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

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1 INTRODUCTION

This country report is one of the final outputs of the 2010 update to the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. It has been prepared by a national country expert but has also been ‘quality assured’ by key stakeholders from the country. The update has been based on a number of key steps:

1. Existing information from the 2007 Inventory country report has been restructured and checked against other European and international sources through desk research;
2. In-country desk research has been carried out to provide a further update on developments since 2007;
3. Up to three interviews with stakeholders have been carried out and / or information has been collected via e-mail correspondence with relevant stakeholders.

The following quality assurance process has also been carried out and the report has been amended in line with relevant comments / feedback:

1. Internal quality checks on the language / style of the report have been carried out by the core GHK team.
2. Internal quality checks on the content have been carried out by the core GHK team;
3. External quality checks have been requested from up to three relevant stakeholders;
4. The report has been revised in line with comments / feedback from the above checks, then published on the Inventory website;
5. Feedback submitted via the website will be verified through desk research / consultation with relevant QA contacts and where appropriate, further updates will be made.
2 NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

This report provides an overview of current practice and the regulation of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Romania. Although it has a fairly short history (outlined below), validation of informal and non-formal learning is gaining momentum in Romania through an increase of certified validation centres and experts, refinement of assessment methods and clearer legal and practical procedures. However, validation has so far mostly been confined to non-academic sectors. The link between the validation system and formal education system could be made, in principle, through the focus of both systems on learning outcomes. However, stakeholders interviewed for this report suggested that this link is still not fully operational as there is a reported lack of coherence in the Romanian qualifications system (e.g., lack of permeability between the IVET, CVET and HE systems, existence of several qualifications frameworks) and a current lack of recognition of the results of validation of non-formal and informal learning in the formal education system. Recent validation projects (usually EU-funded) show mainly a focus on professional/vocational skills targeting specific groups and developing new occupational standards, which without doubt help beneficiaries to improve their employability. However, benefits in terms of mobility between educational levels and access to formal education are still to be established in practice.

2.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

In Romania, there is a legal framework in place for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in relation to professional competences. More specifically, Law 253/2003 which widened the duties and competences of the National Council of Adult Training (CNFPA), made reference to the assessment and certification of competences acquired through CVET organised in formal, informal and non-formal contexts.¹ Later on, the Governmental Ordinance 76/2004 laid down the foundation for the validation centres as institutions accredited by the CNFPA to conduct assessments for the recognition of a professional competence based on occupational standards. The Ordinance also made reference to the importance of evaluating and recognising competences gained through non-formal and informal learning. Order No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004² of the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (completed and amended by Order No. 3329/81 of 23 February 2005³) finally laid down the procedures for the assessment and certification of informal and non-formal learning.

Article 5 from Annex 1 of this Order stipulates that the assessment of professional competences should have the following features:

- it should be voluntary;
- it should be carried out in accordance with established occupational standards;

• the evidence of professional competences (see below) should be gathered through the application of different methods of evaluation applied in various contexts and on different occasions;

• the assessment should be independent of formal professional education and training, meaning that it can take place outside a formal education or training programme; and

• the assessment of each unit of competence should conclude with a result for the candidate - “competent” or “not yet competent”.

Professional competences are defined in the Order as “the ability of a person to use theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and specific attitudes to carry out the activities required at the workplace”\(^4\). These competences can be either vocational or general. As a result of the validation process, individuals can earn competence certificates, which may be used (in principle) by beneficiaries to be admitted to a course either in compulsory education or in higher education (requiring certain qualifications as entry requirements).\(^5\)

Furthermore, the competence certificates can be used to request an exemption from attending a certain unit of a formal study programme (only in the case of a partial certificate for a module or unit of competence). However it should be mentioned that no practical examples have been identified to support these statements. In Romania, validation can be carried out on separate units of competence but no partial qualifications can be awarded as such (although the person can be advised to take certain further training with the aim of acquiring a full qualification). A person can only acquire complete qualifications.\(^6\)

Article 6 from Annex 1 of the aforementioned order outlines several principles that guide the assessment and certification of professional competences in Romania. These are:

• **Validity**: the evaluation is based on evidence of professional competence assessed on the basis of activities described in the occupational standard;

• **Credibility**: the evaluation of competences employs certain methods that lead to the same results on a consistent basis;

• **Impartiality**: the evaluation allows the participation of everyone interested in validation, without the existence of vested interests;

• **Flexibility**: the evaluation is adapted to the needs of candidates and to the particularities of the workplace;

• **Confidentiality**: the information regarding the manner and the result of the process sits with the beneficiary; and

• **Simplicity**: the process of evaluation is easy to understand and can be easily applied by all involved persons

In the national report for Romania of the 2007 European Inventory, it was acknowledged that although the aforementioned legislation represents a move forward in the validation of learning gained outside the formal education system, it does not necessarily create a unitary framework for validation at the national level (ECOTEC, 2007). Furthermore, the report identified a risk that some of the provisions regarding the vocational training of adults, particularly in the domain of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, were still not fully enforced in Romania at that time (ECOTEC, 2007).

\(^4\) Ordinance No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004, Article 3a


\(^6\) Information provided by Georgeta Jurcan, President of PRO VOCATIE Centre for Resources and Training in Social Professions, Bucharest (validation centre).
There has since been a renewed effort to tackle these shortcomings: the proposed new Law of National Education of 12 April 2010 stipulates that “A National Authority of Qualifications would be set up through the merger between the National Council of Adult Training CNFPA) and the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic Environment (ACPART)”\(^7\). This would provide for a better accordance between validation and the qualifications framework at the national level.

### 2.2 Relationship with the existing or developing qualifications framework and information on standards used for validation

Romania is currently developing a national qualification framework (NQF) which is based on a “learning outcomes” approach. Both IVET and CVET systems use learning outcomes-based qualifications (Cedefop, 2010a).\(^8\) Furthermore, the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning is based on occupational standards that are defined by actual competences and competences are defined through learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2010a).\(^9\) This shows that there is – in principle - a formal link between the use of learning outcomes and validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, evidence suggests that this link is still not operational as there is a lack of coherence in the qualifications system (e.g., lack of permeability between the IVET, CVET and HE systems) and there is still no functional NQF (Cedefop 2010b).\(^10\)

Furthermore as stated by CNFPA – the national competent body - the results of validation of non-formal and informal learning are not currently recognised in the formal education system (i.e., certified competences through validation of non-formal and informal learning cannot facilitate entry or mobility in the formal education system).\(^11\)

According to CNFPA in 2010, the use of the qualifications system based on professional competences has increased the interest in the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning. The system of qualifications based on professional competence is particularly attractive for Romanian employers.

The proposed Law on National Education, which has been approved by the Government but at the time of writing still needs to be passed by Parliament, aims to improve the coherence between the national framework of qualifications and validation of non-formal and informal learning.\(^12\) According to Article 308(2) of the proposed Law, the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications covers the national system of qualifications obtained in general secondary education, the IVET system and CVET, apprenticeships and higher education – acquired both in formal and non-formal/informal contexts, from a lifelong learning perspective. Therefore, professional qualifications awarded via validation can be related – in principle - to all educational levels.

Paragraph 3 of the same article stresses that the national framework of qualifications supports the recognition and measurement of learning outcomes and ensures that the

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\(^9\) Occupational standards/training standards are established at the national level by the aforementioned Order No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004. In April 2010, CNFPA listed more than 572 occupational standards covering a wide range of sectors e.g., construction, information technology and telecommunications, steel manufacturing, environmental protection, the food and drink industry, textiles, transport, research and education, agriculture and fishing, commerce/services financial services, tourism and public services and administration. There are also plans to create 54 new occupational standards in various sectors.


\(^11\) CNFPA, information provided on 18/10/2010.

\(^12\) Interview with academic expert, Prof. Dorin Herlo.
validated results of formal, informal and non-formal learning are equivalent in value with
other types of qualifications acquired through the formal system of education.

2.3 National institutional framework

In 2004, Law No. 559/2004 gave the National Council for Adult Training (CNFPA) the role
of National Authority for Qualifications, with responsibility for the coordination of the
National Registry of Qualifications.

The CNFPA also has the overall responsibility for validation of non-formal and informal
learning at the national level. More specifically, as stipulated by Law 253/2003, the CNFPA
is responsible for the authorisation of validation centres and for the certification of individual
assessors of professional competences (CNFPA, 2005).\(^{13}\) CNFPA is also responsible for
issuing formal certificates which record the achievements of an individual following the
assessment procedure.

However, as noted above, the new Law of National Education of 12 April 2010 stipulates
that the National Council for Adult Training (CNFPA) will be merged with the National
Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic
Environment (ACPART), to form a National Authority of Qualifications.\(^{14}\) It is envisaged that
this will provide for a better link between validation and the qualifications framework at the
national level.

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

National level

The CNFPA (http://www.cnfpa.ro/) has the following responsibilities (CNFPA, 2005):

- authorisation of validation centres;
- initial training and certification of validation practitioners, including assessors and
  external and internal observers;
- quality assurance: monitoring the performance of validation centres and individual
  assessors through certified internal and external quality checkers (nominated by
  CNFPA); and
- issuing competence certificates, which have the same value as a qualification
  certificate obtained in the national system of formal education and training (Ordinance
  No. 3329/81 of 23 February 2005).

According to the proposed Law of National Education, the Ministry of Education,
Research, Youth and Sport elaborates the methodology guiding the recognition of the
learning outcomes acquired by teaching staff in non-formal and informal contexts, as well
as the methodology to convert these learning outcomes into equivalent credits for
professional education and training (Article 312(4)). The Ministry of Labour and National
Authority for Qualifications are not involved in developing this methodology.

Regional level

There are no regional structures responsible for the validation of non-formal and informal
learning. At sectoral level, the “sectoral committees” which are social dialogue structures

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\(^{13}\) NATB (2005). Practical guide for the evaluator of professional competences. Available at: http://so.cnfpa.ro/so/ghid-eval-
cp.pdf.

adopted by the Deputy Chamber)/2010
comprising employee and employer representatives (set up under the tutelage of the CNFPA) are involved in this area through their three main activities:

- contribution to the development of a legal framework regarding training, evaluation and certification of competences at sectoral level;
- promotion of a competence-based system of training and evaluation
- contribution to the development and validation of vocational training standards, also known in Romania as “occupational standards”, which provide the basis of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (CNFPA, 2005). However for the time being their role in the validation of non-formal and informal learning as such is minimal, although there are plans to involve them more in the validation of the instruments and methods used by validation centres in Romania in the future (Boeru, December 2008).

Local Level

According to the newly proposed legislation, the local “Communitarian Centres of Permanent Learning” are responsible, inter alia, for projects of validation of non-formal and informal learning as well as advice, information and consultation services in the validation domain (Article 296).

Provider level

As of 13 July 2010, there were 52 validation centres in the national registry of centres authorised by CNFPA. In 2009, these centres were dealing with the assessment of competences for 112 qualifications in various fields, e.g. social work, agriculture, construction, administration and public services, ICT, tourism, hotels and restaurants, the retail trade, food industry, forestry and wood processing, and welding.

The Centres can be specialised departments in private companies or training centres, as well as recruitment agencies or other types of organisations that meet the authorisation criteria laid down by the CNFPA (CNFPA, 2005).

2.5 Examples of regional, local or EU funded initiatives

Romanian organisations are involved in a number of initiatives funded by the EU. Two of these projects, which are currently ongoing, are described below, while others can be found elsewhere in this report (sections 3.4 and 4.4).

L@EGAL 2 – European investment in the future of Roma people in Romania

The Centre of Resources for Roma Communities (CRCR), in partnership with PRO Vocatie and the Soros Foundation in Romania, is carrying out an ESF co-funded project entitled ‘L@EGAL 2 – European investment in the future of Roma people in Romania’. The project is aimed at enhancing the social inclusion of the Roma population in Romania through raising awareness of Roma matters amongst local public authorities. More specifically, it aims, inter alia, to validate the prior knowledge of Roma affairs of 100 beneficiaries working in local city councils. The experts are required to have workplace experience and should have at least

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16 The national registry of the centres for the assessment and certification of professional competences, authorised by NATB, is available at: http://so.cnfpa.ro/ce/. Last accessed on 22 September 2010.


18 More information is available on the website of The Centre of Resources for Roma Communities (CRCR) at http://www.romacenter.ro/noutati/index.php?page=58
finished compulsory education (level 2 in the national qualifications framework (level 3 in the EQF)). The project commenced in 2009 and continued until August 2010. -

The assessment tools used in the validation process for this project were: self-assessment, written test, oral test, observation in real work conditions, simulation/structured demonstration, and feedback reports from other people (beneficiary, superior).

The skills recognised were those laid down in the occupational standard of local experts in Roma affairs, as follows:

**Key competences:**
1. Communication in official language
2. Social and civic competencies
3. Competence of cultural expressions
4. Competence of learning
5. General competences units
6. Planning your own activities
7. Enforcement the security and health procedure and in emergency situations
8. Informing the community members
9. Ensuring the rights of the community members
10. Development of the activities.

**Specific competences units:**
1. Evaluation of the problems which Roma communities are facing
2. Counselling for the community members
3. Solving occurring problems/conflicts.

In terms of results, the process of assessment of the 100 local experts in Roma affairs is still ongoing; so far 52 persons had their skills validated according to the vocational qualification of ‘expert in Roma affairs’ which is a formal qualification at level 2 in the national qualifications framework (level 3 in the EQF). The qualification cannot be acquired in the formal education system. It should be mentioned that the 100 experts selected for the validation exercise have extensive work experience in Roma affairs and are employed by local public authorities in both the rural and urban areas.

**IDOLearn: International Development Officer**[^19] - Validation of informal and non-formal Learning

This project is funded by the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme and is run by a partnership including members from Finland (Co-ordinator), Romania, France, Greece, Italy, UK and the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET). The project aims to find a solution to the change in the role of teachers and trainers associated with international development projects. It is targeted at teachers, trainers, tutors working as international activity developers, EU project managers, international coordinators and similar professionals in VET schools/institutes or working life institutes. The project aims to recognise the changing role of these professionals and the new skills they require, by introducing a validation system to recognise their existing competences and experience. The validation system is based on a competence-based qualification for International

[^19]: http://idolearn.net/
Development Officers, which has been developed and piloted by the project partners. Further information, including access to the modular online course developed by the project, can be found on the project website.

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

It should be mentioned from the start that in Romania the credit system has only been introduced thus far in the tertiary education system and there is no formal link between validation and the credit system.  

In addition, the validation of professional competences is based on the assessment of units of competences, concluding with a result for the candidate of either ‘competent’ or ‘not yet competent’. However, validation can be carried out based on separate units of competence but no partial qualifications can as such be awarded (in this case however the separate units are validated and the person can be advised to take certain further training with the aim to acquire a specific qualification). A person can only acquire complete qualifications through validation. In practice there is no link between credits and the validation system. However it should be noted that Art. 299 of the proposed Law of National Education specifies that:

(1) the validation systems will ensure vertical and horizontal occupational mobility through the utilisation of the system of transferable credits for formal education and training;

(2) the results of non-formal and informal learning as well as the credits associated to them are transferred and integrated in the programme of professional training that a person is undertaking.

2.7 Funding framework

According to the legislation in place (Order No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004), validation centres must pay an authorisation fee to CNFPA for each occupation or qualification they wish to be able to deliver. It should be mentioned that validation centres can only gain accreditation to evaluate the competences of a certain occupation when they have at least two in-house certified evaluators, specialised in that specific occupation and who have carried out at least ten assessments in that particular field as requested by CNFPA.

The total fee is proportionate to the number of qualifications, as well as the number of years of accreditation for which the centre applies (between one and three years). The resulting revenues go into the state’s budget.

With regard to teaching staff in schools, it is acknowledged that the results of non-formal and informal learning they undertake is not always validated.

In the context of professional reintegration of unemployed persons, carried out in non-formal and informal contexts, the costs are supported by the beneficiaries themselves. Only professional reintegration carried out in formal contexts and considered in the public interest is supported with public funding from the state budget.

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20 Information provided by CNFPA, 18/10/2010
21 Interview with representative of PROVOCATIE, validation centre.
22 Information provided by Prof. Dorin Herlo.
23 Information provided by Prof. Dorin Herlo.
Employees usually cover the cost of validation of their own competences. When certain competences are considered relevant for a particular job, the employer can cover the validation costs, but this is relatively rare.\textsuperscript{24}

2.8 Data on beneficiaries

Between 2006 and 2009, the assessment centres authorised by CNFPA have issued over 25,000 certificates for 150 occupations or qualifications. In October 2010, the total number of certificates was up to 28,000. This marks significant progress in this field. Certificates were issued for different occupations, the most common being construction, social assistance, agriculture and commerce. As an example of a local provider, the Centre of Validation \textit{PRO Vocatie} carried out 2,814 evaluations for nine occupations in the social sector during the period 2003-2009.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Information provided by Prof. Dorin Herlo.

\textsuperscript{25} ProVocatie (2010). “ProVocatie Cente Bucharest”. Presentation provided by Georgeta Jurcanu, Centre ProVocatie Bucharest.
3 ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VALIDATION

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

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has to date been taking place in non-academic sectors and so far there is no formal link between validation and the formal education system (CNFPA, 2010). Validation can be related to higher education qualifications but this area is still in its infancy in Romania. There is one example of a validation centre (Centrul de Pregatire in Informatica)\(^ {26} \) that offers HE level qualifications in the IT field for various occupational standards. No examples of university-led projects on validation were identified and the national competent body, CNFPA, confirmed that there are no projects or centres led by universities, which are focused on validation.

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

The most recent data provided by CNFPA shows that, as of 19 October 2010, there were 59 validation centres in the national registry of centres authorised by CNFPA.\(^ {27} \) Amongst other services, the centres generally provide information and guidance services.

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

Romanian employers have generally become more interested in validation of non-formal and informal learning\(^ {28} \). In the private sector, there are a few examples of Romanian private companies that have made efforts to develop validation methodologies. Drawing upon the principles of assessment and certification laid down by the National Adult Training Board, these companies aim at assessing and certifying the competences of their employees gained through non-formal and informal learning (ECOTEC, 2007). Examples of good practices include the Romanian Commercial Bank, The Romanian Crafts Foundation and The Centre for Rural Assistance – AGROTOUR. The latter was recently involved in a project based on partnership with Poland and Belgium which, inter alia, aimed at developing a framework for the validation of competences in the agro-tourism sector. In the radio communications industry, Radiocom (the National Communications Company) has contributed to the certification and validation of competences of various employees. Using internal assessors certified by the National Adult Training Board, Radiocom has issued 240 competency certificates (about 190 for its own employees) between 2000 and 2007.

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

In the third sector, there is a growing number of NGOs which contribute to the development of methodologies for validation of informal and non-formal learning (ECOTEC, 2007). An example of a project involving an NGO is the ‘Value Network’\(^ {29} \), a Grundtvig project implemented by the University of Liverpool (UK) and 20 other partners, including the Romanian NGO Pro Vobis. It promotes the recognition and validation of learning acquired through volunteering across the partner countries (GHK, 2009).

The ICOVET Project\(^ {30} \) (http://www.icovet.eu/index.html) which was funded by the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme, focused on young people, recognising the skills they acquire through for example sport, music, employment or voluntary and community work. It is described in the box below.

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\(^{26}\) http://www.cpi.ro/certificari.html

\(^{27}\) The national registry of the centres for the assessment and certification of professional competences, authorised by NATB, is available at: http://so.cnfpa.ro/ce/

\(^{28}\) Interview with representative of validation centre, Provocatie.

\(^{29}\) http://www.valuenetwork.org.uk/

\(^{30}\) http://www.icovet.eu/index.html
3.5 Cost to organisations

The costs borne by validation centres include the authorisation fees paid to CNFPA, operational costs (e.g. rent etc.) as well as personnel costs (salaries for evaluators).

The authorisation fees paid by the validation centres are set by CNFPA for each occupation for which the validation centre wishes to be authorised. The authorisation can be given according to the centre’s experience and issued for a one, two or three year period. The fees are proportional to the length of the authorisation period as follows:

- One year authorisation for a certain occupation: 600 RON (approx. 140.6 EUR)
- Two year authorisation for a certain occupation: 600 x 2 = 1,200 RON (approx. 281.2 EUR)
- Three year authorisation for a certain occupation: 600 x 3 = 1,800 (approx. 412.8 EUR).

In addition, validation centres have to invest time and resources in the initial (pre-certification) and continuing training of validation practitioners.

The greatest majority of the revenues of validation centres come from charges to beneficiaries (usually paid by professional associations, private employers and public authorities who sign contracts with the validation centre), as well as ESF funding for co-funded projects.33

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31 http://www.icovet.eu/index.html
32 Interview with Prof. Dorin Herlo.
33 Interview with Georgeta Jurcanu, Centre ProVocatie Bucharest
3.6 Awareness-raising and recruitment

There is still a lack of active promotion and dissemination of information regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning in Romania. The recruitment and promotion is generally carried out by validation centres themselves through various means (leaflets, brochures, etc.). CNFPA has also been involved in raising awareness about validation and its benefits through its website and published brochures (e.g. a brochure addressed to validation practitioners – CNFPA, 2005).

3.7 Provision of guidance and support

Pre-service guidance tends to be provided by evaluators themselves who work for validation centres. Before the assessment process starts, beneficiaries are familiarised with the relevant occupational standard and assessment methods. Feedback is given at the end of the assessment process in written and oral format. In some cases, e.g. in the L@Egal2 project, beneficiaries receive a comprehensive feedback report and are given the opportunity to provide feedback on the assessment process and outcomes. They have the right to contest the result of the assessment.

3.8 Costs to individuals

There are no rules regarding payment for validation services. In some cases, the beneficiaries pay a fee based on the level of certificate. In the case of funded projects (particularly ESF-funded projects), beneficiaries may have their competences evaluated and validated free of charge.

3.9 Initiatives focused on specific target groups

There are a number of validation projects which focus on the Roma community. In Romania, there are almost 2.2 million Roma, i.e. about 10% of the total population. A significant number of Roma in Romania, as well as across the EU, live in extreme marginalisation and poor socio-economic conditions. According to an analysis of the European Social Fund (ESF) 2007-2013 Operational Programmes, Romania (similarly to Slovakia and Spain) has dedicated €172 million for activities aimed solely at Roma. One of these (L@EGAL 2 – European investment in the future of Roma people in Romania) is listed above in section 2.5 and a further example is provided below.

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**Validation of learning outcomes, PRO Vocatie and Romania CRISS**

The project “Validation of learning outcomes” was implemented by the Centre of Resources and Training in Social Occupations (PRO Vocatie) in partnership with Romania CRISS – The Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies. The project had three main objectives:

- To establish the first centre for training, evaluation and certification of assessors of Roma ethnicity to become “sanitary mediators”.
- To train, evaluate and certify 20 validation practitioners who would develop instruments for the evaluation and certification of sanitary mediators.
- To evaluate and certify the competences of 100 sanitary mediators of Roma ethnicity.

The assessment tools applied in the validation process were: self assessment, written test, interview, observation in real work conditions, report from another person (beneficiary, superior), portfolio,

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34 Interview with representative of validation centre and academic expert
36 Interview with representative of validation centre and academic expert
38 Ibid.
3.10 Evidence of benefits to individuals

The stakeholders consulted for this report mentioned various individual benefits of validation, such as enhanced employability, professional credibility and self-esteem. It should be also be noted that in the labour market, the qualification certificates based on the validation and certification of competences have the same value as certificates for participation in formal training.

No quantitative data on the benefits to individuals were identified through the research.

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39 Interview with Georgeta Jurcanu, ProVocatie
40 ProVocatie (2010). “ProVocatie Centre Bucharest”. Presentation provided by Georgeta Jurcanu, Centre ProVocatie Bucharest
4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

4.1 Quality Assurance Framework

The assessment and certification procedures for non-formal and informal learning were elaborated in line with the standard ISO 17024 for “General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons”, which ensures the quality of a certifying body operating at the national and international level, irrespective of the sector (CNFPA, 2005).

CNFPA is the main body responsible for the quality assurance processes in this field. More specifically, CNFPA is responsible for the following:

a) Authorisation and monitoring of the assessment centres;

b) Certification of the assessors as well as the internal and external quality checkers or observers.

4.2 Quality assurance systems / procedures and evaluation framework

There are various quality assurance mechanisms as described below:

a) The centres involved in the assessment and validation of professional competences have to meet a series of quality criteria in order to be authorised by CNFPA (please see below);

b) The authorised assessment centres are evaluated and monitored regularly by external observers certified by CNFPA. The centres are also subject to regular auto-evaluation. In addition at the end of assessment process, the internal quality checkers verify the documents resulted from the validation process.

The following quality criteria (mentioned at point (a)) serve as performance indicators set for the assessment centres (according to the provisions of the Order No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004):

- adequate material and human resources;
- up-to-date theoretical knowledge and experience in the particular occupations for which they are authorised to evaluate competences; the assessors operating at the centre must show motivation for continuing self-development and training in their own field;
- available information resources about assessment tools and methods; promotion materials disseminating information about the validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- the centre must carry out its activities in accordance with certain ethical and professional principles, including anti-discrimination and confidentiality rules;
- dissemination of information regarding the conditions of competences assessment and validation;
- equality of opportunity for all candidates who are interested in having their competences assessed and validated;
- transparent appeals procedure: the candidates have the right to appeal the final result “not yet competent” when this is the case; furthermore, in such cases candidates are entitled to a new evaluation; and
- the centre must keep evidence of registrations and processes.
The monitoring procedures entail the following steps as specified in Decree No. 4543/468 of 23 August 2004:

- The assessment centre submits a report every trimester, containing information about the occupations/qualifications for which they assess corresponding competences, number of assessments, number of issued certificates, candidates’ appeals and ways in which they were addressed;

- CNFPA through their external observers monitors the activity of the assessment centre;

- In the case the centre does not meet one performance criteria set in the legal framework, it is notified by the president of CNFPA. The centre has 60 days to address the identified shortcoming(s);

- If the centre does not succeed in addressing the shortcoming(s), the CNFPA withdraws the authorisation of the centre.

The individual assessors must be authorised by CNFPA in conformity with the occupation standard of “Evaluator of professional competences”. There are clear standards set for the individual assessors; more specifically, an assessor must be able to plan, organise and carry out an assessment of professional competences as well as make decisions and report on the assessment. The assessors can also show competence in the elaboration of assessment tools, but this is not a mandatory requirement.

The performance of individual assessors is evaluated and monitored by internal observers also certified by CNFPA. The legislation sets out clear competence requirements for the internal observers.

The actual assessment procedure is followed by a process of internal verification, and an opportunity for the applicant to appeal against the decision.
5 ASSESSMENT METHODS

5.1 Methods used

Article 3 (h) from annex 1 of Order No. 4543/468 stipulates that the methods used in the evaluation of professional competences include “self-evaluation, direct observation, oral test, written test, project-based evaluation, simulation or structured observation, reporting or evaluation by others”.

The assessment tools should be elaborated in accordance with three main principles: validity (the instrument measures what it aims at measuring); accuracy (the instrument provides consistent results used in different contexts and by different assessors); and fairness (the instrument does not favour any socio-economic group at the detriment of other groups).

There are a few examples of good practice. The Assessment Centre PRO Vocatie has produced a set of assessment instruments for several occupations. The centre employs direct observation, simulation, written test, oral test, project, portfolio, report as well as the self-assessment and feedback on the whole assessment process. Most importantly, at least three different methods are used for each candidate, one of which must be direct observation.

5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the methods used

One stakeholder with experience of validation consulted for this report mentioned that evaluation methods must be adapted to the occupation and competences being evaluated. For example, in some cases the direct observation of a nurse taking care of a disabled or chronically ill person may not be practically possible (or ethical). The written test is also less useful in situations where the candidate has poor verbal or written skills.
6 VALIDATION PRACTITIONERS

6.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In October 2010, there were 700 accredited validation practitioners in Romania (CNFPA, 2010).

According to the legislation in place, the assessor of professional competences must be a specialist with up-to-date experience of work and/or coordination in the professional area which the centres have assigned him/her to assess. The legislation does not specify the number of years of experience the expert needs to have before applying for certification but in practice he/she is expected to have at least one or two years of experience. The qualification of an evaluator is level 4 in the NQF and 6 in the EQF, but it is understood that the level of education can vary depending upon the occupation in which the evaluator specialises. A university degree is not a compulsory requirement but for some occupations the evaluator can be expected to have a degree.

The certification is carried out by CNFP, the national competent authority in this field. The certification is carried out according to the requirements of the occupational standard of “evaluator of professional competences”.

This occupational standard is based upon the following competence units:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competence area</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation/planning</td>
<td>Planning and organisation of validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recording and reporting of validation results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Carrying out assessment/evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaboration of assessment/evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information analysis and decisions making regarding identified competences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>Internal verification of validation processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External verification of validation processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CNFPA, 2005, p. 4

6.2 Provision of training and support to practitioners

The responsibility for initial and continuing training of validation practitioners lies with the validation centres in Romania. Validation centres invest in training given that a centre can only gain accreditation to evaluate the competences of a certain occupation when they have at least two in-house certified evaluators specialised in that specific occupation and who have carried out at least ten assessments in that particular field as requested by CNFPA. Therefore, validation centres have an interest in investing in training and

41 Information provided by expert evaluator at Pro Vocatie Centre.
42 Ibid.
certification of their practitioners. Validation practitioners cannot work on a freelance basis, they work only employed by a validation centre accredited to carry out assessments of competences of a certain occupation.

The process of validation and certification of validation practitioners usually takes one month and is free of charge. It is carried out by CNFPA; CNFPA also provides free of charge pre-service guidance to prepare the practitioners for the certification process and to help them gain a better understanding of the occupational standard of the role of evaluator. The continuing training of validation practitioners is delivered on an ad-hoc basis by the validation centres.

6.3 Qualifications requirements

The occupational standard of “evaluator of professional competences” does not specify any qualification requirements. Cognitrom 2007, an R&D unit accredited by the National Authority of Scientific Research, suggests that validators of professional competences should have a qualification at level 6 in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

According to the legislation in place, accredited validation practitioners need to show considerable professional experience in the domain in which they carry out assessments and motivation to develop professionally on an ongoing basis.

43 Information provided by an expert evaluator at ProVocatie.


7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reports and legislation


Websites

CNFPA: http://www.cnfpa.ro

National registry of the centres for the assessment and certification of professional competences, authorised by CNFPA, available at: http://so.cnfpa.ro/ce/

ProVocatie Centre and projects:

Information about Phare project PHARE 2006/018-147.04.02.02.01.716 led by S.C. Afacov Consulting Group S.R.L. Sfantu Gheorghe

List of occupational standards
http://so.cnfpa.ro/so/listaSO.pdf

**Stakeholders consulted:**

Occupational Standards and Assessment Department - CNFPA
www.cnfpa.ro

Centre of Continuous education at the University “Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad

PRO VOCATIE Centre for Resources and Training in Social Professions, Bucharest

Web: [www.provocatie.ro](http://www.provocatie.ro)

C.R.F.P.S. PRO VOCATIE Centre for Resources and Training in Social Professions, Bucharest