the educational cycle. The curricular reform has supported

modularisation of study programmes but putting them into full usage in practice is still very much in progress¹.

As far as 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% in 2003 compared to 9% of the EU25 average².

Assessment and certification mechanisms in IVET and CVT³

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, vocational lyceums 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 and postsecondary schools. Who have successfully passed the initial VET examination. Both titles, certified with diplomas, are obtained irrespective of the form in which education took place (daytime, evening, weekend, extramural, or based on out-of-school examinations).

In the existing system, responsibility for certification, evaluation and the issuing of maturity and vocational title diplomas lies with the head teachers of the relevant types of secondary school. In the reformed system these tasks have to move to the newly introduced eight **Regional Examination Commissions** (coordinated by the Central Examination Board) appointed by the Minister of National Education. The new system will combine both internal and external assessment. In June 2002 an **external standardized 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 these tests do not determine a pupil's progress, the results obtained by pupils are recorded on individual school certificates. The new maturity examination composes of a part taken internally at the school (oral examination) and an external part (written examination) is postponed until 2005. The **first external vocational examinations** was planned for 2004 and the results are not available yet. Examinations are based on the requirement standards defined for given occupations by authorised institutions (e.g. schools, enterprises). The occupational title of apprentices and foremen, are acquired through an examination committee operating with a chamber of crafts. At the end of 2001, standards for external examination requirements were developed for 73 occupations⁴.

¹ 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

² LFS 2003 Principle Results. Statistics in focus. Eurostat. 14/2004

³ 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.

⁴ Ibid.

The current continuing education system encompasses public and non-public establishments functioning within and outside of the school system. External examinations confirming the acquired vocational qualifications represent one of the links between the system of initial vocational education and training and the continuing education system⁵. The separation of qualification examination from the fact of attaining formal education is a first step towards creation of the possibility of the standardized validation system of qualifications, achieved in formal vocational education or in non-formal learning.⁶

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 introduces the possibility of officially recognising primary school or post primary school diplomas without the requirement of attending classes in school. Apart from this, school dropouts, lacking a school certificate, may have their vocational on-the-job acquired skills certified by state committees (appointed by school headmasters) and receive the title of qualified labourer or master in the given occupation. The scope of adult education in terms of general and vocational training in schools for adults in the framework of the reform will be reduced. Instead of school-based training there will be more and more courses alongside a system of external examinations to certify vocational skills. The completion of a vocational or post secondary school is not any longer tantamount to receiving a vocational title but only 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 will be able to acquire these qualifications in the out-of-school system or at work. To gain formal recognition of these qualifications the candidate will have to pass an examination⁷.

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) maybe **validated** by taking examinations, organised by state examination commissions. There are also examination boards appointed by employers (e.g. chamber of crafts), which certify equivalent qualifications providing for the title of journeyman or master craftsman in a profession⁸.

⁵ Drogosz-Zablocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.12.

⁶ 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, p.50

⁷ Report on VET system in Poland, 2001, National Observatory, ETF., p.72

⁸ Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.53-54

An important element of the CVT system are **Centres for Continuing Education**, which are multifunctional public educational 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 CKU's 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.⁹

Act of 27 June 2003 Amending the Educational System Act and Some Other Acts (Journal of Laws 137/2003, item 1304) has 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 system¹⁰.

In the framework of the reform a dozen of other legislation acts concerning education were adopted recently¹¹. The regulations directly applying to vocational education and training dealt with requirement standards for examinations confirming vocational qualifications; types, organisation and operation of public continuing education establishments (Continuing Education Centres, Practical Education Centres, further training and upgrading centres); statutes of public continuing education establishments; core curricula for particular vocations; general vocational education profiles.¹²

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 experience¹³.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Drogosz-Zablocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.7

¹¹ *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 3 February 2003 on Requirement Standards for Examinations Confirming Vocational Qualifications* (Journal of Laws 49/2003 item 411), *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 13 June 2003 on the Types, Organisation and Operation of Public Continuing Education Establishments and Public Practical Learning Centres, Including Public Further Training Centres* (Journal of Laws 132/2003, item 1226), *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 30 July 2003 Amending the Regulation on Core Curricula in General Vocational Education* (Journal of Laws 143/2003, item 1391), *Regulation of the Minister for Education and Sport of 4 June 2003 on Core Curricula in the Following Occupations: Confectioner, Operator of Agricultural Machinery, Mechanic for Rural Facilities, Gardener, Operator of Food Industry Machines and Facilities, Baker, Farmer, Inland Fisherman, Butcher, Agro-business Technician, Horse Breeding Technician, Environmental Engineering and Land Reclamation Technician, Agriculture Mechanisation Technician, Gardening Technician, Apiculture Technician, Farming Technician, Inland Fishery Technician, Food Technology Technician and Food and Household Technician* (Journal of Laws 159/2003, item 1540).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, p.54

There are some other long established practices of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Poland. For instance, training and examinations for craftsmen and candidates, for particular degree's in craftsmanship in accordance with the Crafts Act. The Act (1989 Dz. U. No. 17, item 92 with subsequent amendments) stipulates conditions for carrying out examinations for craftsmen for the degree of apprentice and foreman in crafts, recognised by employers and State administration at national level¹⁴.

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), the award relates to sector entities and professional associations, to issue and deliver **state-recognised certificates** following training and examinations organised within the respective occupation or craft.¹⁵ Furthermore the Regulation in the field of categories, founding principles, changes and cancellation and principles of functioning of institutions of teachers training (2000, Dz. U. No. 85), 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.¹⁶

Overall there are some provisions of 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.¹⁷

Development of 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 field¹⁸. Indicate that the system of vocational qualifications in Poland does not yet exist. But there are elements of the 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), works on harmonisation of the two classification system (that of vocation fields and of occupations), system of documentation of the achievements of students (though without competence-based evaluation) etc.¹⁹

¹⁴ Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Institute for Terotechnology in Radom 2002, ETF

¹⁵ Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. An analysis of the first responses by the candidate countries, ETF, 2002, p.3.

¹⁶ ipe.pl/archiwum/+/html/pyt/uznanie.php

¹⁷ Zelloth, H. et al. Vocational education and training and employment services in Poland, ETF, 2002, pp.60-61.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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

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 as part of an ETF-initiated project²⁰. Standards for eight professions have been designed using this methodology. In 2003, work relating to another 40 occupations has been completed²¹.

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 over 2,400 occupations); (ii) Classification of vocational fields used by the Ministry of Education as a basis for designing vocational education for the relevant professions (contains 195 broadly conceived fields).

The state may only recognise the qualifications and certificates (skilled manual worker, technician, etc.) that fall within the classification of vocational education fields. The 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.²²

Recognition of qualifications from the point of view of mobility in Europe.

The Polish ENIC/NARIC body is the Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange (BfAR)²³. It is the 'contact point' that provides general information on recognition of qualifications of foreigners for practicing regulated professions in Poland. Poland adopted the following legislation relevant to recognition professional qualifications obtained in the EU: Law of 26 April 2001 on the rules governing the recognition of the qualifications required in EU member states for the pursuit of the regulated professions (Dz.U. 2001.87.954); Law of 10 May 2002 on the rules governing the recognition of qualifications acquired in EU member states for the taking up or pursuit of some of activities (Dz.U.2002.71.655); Law of 12 September 2003 amending the law on the rules governing the recognition of qualifications acquired in EU Member States for the pursuit of a regulated profession and amending certain other laws (Dz.U. 2003.190.1864)²⁴.

the Ministry of National Education and Sports). Stockholm Universitypp. Ministry of National Education and Sports, WB. Pp. 49-50

²⁰ Kwiatkowski, S.M.; Symela, K. Standardy kwalifikacji zawodowych. Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, Warszawa 2001.

²¹ Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.11

²² 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

²³ <http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl>.

²⁴ http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eu/public/eng/leg_en/index.htm#relevant_professional

The applications for the recognition of qualifications are submitted to BfAR. BfAR issues opinion on educational part of the qualification (level of education) and sends it to the relevant competent authority (ministries or their authorised subordinate entities or occupational self-governing bodies, sector organizations etc.). Competent authorities take a decision (recognize the qualification, suggest an adaptation period or an aptitude test) and forward it to the applicant²⁵.

BfAR started promoting the **diploma supplement** in Polish higher education institutions in 2000. A pilot project on the use of the diploma supplement involving 69 institutions of higher education was initiated in academic year 2000/2001. The object was to specify terms and conditions for the introduction of the new document in Poland as well as the issue of the first supplements (almost 4,000). The Ministry of Education has recommended the introduction of the diploma supplement and the relevant legal act is passing through the final stage of the legislative process. From 2004/05 onwards, the diploma supplement will be compulsorily annexed to all Polish higher education qualifications. It will contain full information on studies completed and the academic and vocational qualifications acquired. Until then, supplements will be issued upon request. According to a recent poll carried out by the Ministry of Education, 40 percent of higher education institutions have declared themselves ready to adopt the diploma supplement.²⁶

Poland ratified the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in December 2003, and the Convention came in force in this country since 1st May 2004²⁷.

There is no legal obligation for universities to use **credits for the transfer or accumulation of study periods**. However, the participation of Polish higher education institutions in the Tempus Program from 1990 and later SOCRATES/ERASMUS has resulted in the gradual implementation of credit transfer systems based on **European Credit Transfer System** (ECTS) for mobility purposes.²⁸ ECTS is used by most, state institution's specializing in arts, business and health profile's. The implementation of ECTS is one of the conditions for study programs to be accredited at the traditional universities. These 17 traditional universities are the most advanced in implementing and using the credit system. It has been used mainly as a transfer system but often too as an accumulation system. In the 2002/03 academic year, 70 Polish higher education institutions profited from a grant given by SOCRATES/ERASMUS for the introduction of ECTS. These grants have often been implemented at faculty or departmental level and sometimes at institutional level, although mostly for mobility. Some private institutions (over 200 in Poland) have only just started implementing ECTS.²⁹

²⁵ http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eu/public/eng/expl_en/doc/br_gen_EN.pdf The Database of regulated professions in Poland can be found at <http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl>.

²⁶ Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. QCA Consortium, 2004, p. 26 http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf

²⁷ Rauhvargers, A. Recognition of foreign qualifications. Guide for recognition specialists, Warsaw 2004, p. 11

²⁸ According to a report prepared by the ministry of education for the Berlin-Bologna 2003 ministerial conference, ECTS is applied for credit transfer in 68 percent (43/63) of state institutions and 35 percent (22/63) non-state institutions.

²⁹ Czesaná, V.; Matoušková, Z. (eds.). Achieving the Lisbon Goals: The contribution of VET. Country Report: Poland. QCA Consortium, 2004, pp. 25. http://www.refernet.org.uk/documents/Country_Report_Poland.pdf

Vocational guidance and career planning.

There has been a two-pillar system of vocational guidance and counselling in Poland:

- (i) The Ministry of National Education is in charge of overseeing activities provided for school students in career counselling and educational path choice. The network of pedagogical and psychological advisory centres was taken over by the *powiat* self-governments as of January 1999 in the framework of the decentralization reform.
- (ii) The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is in charge of career guidance and vocational counseling for adult population, especially for those unemployed and job-seekers via the network of the *powiat* labour offices as well as centres for vocational career information and planning operating at *voivodship* labour offices³⁰. The relocation of vocational guidance and counselling services for the youth and the adult population to the regional level should provide for integration of the system³¹.

Some *voivodship* labour offices provide evaluation of vocational skills and experience gained in non-formal contexts, making use of the French model *bilan de competence*.³²

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 labour³³.

1.2.2 Policy development

The authorities attach great importance to continuing education. This is proved, by a document entitled Development Strategy for Continuing Education Until 2010, adopted by the Government on 8 July 2003³⁴. 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 to 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.³⁵

³⁰ Report on VET system in Poland, 2001, National Observatory, ETF, p.73

³¹ The National Forum for Vocational Guidance activities have also been targeted at the integration of the system in recent years. Ibid

³² Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.11.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *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.

³⁵ Drogosz-Zabłocka, E. et al. VET in Poland. National Report. National Observatory, 2003, p.12.

With regard to the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning, the Strategy targets at implementation of numerous elements 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 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; establishment of professional qualification standards as one of the elements of ensuring quality in continuous education; creation of a system of voluntary accreditation of institutions conducting continuing education in non-school forms; modification and enrichment of offered continuous education programmes, with particular emphasis on modular programmes; creation of the bank of modular programmes for school and out-of-school training; 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 formal (school) and non-formal (out-of-school) system, compare the vocational achievements of pupils, 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.³⁶

Sectoral Operational Program for the Development of Human Resources (National Development Plan for the years 2004-2006) targets strengthening 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.

1.2.3 Academic sector

The method of the record of achievements is discussed in the literature³⁷ 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 industry³⁸. On the Polish side, the

³⁶ Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Ministry of Education and Sports. 2002, ETF

³⁷ 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

³⁸ The project was coordinated by European Society for Engineering Education, www.control.ethz.ch/eurorecord/.

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 a 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 providing methodology for documentation of competences, identification of the 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 Terotechnology in Radom is very active in the initiation of and in the participation in project's which develop aspects of the validation of competences attained through informal and non-formal learning, such as:

- 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,
- 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,
- Pilot project of the "The Jean Monnet – Poland Action" Programme: „Comparativeness of Vocational Qualifications on the Polish and European Labour Market" PL98/0071;
- Polot 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 Bank³⁹

The latter project European - *Bank for the Development of Modular Curricula and Educational Technologies - EMCET de Bank* (2001-2003) - was developed in the European consortium of seven partner institutions. Apart from the Institute for Terotechnology in Radom several other Polish institutions were involved: Association of Technical Schools, Górnośląsk Education Centre and FESTO DIDACTIC. The project developed modular approach, which took into account the training needs of participants based on the formative assessment of their competences. The system is based in 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

³⁹ Questionnaire on validation of non-formal and informal learning. Responses of the Institute for Terotechnology in Radom 2002, ETF

supplement⁴⁰ - 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.⁴¹

1.3 Review of existing initiatives: Private Sector

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 lack of awareness and understanding of solutions, commonly applied by European companies in this field, among the Polish firms.⁴²

In some industries, however, special standards are set and the work-based learning courses are easily recognized by other enterprises across the sector. Such an example is **banking**⁴³ 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 a 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 pass simplified examination. The certificate allows for comparability at the European labour market and supports mobility of the workforce. The first exam in Poland is scheduled for December 2004. The Polish institutions also offer training for preparation for the exam.⁴⁴

The Polish literature in the field of CVT specifically pinpoints **the construction sector**⁴⁵ where a model of continuing vocational training of construction workers includes self-

⁴⁰ The supplement explains the scope and character of the course of the modular training.

⁴¹ <http://www.itee.radom.pl/programy/emcet.htm>

⁴² 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

⁴³ Responses of NARICs on Questionnaire ICE & PLAR.

⁴⁴ <http://www.gab.com.pl/efcb/>

⁴⁵ 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.

training and training aimed at upgrading of skills in the out-of-school system of CVT.⁴⁶ The same sector enjoys the *Model of professional qualification structure and new methods of promotion, certification and mutual recognition of managerial skills according to EU requirements*.⁴⁷ 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 was aimed at recognition of needs 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 from European Union,
- Creation of uniform certification criteria of managerial qualifications and accreditation of studies, preparing to fulfil managerial functions in various areas of construction industry and different levels of required qualifications,
- Preparation of models and organization of complementary studies (especially "distance learning" system), which are necessary to standardize qualification levels and process of specialization 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.

⁴⁶ 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

⁴⁷ <http://www.il.pw.edu.pl/~itiopb/leonardoIII/info-eng.htm>

Another example of a sector initiative is 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 (EFW) 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.⁴⁸

The Polish Psychologists Society (PPS) provides recommendations, licences, and permissions for performance of training or consultations for the PPS members with the 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).⁴⁹

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

⁴⁸ <http://www.is.gliwice.pl/en/certification.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.ptp.psychologia.pl/>

certificates by various institutions and organizations – their procedures, competence requirements etc, as education authorities often decline to accept certificates recognised by the environment, like in some cases certificates of the Polish Psychologist Society.⁵⁰

1.4 Review of existing initiative: The Third Sector

The third sector in Poland is rather active in taking the initiative towards validation of informal and non-formal learning. One of the reasons 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 a possibility of learning by doing and other forms of informal and non-formal learning. Especially 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 is a subject of the conference being organised by the National Agency of the Programme Youth in December 2004⁵¹.

Presently, 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. 2million). **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 volunteers⁵². 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 commitments⁵³, as expressed in the ‘*Karta wolontariusza*’ (‘Volunteer’s card’).⁵⁴

The project called *Assessing voluntary experiences: identifying, evaluating and validating skills and qualifications acquired through volunteering as an informal learning for a professional purpose* is supported by the programme Leonardo da Vinci (2003-2006) and involves 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 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

⁵⁰ Korab, K. Report at http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lll/life/report/candidate/poland_en.pdf. Department of Strategy and Development, Ministry of National Education, p.4

⁵¹ <http://www.wiadomosci.ngo.pl/labeo/app/cms/x/89865>

⁵² <http://www.iriv.net/>; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl>

⁵³ <http://www.iriv.net/>; <http://www.wolontariat.org.pl>

⁵⁴ http://www.fip.ngo.pl/programy/st_dok/4.pdf

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 (youngsters) 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 are to:

- identify and evaluate the skills and qualifications required and acquired in volunteering;
- validate these skills and qualifications in a professional perspective⁵⁵

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 NGOs' 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 training⁵⁶.

There is a description of 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, whereas 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 first 3 months after obtaining the certificate the trainer has to provide a feedback on the experience and from clients.

1.5 Conclusions

A great deal of efforts have been done in the framework of the reform process in the initial VET and - more recently – in policy development and implementation of CVT. Introduction of modular training, extramural qualification examinations and works 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

⁵⁵ <http://www.iriv.net/>; www.eEuropeassociations.net

⁵⁶ <http://free.ngo.pl/stop/>

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 to the real situation now.

The importance of the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the country is widely recognised, it is well present in the political agenda as well as in the expert discussions. 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 provision and development of validation of informal and non-formal learning can be facilitated by enhancement of transparency and reinforcement of the systemic character of activities in this field.