



European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014

Country report Lithuania

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1 Introduction

Many developments have taken place in Lithuania in terms of building a national system of validation since the 2010 Inventory was carried out. These have been driven by the development and publication of a number of strategic documents together with advances in the legal framework to support validation. As discussed in more detail below, Lithuania does not have a national strategy for validation as a separate comprehensive policy document; however several laws were amended in recent years to pave the way for validation of non-formal and informal learning on a more mainstream basis, both at national and sectoral levels.

No sectors are given priority within the new arrangements for validation, but more comprehensive initiatives, projects and actions have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented in the areas of Higher Education and VET. The majority of bottom-up initiatives have taken place in HE, and most top-down initiatives have taken place in the VET sector.

One of the first formal national initiatives has been developed in the area of youth work. This initiative is currently being implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Its overall aim is to 'strengthen the state and non-governmental sectors working with young people, as well as to develop, promote and strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation between the public and third sectors'.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning in the areas of adult education and the labour market remain relatively basic, but these areas are taken into account in the new strategic documents for the period 2014-2020, and are expected to be developed in the near future. A stimulus to boost bottom-up initiatives of validation in the third sector is yet to be identified. However this remains a priority mainly because non-governmental organisations are in need of this type of intervention. In many cases, these organisations have developed their own internal procedures to facilitate recognition validation within their own areas of work, although they may have limited knowledge in terms of the implementation of validation in practical terms.

With many initiatives already in place and other developments planned in the near future, the challenge remains of how to attract potential beneficiaries. A further challenge is how to effectively link different sectors together, both in terms of sectors within education and training but also with the labour market and third sector in relation to validation arrangements.

2 National perspective on validation

2.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

As reported above, Lithuania does not have a national strategy for validation as a separate comprehensive policy document, though significant advances in the legal framework supporting validation have taken place. An early impetus for the validation of non-formal and informal learning was provided by the White Paper on VET (1998) through the principle of 'formal recognition of the acquired qualification, irrespective of how it has been acquired'¹. The Law on Non-formal Adult Education (1998; last amended 1 July 2010)² established the

¹ Juciute, R. (2007). *European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Lithuania*. <http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/publications/inventory/chapters/2007/lithuania.pdf>

Juciute, R. (2010). *European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Lithuania*. <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77483.pdf>

² Law on Non-formal Adult Education of the Republic of Lithuania, June 30, 1998 No. VIII-822, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=370777

right of participants in non-formal education (Article 11): “after passing examinations in formal education, science or studies institutions, to receive an assessment of the knowledge acquired in the system of non-formal adult education as well as a state recognised document testifying to the acquisition of a certain level of formal education, stage thereof or a separately regulated part of the programme (module)”³.

In 2001-2002, legal acts defining the procedures for the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal vocational education and training and for the recognition of prior learning in higher non-university studies were adopted. In 2003 a then new edition of the Law on Education⁴ set out key elements to formally certify competences acquired through non-formal (including children’s and adult education) or informal learning. For instance, Article 16 of the 2003 law edition (now Article 15) ‘Non-formal Children’s Education’ stated that ‘a competence acquired in the course of non-formal learning may be recognised as a part of a formal education programme or a qualification, according to a procedure established by the Government or its authorised institution, or according to a procedure established by educational institutions. A long-term arts curriculum completed at a children’s music, art, sports or other school may be recognised as a module of vocational training’. Article 17 (now Article 16) ‘Non-formal Adult Education’ states that a person’s competence acquired by way of non-formal education may be recognised as being a part of a formal education programme or a qualification as prescribed by the Government or its authorised institution, or by educational institutions. Article 18 (now Article 19) ‘Self-Education’ states that “A person’s competence acquired by way of self-education may be recognised as being a part of a formal education programme or a qualification as prescribed by the Government or its authorised institution.”

A then new addition to the Law on Vocational Education adopted in 2007 (last amended 21 July 2009)⁵ Article 7 ‘Continuous vocational education’ included *inter alia* confirmation that the assessment of competences acquired via non-formal vocational education and training can be recognised as a full or partial qualification. The Law, which also eliminated an earlier divide between formal and non-formal or informal learning, has embedded the image of vocational education as a seamless lifelong process and created favourable legal environment to establish a system of qualifications – a foundation for facilitating validation of prior learning. For instance, the Law provided a basis to reform and optimise management of the systems of vocational education and training and labour market training, to create a national system of qualifications and to define principles of qualification formation, assessment and recognition. The Law also opened legal opportunities to introduce a module-based system of vocational education and training, and the application of various forms of acquisition of professional competence and qualification, thus providing the possibility for increasing the accessibility of lifelong learning.

In addition, several strategic documents, namely the Strategy on Vocational Guidance (2003), Strategy Paper on Lifelong Learning (2008) and their action plans, Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2003-2012 and Single Programming Documents for 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 (which embedded the need to develop a Knowledge and Skills Assessment System, including those acquired in a non-formal way), aimed to build further links between formal, non-formal and informal education. This work is now expected to be continued by adopting new strategic policy documents for the period 2014-2020: National Education Strategy for 2013-2022⁶, the Programme for Increasing

³ Law on Non-formal Adult Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 30 June, 1998, No. VIII-822 (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=370777.

⁴ Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, No XI-668, last amended on 21 January 2010 (viewed 3 April 2010), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=104190.

⁵ Law on Vocational Education and Training of the Republic of Lithuania, 3 April 2007, No. X-1065 (last amended 21 July 2009) (viewed 3 April 2010), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=350526.

⁶ National Education Strategy 2013-2022, 23 December, 2013, No. XII-745 (viewed 3 May, 2014), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=463390&p_tr2=2.

Employment for the period 2014-2020⁷, which include the development of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning as a priority measure.

Measures for further development of the system are also included in draft VET Development Action Plan for 2014-16 and draft Non-formal Adult Education Development Action Plan for 2014-16. These documents are expected to be adopted mid-2014. Several national projects were undertaken as follow up actions of the strategic documents for 2004-2006 and 2007-2013 with subsequent follow up initiatives, which are important for creating preconditions/piloting of the system:

- The national system of qualifications has been developed under the European Social Fund (ESF) national level project “The Development of the National System of Qualifications in Lithuania” (Nacionalinės kvalifikacijų sistemos sukūrimas). Developed in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework, it provides the framework against which competences and knowledge acquired in non-formal and informal ways can be assessed and ultimately validated. Another project in the field “Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF”, was implemented by the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre between 2011 and 2012⁸.
- “The Development of the System of VET Standards” (Nacionalinės profesinio standartų sistemos plėtra) was a national-level project implemented by the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras) between March 2005 and December 2008. The aim of the project was to contribute to the development of a National Qualifications System through nationally established VET standards that correspond to current labour market needs. As with the previous example, this provides the basis for assessing skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings.

A project called “Formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system” (2010-2014) is a follow up action of the previous project and it aims at developing qualifications and innovative modular programmes. Within the project, 5 sectoral qualifications standards and at least 40 modular VET programmes for the most popular qualifications are being developed.

Lithuania is piloting a new approach to VET standards that describe the most important qualifications and their competences at different LTQF levels in specific sectors of the economy. The standards will provide an up-to-date picture of competences needed in the labour market and thus will contribute to improved correspondence of curricula to the labour market needs. The modular VET approach will facilitate the process of updating curricula and will ease access to VET for different learner groups as well as improving preconditions for validation.

In addition the “Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions” were adopted on 15 December 2010 (have been in force since 24 December 2010)⁹. The document established general principles of validation and recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal education (e.g. accessibility, flexibility, transparency, objectivity, transferability and the

⁷ Programme for Increasing Employment for the period 2014-2020, 25 September, 2013, No. 878 (viewed 3 May, 2014), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=456810&p_tr2=2.

⁸ More information about the project “Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF” (Lietuvos ir Europos kvalifikacijų sandarų susiejimas) can be found here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1368

The Project has produced number of reports:

1. Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2012), Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA. National report. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTKS_EKS_ataskaita_ENG.pdf
2. Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2011), Referencing Lithuanian Qualifications System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Research report. By Prof. Ligija Kaminskienė. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LKA-research.pdf

⁹ Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions. Order by the Minister for Education, No V-2319, 15 December 2010, in force 24 December 2010, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=389755&p_tr2=2

principle of voluntary) and outlined the main stages of the overall procedure (such as information, consultation, assessment and validation).

New amendments of the Law on Vocational Education adopted in 2008 (last amended 12 October 2013) Article 7 'Continuous vocational education' now state that:

1. *Continuing vocational education shall comprise formal and non-formal vocational education.*
2. *The achievements of the previous studies shall, in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education and Science, be validated for a person who upgrades the qualification held or seeks to acquire another qualification.*
3. *A person who has completed a formal vocational training programme and/or has received in a prescribed manner the assessment of the competences he acquired shall be awarded the qualification of an appropriate level.*
4. *Upon assessment of the competences acquired in the course of person's non-formal vocational education, such competences may be recognised as a qualification of an appropriate level or part thereof in accordance with the procedure for assessing competences acquired by a person, as laid down by the Minister of Education and Science and coordinated with the Minister of Economy.*

In addition to this, a number of other documents were adopted to facilitate validation of non-formal and informal learning in vocational education and training, such as:

- The Description of the Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework; approved by the Government of Lithuania¹⁰;
- Order Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science¹¹;
- List of Certificates of Qualifications and Learning Achievements issued by the VET providers and competence assessment bodies¹²;
- Order Description of the Content, Format and the Issuing Order of the Qualification Certificate, Vocational Training Certificate, Certificate of Vocational Learning Outcomes, Certificate, Certificate of Competence Assessment, approved by the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania¹³;
- Calculation Methodology of Costs per Person for Competence Assessment Process, approved by the Government of Lithuania¹⁴;

¹⁰ The Description of the Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework, approved by the Government of Lithuania, 4 May, 2010. Resolution No. 535 (Official Gazette, 2010, Nr. 56-2761), (Lietuvos kvalifikacijų sandaros aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2010 m. gegužės 4 d. nutarimu Nr. 535 (Žin., 2010, Nr. 56-2761).), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=405326

¹¹ Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

¹² List of Certificates of Qualifications and Learning Achievements issued by the VET providers and competence assessment bodies, (Kvalifikacijos ir mokymosi pasiekimų dokumentai, kuriuos išduoda profesinio mokymo teikėjai ir kompetencijų vertinimo institucijos), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: <http://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/svietimas/profesinis%20mokymas/Kvalifikacijos%20ir%20mokymosi%20pasiekim%C5%B3%20dokumentai%20kodai%20paskirtis%202013%20.doc>.

¹³ Order Description of the Content, Format and the Issuing Order of the Qualification Certificate, Vocational Training Certificate, Certificate of Vocational Learning Outcomes, Certificate, Certificate of Competency Assessment, approved by the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 6 February, 2012. Order No. V-209 (Official Gazette, 2012, Nr. 19-885), (Kvalifikacijos pažymėjimo, profesinio mokymo pažymėjimo, profesinio mokymosi pasiekimų pažymėjimo, pažymėjimo, kompetencijų įvertinimo pažymėjimo turinio, formos ir išdavimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. vasario 6 d. įsakymu Nr. V-209 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 19-885), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=418275&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

¹⁴ Calculation Methodology of Costs per Person for Competency Assessment Process, approved by the Government of Lithuania, 14 November, 2012. Resolution No. 1373 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 133-6789), (Kompetencijų vertinimo lėšų skaičiavimo vienam asmeniui metodika, patvirtinta Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012 m. lapkričio 14 d. nutarimu Nr. 1373 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 133-6789), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=437498&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

- Order Description of Allocation of Costs for Competence Assessment, approved by the Minister for Education and Science¹⁵.

In order to ensure quality and transparency of the assessment process, the competence assessment and validation process has been separated from the system of formal vocational education and training and can be undertaken by an accredited social partner or another legal entity of the Republic of Lithuania or other member state of the EU, or an organisation/its unit not holding the status of a legal person.

An accredited competence assessment authority has the right to assess the competencies acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes, employment activities or informally. The list of accredited competence assessment bodies is published on the website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science (before January 2010 known as the Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training). Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures were approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012¹⁶. As noted there are currently nineteen institutional bodies on the list of accredited competence assessment authorities. As part of the current arrangements, VET providers play an important role. For instance, a person seeking validation of his/her competences has to approach a VET provider implementing a relevant programme. He/she provides evidence of their experience, recommendations, etc. The VET provider, after assessing the evidence of a person who applies for validation, proposes further training (if needed) and includes the person on a list of individuals who are ready to take the final qualification exam in an external competence assessment institution.

However, despite the above mentioned developments, in its recent report on "The Development of Non-formal Adult Education"¹⁷, in which it has evaluated the implementation of the National Strategy on Lifelong Learning (2008), the National Audit Office has stated that a national system of validation of non-formal and informal learning, which, according to the Strategy was aimed to be completed by 2012 (i.e. in 2009-2012), has been developed, however its practical implementation is behind schedule.

As mentioned above, further actions in this field are anticipated in the State Education Strategy for 2013-2020¹⁸, which was recently adopted by the Lithuanian government. This strategy together with the report of the National Audit Office reinforce the fact that validation initiatives in the labour market are lacking, despite a significant need, particularly for those who are long-term unemployed and without formal qualifications. The Programme for Increasing Employment for the period 2014-2020¹⁹, sets out the planned development of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning as a priority measure.

¹⁵ Order Description of Allocation of Costs for Competency Assessment, approved by the Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1711 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-755), (Kompetencijų vertinimo lėšų paskirstymo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1711 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-755), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]:

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439723&p_query=&p_tr2=2

¹⁶ Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012. No. 132 (Official Gazette, 2012, Nr. 18-799), (Reikalavimų kompetencijų vertinimo institucijoms ir jų akreditacijos tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012 m. vasario 2 d. Nr. 132 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 18-799), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]:

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=418020&p_query=&p_tr2=2

¹⁷ National Audit Office. National Audit Report on „The Development of Non-formal Adult Education”, 28 June 2013, No. VA-P-50-9-8 (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės kontrolė, Valstybinio audito ataskaita, Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo plėtra, 2013 m. birželio 28 d. nr. VA-P-50-9-8, Vilnius), available [last viewed 01.12.2013.]:

http://www.vkontrole.lt/pranesimas_spaudai.aspx?id=17667

¹⁸ Draft Order on The State Education Strategy for 2013-2020, 26 November 2013, No. XIIP-938(2) (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, Nutarimas dėl valstybinės švietimo 2013-2020 metų strategijos patvirtinimo, projektas Nr. XIIP-938(2), available [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=460565&p_tr2=2

¹⁹ Programme for Increasing Employment for the period 2014-2020, 25 September, 2013, No. 878 (viewed 3 May, 2014), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=456810&p_tr2=2.

Regarding validation initiatives in the third sector, some discussions at national level were initiated by the Symposium on Recognition of youth work and of non-formal learning²⁰. The symposium was organised by the European Youth Forum (a partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe) in November, 2011.

An initiative that partly covers the third (non-governmental) sector is a project called "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy"²¹, which is being implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The project is funded by the European Social Fund and the state budget. The development and implementation of a competence assessment mechanism of youth workers is among the project deliverables²². As part of this project, a number of documents were produced: "The description competence assessment mechanism of youth workers"²³, "Diagram of the Implementation Mechanism"²⁴ and the "Certification Methodology of Youth Workers"²⁵.

2.2 Skills audits

A skills audit, as defined in the European Recommendation on Validation is "a process aimed at identifying and analysing the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual, including his or her aptitudes and motivations in order to define a career project and/or plan a professional reorientation or training project" where the aim of a skills audit is "to help the individual analyse his/her career background, to self-assess his/her position in the labour environment and to plan a career pathway, or in some cases to prepare for the validation of non-formal or informal learning outcomes" is not used in Lithuania neither by the public employment services, nor by the private sector as yet.

2.3 Relationship with qualifications framework and credit systems, and information on standards used for validation

Qualifications and qualifications frameworks

The conceptual model of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Lithuania was designed under a three-year nationally implemented ESF project between March 2005 and February 2008. The Development of the National System of Qualifications was led by the Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, in cooperation with the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. The aim of the project was to establish a uniform and transparent qualifications system which would cover all levels of qualifications and transition between them, to ensure variety in the ways of acquiring a qualification, and provide the potential to flexibly respond to the requirements of the changing environment.

²⁰ Symposium on Recognition of Youth Work and of Non-formal Learning, organised by the European Youth Forum, the European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 14-16, December, 2011. Outcome Statement available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/attachments/STATEMENT_Symposium_participants_081211.pdf

²¹ The Project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy" ("Integruotos jaunimo politikos plėtra"), project No. VP1-4.1-VRM-07-V-01-002, which is implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. The project is funded by the European Social Fund (2007-2013) under the Human Resources Development Priority 4 "Administrative Capacity Building and Efficiency of Public Administration", measure VP1-4.1-VRM-07-V "Fostering Cooperation between the Public and the Non-Governmental Sectors and the state budget. Project No. VP1-4.1-VRM-07-V-01-002, it is funded by the. More information about the project is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <http://ijpp.lt/Vir%C5%A1utinis+meniu/lorem-ipsum-1/>

²² More information about this project activity is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <http://ijpp.lt/Vir%C5%A1utinis+meniu/artimiausi-renginiai/dirbanciu-su-jaunimu-darbuotoju-kompetenciju-ivertinimo-mechanizmo-parengimas-ir-igyvendinimas/>

More information about competence assessment mechanism delivered by the project is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <https://jaunimodarbuotojas.lt/apie/>

²³ The description competence assessment mechanism of youth workers is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <http://verslovirusas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/SU-JAUNIMU-DIRBANCIU-ASMENU-KOMPETENCIJU-VERTINIMO-MECHANIZMAS-galutinis.pdf>

²⁴ Diagram of the Implementation Mechanism is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <http://ijpp.lt/Vir%C5%A1utinis+meniu/artimiausi-renginiai/jaunimo-darbuotojo-sertifikavimo-sistemas-igyvendinimas/>

²⁵ Certification Methodology of Youth Workers is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.jrd.lt/uploads/Jaunimo_darbuotoju_sertifikavimo_metodika_20120519.pdf

Further development (in terms of its linking to the European Qualifications Framework) of the National Qualifications Framework took place under the ESF-funded project “Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF”, which was implemented by the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre between May 2011 and July 2012²⁶.

The Lithuanian Qualifications Framework describing the content of eight levels of national qualifications was approved by the Government Resolution on the 4th of May 2010²⁷. According to the document, the description was drafted with the aim (*inter alia*): “to ensure the clarity and accessibility of the processes of definition, acquisition, evaluation and recognition of qualifications; and to encourage lifelong learning through the application of all the forms and methods of formal, non-formal and informal learning with the purpose of moving between different levels of qualification.”

The framework is compatible with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) both in its structure (eight levels) and in its definition of the contents of qualifications levels²⁸.

The Lithuanian NQF is also compatible with the European Higher Education Qualifications Framework (Dublin descriptors): the last three levels of the NQF correspond to the three education cycles in HE. A visual presentation of the NQF is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1 **Concept of the national qualifications framework (NQF) in Lithuania**

²⁶ More information about the project “Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF” (Lietuvos ir Europos kvalifikacijų sandarų susiejimas) can be found here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1368

The Project has produced number of reports:

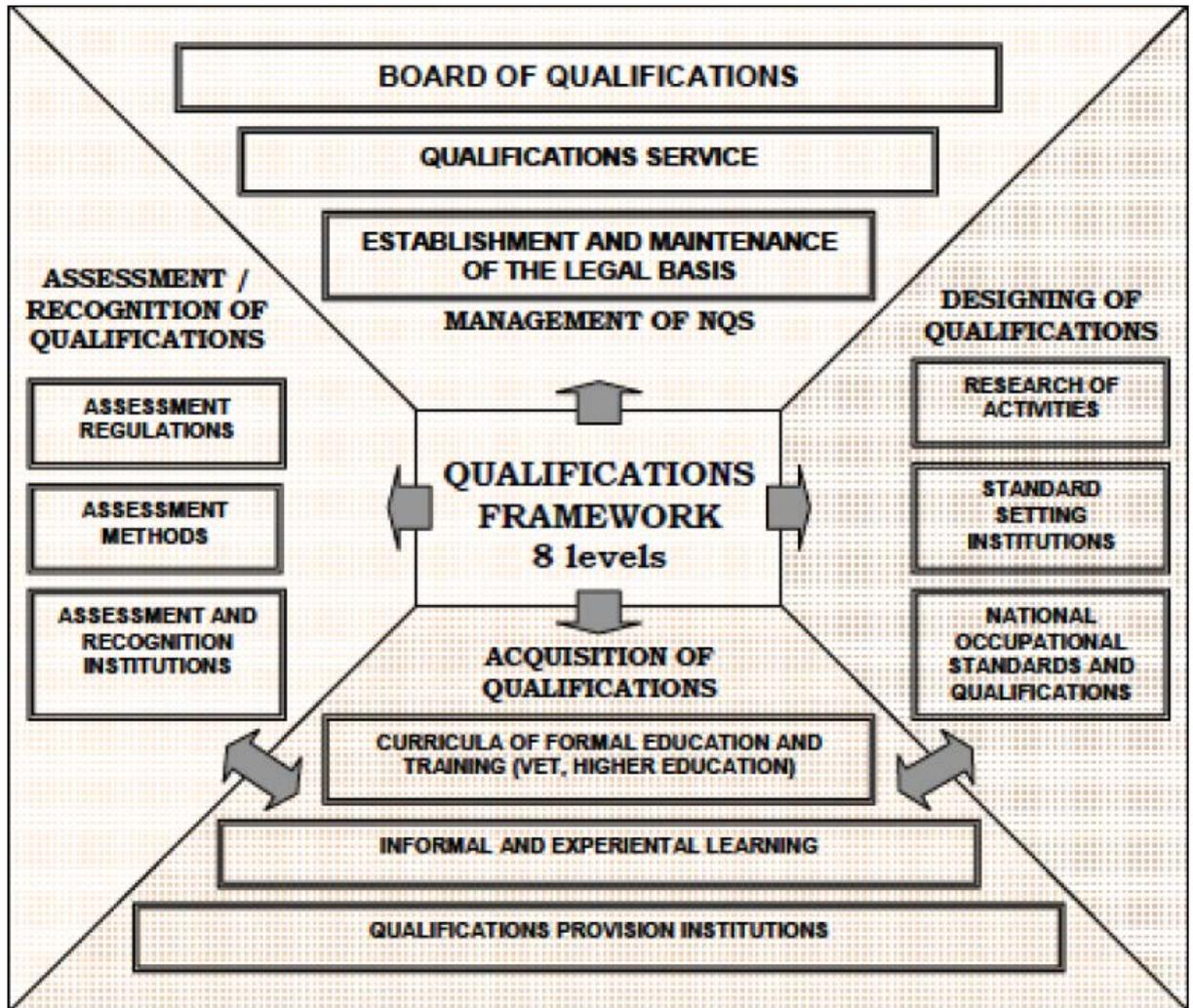
1. Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2012), Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA. National report. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTKS_EKS_ataskaita_ENG.pdf
2. Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2011), Referencing Lithuanian Qualifications System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Research report. By Prof. Dr. Ligija Kaminskiėnė. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LKA-research.pdf

²⁷ Government Resolution on Approving The Description of the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework, 4 May, 2010 (last amended 31.08.2011), No. 535 (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės nutarimas “Dėl Lietuvos kvalifikacijų sandaros aprašo patvirtinimo”. 2010 m. gegužės 4 d. Nr. 535.) can be found here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=405326

An official translation into English language is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTQF_official_translation.pdf

²⁸ For more information please refer here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]:

1. Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2012), Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA. National report. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTKS_EKS_ataskaita_ENG.pdf
2. Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2011), Referencing Lithuanian Qualifications System to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Research report. By Prof. Dr. Ligija Kaminskiėnė. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LKA-research.pdf



Source: Concept of Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework, 2006 (*Lietuvos nacionalines kvalifikacijų sistemos koncepcija*).

The chosen model of the NQF plays an important regulatory role: referencing of qualifications to NQF levels ensures the coherence between the main processes of the national system of qualifications:

- Designing of qualifications - here the NQF is a crucial instrument for the positioning of the designed qualifications (occupational standards) to the levels and prescribing of the ways and requirements of their acquisition according to the criteria of NQF levels.
- Provision/acquisition of qualifications – here the NQF is an important reference for the curriculum design and provision of education and training leading to the different qualifications and degrees. Referencing to the NQF is used as a tool for quality assurance in VET and higher education, as well as a regulative measure to avoid overlap in the provision of education and training programmes by different providers.
- Assessment of competences and awarding of qualifications – here the NQF is structuring the processes of assessment of competences, ensuring their coherence with the criteria of qualification descriptors and provides clear reference and criteria for assessment of learning outcomes and competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal ways.

In terms of important features of the NQF of Lithuania (competence-based framework), the NQF has a logical structure of descriptors and levels with two types of levelling parameters – characteristics of activities and types of competences, where types of competences in each level are described referring to the requirements of the characteristics of activities.

The main distinguishing characteristics of activities are: complexity, autonomy and changeability. The descriptors of the qualification levels make distinctions between specific

typical functional, cognitive, and general competences, and reflect the evolution of competences on the route from a lower to a higher qualification.

The level reference structure captures qualifications acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities as well as through an individual's professional experience at all levels from the lowest (level 1) to the highest (level 8).

Assessment/recognition (validation) of qualifications is an integral part of the NQF and consists of three main elements: assessment regulations (for more information on assessment methods please see section 2.1 and section 5, for more information on assessment and recognition institutions please see sections 2.4 and 2.5).

Nevertheless the system of standards is still incomplete and only VET standards are in place. VET standards are used for validation purposes in the case of validation of competences that have been previously acquired by VET learners, and for the unemployed (as a labour market policy measure). Sectoral qualifications standards (profesiniai standartai) are being developed further and it is the responsibility of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre to manage this process within the ESF programme for the formation of qualifications and development of modular VET system.

Credit systems

A National Framework of Higher Education Degrees and Qualifications has been developed as part of the Lithuanian NQF, which is compatible with the European Higher Education Qualifications Framework (Dublin descriptors): the last three levels of the NQF correspond to the three education cycles in HE.

The Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania introduced the term "study credit" back in 2000, meaning a unit of the volume of studies, equalling 40 hours of study work (both in the classroom and hours of independent student work), therefore the credit system to measure the study input has been used in the Lithuanian higher education sector since then.

It must be noted though that it was comparatively recently that the introduction of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) began. According to this system, credits are granted not only in view of the amount of study time but also learning outcomes. Under a new rule introduced on 1 September 2011, one year of studies represents 60 ECTS credits.

There is a unit based structure for qualifications in the Lithuanian higher education system.

The introduction of the ECVET system in the Lithuanian VET system has only recently started. In order to become familiar with the experience of Nordic countries in relation to ECVET implementation, a Leonardo da Vinci project "ECVET Implementation in the national vocational education and training system of Lithuania. Finnish and Danish experience" was carried out in 2013-2014 and a national ECVET expert team was initiated by national Leonardo da Vinci programme agency - Educational Exchanges Support Foundation²⁹.

A modularised structure for qualifications in line with ECVET is currently being developed in the VET system in Lithuania under the national ESF project called "Formation of Qualifications and the Development of Modular VET System"³⁰, which is being implemented by the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. The goal of the project is to shape qualifications and design innovative modular programmes that correspond to the needs of education and the economy. Activities of the project include: updating the methodology for the development of sectoral qualifications standards; training of experts; designing and updating of five sectoral qualification standards; the development of the concept for modular VET system; the development of the methodology for design of

²⁹ More information on the Project "ECVET Implementation in the national vocational education and training system of Lithuania. Finnish and Danish experience (2013-2014)" (Europos profesinio mokymo kreditų sistemos (angl. ECVET) diegimas nacionalinėje profesinio mokymo sistemoje. Suomijos ir Danijos patirtis (2013-2014 m.) is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=2237.

³⁰ More information on the Project "Formation of Qualifications and the Development of Modular VET System" (14.10.2010.-14.08.2014.) ("Kvalifikacijų formavimas ir modulinio profesinio mokymo sistemos kūrimas") is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1364

modular VET programmes; the design of 40 modular VET programmes in 25 educational areas.

The process of linking Lithuania's National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) to the units of developed national sectoral qualifications standards (and VET standards), which define the knowledge, understanding and competence required to perform that particular job related role is only starting. This is because qualifications standards are being developed at the moment (for instance, see the ESF project: "Formation of Qualifications and the Development of Modular VET System"³¹ under which 5 qualifications standards in priority sectors (i.e. energy, hospitality, construction, ICT and transportation and storage sectors' professional standards) will be developed before the end of 2014. It is not yet possible to achieve a partial certificate at any level through validation. Instead, validation results can be used to provide further guidance to the candidate for accessing and admission to formal education and training. Validation can be used at levels I-V of the EQF in the area of VET.

A similar approach is being applied in the system of Lithuanian higher education as well. Here, however, the amount of study credits acquired through the validation of candidate's competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning shall not exceed 75 percent of the amount of credits of the study programme that the candidate intends to study.

General "Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions"³² are used for organising the process at HE establishments. However, the process itself, assessment methodologies and methods as well as assessment criteria are developed and approved by the HE institution.

According to HE institutions themselves, a common procedure for HE institutions to follow, or more detailed guidelines in relation to these aspects of validation and recognition (especially the aspects of the whole process organisation, applications of candidates, a methodology of the preparation of the validation documents, the process of candidate consultation, the approval of an assessment committee and similar) would be much appreciated³³.

According to the National Audit Office, there is no clear stipulation in the legal acts in relation to validation of non-formal and in-formal learning at universities. If such opportunities are created, they are usually developed by the universities on their own initiative³⁴.

At the moment³⁵ validation services of competences acquired in non-formal and informal adult education system are provided at 33 higher education establishments³⁶. The majority of them have approved internal validation procedures in 2013 as part of the Project FORMALIS - „The Development of Validation System of Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Learning at Higher Education Institutions"³⁷, which was implemented April 2012 – 2014 by the Career and Competence Centre of Vytautas Magnus

³¹ More information on the Project "Formation of Qualifications and the Development of Modular VET System" (14.10.2010.-14.08.2014.) ("Kvalifikacijų formavimas ir modulinio profesinio mokymo sistemos kūrimas") is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1253

³² Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions. Order by the Minister for Education, No V-2319, 15 December 2010, in force 24 December 2010, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=389755&p_tr2=2

³³ National Audit Office. National Audit Report on „The Development of Non-formal Adult Education”, 28 June 2013, No. VA-P-50-9-8 (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės kontrolė, Valstybinio audito ataskaita, Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo plėtra, 2013 m. birželio 28 d. nr. VA-P-50-9-8, Vilnius), P. 13, available [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.vkontrole.lt/pranesimas_spaudai.aspx?id=17667

³⁴ National Audit Office. National Audit Report on „The Development of Non-formal Adult Education”, 28 June 2013, No. VA-P-50-9-8 (Lietuvos Respublikos Valstybės kontrolė, Valstybinio audito ataskaita, Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo plėtra, 2013 m. birželio 28 d. nr. VA-P-50-9-8, Vilnius), available [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.vkontrole.lt/pranesimas_spaudai.aspx?id=17667

³⁵ 1st May 2014.

³⁶ The Ministry of Education and Science, available [last viewed 01.05.2014.]: <http://www.smm.lt/web/lt/smm-svietimas/suaugusiųjų-svietimas>

³⁷ Website of the Project FORMALIS („Neformaliu būdu įgytų kompetencijų formalizavimo sistemos sukūrimas aukštojo mokslo įstaigose“ No. VP1-2.1-ŠMM-04-K-03-003), available [last viewed 01.05.2014.]: <http://kkc.vdu.lt/lt/content/projektas-formalis>

University. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, 646 people in 2012 and 341 people in 2013 have validated their competences at higher education establishments³⁸.

A different approach to the organisation of validation and recognition process is being taken within the VET area. In order to ensure quality and transparency of the assessment process, the validation process has been separated from the system of formal vocational education and training and can be undertaken by an accredited social partner or another legal entity of the Republic of Lithuania or other member state of the EU, or an organisation/its unit not holding the status of a legal person.

The accredited competence assessment institutions has the right to assess the competencies acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes, employment activities or informally. The list of accredited competence assessment bodies is published on the website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science (before January 2010 known as the Methodological Centre for Vocational Education and Training).

Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures were approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012³⁹. The whole process is organised according to the Order Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by the Minister for Education and Science⁴⁰, where the document itself is quite detailed and covers areas such as: registration of applications, preparation of competence assessment tasks, approval of the assessment committee, assessment process, etc.). According to the Ministry of Education and Science, 47 people in 2013 have validated their competences in the system of VET⁴¹.

Standards

The system of sectoral qualifications standards is still incomplete and only vocational education and training standards are in place⁴². VET standards in vocational education and training provide national-level learning outcome requirements for the acquisition of a corresponding qualification.

In terms of validation and recognition of vocational competences gained through non-formal and informal learning, VET standards are being used for validation purposes for the time being. Once the development of sectoral qualifications standards is complete, they will be linked with education and training standards for validation purposes as well.

At the moment, qualifications standards are being developed further and it is the responsibility of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre to manage this process within the ESF project "Formation of Qualifications and the Development of Modular VET System"⁴³ under which 5 occupational standards in priority sectors (i.e. energy, hospitality, construction, ICT and transportation and storage sectors'

³⁸ Draft Non-formal Adult Education Development Action Plan for 2014-2016 (Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo plėtros 2014–2016 metų veiksmų planas), available [last viewed 01.05.2014.]: <http://www.smm.lt/web/lt/teisesaktai/teisesaktuprojektai>.

³⁹ Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012. No. 132 (Official Gazette, 2012, Nr. 18-799), (Reikalavimų kompetencijų vertinimo institucijoms ir jų akreditacijos tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012 m. vasario 2 d. Nr. 132 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 18-799), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=418020&p_query=&p_tr2=2

⁴⁰ Order Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

⁴¹ Data provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, 11 December, 2013.

⁴² Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (2012), Referencing the Lithuanian Qualifications Framework to the EQF and the QF-EHEA. National report. Available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/LTKS_EKS/LTKS_EKS_ataskaita_ENG.pdf

⁴³ More information on the Project "Formation of Qualifications and the Development of Modular VET System" (14.10.2010.-14.08.2014.) ("Kvalifikacijų formavimas ir modulinio profesinio mokymo sistemos kūrimas") is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1253

professional standards) will be developed before the end of 2014. Authorised institutions⁴⁴ assess candidates' competences according to learning outcomes of VET standards.

With regard to higher education, a number of colleges and universities have developed and approved their own internal procedures for validation of non-formal and informal learning. These are applied in the recognition of learning that has taken place in any other non-academic environment along with credit transfer and accumulation schemes. On the national level, though, these issues are yet to be resolved. The Minister of Education and Science approved "Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions" by his Order No. V-2319 of December 15 2010⁴⁵. This should speed up the process of implementation of the recognition of prior learning in the higher education sector.

2.4 National institutional framework

The **Ministry of Education and Science (MES)** implements the national system of formal and non-formal education which encourages social attitudes in favour of education and creates conditions for lifelong learning in a changing democratic society including validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The Ministry of Education and Science accredits, upon the approval of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre, institutions that seek to gain the right to assess individual competences, refuse accreditation, suspend accreditation validity, revoke accreditation suspension and withdraw accreditation in accordance with the laws.

The **Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (QVETDC)** (Kvalifikacijų ir profesinio mokymo plėtros centras) – an overall objective of the Centre is to ensure a development of the lifelong learning system which corresponds to the needs of the national economy within the global context. Among its core activities are: the development of sectoral qualifications standards and VET standards, organisation of the development of modular programmes, the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework, development of the VET credits system; quality assurance, and to act as the National Coordination Point for the European Qualifications Framework. The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre submits the candidacy of an institution that seeks the right to become a competence assessment centre to the Ministry of Education and Science for approval.

Until July 2009 the **Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MSSL)** had overall national responsibility for managing vocational training in the labour market. With the implementation of the Law on the Amendment of the Law of Vocational Education and Training which was passed in 2007, the labour market training system is being integrated with the initial VET system and now all VET governance functions (both initial VET and labour market training) are delegated to the Ministry of Education and Science.

From 2011, after adopting amendments to the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the **Lithuanian Ministry of Economy** has undertaken responsibilities related to human resources development and vocational education and training which were previously assigned to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. The Ministry of Economy participates in shaping human resources development policy, takes part in developing and implementing VET policy, shapes national policy in recognition of regulated professions, and takes part in preparing legal acts in the area of competences assessment. Together with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Economy defines the structure of qualification and VET standards and the procedure for their development, and approves them. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour remains responsible for social affairs, including training issues for the unemployed.

⁴⁴ Please see the website of the the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1488

⁴⁵ Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions. Order by the Minister for Education, No V-2319, 15 December 2010, in force 24 December 2010, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=389755&p_tr2=2

Other ministries and departments, as well as municipalities may also implement functions in the field of VET within the scope of their activity. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for providing training for farmers at the national level and has issued related legal acts, appointed training institutions, implementing training and assessment of knowledge for farmers.

Recommendations on Validation and Recognition of Competences acquired in the System of Non-formal Adult Education in **Higher Education Institutions** were adopted on 15 December 2010 (in force since 24 December 2010)⁴⁶. The document established general principles of validation and recognition of competences at higher education establishments that were acquired in non-formal and informal education. At the moment, validation services of competences acquired in non-formal and informal adult education system are provided at the following six higher education establishments: Vytautas Magnus University, Mykolas Romeris University, Kaunas College of Applied Sciences, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, V. A. Graičiūnas School of Management and Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences.

In relation to the validation of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal vocational training, **VET providers** have an overall responsibility to offer all necessary support leading towards final qualification exams to an applicant seeking to validate knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education. According to a recent procedure of competence assessment (2012), a person willing to validate his competences and receive a qualification (equivalent to awarded through formal education) has to approach a VET provider who is implementing a relevant programme. The level of skills and knowledge of an applicant and their correspondence to the requirements for the qualification is defined on the basis of VET standards and relevant VET programmes. S/he has to present proofs of their experience, recommendations, etc. The VET provider, after assessing the evidence, proposes further training (if needed) and includes the individual onto the list of candidates who are ready to take a final qualification exam in external certification institution (external competence assessment institution, see below). After a successful examination the VET provider awards a qualification certificate (in future a qualification diploma).

Amendments to the Law on Vocational Education have broadened the powers of **stakeholders (employers and trade unions)** in VET and now they are more closely involved within the entire VET organisation and delivery process. Stakeholders are legally obliged to participate in shaping VET policy, initiate the development of new qualifications, occupational standards, VET curricula, provide content contributions and support for the development of VET standards and training programmes.

In order to ensure quality and transparency of the assessment process, the validation process has been separated from the system of formal vocational education and training and can be undertaken by an **accredited social partner or another legal entity of the Republic of Lithuania or other member state of the EU, or an organisation/its unit not holding the status of a legal person**. An accredited competence assessment authority has the right to assess the competencies acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes, employment activities or informally. The list of accredited competence assessment bodies is published on the website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science. As indicated above, there are nineteen institutional bodies on the list of accredited competence assessment authorities.

⁴⁶ Recommendations on Validation and Recognition of Competences acquired in the System of Non-formal Adult Education in Higher Education Institutions. Order by the Minister for Education, No V-2319, 15 December 2010, in force 24 December 2010, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=389755&p_tr2=2

2.5 Governance and allocation of responsibilities

2.5.1 Please describe the allocation of responsibilities (at national, regional, local, social partner, provider level) according to the different aspects of validation

An overall institutional model of validation of non-formal and informal learning achievements in Lithuania is supported by a developing framework:

- **In VET sector**, the design of the procedure/approach is described in detail in the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012⁴⁷. Information, promotion and raising awareness is the responsibility of the formal VET providers and the institutions (usually sectoral and employers' associations, training centres of large companies, specialised departments of the public sector, such as, for instance, Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department and State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior) that are accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science to undertake assessment and validation of competences including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Providing counselling and guidance to the candidates, undertaking assessment, certification of the outputs of validation procedures are direct responsibilities of these institutions. Quality assurance and evaluation and review fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. Nevertheless, numbers of beneficiaries per year remain very small – about 15 – 20 people. The majority of them are wishing to validate their competences in construction and catering sectors⁴⁸.
- **In HE sector** – Order by the Minister for Education on Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions, 15 December 2010⁴⁹, only very briefly describes common principles of validation and recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning in HE as well as outlining the main stages of the overall procedure by delegating responsibility for the entire content of the process to the HE institutions themselves. Information, promotion and raising awareness is the responsibility of the HE providers as well as providing counselling and guidance to the candidates, undertaking assessment, certification of the outputs of validation procedures. Quality assurance and evaluation and review falls under the responsibility of the HE providers themselves and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras) - an independent public agency implementing external quality assurance at HE in Lithuania.
- General responsibility for monitoring, assessing and delivering short term forecasts of the **labour market** needs and **qualifications** as well implementing active labour market intervention measures falls to Lithuanian Labour Exchange (Lietuvos Darbo birža) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and its 10 regional offices.
- However, no initiatives in relation to validation of non-formal and informal learning are undertaken by this organisation as yet. More specific responsibility for more strategic and long term forecasts on the labour market needs and qualifications which are then linked with the development of sectoral qualifications and occupational standards and VET standards is assigned to the The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. In this respect, the Centre closely works with an extensive range of

⁴⁷ Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

⁴⁸ Interview with Dr. Mečislavas Griškevičius, Head of the Vocational Education and Guidance Division, Department of General Education and Vocational Training the Ministry for Education and science, 5th December 2013.

⁴⁹ Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions. Order by the Minister for Education, No V-2319, 15 December 2010, in force 24 December 2010, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=389755&p_tr2=2

social partners through 17 sectoral partnerships, which were established as part of the ESF project “Sectoral partnerships for the development of qualifications system (Lifelong learning programme)” (June 2012 - May 2013)⁵⁰.

- At the moment, labour market needs for validation of non-formal and informal learning are compensated by the process in VET sector. On the other hand, a number of training centres of major companies in Lithuania, and business and professional associations, have acquired the right to validate non-formal and informal learning in their operation areas according to the procedure laid down in the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012⁵¹ (i.e. equivalent to the process in VET sector).

2.5.2 Explain more specifically the role of different stakeholders

Education and training providers:

In terms of **validation in VET sector** - in order to ensure quality and transparency of the validation and assessment process, the assessment and validation process has been separated from the system of formal vocational education and training and can be undertaken by an **accredited social partner or another legal entity of the Republic of Lithuania or other member state of the EU, or an organisation/its unit not holding the status of a legal person.**

An accredited competence assessment authority has the right to assess the competencies acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes, employment activities or informally. The list of accredited competence assessment bodies is published on the website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science. In this respect the process is regulated by the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012⁵². In addition, a representative from formal VET (an occupation teacher) is one of the three assessors on the Competence Assessment Panel for each validation case.

In terms of **validation in HE sector** - Order by the Minister for Education on Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions, 15 December 2010⁵³ only very briefly outlines this process in HE area, leaving the full responsibility for the development of the validation content (including methodologies and the process itself) to HE institutions themselves.

Private sector actors (including social partners)

The role of private sector actors (including social partners) is most evident in the processes of validation in VET sector and the labour market. These processes are very similar because a separate process corresponding to the specific needs of the labour market in terms of validation of non-formal and informal learning has not yet been developed.

As mentioned above, in order to ensure quality and transparency of the assessment process, the assessment and validation process has been separated from the system of

⁵⁰ More information on the Project “Sectoral partnerships for the development of qualifications system (Lifelong learning programme)” is available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1917

⁵¹ Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

⁵² Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

⁵³ Recommendations on the Assessment and Recognition of Non-formally Acquired Competences in Higher Education Institutions. Order by the Minister for Education, No V-2319, 15 December 2010, in force 24 December 2010, (viewed 10 November 2013), available at: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=389755&p_tr2=2

formal vocational education and training and can be undertaken by an accredited social partner or another legal entity of the Republic of Lithuania or other member state of the EU, or an organisation/its unit not holding the status of a legal person. An accredited competence assessment authority (mainly sectorial and employers' associations, training centres of large companies and similar) has the right to assess the competencies acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes, employment activities or informally. The list of accredited competence assessment bodies is published on the website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. There are currently⁵⁴ nineteen institutional bodies on the list of accredited competence assessment authorities.

As previously mentioned, general responsibility for monitoring, assessing and delivering short term forecasts of the **labour market** needs and **qualifications** as well implementing active labour market intervention measures falls to Lithuanian Labour Exchange (Lietuvos Darbo birža) under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and its 10 regional offices. However, no initiatives in relation to validation of non-formal and informal learning are undertaken by this organisation as yet. More specific responsibility for more strategic and long term forecasts on the labour market needs and qualifications which are then linked with the development of sectorial qualifications standards and VET standards is assigned to The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. In this respect, the Centre closely works with an extensive range of social partners through sectoral partnerships. At the moment labour market needs for validation of non-formal and informal learning is compensated by the process in VET sector. On the other hand, a number of training centres of major companies in Lithuania, business and professional associations have acquired the right to validate non-formal and informal learning in their operation areas according to the procedure led down in the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012⁵⁵ (i.e. equivalent to the process in VET sector).

Third sector organisations

Regarding the initiatives of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in the third sector, some discussions at the national level in Lithuania were initiated by the Symposium on Recognition of youth work and of non-formal learning⁵⁶ as previously mentioned. However no credible solutions or initiatives taken by or involving youth organisations and voluntary organisations (except one – where a national project among other activities aimed to develop and implement a competence assessment mechanism for youth workers including those working in the third sector – please see section 2.6) have been undertaken so far in the last three years.

2.5.3 Coordination between stakeholders

A relatively good example in this respect is one that demonstrates good cooperation between the public sector (the Ministry of Education and Science and the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre), formal VET providers and the social partners (mainly sectorial and employers' associations, training centres of large companies) (please see section 2.5).

Another example is the existing 'Development of an Integrated Youth Policy'⁵⁷ project. As discussed in more detail in the box below, the overall objective of the project is to

⁵⁴ 1 December 2013, available [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1488

⁵⁵ Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

⁵⁶ Symposium on Recognition of youth work and of non-formal learning, organised by the European youth forum, the European Youth Centre, Strasbourg, 14-16, December, 2011. Outcome Statement available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/news/attachments/STATEMENT_Symposium_participants_081211.pdf

⁵⁷ The Project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy" ("Integruotos jaunimo politikos plėtra"), project No. VP1-4.1-VRM-07-V-01-002, which is implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social security and Labour of

“strengthen the state and non-governmental sectors working with young people, as well as to develop, promote and strengthen their cooperation”. Through the development of a youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning of youth workers⁵⁸, around 500 youth workers including those from the public (social workers, police officers, job centres’ workers and similar) and non-governmental sectors have validated their competences⁵⁹.

2.6 Examples of national, regional, local or EU funded initiatives

Overall it can be said that there have not been many nationally or regionally implemented projects or initiatives in the field of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the last three years in Lithuania, across all – public, private and non-governmental, sectors. Major activities are taking place at the national level, aiming to strengthen the legal framework, and other preparatory work – such as the development of the qualifications standards and similar (please see section above). In the meantime Lithuania has participated in a number of EU funded initiatives as project partners, which support the accumulation of a variety of knowledge in the field and pave the way for further initiatives in the future.

Within this context however, the most recent example of a national initiative in the field covering both public and non-governmental sectors, is the aforementioned project “The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy”.

Project “The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy”

Brief description of project/initiative: It is a large national project, which is implemented by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. An overall aim of the project is to “strengthen the state and non-governmental sectors working with young people, as well as to develop, promote and strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation”.

Project activities include:

- The analyses of the state-of-play of the implementation of youth policies in Lithuanian municipalities; quality assessment of municipality youth policies; quality assessment of youth organisations’ performance and the delivery and implementation of recommendations on performance effectiveness; preparation and implementation of action plans in the field of youth policy both at the national and municipality levels; and the empowerment of youth organisations to become strong partners for the public sector in the implementation and the delivery of youth policies.
- The implementation of the youth workers’ certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning are the integral actions of the later activity. A broad definition of a “youth worker” (youth worker and specialists working with the youth) will enable a broad group of potential beneficiaries (public sector employees working with the youth such as social workers, police officers, culture and sports specialists and similar, as well as those working in NGOs) to participate in this activity.
- The certification procedure consists of two pathways: the first is dedicated to a so called “initial procedure of competence assessment”, which is mainly designed to guide the candidate through a focused acquiring of competences and experience in the field of youth and the second – so called “the main competence assessment procedure”, which is mainly dedicated to the validation of competences and experience that the candidate already has.
- If the candidate is successful, both procedures result in a certificate. The major difference

the Republic of Lithuania. The project is funded by the European Social Fund (2007-2013) Priority 4 “Fostering administrative competences and increasing efficiency of public administration” of Human Resources Development Operational Program (2007-2013), measure VP1-4.1-VRM-07-V “Fostering Cooperation between the Public and the Non-Governmental Sectors and the state budget. Project No. VP1-4.1-VRM-07-V-01-002. More information about the project is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <http://ijpp.lt/Vir%C5%A1utinis+meniu/lorem-ipsu-1/>

⁵⁸ More information about this project activity is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]:

<http://ijpp.lt/Vir%C5%A1utinis+meniu/artimiausi-renginiai/dirbanciu-su-jaunimu-darbuotoju-kompetenciju-ivertinimo-mechanizmo-parengimas-ir-igyvendinimas/>

More information about competence assessment mechanism delivered by the project is available here [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: <https://jaunimodarbuotojas.lt/apie/>

⁵⁹ Interview with Ms. Valda Karnickaitė, project coordinator, the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry for Social Security and Labour, 3rd December 2013.

between the procedures is the learning pathway (both a possibility for professional development through accredited programmes and modules and professional development through other non-accredited ways) that is offered to the candidate in the first case, whereas the second is mainly dedicated towards the validation of the competences and experience that the candidate already has and professional development activities are offered only in the cases, if the candidate is unsuccessful in gaining a certificate.

- The main assessment method that is used in the first case - an initial procedure of competence assessment - is a self-reflection questionnaire followed by a discussion session with an accredited assessor, whereas number of assessment methods (can be selected according to the specifics of the case) are used in the second - the main competence assessment procedure – case: a discussion session with an accredited assessor, observation, oral presentations, presentations using various media tools, group discussions, role games, simulation, case analysis, practical tasks and written works.

It is an interesting example of an integrated approach towards the delivery of an integrated youth policy, where youth workers' certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism are well developed and stimulate cooperation between the public and non-governmental sectors.

Duration/sustainability: The Project is being implemented between August 2010 and January 2015. All expected results are oriented towards the sustainability of the project deliverables in the future: it is expected that the research, analysis and the assessment data of youth policies in the municipalities will be later used in the preparation of the municipal planning documents as well as national programs and measures concerning youth policy. The youth organisations involved will become more competent in cooperation with the national and local government agencies and therefore will be able to compete better with other potential service providers for the public sector in delivering youth policies. The subsequent state programmes and their action plans will include further development, implementation and sustainability measures of the project results. The Project is funded from the ESF in accordance with the measure "Promoting cooperation between national and non-governmental sectors" of Priority 4 "Fostering administrative competences and increasing efficiency of public administration" of Human Resources Development Operational Program (2007-2013) with co-funding from the state budget.

Quality assurance: The Project has quality assurance processes in place. The certification procedure will be carried out by an independent third party, the Certifier or a Certification Authority, which will certify qualifications for a defined time period and in accordance to a pre-defined set of transparent quality assurance standards and norms.

Stakeholder involvement: this particular project activity involves governmental (national and municipal level) and non-governmental (mainly NGOs) organisations. All stakeholders were involved both in the development and piloting stage of the activity deliverables (i.e. the development and implementation of the certification system and competence assessment mechanism).

Evidence of results: before the end of the Project around 600 youth workers will be able to participate in the pilot competence assessment. To date around 500 youth workers including those from the public (social workers, police officers, job centres' workers, culture and sports specialist working with youth and similar) and non-governmental sectors have validated their competences.

Evaluation: the Project is still at the implementation stage, therefore internal/external evaluation activities have not been carried out yet.

Further information: Project websites: www.jrd.lt and www.jaunimodarbuotojas.lt

Project deliverables: "The description competence assessment mechanism of youth workers": <http://verslovirusas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/SU-JAUNIMU-DIRBANCIU-ASMENU-KOMPETENCIJU-VERTINIMO-MECHANIZMAS-galutinis.pdf>;

"Diagram of the Implementation Mechanism": <http://verslovirusas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Picture1.png> and

the "Certification Methodology of Youth Workers": http://www.jrd.lt/uploads/Jaunimo_darbuotoju_sertifikavimo_metodika_20120519.pdf

Project team: Mr. Vydūnas Trapinskas, Head of the project, the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and Mrs. Valda Karnickaitė, Project coordinator, the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Another example of a national initiative is the development of a national system for validation of competences (including those that have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning) in VET sector.

The development of a national system for validation in VET sector

Brief description of project/initiative: Lithuania has developed a national system for validation of competence (including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning) in VET sector, that involves cooperation between the public sector (the Ministry of Education and Science and the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science, specialised departments of the public sector, such as, for instance, Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department and State Border Guard Service under the Ministry of the Interior), formal VET providers and the social partners (usually sectorial and employers' associations, training centres of large companies).

In order to ensure quality and transparency of the assessment process, the assessment and validation process has been separated from the system of formal vocational education and training and can be undertaken by an accredited social partner or another legal entity of the Republic of Lithuania or other member state of the EU, or an organisation/its unit not holding the status of a legal person.

An accredited competence assessment authority has the right to assess the competencies acquired in formal and non-formal education programmes, employment activities or informally in a particular area they operate. The list of accredited competence assessment bodies is published on the website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science. Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures were approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012⁶⁰.

The nineteen institutional bodies on the list of accredited competence assessment authorities⁶¹ include for instance, Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, Lithuanian Electricity Association, Lithuanian Chamber of Agriculture, Lithuanian Welders Association, Training centre of state owned company "Lithuanian Railways", "Achema" training centre, "Lifosa" training centre and similar.

The design of the procedure/approach is described in detail in the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012⁶², where the document itself is quite detailed and covers the areas such as: registration of applications, preparation of competence assessment tasks, approval of the assessment committee, assessment process, etc.). Following this document, a person willing to validate his competences and receive a qualification has to approach a VET provider who is implementing a relevant programme. S/He has to present evidence of their experience, recommendations, etc. The VET provider, after assessing the evidence, proposes further training (if needed) and includes the person on a list of individuals who are ready to take the final qualification exam in an external competence assessment institution. Information, promotion and raising awareness is the responsibility of the VET providers and the institutions that are accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science to undertake validation of competences including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

Providing counselling and guidance to the candidates, undertaking assessment, certification of the outputs of validation procedures are direct responsibilities of these institutions. Quality assurance and evaluation and review falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre. However, there is no agreed quality assurance framework in terms of specific standards, guidelines, etc. for validation

⁶⁰ Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012. No. 132 (Official Gazette, 2012, Nr. 18-799), (Reikalavimų kompetencijų vertinimo institucijoms ir jų akreditacijos tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012 m. vasario 2 d. Nr. 132 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 18-799), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=418020&p_query=&p_tr2=2

⁶¹ Please see the website of the the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre [last viewed 01.12.2013.]: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1488

⁶² Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

procedures in VET sector. Main validations methods that are used here are the theory exam and practical assignments.

Duration/sustainability: the opportunity to validate competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning (/work experience) in VET sector have been offered from 2001, whereas accredited competence assessment institutions started their activities since the beginning of 2013. The system is funded from the state budget and co-financed by the beneficiaries

Quality assurance: main aspects are described in the Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures were approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012⁶³ and the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the accredited competence assessment authorities. The process is monitored by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre.

Stakeholder involvement: as mentioned, a number of stakeholders from various sectors are cooperating on this initiative.

Evidence of results: this is still a recent initiative and the take up is not very high (around 15 – 20 beneficiaries per year). The majority of beneficiaries so far were wishing to validate their competences in construction and catering sectors⁶⁴.

Evaluation: the initiative is still at the very early stage of its implementation, therefore internal/external evaluation activities have not been carried out yet.

Further information: Website of the Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre: http://www.kpmc.lt/kpmc/?page_id=1488

Mr. Dr. Mečislavas Griškevičius, Head of the Vocation Education and Guidance Division, Department of General Education and Vocational Training the Ministry for Education and science and Mrs. Rūta Karvelytė, Head of Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Unit, The Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre.

The following are the EU funded initiatives that Lithuanian organisations have been participating as project partners in the last three years:

- **Informal Learning in Communities, ILIC** - increase the consideration and application of informal learning within communities, by producing innovative training modules for practitioners in the field of adult learning wanting to develop and validate informal learning opportunities within communities;
- **Informedu** - validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the education system providing recognition of skills gained informally to enable adults to re-enter formal learning gained in the tourism sector;
- **Validaid** - validation of skills and knowledge for strengthening the positions of low-qualified employees in the labour market. The project develops methods and tools for identifying and validating competences in the workplace and opening gateways to education and training to make it easier for low-qualified individuals to develop their competences. The project examines methods of validation in workplaces based on occupational standards. The target group is low-qualified employees in Finance, Trade and Information Technology sectors;
- **FORWARD** - competence portfolio and pedagogical tools to identify, recognise, validate and improve the competences acquired by migrant women in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. FORWARD promotes the participation of migrant women in

⁶³ Requirements for competence assessment bodies and their accreditation procedures, approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2 February 2012. No. 132 (Official Gazette, 2012, Nr. 18-799), (Reikalavimų kompetencijų vertinimo institucijoms ir jų akreditacijos tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012 m. vasario 2 d. Nr. 132 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 18-799), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=418020&p_query=&p_tr2=2

⁶⁴ Interview with Dr. Mečislavas Griškevičius, Head of the Vocational Education and Guidance Division, Department of General Education and Vocational Training the Ministry for Education and science, 5th December 2013.

adult education and focuses particularly on two key tools: competence-based methodologies and competence validation frameworks;

- **UPCARING** - UPgrading CARE service with INnovative skills certification, e-learning and matchinG systems: the project aims to improve the professionalism of home care workers and enhance their chances of employment by using a web-based platform to develop learners' knowledge and skills in home care work through e-learning, enhancing their professionalism through validation of their prior learning, and supporting their employability through a demand/supply matching service;
- **VITA** - validation of service related skills and competences with an innovative IT-based assessment and evidencing system: an innovative validation system for service-oriented competences to provide evidence of professional competences for both learners and potential employers;
- **VILMA** - Validation of Informal Learning in Mobility Actions – the project provides a comprehensive approach and a consistent set of instruments to assess and evidence the impact of informal mobility learning on the competence development of the individual learner based on a comparable reference system and a common methodology;
- **IDEAL** – Identifier, Evaluer, Valider aimed at transferring and sharing the French methodology for the Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience or VAE (Accreditation of Prior Learning or APL), in particular to reduce the shortage of teachers by reducing the training period of adults wishing to take up teaching. The project highlights the subject-specific knowledge and skills needed to fulfil the role of a teacher to ensure the development of a continuing education programme for in-service teachers;
- **Recognition and Development of Vocational Education and Training Competencies – PEIRA** aimed to transfer to the Italian context the results of the project Recognition of Prior Learning Outcomes (RPLO, 2008 – 2010) which developed a method for implementing - at UK level and for the VET sector - the Cedefop European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. The aims of the project are to develop a general model of recognition of prior learning, to be tested on the VET sector in Lombardy and Lazio regions; to apply the model in the two Italian regions and in the partner countries through experimentations on the level 4 and 5/6 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF); and to strengthen the basis for improving the VET offer in Italy and in the partner countries.

2.7 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

2.7.1 Funding

Regarding funding, there are no national framework explicitly ring-fencing funds for validation. Funding mainly comes from ESF (with governmental co-funding) and other European funding streams and is usually provided to single ad hoc initiatives.

2.7.2 Distribution of costs

There are no estimations regarding the costs to organisations in terms of validation processes. There are no tax incentives for firms to get involved in validation schemes. There are no direct costs (i.e. individuals are not required to pay a fee) to individuals for the validation process. Validation costs are covered to accredited competence assessment authorities from the government budget per number of persons of which competences were validated.

In this respect two recently adopted legal acts are important:

- Calculation Methodology of Costs per Person for Competence Assessment Process, approved by the Government of Lithuania⁶⁵;

⁶⁵ Calculation Methodology of Costs per Person for Competency Assessment Process, approved by the Government of Lithuania, 14 November, 2012. Resolution No. 1373 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 133-6789), (Kompetencijų vertinimo lėšų

- Order Description of Allocation of Costs for Competence Assessment, approved by the Minister for Education and Science⁶⁶.

2.7.3 Data on flows of beneficiaries

At the moment⁶⁷ validation services of competences acquired in non-formal and informal adult education system are provided at 33 higher education establishments⁶⁸. The majority of them have approved internal validation procedures in 2013 as part of the Project FORMALIS - „The Development of Validation System of Competences Acquired through Non-formal and Informal Learning at Higher Education Institutions”⁶⁹, which was implemented from April 2012 – 2014 by the Career and Competence Centre of Vytautas Magnus University. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, 646 people in 2012 and 341 people in 2013 have validated their competences at higher education establishments⁷⁰.

In respect to flows of beneficiaries in the VET sector, numbers are relatively small, i.e. around 30 applications and 15-20 who actually undergo validation per year on average. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, 47 people in 2013 have validated their competences in the system of VET⁷¹.

Regarding the number of beneficiaries in the project “The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy” - before the end of the Project around 600 youth workers will be able to participate in the pilot competence assessment. As mentioned above, to date around 500 youth workers have validated their competences.

2.7.4 Evidence of benefits to individuals

There are no data so far on the benefits to individuals of validation, e.g. qualifications achieved, successful applications to education/training courses, career development, improved self-esteem etc.

3 Information, advice and guidance

3.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

In general, there is a lack of awareness about the benefits involved in relation to validation of non-formal and informal learning. This is typical for all parties (potentially) involved: education and training providers, individuals, employers and social partners. For instance, the majority of employers do not see any need to formally certify employees' competencies acquired in non-formal or informal ways. In their opinion, this is only beneficial for the individuals but not for businesses. Cases where employers refer employees to take exams towards a qualification are rare.

skaičiavimo vienam asmeniui metodika, patvirtinta Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2012 m. lapkričio 14 d. nutarimu Nr. 1373 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 133-6789), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]:

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=437498&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

⁶⁶ Order Description of Allocation of Costs for Competency Assessment, approved by the Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1711 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-755), (Kompetencijų vertinimo lėšų paskirstymo tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1711 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-755), available [last viewed 20.11.2013.]:

http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439723&p_query=&p_tr2=2

⁶⁷ 1st May 2014.

⁶⁸ The Ministry of Education and Science, available [last viewed 01.05.2014.]: <http://www.smm.lt/web/lt/smm-svietimas/suaugusiųjų-svietimas>

⁶⁹ Website of the Project FORMALIS („Neformaliu būdu įgytų kompetencijų formalizavimo sistemos sukūrimas aukštojo mokslo įstaigose“ No. VP1-2.1-ŠMM-04-K-03-003), available [last viewed 01.05.2014.]: <http://kkc.vdu.lt/lt/content/projektas-formalis>

⁷⁰ Draft Non-formal Adult Education Development Action Plan for 2014-2016 (Neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo plėtros 2014–2016 metų veiksmų planas), available [last viewed 01.05.2014.]: <http://www.smm.lt/web/lt/teisesaktai/teisesaktuprojektai>.

⁷¹ Data provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, 11 December, 2013.

On the other hand, the motivation of individuals to gain recognition for non-formal experiences is rather low as well. Overall there are bigger issues involved in the awareness raising and recruitment area, such as lack of national guidance and ultimately low prestige of learning gained outside the formal education system, as well as lack of traditions and a culture of lifelong learning.

In VET sector, awareness-raising and recruitment is the responsibility of the formal VET providers and the institutions that are accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science to undertake validation of competences including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning. However, this area is relatively weak. This area offers significant potential, if job centres across the country and guidance practitioners were actively involved in this area.

In higher education sector, awareness-raising and recruitment is also the responsibility of the HE institutions themselves. On the other hand, there is lack of motivation for them as validation processes require financial resources from the universities, beneficiaries' fees usually cover administrative costs only and universities lose potential students in other cases.

Within the context of the national project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy", awareness raising and recruitment is undertaken by involving "target information disseminators" (please see description of a separate case study "Implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism in Lithuania").

3.2 Role of information, advice and guidance networks/institutions

There are no existing specific information, advice and guidance networks/institutions involved in delivering/developing validation. A systematic approach towards the issue has not been developed yet. Stakeholder interviews have revealed that the lack of existing information, advice and guidance networks/dedicated institutions or their availability to provide information, advice and guidance are among the main issues why validation of non-formal and informal learning has still low take up.

Guidance for validation is usually provided by those who actually offer validation opportunities (e.g. formal VET providers (in VET sector) and HE providers (in HE sector)). There are no effective initiatives so far that would link e-guidance to validation, apart from one – a currently implemented project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy". An extensive information and support to individuals (before, during and after validation) is planned in the implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning of youth workers, which were developed under the Project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy" as presented under section 2.6 in more detail above.

3.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

There are no measures so far to improve awareness of validation amongst guidance practitioners, so that they can direct individuals to validation systems as appropriate.

4 Quality assurance and evaluation

4.1 Quality Assurance Framework

In VET sector, this is described in the Order by the Minister for Education and Science on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, 11 December, 2012⁷². The document is quite detailed and covers *inter alia* the following aspects:

⁷² Order on the Description of the Assessment of Personally Acquired Competencies, approved by Minister for Education and Science, 11 December, 2012. Order No. V-1710 (Official Gazette 2012, no. 146-7558), (Asmens įgytų kompetencijų vertinimo

applications of candidates, preparation of assessment tasks, requirements for candidates, an approval of an assessment committee, organisation of an assessment process and similar. However, there is no agreed quality assurance framework in terms of specific standards, guidelines, etc. for validation procedures in VET sector. Monitoring and quality assurance is undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Science.

HE providers themselves are responsible for quality assurance framework. At Mykolas Romeris University, for instance, the regular validation procedure includes internal and external audit components providing quality checks on validation procedures: where internal audit reviews appeal applications and assesses qualifications of assessors, assessment methods used and other procedural aspects and external audit looks at overall quality in HE.

Quality assurance framework is well pre-defined in the implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning of youth workers, which were developed under the Project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy" (please see case study in Section 2.4 "Implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism in Lithuania").

4.2 Quality assurance systems/procedures

The quality of validation is ensured by: validation standards that are accepted by stakeholders, using external assessors as part of the validation process, external observers to provide a quality check on validation procedures, qualifications requirements for guidance and assessment practitioners, etc. (please see separate case study in Section 2.4 "Implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism in Lithuania").

4.3 Evaluation framework

An evaluation framework is in place as part of the implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning of youth workers, which were developed under the Project "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy" presented above.

5 Validation methods

5.1 Methods used and the validation process

Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning through or with the help of examinations in the formal system is the most common assessment method used in Lithuania so far. In this way an individual enters examinations of the formal education system and by passing them, his or her competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning are validated. The end result is a formal and usually generally recognised diploma or a certificate.

A competence portfolio is another method for validation of non-formal and informal learning in Lithuania and is used by the validation initiatives developed by the Centre of Career and Competences of Vytautas Magnus University and the Mykolas Romeris University. Competence portfolios tend to use a mix of methods and instruments employed in consecutive stages to produce a coherent set of documents showing an individual's skills in different ways (such as self-assessment based on a questionnaire or a set of given criteria collecting evidence from work experience or other practices, interview(s) with a third party and/or an assessment centre and competence exams in some cases).

tvarkos aprašas, patvirtintas Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo ir mokslo ministro 2012 m. gruodžio 11 d. įsakymu Nr. V-1710 (Žin., 2012, Nr. 146-7558), available here [last viewed 20.11.2013]:
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=439722&p_query=&p_tr2=2.

Observation is less commonly used as a method for validating non-formal and informal learning in Lithuania. The method involves extracting evidence of competences while individuals perform everyday tasks at work. Evidence extracted from work practices usually relies on observation by a third party (in these cases a line manager or a senior supervisor) for the judgement of the competence level acquired.

Simulation is another method used when in addition to other methods and techniques, a person undergoing an assessment procedure is given a 'real life' example to solve. In addition a candidate also collects and documents physical or intellectual evidence of learning outcomes from their work. This evidence then forms the basis of the validation of competences by a third party. Yet, competence assessment procedures in the third sector are often more an instrumental tool for the organisation concerned than for the individual and do not result in a certificate of any kind.

Other assessment methods are used in the implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning of youth workers, which were developed under "The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy" presented above.

The Certification procedure consists of two pathways: the first is dedicated to a so-called "initial procedure of competence assessment", which is mainly designed to guide the candidate through a focused acquiring of competences and experience in the field of youth and the second – the so called "main competence assessment procedure", which is mainly dedicated to the validation of competences and experience that the candidate already has.

If the candidate is successful, both procedures result in a certificate. The major difference between the procedures is the learning pathway (both a possibility for professional development through accredited programmes and modules and professional development through other non-accredited ways) that is offered to the candidate in the first case, whereas the second is mainly dedicated towards the validation of the competences and experience that the candidate already has and professional development activities are offered only in the cases, if the candidate is unsuccessful in gaining a certificate.

The main assessment method that is used in the first case - an initial procedure of competence assessment - is a self-reflection questionnaire followed by a discussion session with an accredited assessor, whereas number of assessment methods (can be selected according to the specifics of the case) are used in the second - the main competence assessment procedure – case: a discussion session with an accredited assessor, observation, oral presentations, presentations using various media tools, group discussions, role games, simulation, case analysis, practical tasks and written works.

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate	v	v	v
Declarative methods	v	v	
Interview	v	v	v
Observation			v
Portfolio method	v	v	v
Presentation			v
Simulation and evidence extracted from work			v
Tests and examinations			v
Other (e.g. e-learning methods) – please specify			v

6 Validation practitioners

6.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In VET sector, validation practitioners are vocational teachers, employers and occupation representatives. As an example, validation practitioners at the Centre of Career and Competence of Vytautas Magnus University and the Mykolas Romeris University are usually university teachers.

There are no particular qualification requirements for validation practitioners in Lithuania, however in the project “Developing the System of Evaluation of Knowledge and Competence in VET”, which was funded by the EU Structural Funds in 2005-2007, the competences of assessors dealing with validation of non-formal and informal learning were defined for the first time (Table below⁷³).

Table No. Types of activities and required competences by the assessor’s

Type of activity	Required competences
1. Preparation for the validation process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand qualitative and quantitative changes in the profession/professional qualifications concerned; 2. To understand key methodologies and methods of VET; 3. To understand key principles and structure of vocational standards and modularised structure of qualifications; 4. To understand the main principles of competence-based learning content; 5. To be aware of legal requirements and regulation in relation to competence assessment; 6. To understand the social value of validation of non-formal and informal learning.
2. Preparation of the validation process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to apply assessment criteria for a specific validation case; 2. Ability to choose competence assessment methods; 3. Ability to prepare tasks for the competence assessment process.
3. Organisation and implementation of the assessment process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to undertake competence assessment in line with defined standards and requirements; 2. To apply assessment criteria which are specified in a professional standard; 3. Ability to test/to verify competence assessment results; 4 Ability to document assessment results; 5. Ability to create positive psychological environment for the candidates.
4. Improvement of validation process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to analyse competences over the assessment process; 2. To provide recommendations in relation to competence assessment process.
5. Assessor’s professional and individual development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To be self-critical and able to reflect and analyse your own work and search for development possibilities; 2. To design strategies and plans for self-development.

Other requirements of validation practitioners are used in the implementation of the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning of youth workers, which were developed under the Project “The Development of an Integrated Youth Policy” presented above.

⁷³ Taken from the Project’s “Innovative tools and procedures for non- formal and informal learning validation in tourism sector” deliverables “Methodological practical recommendations for the validation of non-formal and informal learning” (LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-LT-0011). Available from (accessed 3 September 2013): http://www.leonardodavinciprojekte.org/prj/3263/prj/ETAP_GIDAS_LT.doc

6.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

As the majority of all validation initiatives have been developed as part of one or another ESF funded project, initial training and support to validation practitioners is usually provided by external validation experts (usually sub-contracted university experts)

6.3 Qualifications requirements

There are no particular qualification requirements for validation practitioners in Lithuania, however please see Section 6.1 for details of a project-based approach.

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