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European Inventory on Validation of Non- formal and Informal Learning 2010 Country Report: Czech Republic

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1 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

As an introduction and to understand the focus of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic it is important to highlight that the overall qualification attainment of the population is relatively high:

- The number of early school leavers are among the lowest in the EU (in 2008 only 5.6% of young people – 18-24 – who were not in education had only a lower secondary level education attainment¹);
- Over 90% of the economically active adult population (aged 25-64) have achieved at least upper-secondary qualifications² (that give access to higher education).

Consequently, the main emphasis on validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic is not so much on upgrading one's qualifications (one level up) or on getting access to higher education, but more on requalification and gaining additional qualifications (mainly vocationally oriented ones). This is the area where most developments are taking place and where the political emphasis is given. Having said this, the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning that is currently being implemented does give those people who have no or only very low qualifications the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications (second chance).

Recognition and permeability are among the seven strategic goals of the Czech Lifelong Learning Strategy³, together with equal access, functional literacy, social partnership, stimulation of demand, quality and counselling. When it comes to formal (i.e. certified) recognition of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal settings this is mainly motivated by the political will to support employability⁴. However, attention is also being paid to the contribution non-formal learning activities are having on the development of key competences and personal and social development of individuals – with specific emphasis on non-formal learning of children and young people as well as volunteers and people working in NGOs that organise non-formal learning⁵.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning for the purposes of shortening one's studies (without being linked to achievement of a partial qualification) is not the main focus of ongoing developments. As noted below higher education institutions cannot use this option for purposes of shortening studies leading to Bachelor or Master's qualification. For the moment, publicly funded providers of adult learning offering requalification courses can use this procedure for shortening studies in only in a limited manner (see below). The rules for accreditation of providers of publicly funded further learning (mainly leading to requalification) specify that to be able to participate in the final assessment for the given certificate the candidate has to have participated in at least 80% of the programme activities⁶.

¹ Eurostat data

² Eurostat data

³ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2007): *The Strategy of Lifelong Learning in the Czech Republic* available online: http://www.msmt.cz/uploads/Zalezitosti_EU/strategie_2007_EN_web_jednostrany.pdf

⁴ See: National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education (2007): *OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning; country report: Czech Republic*; p.18

⁵ See the implementation plan for the Lifelong learning strategy and more specifically the activities planned under the objective on development of extracurricular and leisure activities of pupils. Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy (2008): *Implementační plán Strategie celoživotního učení*. Available online: <http://www.msmt.cz/mezinarodni-vztahy/publikace-strategie-celozivotniho-uceni-cr>

⁶ Vyhláška č. 176/2009 Sb., kterou se stanoví náležitosti žádosti o akreditaci vzdělávacího programu, organizace vzdělávání v rekvalifikačním zařízení a způsob jeho ukončení Available online: http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/7325/Vyhlaska_176.pdf

1.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

The legislative framework for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic is set in the law 179/2006 Coll. on *Recognition of Further education results*⁷ valid as from 1 September 2007. This law defines the conditions and the process for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in view of achieving full and partial qualifications. The law also defines the term qualification (full or partial) as well as the national qualifications register (see also below point 1.2).

According to this law any person who is older than 18 and has achieved a minimum basic education can request the assessment of his/her learning outcomes in view of achieving a partial qualification (see also below). In other words there is no minimum requirement in terms of practice in a given professional area or other prior learning. The process is based on an assessment by an authorised person (regulated by the same law) in line with the assessment standard for a given qualification (defined in the national qualifications register).

The process will cover all full and partial qualifications in the qualifications register and these can be at all levels of the national qualifications framework except higher education degrees: i.e. Bachelor, Master and PhD. These degrees can currently (in 2010) only be achieved through completion of a regular formal programme of education and training or after a recognition procedure when it comes to qualifications achieved abroad. The formal study programme can be shortened following the recognition of credit from another higher education institution but not following the recognition of non-formal or informal learning. The minimum requirement for access to tertiary education is the upper-secondary leaving certificate (Maturita) and non-formal and informal learning cannot be recognised in order to grant access, if the applicant does not hold the "Maturita" qualification.

As will be discussed below, the recognition process is conditioned by the existence of the qualification standard in the national qualifications register. When the legislation entered into force, in 2007, the number of qualifications standards available was limited. The qualifications standards in the qualifications system are being progressively completed and approved thus enhancing the possibilities for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In May 2010 there were 200 partial qualifications available but it is planned that there would be around 1200-1500 partial qualifications. Most of the full and partial qualifications currently defined in the qualifications register are at the level that will correspond to the level 3 of the EQF. Qualifications at higher levels are progressively being developed.

1.2 Relationship with the existing/ developing qualifications framework and information on standards used for validation

The procedure for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic is tightly related to the development of the qualifications framework. The law 179/2006 Coll. which defines the procedure for recognition of NFIL also defines the qualifications register which is the basis of the national qualifications framework.

Recognition procedure can only be carried out if the qualifications and assessment standard are defined in the qualifications register. Qualifications in the register are developed through a defined process by sectoral councils and they are described in a specific format. The use of competences to define these qualifications (as opposed to the use of teaching inputs that are used to define curricula) enables the recognition of learning that has been achieved outside the formal learning context.

⁷ Zákon 179/2006 Sb., o ověřování a uznávání výsledků dalšího vzdělávání available online: http://aplikace.msmt.cz/PDF/PKsb061_06.pdf

Act 179/2006 Coll., on Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results and on the Amendment to Some Other Acts (the Act on the Recognition of Further Education Results) available online in english: <http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/zakon-c-179-2006-sb>

The development of the qualifications register is linked to the reform of all vocational qualifications in view of improving the relationship between qualifications and the labour market needs. It takes place simultaneously to the development of a new register of occupations. The qualifications register contains full and partial qualifications. Partial qualifications can be related to a full qualification (i.e. the full qualification is composed of partial qualifications) but they can also be independent “additional” qualifications. For full qualifications, sectoral councils define the standards of all vocationally oriented qualifications that are not awarded by higher education institutions (meaning qualifications other than the Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees). In practice this means that they define all standards of full qualifications up to what would correspond to the level five of the EQF (with the exception of general education qualifications). Sectoral councils can also define partial qualifications that are at higher levels (for example levels that would correspond to the level 6 or 7 of the EQF) but these would be partial qualifications – in practice they are specialised additional qualifications.

Full qualifications (other than higher education degrees) can be achieved following the successful passing of a final examination. The examination is open to people who have either successfully completed the related formal education and training programme or those who have⁸:

acquired partial qualifications confirming all professional qualifications laid down in the National Qualification System for Due Performance of all Working Activities Carried Out within a Certain Profession.

Consequently the introduction of the qualifications register, which is the basis of the national qualifications framework, articulates the competence requirements to achieve a qualification and this enables a procedure for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In the past, qualifications were based on education standards (curricula) which were formulated in terms of taught inputs making it impossible to match one’s competences achieved outside the formal system with the requirements.

When it comes to the issue of standards used, the qualifications in the register⁹ are described through two sets of standards:

- Qualifications standard (or certification standard) – which contains the list of professional competences;
- Assessment standard which contains, for each professional competence, the assessment criteria and the assessment modes (e.g. oral explanation, practical demonstration, etc.).

These standards are used for recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as for the certification process which follows the formal education and training programme (i.e. final examination).

1.3 National institutional framework

The overall institutional framework for recognition (certified) of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic is summarised in the table below. Note that the financing aspect is not covered in this sub-section as it is discussed separately in section 1.7 below.

⁸ Act No. 561 of 24th September 2004 on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act); §113c available online: <http://www.msmt.cz/dokumenty/act-no-561-of-24th-september-2004>

⁹ See the register here (in Czech only): <http://www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz/default.aspx>

Institutional framework for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in CZ

Function/process	(Type of) Institution responsible
Qualification and assessment standards	<p>Approved by the Ministry of Education</p> <p>Developed by the sectoral councils. Sectoral councils bring together: employers' and employees' representatives as well as the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NUOV), National Council for qualifications, the relevant ministry. The sectoral councils are expected to be proactive in suggesting what new standards are needed and where standards should be updated.</p>
Conception of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning process	<p>Ministry of Education and the National Institute for TVET</p> <p>The process and responsibilities of different institutions are defined in the law 179/2006 Coll.</p>
(carrying out) Assessment of non-formal and informal learning (based on the standard) – for partial qualifications	<p>Authorised institutions – these can be schools, private institutions, companies as well as persons (for example a craftsman can become an authorised person)</p> <p>Some assessment standards require the presence of a jury (two or three people)</p> <p>In line with the assessment standard and the specified mode of assessment the authorised persons are responsible to choose the most appropriate assessment method, context, tools as well as the exact definition of the assessment (i.e. the formulation of the question or the assignment, etc.)</p>
(carrying out) Assessment of non-formal and informal learning (based on the standard) – for full qualifications	<p>Schools only</p> <p>In line with the regulation and specifications for the specific full qualification. Note: final examinations for VET qualifications at upper-secondary level are all defined nationally and the same examination applies to regular students as well as to people who have achieved partial qualifications but have not participated in the full formal programme.</p>
Recognition of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. delivery of certificate) – for partial qualifications	<p>The certificate is delivered by the authorised person or the jury</p> <p>The law 179/2006 Coll. specifies what information has to figure on the certificate</p>

Function/process	(Type of) Institution responsible
Recognition of non-formal and informal learning (i.e. delivery of certificate) – for full qualifications	Only schools can award full qualifications – these are the same certificates as those awarded by schools to people who have achieved the qualification through formal education and training
Quality assurance of the process	The law 179/2006 Coll. stipulates the requirements regarding documentation and archiving of proceedings Appeals procedure: the applicants can request the authorised bodies (see below) to review the process
Giving licence to authorised persons/institutions	This is done by authorised bodies who are the ministries under which the given partial qualification falls (there are currently six ministries concerned – the Ministries of Regional Development, Agriculture, Industry and Trade, Home Affairs, Education, and Transport). Authorisation is linked to a specific partial qualification and is valid for the period of five years Those interested to become authorised persons/institutions need to request authorisation The process is set in law 179/2006 Coll.
Monitoring and expertise for the overall approach	National Institute for TVET

1.4 Division of responsibilities (national, regional, local, provider level) according to the different aspects of validation

These aspects are set at national level:

- The overall approach as set in the legislative framework (including division of competences among the different institutions and types of bodies);
- For both full and partial qualifications: the qualification and assessment standards including assessment criteria and assessment mode (e.g. oral presentation, practical demonstration, etc.);
- For certain full qualifications (qualifications at the level 3 of the NQF) the assessment is fully defined at national level;
- The delivery (and removal) of licence to authorised persons/bodies;
- Public employment service policy including the use of recognition of NFIL for requalification of unemployed.

Regional level:

Regional authorities do not have a specifically defined responsibility with regard to recognition of NFIL in the legislation, however they have important competences in the related areas such as:

- Regions are in charge of education and training infrastructure (they decide on the number of schools, the qualifications to be offered etc.). As outlined above and discussed in more detail below, schools are expected to be key actors (though not the only one) in the recognition of NFIL. Regions can provide incentives for schools to engage in lifelong learning activities (including recognition). Currently, there is a nationwide project (UNIV) which develops regional networks of VET schools in view of enhancing their capacity to provide further education, guidance and recognition of NFIL for adults. Among other things, the project provides training to schools staff on how to use the qualifications and assessment standards for recognition of NFIL (as well as for development of adult learning programmes). Regions decide which VET schools participate in the project based on demographic forecasts and skills needs in the area.
- Though public employment services (PES) operate at local level (towns) regions have a role in disseminating information among public employment services staff who offer guidance and are expected to orientate people towards recognition of NFIL (mainly when it comes to requalification measures).

Institutional level:

- Reception of requests for recognition from the side of learners;
- Setting up the assessment procedure and its design and the actual assessment;
- Decision on recognition;
- Delivery of a certificate.

There is for the moment no clearly defined responsibility for orientation and guidance. Promotion and awareness raising about the possibilities of recognition will be made at national level. The information system of the NQF which contains information about qualifications available through this procedure and about the requirements and assessment will be managed at national level (the current system is oriented at an expert audience and will be further developed). PES staff, schools as well as employers and their representatives (e.g. chambers) will have a guidance and orientation role in guiding people towards these possibilities.

1.5 Examples of regional, local or EU funded initiatives

The development and implementation of the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning receives significant EU funding through the European Social Fund. The following aspects were EU (co-)funded (mainly ESF):

- The conceptualisation and development of the qualifications framework and the underpinning register (including the development of new qualifications standards);
- Methodological support for the recognition system;
- Development of schools into centres for lifelong learning and more specifically:
 - o Informing schools about the possibilities of recognition of NFIL and the possibilities for them to become authorised bodies and training pedagogical staff in how to work with the newly developed qualifications standards (including for the purposes of recognition of NFIL);
 - o The promotion of information aimed at individuals – potential candidates.

1.6 Link between validation and the existing/ developing credit system, unit-based or modularised structure of qualifications

There is currently no credit system as such in Czech vocational education and training, and in higher education ECTS is not used for recognition of non-formal and informal learning (this is not enabled by the current legislative framework).

However, there are aspects of accumulation of learning outcomes in the above described approach to recognition in VET. For full qualifications at levels 3 and 4 of the NQF, where these are composed of several partial qualifications, the individual can accumulate the partial qualifications. In this case, the fact that s/he holds the partial qualifications entitles him/her to attend the final examination directly without having to attend any formal learning. Final examinations at the level 3 of the NQF are very much oriented towards assessing the vocational competence of individuals. They are very practically oriented and hence are suitable to test the competence of people who have achieved these through employment rather than through formal education and training.

Final examinations for full qualifications at level 4 are somewhat different. These full qualifications give access to higher education and hence have an important academic component which is oriented more at knowledge (for example an examination from the Czech language and literature is compulsory). People are unlikely to have achieved this knowledge fully through employment. The exact details of how partial qualifications will be accumulated towards full qualifications at this level are yet to be defined but it is likely that the more academic elements of these qualifications (like Czech language) will for most people require additional formal learning while it will be possible to achieve the vocational aspects of these qualifications through accumulation of partial qualifications following recognition of NFIL.

However, there are typically only a few partial qualifications for a full qualification (because the partial qualifications are expected to be meaningful for the labour market on their own) and hence the possibilities for accumulation are somewhat limited compared to a qualifications system which uses smaller units. Furthermore, the possibilities of credit transfer are also likely to be limited as it is rare (though possible) that a partial qualification would contribute to several programme units.

1.7 Funding framework

The procedure is designed so that the direct costs of the recognition procedure (assessment and assessors) will be covered by individuals. Individuals can seek co-funding from employers but this is not regulated. The current experience shows that employers are willing to cover the costs of the procedure if the qualification is related to a regulated profession or a licence to practice. For unemployed people it is foreseen that public employment services will be able to cover the costs of the assessment if this fall in the framework of requalification (so far they fund the requalification training as well as the assessment¹⁰).

It is for the authorised persons to set the fee and in practice this varies depending on the qualification and the material needs for the assessment (it can go up to several hundreds of euro). However the fee has to be set within a scale that is set at national level, according to the partial qualification, when the assessment standard is designed. This calculation takes into account the fees of assessors and possibly of an assistant (who prepares and puts in order the assessment) as well as the material needed¹¹. Based on a qualified judgement a calculation is made and the final scale for the fee normally varies between 50% and 130% of the result of the qualified judgement. The committee makes a judgement on the cost and sets a figure (e.g. EUR 200) – based on that figure the committee will normally define a minimum and a maximum fee and that would vary between 50 and 130% (e.g. EUR 100 and EUR 270). There are exceptions though – for example some ministries (competent

¹⁰ It is already technically possible for PES services to cover the costs of the assessment process. However given that they lack diagnostic tools/ experience/ practice which would enable them to evaluate whether a person is likely to succeed in the assessment process directly or whether they need additional training at this point in time PES services prefer to send people to training rather than directly for the recognition of NFIL procedure.

¹¹ NUOV (2010) *Metodika naplňování Národní soustavy kvalifikací*. P.36-37 Available online: http://www.nuov.cz/uploads/Metodika_naplnovani_NSK_2010.pdf

authorities for certain qualifications) have decided not to set any minimum value and the range hence goes from zero.

The setting up of fees at national level was a sensitive discussion point and while some actors were in favour of no limitations, others were in favour of setting only the maximum or only the minimum rate. Overall it was clear from the beginning that differences in fees were necessary because:

- The duration of and material needed for assessment can vary greatly: from a few hours to several days; from basic alimentary products to costly construction materials;
- The costs of renting facilities as well as those of assessors vary according to the regions.

When it comes to the equipment needed, the authorised person has to be able to provide the technical and material conditions necessary for carrying out the assessment. This condition can be satisfied by both education and training institutions which have the necessary equipment for teaching but also enterprises which have the equipment for purposes of service/product delivery.

The setting up of the recognition system and of the methodology, training and preparation of VET secondary schools (and teachers) are funded through several ESF projects. The standards development is part of the NQF design national project. The training and awareness raising among teachers and school leaders is part of the aforementioned project called UNIV¹².

1.8 Data on flows of beneficiaries

The recognition process really started in 2009 and hence the figures remain relatively modest. The table below shows the number of successful assessments carried out (note: there seem to be very few unsuccessful assessments but these are not captured in the data) as of May 2010. The table also shows that the numbers of successful candidates have been growing relatively quickly. Between January 2010 and July 2010 the number of successful candidates has grown by 400%. Interestingly the highest number of candidates is in an area where so far only two partial qualifications are available. However both of these qualifications are related to the condition of obtaining a licence to trade and consequently the qualification becomes a condition for practising the occupation.

¹² A first phase run in the 2005-2006 period (<http://www.univ.nuov.cz/>) and the second phase is ongoing (<http://www.nuov.cz/univ2k>)

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the Czech Republic as of July 2010 (also compared to January 2010)

Authorised body	Ministry of regional development	Ministry of agriculture	Ministry of industry and trade	Home affairs	Ministry of education	Ministry of transport	Total July 2010	Total in January 2010
Number of partial qualifications	28	76	95	2	2	9	212	193
Number of authorised persons (institutions or persons who are authorised to carry out validation)	77	62	42	60	2	0	243	173
Number of authorisations for individual partial qualifications	521	287	287	107	4	0	1206	912
Number of (successful) assessments carried out	322	45	161	2592	6	0	3126	786

Source: Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

2 ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

2.1 Role of the formal education and training sector, including providers

First of all the development of this national approach to recognition of non-formal and informal learning is led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport though largely supported and contributed to by other ministries (when it comes to the design of partial qualifications based on occupational profiles).

The formal education and training sector has these main roles:

- In the process of design of partial qualifications and of assessment criteria representatives from the formal education and training sectors are members of expert teams;
- Education and training providers can (and do) request authorisation to undertake recognition of non-formal and informal learning for partial qualifications (other types of organisations can also apply);
- Full qualifications can only be awarded by formal education and training providers.

VET schools are also expected in the future to provide guidance to adult learners.

2.2 Role of existing information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

The information, advice and guidance functions are for the moment considered rather weak – this is the case in initial education and training as well as when it comes to the career and education and training guidance available to adults¹³. However, initiatives (like the below

¹³ See for example: Kuczera M. (2010) *Learning for Jobs: OECD Review of Vocational Education and Training. Czech Republic*

discussed UNIV projects) are designed to improve the information and guidance available to possible candidates for recognition of NFIL.

The public employment services use a diagnostic approach (COMDI) for their clients – this is a tool to identify competences and aspirations based on individuals' self-assessment¹⁴. It also uses tests for knowledge and skills in certain key areas like numeracy. The goal of this diagnostic approach is to orientate people towards the appropriate profession and/or training. It has different modules according to the profile of the individual and it can be used with different profiles of clients (according to age or prior qualification)¹⁵.

The database containing information on the qualifications in the qualifications register will be an important tool for provision of information and guidance. At this stage the database (<http://www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz/>) is publicly available and contains the approved qualifications and assessment standards searchable by sector as well as some additional information like the range for fees for assessment or the institutions that participated in the design of the standard. It is planned that the database will be further developed to facilitate use by career advisors but also directly individual learners.

2.3 Validation in the private sector and the role of private sector actors

First of all, private organisations can become authorised persons that can deliver partial qualifications. Currently the majority of authorised persons are (private or public) schools but some sectoral organisations (chambers) and some private enterprises have been authorised for assessment and award of partial qualifications.

Private sector representatives also have a key role to play in the definition of qualifications standards and of partial qualifications as they are key members of sectoral organisations.

Some sectoral organisations and chambers have developed their own certification approaches (e.g. for accountants or in the area of marketing). These often require professional experience in the sector as a pre-requisite and consequently they recognise the added value of informal and non-formal learning for professional development of people without necessarily specifying explicit standards for this recognition process.

2.4 Validation in the third sector and the role of third sector actors

When it comes to the approach to certified recognition of non-formal and informal learning that leads to certification as described in the majority of this document this is currently (in 2010) not used in the third sector. However, it is possible that in the future one or several partial qualifications related to the roles and activities of people working in the voluntary sector will be designed. In the initial stages of the development of the qualifications register, emphasis is put on those qualifications where there is significant demand for qualified staff or qualifications that already exist in the initial VET systems. Additional qualifications, like for example a qualification for volunteers working in the third sector will be envisaged at a later stage.

¹⁴ <http://www.rcv.cz/cz-7-pracovni-diagnostika-comdi.html>

¹⁵ For more information, in Czech only, see: <http://www.rcv.cz/cz-7-pracovni-diagnostika-comdi.html>

Example: Project for Development of key competences in leisure and non-formal learning¹⁶

Since 2009, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport together with the National Institute for Children and Youth¹⁷ has run a project that is designed to support the lifelong learning of people working mainly in the third sector. This large scale project develops a complex range of activities covering aspects such as research on education and training needs of people working in the sector, or how organisations in the third sector currently operate in the development of three years education programme for people in the voluntary sector in cooperation with one University. One strand of work under this project is the development of an approach to validation and recognition of NFIL. This strand of work covers:

- Research on the state of play of competence needs in the third sector;
- Development of a set of minimum competence standards (key competences and vocational competences) for volunteers and professionals working with children and young people in their free time;
- Design of self-assessment tools as well as methods for identification of these competences;
- Design and testing of learning modules (including e-learning) for the competences defined;
- Analysis of the preferred approach of organisations working in the third sector to what the role of these competence standards should be, including a proposal for an accreditation process for non-formal learning delivered/facilitated by the third sector;
- Discussions with the social partners and educational institutions on the best ways to validate, including introduction of mutually agreed and guaranteed certificates, highlighting competences acquired through non-formal education in the field of work with children and youth.

In the final phase this strand of work will result in the development of a common agreed approach to recognition of non-formal learning in the third sector¹⁸. It is foreseen that the competence standards developed will transform into 12 new partial qualification(s) that will be included in the qualifications register.

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot>

¹⁷ The institute is an agency of the Ministry of education, youth and sport which provides methodological support for the sector of leisure and voluntary activities for children and youth

¹⁸ More information on this strand of the project can be found (in Czech only) here: <http://www.nidm.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot/uznavani-neformalniho-vzdelavani?fi=1>

2.5 Costs to organisations

As noted in the section on funding framework, the costs for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in view of partial qualifications are borne partly by the individual and partly by the organisations – when it comes to equipment. Normally the price of the procedure is set so as to cover the human resources and material required.

The accreditation fee for an organisation is 1500CKK (approx. EUR 60) for each authorisation¹⁹ with a maximum fee of 10,000CKK (approx EUR 410) when the organisation requests seven or more authorisations. This fee covers the authorisation process.

A survey²⁰ of assessors carried out as part of the UNIV project showed that most assessors considered that the costs for the assessment process were appropriate considering both the costs to the individual (direct and indirect) when compared to the costs of training as well as the costs for the assessment process itself.

Example: UNIV Projects²¹

UNIV is a name for a series of projects funded through the ESF Operational Programme Education for Competitiveness 2007-2013 (and the Operational Programme Development of Human Resources 2004-2006). These are capacity building projects that aim at enhancing the capacity of VET schools and providers to deliver lifelong learning including recognition of NFIL.

In the first project UNIV 1, the feasibility of the recognition procedure discussed in this national report was tested. Schools were involved in developing modularised VET programmes for adult learning and, in testing the possibilities of using assessment standards defined by sectoral councils for recognition of NFIL.

The initial findings of the project UNIV 1 are further developed under the UNIV 2 project which creates regional networks of VET schools and trains teaching staff in order to enable schools to better meet the needs of adult learners. As part of this project pedagogical staff learn how to identify the needs for adult learning provision in their area/region, how to reach adult learners and what information to give them (information – including marketing -and guidance) but they are also trained in using the qualifications register as a basis for both definition of learning programmes as well as assessment and recognition of NFIL.

Basic data: 325 VET schools participate in the project (spread across the whole territory of the Czech Republic); in 2010, 61 of these schools were authorised to provide for recognition of NFIL for at least one partial qualification.

It is expected that a new project – UNIV 3 – will be launched in 2011 with specific focus on recognition of NFIL.

¹⁹ an authorisation is needed for each partial qualification but these can be requested jointly in one procedure

²⁰ NUOV (2010) *Příklady dobré praxe z realizace uznávání výsledků předchozího učení* (Examples of good practice in carrying out recognition of NFIL)

²¹ For more information see: <http://www.nuov.cz/univ2k/projekt> and <http://www.univ.nuov.cz/>

3 INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

The awareness of individuals about the possibilities of recognition is currently low and this is recognised in the planning for implementation of the above described approach to recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In the previous period major efforts have been made in the development of qualifications and assessment standards. It was impossible to launch a large information campaign before these standards were ready for use. In addition it was first necessary to develop a network of authorised bodies.

An awareness-raising and information campaign aimed at individuals is planned for 2010²².

When it comes to awareness-raising among education and training providers, this is being covered by a national project (UNIV 2 Kraje - regions) which aims to convert education and training institutions into centres of lifelong learning. This project concerns activities other than recognition, such as the development of modularised programmes for adults and the provision of adult learning. As part of this project, education and training providers are encouraged to become active in the area of adult learning and to promote the services they can offer to both individuals and employers themselves.

3.2 Provision of guidance and support

At this stage, no specific support is foreseen at national level to support individuals in preparing for the assessment of NFIL or in completing their application form. However, as part of the project UNIV 2 VET schools are developing their capacity to provide career and education and training guidance to adults – including in order to orientate them towards recognition of NFIL. Furthermore, PES services are also expected to play a role in this process.

3.3 Costs to individuals

As noted above the costs of the assessment process to achieve partial qualifications are partly borne by individuals through the payment of a fee. This can vary greatly from less than a hundred euro to several hundred, depending on the qualification. The fee can be covered by the employer but there is no obligation for employers to contribute to this expenditure.

For job seekers registered at PES offices the fee is covered through the public employment policy. PES can only fund re-qualification activities that lead to achievement of partial qualifications²³ (if a qualification in the sector/ domain exists in the qualifications register). These requalification activities can cover training, recognition of NFIL or a combination of these.

3.4 Initiatives focused on specific target groups

No initiatives focused on specific target groups have been identified.

3.5 Evidence of benefits to individuals

The implementation of the recognition procedure is still in relatively early stages and no systematic evaluation or monitoring of benefits has been carried out. Some case study evidence is available from the assessments carried out as part of the NUOV project²⁴. This rather small scale case study evidence shows benefits such as:

- Increased confidence;
- Enhanced motivation to learn further;

²² Odbor dalšího vzdělávání Ministerstva školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy (2010): *Průvodce dalším vzděláváním*

²³ Regulation No. 176/2009 Coll. (See Note. Footnote 6)

²⁴ NUOV (2010) *Příklady dobré praxe z realizace uznávání výsledků předchozího učení* (Examples of good practice in carrying out recognition of NFIL)

- Access to a qualified position in the labour market.

4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

4.1 Quality Assurance Framework

The quality assurance framework for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is set in the legislation 179/2006 Sb which sets up this approach and related laws. It relies on these pillars:

- ***The quality of the qualifications and assessment standards.*** These are formulated by bodies that contain a mixture of stakeholders from the labour market as well as from the education and training area. There is also national level guidance available concerning the process through which these should be designed and how they should be formulated and presented. Furthermore there is an approval process for the standards by the relevant ministry.
- ***The quality of authorised persons/bodies when it comes to their expertise as well as material equipment.*** The overall criteria through which a person or an organisation can become authorised are defined at national level and each qualification standard specifies the particular qualifications and equipment the authorised persons/bodies have to demonstrate. These are authorised by the relevant ministry. The authorisation is limited in time (five years).
- ***Definition of the assessment mode and material equipment at national level.*** For each competence defined in the qualifications standard, several assessment criteria are defined. For each criterion the mode of assessment is defined as part of the assessment standard and is hence homogeneous across the country. For example for the partial qualification of Sommelier one competence is “preparation of wine menus” within which one assessment criterion is “use knowledge about worldwide wine production areas” and this is assessed through a “practical demonstration”²⁵. The material needed for assessment is also defined at national level (at a general level).
- ***The requirement to document the execution of the assessment.*** It is required that the authorised persons keep documentation about the procedure. It is also required that the assessment process is open to the public.
- ***The possibility for individuals to appeal.*** Individuals can request a review of the process and the competent ministry has to give an opinion on their request.

4.2 Quality assurance systems / procedures

See above

4.3 Evaluation framework

No evaluation framework has been defined at this stage.

5 ASSESSMENT METHODS

5.1 Methods used

The assessment always takes the form of a complex examination in front of the authorised person or commission. Portfolios are not used. The person carries out the practical, written and/or oral parts of the assessment in front of the assessors.

²⁵ See the assessment standard for Sommelier here: <http://www.narodni-kvalifikace.cz/detailHodnoticihoStandardu.aspx?s=31&id=66>

These three main assessment modes are used:

- Practical demonstration
- Oral assessment
- Written assessment

For each assessment criterion the mode is defined in the assessment standard. However, these modes can cover several methods.

Practical demonstrations cover situations where the person directly carries out the tasks or when s/he presents a finalised product. It also covers simulations. Practical assessments are the core method to be used as often as possible and suitable.

The written assessment covers both complex written assignments as well as tests. However, the use of tests is limited – it cannot be the only assessment method used. Furthermore it is recommended that tests are only used in these cases:

- For partial qualifications which require a very large spectrum of knowledge and where it is unrealistic to expect the assessment of this knowledge through other means;
- When this is based on a legal norm;
- When tests are an established method in a particular field and have proved effective.

When tests are used questions should be generated from a large pool of questions and for each assessment criterion at least one question should occur in the specific test for each individual.

The oral assessment is recommended as a complementary method to practical assessment.

If practical assessment is not possible or it is not appropriate, written assessment is preferred to oral assessment.

5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the methods used

Given the fact that so far mainly qualifications at the NQF level 3 (which should correspond to EQF level 3 in the future) are being used as basis of recognition practical demonstrations are the privileged method used. This assessment method is particularly suitable because:

- it is competence-oriented (it enables candidates to show how they combine knowledge and skills to carry out expected tasks);
- it is particularly adapted for people who have acquired the expected knowledge, skills and competence on the workplace.

However, it is expected that for qualifications at higher levels a broader range of assessment methods will be used (possibly combining several modes). Their advantages and disadvantages still remain to be demonstrated.

6 VALIDATION PRACTITIONERS

6.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In most cases practitioners in charge of assessment are teachers and trainers. However, it can be any person who complies with the qualification requirements defined in the assessment standard (see below). If the person does not have the appropriate pedagogical qualifications they have to pass a preparatory course that is specific for the practice of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

6.2 Provision of training and support to practitioners

The project UNIV trains practitioners, in particular VET teachers, in use of qualifications and assessment standards for recognition of NFIL as well as in aspects such as provision of career guidance to adults or pedagogy of adult learning.

6.3 Qualifications requirements

For each partial qualification the “technical” qualification requirements for the authorised person are specified (e.g. qualification in the occupational field and/or years of practice of an occupation). As a general rule, assessors themselves have to be qualified in the given area.

In addition, general rules are valid for all partial qualifications and these are:

- The person has to be either a qualified education professional, or experienced adult educator or have passed a specific preparation course for recognition of non-formal and informal learning and work with adults (12 hours of courses).
- The person has to have basic competences in working with computers and the internet.

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Stakeholders consulted:

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

National Institute for Children and Youth

National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education