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

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1 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

1.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

Prompted to a large extent by the European policy agenda, but also by a need to rationalise the education and training system, the issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning has been in discussion for a number of years in Greece. The discussion is particularly evident in public sector institutions responsible for adult education and VET, but there is increasing involvement from the social partners and key stakeholders in the debate. Overall, continuing vocational training in Greece is moving towards learning outcomes-based approaches.

The legal framework for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is under development. However, a national system for validation has not yet been implemented.

This can be attributed to both the difficulty of evaluating non-formal and informal learning and to the conflicting interests of professional associations who feel that their professional rights might be threatened with the establishment of a validation system.

The recent Law 3879/2010, passed in September 2010, aims to address the shortcomings of the Greek education and training system and brings all further training and adult education under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The law discusses all types of education and training, including informal and non-formal learning. The Law introduces a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for Lifelong Learning, in the framework of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which is intended to create an integrated system of validation of informal and non-formal learning in Greece.

In this context, two institutions are foreseen by the law:

a) an institution that will be responsible for certifying the inputs to lifelong learning (the occupational profiles, training centre infrastructures, trainers, training programmes, training materials etc). This role will be performed by the existing EKEPIS institution which is renamed from ‘National Accreditation Centre of Continuing Vocational Training’ into ‘National Accreditation Centre of Lifelong Learning Structures’ maintaining the same acronym, EKEPIS.

b) A new institution responsible for certifying the outputs of lifelong learning, i.e. the knowledge, skills and competences that individuals will acquire during learning is set up. The title of the new institution will be the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP). This institution will be responsible for: the creation and development of the NQF and its correspondence with the EQF; the correspondence of qualifications gained through non-formal and informal learning with the NQF levels; the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and the issuing of permits and the monitoring of bodies validating non-formal and informal learning.

Prior legislation that made up the legislative framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning included:

- Law 3191/2003 refers to the National System of Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA). The law was passed at the end of 2003 and became activated in 2006. A High Level Committee for ESSEEKA was set up in 2006, aiming to function as the core group that will implement all the other provisions of the Law. This law aimed to link the adult education and VET systems and laid the foundations for a future validation system.

- Law 3369/2005 on ‘Systematisation of Lifelong Learning’ aims at the systematic promotion of lifelong learning services by all bodies involved. This Law constitutes the
first integrated strategy on lifelong learning at national level, in contrast to the frequently fragmented policies of the past. The Law sets out the roles and responsibilities of each type of organisation involved in VET and lifelong learning. It also sets the framework for the establishment and function of the “National Committee for Lifelong Learning”, whose role is intended to be the improved identification of needs in lifelong education and training, the improved cooperation between actors in lifelong education and training and its link with ESSEEKA. The Chairman of the High Level Committee sits in the Lifelong Learning Committee. There is a provision in the Law for training certificates for training programmes lasting 75 hours and lifelong learning certificates of programmes lasting up to 250 hours. The provisions of the aforementioned law complement the provisions of the ESSEEKA Law. Moreover, the procedures of certification for the structures, the trainers, the general framework of the occupational profiles, as well as the procedures of constant control and evaluation of the educational institutions with the assistance of the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) and the National Accreditation Centre of Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS) have been designed and have begun to be implemented.

• The development of procedures and tools for certifying knowledge, skills and competences which contribute to the recognition of professional qualifications that are acquired in the framework of lifelong learning have led to the Common Ministerial Decision by the Ministers of Economy and Finance, Employment and Social Protection entitled ‘Certification System of Programmes, Knowledge, Skills and Competences’ (Official Journal issue B’-30-12-2005) which defines the procedures for the certification of knowledge, skills and competences of trainees. However, this common ministerial decision has not been implemented to date. The National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS) will be the competent body for the implementation of the above decision.

• A Joint Ministerial Decision on the creation of Occupational [Vocational] Profiles (566/2006) was issued in 2006. Further, the Ministerial Decision No 110998/2006 regarding a common methodology for the creation of job profiles is considered to be a central and innovative development for VET in Greece – more information on job profiles is provided below in this report.

• Law N. 3999/2008 which provides for the creation of the ‘National Committee for Lifelong Learning’, and Law N. 3687/2008 which addresses further issues related to lifelong learning in Greece, also attempted to strengthen lifelong learning in Greece.

In Greece, for cultural reasons, formal educational attainment, especially at University level, is held in high esteem. However, there is a lack of a training culture, while non-formal and informal learning are not valued. Moreover, the lack of a system for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in Greece lowers the motivation of learners to participate in lifelong learning.

The National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training (EKEPIS), established in 1997, has been making efforts to develop quality assurance systems which were intended to lead to the implementation of a system for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The steps taken by EKEPIS, in the process of putting in place quality assurance systems for continuing vocational training, included the following:

• EKEPIS firstly developed the system for the accreditation of Vocational Training Centres (KEK) and for the Specialised Centres of Social and Labour Integration for disadvantaged groups, i.e. ensuring that the accredited training structures have the appropriate infrastructure.

• The second step has been the development of an accreditation system for human resources, such as adult trainers. EKEPIS has compiled a Registry of accredited
trainers, who are eligible for employment in EU co-funded programmes offered by those KEKs which have been accredited by EKEPIS.

- EKEPIS went on to develop a system for the accreditation of accompanying support services staff, who provide support services tailored to the needs of the social vulnerable groups, and has respectively compiled a Registry of accredited support services professionals, who are eligible for employment in EU co-funded programmes.

- EKEPIS is also responsible for the accreditation of Occupational Profiles on which continuing vocational training programmes are built. EKEPIS has developed and accredits 202 occupational profiles, on the basis of tripartite agreements (i.e. agreements between the government, employee and employer representatives).

- There are two remaining steps that are related to the validation of informal and non-formal learning, which have not yet been implemented. These steps will entail a system for the accreditation of Vocational Training Programmes offered by accredited vocational training centres (KEKs). The last step is envisaged to be the accreditation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired by learners, who have successfully completed an accredited training programme. This last step, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in general, will now be the responsibility of the new institution, the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP), established by law 3879/2010, in September 2010.

Apart from the above system which is under development, the Greek government certifies foreign language learning and knowledge on Informatics and ICTs through two validation initiatives. These are described below, along with other validation initiatives.

**Validation of Language Competence:** in 2003, the Ministry of Education set up a system of summative assessment, based on examinations, to confirm and certify knowledge of modern languages obtained through non-formal learning. The process leads to the award of the ‘National Language Certificate’ which is not linked to the formal education system. It mainly targets adults and is recognised as a qualification with labour market value. This Certificate has adopted the scale of six levels of language competence proposed by the European Council in the European Language Passport. It can be obtained by Greek native speakers for foreign languages including English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, while foreign nationals can obtain certification for their knowledge of Modern Greek.

The Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs is the body responsible for the recognition and accreditation of language proficiency through the State Certificate in Language Proficiency. Hence, the Ministry of education, via the Directorate for Accreditation of Foreign Language Proficiency, certifies the level of foreign language knowledge of the successful participants. A condition for the acquisition of the State Certificate in Language Proficiency is the candidates’ success in the written and oral examinations, organised two times per year, on the basis of a common programme framework for all languages, common criteria for papers and instruments of measuring the written and oral speech comprehension skills. One of the most important factors of assessment is transparency, for this reason detailed information on the certification method is widely available on the internet and through communication with the Ministry and its agencies. The details of the structure and content of the certification procedure are available for the benefit of the language learners, language teachers and employers.

In 2006, the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning (GSLL) developed a system which provides for the accreditation and recognition of Greek language competence for immigrants at two levels of competence. A non-formal Greek Language learning programme is offered at beginner level (125 hours of training) and at advanced level (175 hours of training). This system offers an important contribution towards the integration of immigrants into the labour market, as well as enhances the mobility and employability of foreign language speakers.

1 Greek Language Centre http://www.greeklanguage.gr/node/117
hours of training). Upon successful completion of a test, participants are awarded a ‘certificate of lifelong learning’ in Greek Language Learning. In addition, those who successfully complete the advanced level of the GSLLL’s educational programme on Greek language and culture can participate in twice-yearly examinations to obtain a Certificate of Greek Language Competence. The certificate is awarded by the GSLLL, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior. This Certificate is a pre-requisite for obtaining a long-stay permit in Greece and is sought after in particular by third country nationals (from countries outside the EU) who participate in the examinations. Examinations took place in April 2008, March 2009 and July 2010. In terms of participation, 2 380 persons participated in the advanced level Greek language and culture training, a proportion of which sat the July 2010 exams.

A recent development of interest in relation to the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is that the new Law 3879/2010 on Lifelong Learning, passed in September 2010, affords the possibility for immigrants to obtain the Greek Language Competence Certificate without sitting through a GSLLL Greek language training programme beforehand. Thus, knowledge of the Greek language is assessed, irrespective of how it was obtained, whether this was through various training programmes and educational institutions, or through self-learning.

**Validation of ICT Competence:** The Ministerial Decision A/25081/8-12-2005 on the ‘Development and Implementation of Accreditation and Regular Control of Bodies that issue Certificates on Informatics and the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)’ is another important measure introduced in order to validate ICT competences. This measure is considered to be part of a broader policy trend that aims at improving and developing methods for the accreditation of skills that are acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Up to 2010, the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) has been responsible for the implementation of this policy which helps to ensure the quality and validity of the ICT competence certificates issued. The certificates are an essential qualification for employment in the public sector. Acquisition of ICT basic knowledge and skills is recognised by the Supreme Council for Personnel Selection (ASEP) of the Greek State on the condition that the respective certificates (except those acquired through the formal educational system) are awarded by the bodies accredited by OEEK.

The learning modules are a) word processing, b) spreadsheets and c) internet services. The certificates awarded are valid for three years from the day of issue. This means that people have to re-sit the exam every three years.

Further initiatives related to validation include the following:

1. Currently, upon successful completion of a continuing vocational training programme, participants are provided with a certificate of attendance by the accredited Vocational Training Centres (KEK). Such programmes are not integrated in the formal VET system and such certificates do not have official state recognition but have some recognition in the labour market.

2. The Training Departments of various Ministries and major public corporations also plan vocational in-service training programmes for their own staff. These courses lead to certificates which are taken into account for career development within each Ministry or company.

3. The Second Chance Schools for adults who have not completed compulsory education were introduced by Law in 1997 but started operating in 2000, with great success. These schools offer adults who had not completed compulsory education a second

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2 General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning http://www.gsae.edu.gr/index.php/immigrants
3 Refernet, Greece 2006 report
chance to do so. The training is considered to be non-formal learning but graduates of the second chance schools are awarded a Certificate which is equivalent to the lower secondary leaving School Certificate. This Certificate is recognised for employment in the Public Sector and allows holders to proceed to upper secondary general and technical education or to initial or continuing vocational training programmes such as, in IEKs, KEKs, and other structures offering adult learning.

4. Furthermore, non-formal learning is provided by: the Adult Education Centres (KEE); the Parents’ Schools (Scholes Goneon); the Centre for Distance Lifelong Education and Training of Adults (KEEENAP). Lifelong learning programmes lead to the acquisition of either a ‘Certificate of Training’ (this is awarded for programmes that last for up to 75 hours) or a ‘Certificate of Lifelong Learning’ (awarded for programmes that last for up to 250 hours).

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

The framework for lifelong learning is only now being developed in Greece - a national qualifications’ framework (NQF) is under development and the validation of informal and non-formal learning will eventually be linked to this NQF. The recognition of prior learning will be facilitated by the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework which will comprise eight levels and which will allow for the recognition of each level as regards the corresponding levels of skills and competences, thus making possible the recognition of all forms of prior learning including non-formal and informal learning.

Until now, a unified system for the recognition and certification of qualifications encompassing all forms of education, training and professional experience did not exist in Greece. Recognition of learning outcomes was largely dependent on their attainment in the formal education and training system. The most recent development towards the creation of a NQF in Greece is an open public consultation on a proposal put forward for a NQF that has been launched by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (from now on referred to as Ministry of Education). The NQF proposed would follow the eight levels of qualifications of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and would be compatible with the EQF in order to promote comparability of qualifications and mobility. The public consultation was launched on 5 March 2010 and will be open until 5 September 2010. Policy makers, social partners, national experts and VET stakeholders are all participating in this discussion.

A National LLL Committee has been created, which is chaired by the Secretary General of Lifelong Learning of the Ministry of Education. The Committee is made up of representatives, policy makers and experts from all Ministries and organisations that are directly involved in both the strategic planning and the implementation of LLL policies, along with representatives of various stakeholders, trade unions and members from Higher Education Institutions (HE). The aforementioned open consultation may bring about changes in the composition and functions of the Committee. In addition, Lifelong Learning Institutes have been established in HE and in Social Partners Structures.

A system for occupational standards is currently being developed in Greece. The process of designing occupational profiles was initiated by EKEPIS in 2007, with close involvement of the social partners. So far, 202 occupational profiles have been designed, covering a multitude of emerging occupations and economic sectors including commerce, tourism, industry and banking. The social partners are actively involved in defining these occupational profiles, the relevant knowledge, skills and competence for each occupation and the learning pathways and training programmes that need to be followed in each case.

4 The consultation is hosted on http://www.opengov.gr/ypepth/
Each profile can extend to the whole range of knowledge, skills and competence gained through education and training required for the specific job profile and in line with existing labour market needs. Priorities for the development of job profiles are justified by existing (and persisting) fast changing job requirements as proposed by employers and employees, as well as national priorities set by the government.

These profiles will subsequently be accredited and training institutions will then be expected to adapt their curricula in accordance with these occupational profiles. Hence, the system of defining occupational standards is one step in the process towards a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The creation of a system for the accreditation of training programmes based on the occupational profiles, and following that, a system for the accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competences that will be acquired through such programmes has not yet been implemented. This is a challenge for the near future, in the context of a National Qualifications’ Framework based on learning outcomes, which will be governed by common processes and in parallel to the accreditation of the stakeholders offering continuing vocational training.

1.3 National institutional framework

The coordination of all issues related to lifelong learning is now carried out by the Ministry of Education. Since October 2009, major changes have been developing in lifelong policy and practice. Adult education and initial and continuing VET are now under the remit of the Ministry of Education. The fact that continuing training is now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education signifies a major change in Greece. Up until recently, continuing training was under the remit of the Ministry of Employment. The title itself of the Ministry of Education has changed from Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs to Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, reflecting the emphasis now being placed on an integrated approach in lifelong learning policy.

In the past, there had been fragmented provision and lack of coordination among the various educational and training components of the system in Greece. Efforts to create a legal framework in order to achieve a coordinated cooperation among the institutions responsible for education and training have been promoted in recent years. Despite the fact that some serious steps have been taken in this direction in the last few years, there are still several improvements to be made so that full cooperation can be achieved among the authorities that are responsible for education and training and those responsible for promoting entrepreneurship and competitiveness. The effort for a coordinated policy for lifelong learning has started recently. This policy is characterised by building synergies among all the relevant national bodies (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, Greek labour unions, Employment Observatory-Research Informatics S.A., Research Centres, etc). The effective coordination of the actions of the bodies involved is still an issue to be addressed, to avoid overlap.

The institutional structure related to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, is as follows:

General education, technical vocational education, adult education and initial VET are all under the remit of the Ministry of Education. Up until September 2010, the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (O.E.E.K.), established in 1992, was the body responsible body for Initial VET provision. OEEK provided initial or supplementary vocational training, establishes and operates the Institutes of Vocational Education (IEKs), determined the curricula of public and private IEKs, recognised and qualified the professions which correspond to vocational education and training, determined vocational rights of all vocational education and training levels, as illustrated in Law 2009/92, in cooperation with the competent Ministries. OEEK certified Initial Vocational Training, however,
IEK structures were not accredited or evaluated on the basis of qualitative or quantitative criteria. Following the Law 3879/2010, the OEEK has been disbanded and is replaced by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP), the new institution with responsibility for the NQF and the validation of non-formal and informal learning set up in September 2010, as described above), while the OEEK functions in relation to IEKs are being transferred to the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning (GSLLL) and to EKEPIS. To date, the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) has also been responsible for accrediting the professional bodies entitled to issue certificates on Information Technologies, these functions are also expected to be transferred to EOPP in the near future.

The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning is part of the Ministry of Education and is responsible for lifelong learning in Greece and, among other responsibilities, supervises the Institute of Adult Lifelong Education (IDEKE), responsible for implementing policy and programmes in the field of lifelong learning and also runs the system on the recognition of Greek language competence for immigrants.

EKEPIS, the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, is the authority and policy maker for the development and implementation of an accreditation system for continuing vocational training. The social partners participate in the EKEPIS processes as consultative bodies, contributing to the framing and implementation of policies in the field of accreditation of continuing vocational training. The effort of EKEPIS to ensure quality in the provision of continuing vocational training and improve effectiveness of training services in Greece has been evolving step by step through the development of quality assurance systems, which were designed on the basis of social dialogue. The social partners participated actively in the design of these systems.

The social partners will also participate in the board of directors of the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP) to be set up imminently.

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

A validation system has not yet been implemented in Greece. However, from the plans contained in the Law 3879, passed in September 2010, it appears that the responsibility for validation will rest with the national level Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications (EOPP). Regional and local level responsibilities are not yet set out in relation to validation. However, for the provider level, Law 3879, mentions that the EOPP will be responsible for issuing permits and monitoring those bodies that will be offering validation of informal and non-formal learning.

1.5 Examples of regional, local or EU funded initiatives

The Sivitanidios Vocational Training Centre (K.E.K) from Greece was involved in the following project, funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, in 2004.

### Accumulated Knowledge and Skills

This Leonardo da Vinci project carried out further testing and development of a method and a tool created by the Norwegian Electro-technical Research and Development Centre (ELBUS) to map the competences of employees in electro-technical companies.

The method and the tool were originally developed as part of the Norwegian national validation project. The Leonardo project enabled the partners, from Denmark, Greece, Great Britain and Sweden to test the tools and methods and try to find a system for validation of the competences of employees in companies in the electro-technical industry that could be used across borders. This would enable electricians who start working in a country other than their native one to present some kind of valid documentation of competence. The mapping of skills and the validation framework was thus intended to respond and offer solutions to the high turnover rate of electricians experienced particularly in countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
such high turnover of electricians were thus becoming increasingly aware of the need to be able to accurately and efficiently assess the knowledge and skills in both existing and potential employees.

The partners in the project included organisations of both employers and employees (Norway and Great Britain) and schools (Greece, Denmark and Sweden).

The project outputs included two books, one in which the method is described and one which presents the validation tool.

The project was chosen as one of the 32 success stories to receive the Leonardo da Vinci Award 2004.

The "DIMITRA" Institute of Training and Development in Greece was also involved in a project supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, which aims to develop a system of validation for personal assistants (PAs).

Validation of Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning: The case study of Personal Assistants (EUPA)

The EUPA project is funded by the European Commission’s Leonardo da Vinci programme. It brings together partners from Cyprus (lead partner), France, Greece, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. The project commenced in 2009 and will continue until 2012.

The main aim of the EUPA project is to develop a model based on learning outcomes for the recognition and validation of the qualifications of Personal Assistants (PAs). The role of Personal Assistant (PA) has been chosen to serve as a case study, for a number of reasons but perhaps most importantly because PAs often do not have academic qualifications, which makes the validation of other skills and competences a necessity.

The main objectives of the project are:

1. To develop a qualifications framework for PAs based on learning outcomes
2. To identify Learning Outcomes that may be easier to develop through non formal and informal learning and to use this information to design methodological tools to be used during formal training for these outcomes.
3. To develop, with the aid of an Assessment Tool, a two-dimensional European certification for secretaries and PAs. The Assessment Tool will use different methodological tools for the assessment of different learning outcomes so that it can be customised and used across sectors.
4. To develop a modular curriculum and training material that will enable PAs to certify and to assign credits to the modules of this curriculum

The objectives will be achieved through an innovative methodology where assessment is performed before and after the training, in different target sectors. EUPA will raise awareness of the issue of qualifications recognition and will develop assessment and methodological tools, materials etc to support the recognition of qualifications.

For beneficiaries, it is expected that participants will become more aware of and have more confidence in their knowledge, skills and competences. They will benefit in terms of their career and / or may be able to find employment as a result of taking part.

The Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) was involved in the INLearning project, which is also funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

INLearning

The Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) began developing a transnational validation project in
1.6 Link between validation and the existing/ developing credit system, unit-based or modularised structure of qualifications

Within the framework of enhancing adult education, a system of ECVET credits for validation and recognition of prior learning will be developed in Greece alongside the plans to develop a NQF and a system for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Currently, many Universities are implementing the ECTS; the Diploma Supplement is also used. Since a validation system in Greece has not yet been implemented, it is not currently possible to award credits or modules of learning via validation.

1.7 Funding framework

The system of the certification of Greek language competence (and the accompanying Greek Language courses that lead to such certification) are co-funded by national and EU funds, under the Operational Programme ‘Education and Lifelong Learning’ for the period 2007-2013, while accreditation of professional bodies entitling them to issue certificates on Information Technologies, which to date has been carried out by OEEK, is supported by national funds.

1.8 Data on flows of beneficiaries

As already mentioned, individuals do not currently undergo validation, but training structures have been certified as adequate to offer training.

Up until early 2010, EKEPIS had accredited 283 Vocational Training Centres (KEK) with 560 training sites and with a capacity of 45,510 training places. The way in which the learning acquired in these training centres will be validated, will be determined in future. These centres specialize in nine thematic fields regarding technical and transport professions, agricultural, environment, education, health and care, culture, sports and economy professions. Moreover, 34 Specialised Centres of Social and Labour Integration for disadvantaged groups have been certified with 38 sites and 1,789 training places. These structures are subject to an ongoing monitoring system and an evaluation and re-certification process every two years. Their future role in relation to validation is still unclear at this stage.

2009. The project is called INLearning and it has been implemented in Austria, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia and Turkey.

The INLearning project aims to promote social inclusion through developing a methodology framework for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. A portfolio called ‘Lifepass’ has been developed which will be applicable across different sectors and may be used across Europe. The tool was tested in a number of jobs in different sectors for example: printing, agribusiness, construction, hospitality, transport, security, and childcare.

The main objective of this project is for the Lifepass portfolio to be taken up and used across Europe in a similar manner to the Europass CV. The tool helps individuals to demonstrate the richness of their learning and competences and will help achieve coherence across European countries.

The aim of introducing this tool is to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion among those who do not possess any formal qualifications within National and European Qualifications Frameworks.

The qualification available through the validation process is the equivalent to secondary education and higher education.

Occupational standards for 100 different occupations were established by the project consortium in the following seven sectors: Printing, Agribusiness, Childcare, Construction, Transport, Hospitality and Security.
With regards the existing initiative to certify foreign language learning, during the period 2003-2009 the following numbers for the participation in the exams for the state certificate of Language Proficiency were recorded:

- Participation in the examination of the English language: 160,550 (rate of success: 48.16%)
- Participation in the examination of the French language: 17,565 (rate of success: 50.46%)
- Participation in the examination of the Italian language: 25,674 (rate of success: 47.50%)
- Participation in the examination of the German language: 26,703 (rate of success: 51.15%)
- Participation in the examination of the Spanish language (2008-2009): 1,063 (rate of success: 70.62%)8

In relation to the aforementioned certificate of ICT competences, in 2006 61,392 people have so far participated in the exams in order to be accredited in the use of Information Technologies.

In relation to private sector initiatives, the ECDL was selected by the Ministry of Employment, in the context of the Programme “Training in Basic ICT Skills”. Through the programme, 20,000 unemployed persons and soldiers participated in the ECDL certification programme. Examples of other public sector bodies that use the ECDL certification include the employees of Ministries of Education, Defence, Georgia and Commercial Shipping that have included themselves in the Programme of ECDL Certification. The ECDL also has certified enterprises and public sector utilities (NATIONAL ELECTRICAL COMPANY, Universities, Educational Centres of Municipalities and Prefectures) as Examining Centres, while hundreds of private companies in Greece also employ staff holding ECDL certificates and job advertisements also include this requirement9.

2 ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

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

The promotion of flexible learning pathways, which include the provision of educational opportunities for younger students as well as adults, is part of the future planning for the development of lifelong learning in Greece.

Starting from 2005, each Higher Education Institution (University or Technological Education Institute - TEI) can establish a lifelong learning Institute which offers non-formal learning opportunities to graduates. The LLL institutes along with the Centres of Vocational Training run by Universities offer flexible learning programmes.

Moreover, the provision of e-learning with the development of e-classes through the Operational Programme “Knowledge Society” and the Greek University Network (GUNET) e-class platform support these initiatives.

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

In general, information on the ICT and language validation initiatives is available from the website of OEEK and the GSLLL, respectively. Also, a recent information campaign aimed to raise the awareness of immigrants on possibilities to obtain a long stay permit in Greece. One of the requirements for a long stay permit, as already mentioned above, is Greek language certification. Hence, the information campaign also helped increase awareness of the wider public of immigrants on this certification.
2.3 Validation in the private sector and the role of private sector actors

There is no specific certification system for assessing and recognising competences acquired through informal or non-formal learning in the private sector. The private sector has taken some initiatives to cover the gap created by the absence of a validation system for informal and non-formal learning, especially in the fields of language learning and ICT skills:

- Certification is offered by Private Educational Institutes for courses offered by them but these are not officially recognised by the State. However, certificates of attendance at such courses are an element that is sometimes taken into account by employers to the advantage of candidates who possess such certificates.
- Some major private companies, including companies in the banking and IT sector, offer certification for in-house training courses they offer to their own employees.
- There is also some opportunity for the acknowledgement of skills via the acquisition of certificates or a licence to exercise certain professions which are issued by a number of agencies.
- The European Computer Driving License (ECDL) is well sought after in Greece and recognised both by public and private sector employers. The number of registered persons in the programme has reached 2.5% of the total population of Greece (this is nearly double the EU average) indicating a high degree of interest in ECDL in Greece. Similar certificates are also provided by private sector companies for various ICT skills in collaboration with IT multinationals (Microsoft, Oracle etc.).

In relation to the social partners, the Federation of Greek Industries / SEV, the Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOVE), the Greek Business Management Association (EEDE), et. al., contribute in various ways to the consolidation of a coherent LLL platform (PRAXIS Network, ALBA graduate degrees, etc.). The Social partners are encouraged to be involved in various stages of education and VET, such as the development and implementation of the relevant legal framework, via their participation in consultation and in the institutions developing quality assurance systems for training.

The social partners from Greece have also highlighted a number of individual companies that have been engaged in recognising and certifying non-formal and informal learning. As an example, Aluminium de Grèce SA has established a ‘Continuing Progress System’ where employees record their own existing knowledge, skills and competences through team discussions and through the personal assessment processes. In this way, each employee is closely involved in determining their own and their teams’ future skills needs, helping to set out the necessary training which then takes place either in-house or outside the company.

Branches of private companies offering professional certification linked to international sets of standards have also recently started to operate in Greece. For example, the Staregister company started operating in Greece in 2006 and has since developed an accreditation scheme for professions such as ISO19011 Management Systems’ Inspectors and for Consultants on ISO19011 Management Systems.

As noted in the 2007 European Inventory report for Greece, Greek organisations were involved in a number of pilot projects within the EQUAL and LEONARDO programmes, which included elements relevant to the development of methods and tools for the validation of skills and competences in different sectors. For example, the main VET bodies had an active involvement in the development of the National Thematic Network (NTN) entitled “Accreditation of Vocational Qualifications and Skills” during the 2001-2005 period and within the framework of EQUAL (2nd cycle: 2005-2008), a project on the accreditation
of educational packages and the recognition of knowledge acquired through working with IT applications and in technical occupations was implemented.

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

An example of a self-standing validation system of summative assessment, which was already noted in the 2007 European Inventory report for Greece, is that of a major non-profit association, the Hellenic Business Administration Corporation (EEDE). This certification is not part of any formal validation system, but employers do recognise it. Hence, there is ‘social recognition’ of the training received. This is because EEDE is widely known for offering quality non-formal training. EEDE offers a number of ‘Post-Graduate Programmes’. The Programmes recognise prior learning, since they are open to individuals who have either a University degree or possess eight years of work experience.

The Leonardo da Vinci-funded project ‘Certification of Social Economy’ which is led by the Greek Institute Entrepreneurship Development focuses on validation for individuals employed in the social economy sector. It is described in the box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification of Social Economy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project ‘European Certificate of Social Economy’ is a transnational validation project that was developed by partner organisations from Greece, Poland and Italy. The project was funded by the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The objective of the project is to promote the transparency of qualifications and competences of employed individuals in consulting institutions in the social economy sector. The project aims to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitate the mobility of employees in institutions of training/education and counselling through the validation of informal learning and qualifications that are informally acquired.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Widen the application of methodologies and procedures of certification that were developed in other programmes or initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase the certification of informal qualifications of training/education and counselling of individuals (especially women) that are employed in structures of counselling and training/education in the sector of the social economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish a European certificate of qualifications for Consultants of Social Economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assist the professional development of executives of structures of training and counselling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish European prototypes for the certification of informal qualifications in the education/training of counselling in the field of the social economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Facilitate the comparison of competences of consultants across boundaries, facilitating simultaneously the mobility of workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop social businesses through the improvement of the qualifications of consultants and the services offered concerning consulting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The target groups for the project are social economy consultants and educators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Further information can be found on the project website: <a href="http://www.socialconsultant.eu">http://www.socialconsultant.eu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Centrefor Family and Children (Kendro Merimnas Oikoyennias kai Pediou - KMOP) is a non-profit, social NGO. It is a partner in the project ‘ASK’ which is funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessing and Validating of Competences Acquired by Non-formal and Informal Learning</th>
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<td>The Assessing and Validating of Competences Acquired by Non-formal and Informal Learning was initiated in 2009 and will continue until August 2011.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The project aims to analyse different assessment and validation methods in six European regions. It is financed by the Lifelong Learning Programme and its main goal is to optimise existing</td>
</tr>
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</table>
2.5 Costs to organisations

There is no information available on the costs of validation initiatives to organizations.

3 INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

The main target groups that are expected to benefit from a future validation system will be:

- low and semi-skilled workers
- the unemployed
- young people
- women
- disadvantaged social groups
- migrants.

As already mentioned above, awareness raising has been taking place through an information campaign that took place during 2010 to inform migrants of their rights in relation to obtaining a long stay permit. One of the requirements for migrants to obtain a long stay permit in Greece is to acquire the Certificate of Greek Language competence.

3.2 Provision of guidance and support

Guidance and support is provided by the OEEK and by the GSLLL, in relation to the initiatives for the validation of ICT and language competences, respectively.

3.3 Costs to individuals

Information on costs to individuals is not available.

3.4 Initiatives focused on specific target groups

Continuing vocational training for people from disadvantaged groups is provided by the Operational Programme "Employment and Vocational Training". This is non-formal training and a certificate of participation is awarded but these certificates do not carry weight in the labour market or the public sector.
3.5 **Evidence of benefits to individuals**

In relation to the validation of Greek Language Competence, based on the Certificate of Greek Language Competence, which is awarded by the GSLLL, the main benefit is that foreigners awarded the certification can then obtain a ‘long-stay’ permit in Greece. This is because the Certificate is a pre-requisite and is submitted together with other required documents to the Ministry of the Interior, which then issues the long-stay permit. Third country nationals seek this certification, in order to be able to obtain the long-stay permit. Conversely, foreigners from EU member states residing in Greece that participate in the Greek language and culture training, find that the Lifelong Learning Certificate which is awarded upon successful completion of the course, is enough for them, without needing to further participate in the exams to obtain the Certification of Greek Language Competence.

In the case of private sector initiatives such as the ECDL Certification, possessing a certificate of basic dexterities for the use of PCs constitutes an essential qualification for participating in examinations for employment in the Greek Public Sector. The ECDL Certification meets this requirement and, as mentioned above, is officially recognised by the Greek State, the OEEK and the organisation for the examinations for employment in the public sector (ASEP). This is also one reason explaining the impressive attendance of candidates in the programmes of acquisition of ECDL in Greece. In the provisions for employment in the public sector, it is stated that only ICT competence certificates that are published by institutions certified by the OEEK are accepted and ECDL is such a certificate. This is consistent with international practice in the area of certification of ICT knowledge and is harmonised with the international standard ISO/IEC 17024:2003\(^1\). Aside from being recognised for employment in the public sector, the ECDL certificate is also recognised by private sector employers. According to ECDL Greece, the impressive number of individuals registered in the Programme in Greece, which exceeds 2.5% of the total population of Greece and is almost double the European average, is proof of the recognition of the ECDL Certificates by candidates and by the labour market more generally.

4 **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION**

4.1 **Quality Assurance Framework**

There is no national quality assurance framework for validation initiatives. Organisations involved in validation practices are therefore free to establish quality assurance procedures, as they see fit.

4.2 **Quality assurance systems / procedures**

The quality assurance procedures employed in Greece are likely to vary by validating organisation, as little national guidance is provided on this topic. Moreover, there is currently no comparative overview of the level and nature of such practices.

4.3 **Evaluation framework**

There is no national evaluation framework for validation initiatives. There is also a lack of tradition in evaluation of validation practices at the organisational level, together with a lack of data on evaluation results of validation practices in Greece.
5 ASSESSMENT METHODS

5.1 Methods used
The assessment methods used for validation practices in Greece by both the public sector (for language and ICT certification) and the private sector (e.g. ECDL), are based on examinations.

In particular for the ECDL, 99% of the examinations are based on the ‘automated test evaluation system – aTES’.

5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the methods used
The advantages of using examinations as an assessment method for validating informal and non-formal learning relate to the consistency of the approach, the fact that such examinations are convenient to use and they can be adopted and implemented quickly.

On the other hand, the disadvantages of using examinations as an assessment method relate mainly to the fact that examinations measure relatively superficial knowledge or learning.

6 VALIDATION PRACTITIONERS

6.1 Profile of validation practitioners
There is little available information in relation to the profile of validation practitioners in Greece. In the cases of validation initiatives described above, such as ECDL, the practitioners are ICT professionals.

6.2 Provision of training and support to practitioners
As above, there is no available information in relation to the training and support that validation practitioners receive in Greece, in order to carry out validation.

6.3 Qualifications requirements
There is no relevant information available in relation to this heading, beyond the fact that there are no centrally defined qualification requirements for validation practitioners in the private sector, voluntary sector or in public initiatives.
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Information provided by:
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Country Update validated by:
Consultant to the Minister on lifelong learning matters, Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs
Department of International Relations, Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK)
General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning (GSLLL)