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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update

COUNTRY REPORT: **SLOVENIA**

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1 Introduction

Slovenia has more than 15 years of experience in validation of non-formal and informal learning. The validation arrangements are regulated by legislation. The most long-standing and comprehensive system is the system of national vocational qualifications legally embedded in the National Professional Qualifications Act from 2000 (with several amendments, the latest in 2009). According to this law national vocational qualifications can be fully awarded based on validation of non-formal learning.

The backbone of this system is the national register of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) – currently there are 311 national vocational qualifications in the register – the system is fully integrated into the Slovenian Qualification Framework, ranging from EQF levels 2 to 5. The number of NVQ certificates issued in 2018 and 2017 was significantly lower than those issued in 2015 and 2016 (2015: 4758 NVQ certificates; 2016: 4674 NVQ certificates; 2017: 3996 and in 2018: 3840 NVQ certificates). However, as stated in the conclusions of the evaluation of the analysis of NVQs certification procedures in certain fields (Drofenik K., 2017)¹, it is not possible to detect trends from the number of certificates issued in each area of certification, in particular because they vary considerably in terms of the volume and number of certificates issued. Additional to the system of national vocational qualification, that allows the acquisition of complete national qualifications based on VNFIL, validation of non-formal and informal learning is possible in all education subsystems since 2006, regulated by sector-specific acts and regulations.

Since 2016, Slovenia has continued to invest ESF-funds for the development of validation methods, tools, web portals, counselling services for adults, etc. Each of the projects has continued to contribute to the implementation of different elements of national validation arrangements.

There were no significant changes within the legal framework that would govern and determine new approaches and directions for validation. The new Adult Education Act mentions that one of the activities in the field of adult education is identification and documentation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. The new revision of the VET Act from 2017 included reference to validation of non-formal learning of VET students.

The existing practice of validation of national vocational qualifications in general, and in particular in the domain of adult education, is gaining importance because it is well aligned with the Council's Recommendations on Validation (2012). Namely, the system of National Vocational Qualifications is embedded in the Slovenian Qualification Framework and all qualifications in the system can be acquired through validation of non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, the validation arrangements are measured against the learning outcomes of education

¹ Drofenik K. et al (2017) Accompanying the certification system in professional fields: Pharmacy, Education, Production Technologies, Journalism and Information, Computers, Household Services, Technology, Transport, Health, Environmental protection, Stone industry (Spremljava certifikatnega sistema na strokovnih področjih: Farmacija, Izobraževanje, Proizvodne tehnologije, Novinarstvo in obveščanje, Računalništvo, Storitve za gospodinjstva, Tehnika, Transportne storitve, Zdravstvo, Varstvo okolja, Kamnarstvo):

Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana: http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Publikacije/NPK_spremljava_11podrocij_2017.pdf

programmes in VET, higher education and general education, included in the Slovenian Qualification Framework. The practice includes the elements of the identification of individual's prior knowledge; it documents the knowledge in the form of portfolios; implements assessments conducted by the committees and awards certificates. A similar procedure of the four individual steps can be found within the validation approaches on the higher education level that are described for some universities in specific Rulebooks governing the procedure.

Links to the Slovenian Qualification Framework are becoming more and more visible and understandable to the wider public due to the numerous awareness-raising activities that have been implemented within the ESF-funded projects. The Slovenian Qualification Framework positioned national vocational qualifications / national vocational certificates on levels 2-5, whereas the supplementary qualifications are positioned on levels 2-8. This reflects not only the high level of flexibility within the education system in terms of the options for continuing education at different levels, but also helping to motivate unemployed and low-skilled adults as validation and certification may lead to employment opportunities.

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Slovenia already has more than 15 years of a long tradition and experience in the validation of non-formal learning which leads to national vocational qualifications and which can be described as the national system of validation regulated by the National Professional Qualifications Act (2000). This experience and ongoing practice is an integral part of the Slovenian Qualification Framework. In addition, the popularity, visibility and easier access to the information relevant to all actors involved in the validation (such as individuals, counsellors, validation practitioners, institutions conducting validation) of vocational qualifications has gained in importance. Several portals are kept up-to-date with relevant databases and general information, about which more details will be provided in the sections below.

In 2017, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education published a Report on Strategic and legal foundations for the validation of non-formal and informal learning². The publication presents a comprehensive overview and a detailed description of the legal basis and also developments at national level. It provides an analysis of validation at all educational levels mainly since 2000, when the Act on national vocational qualifications was introduced. The publication is a very informative document for readers who would like to gain a broad overview and understanding of activities and results in the legal aspects and also in the projects that were conducted.

As stated in the 2016 Report (Kosmrlj K., 2016)³, recognition of prior learning is designated to educational institutions. These are autonomous in their specific operational procedures. Recognition of prior learning is applicable in the case of

² http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Publikacije/CPI_vrednotenje-ucenja_3korektura.pdf

³ Kosmrlj K. (2016):

2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

enrolment to educational programmes or to obtain exemptions / credits for part of the educational programme (for a single subject, a module, or a study year).

The legal framework on validation consists of several sectoral acts that regulate the possibility and right to the recognition of prior knowledge. For the purpose of clarity, the acts reported in the 2016 Report are also mentioned here since there were no major changes since 2016 in the legal framework, except for the development of the new Adult Education Act, the revision of the Vocational Education Act and the Labour Market Regulation Act.

General Legislative Acts:

- National Professional Qualifications Act (2010) is the basis for a formalised system of national vocational qualifications (NVQs), where the knowledge and experience gained by candidates is compared to occupational standards defined at the national level. In the NVQ verification and validation procedure, candidates demonstrate their skills and knowledge for the effective performance of specific occupational tasks. Through verification and validation of NVQs, the skills and knowledge of the candidate are ascertained with regard to a specific occupational standard and a catalogue of standards of vocational knowledge and skills.
- Rulebook on validation of prior knowledge and higher vocational education (2010) – the document defines procedures for validation and recognition of prior knowledge, as well as criteria for validation of knowledge and skills, which were obtained by the students of higher vocational schools either by formal or informal education.
- On VET level: Occupational standards and catalogues and also rules for their implementation in the validation process
- Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act (2015)⁴: establishing the Slovenian NQF – the SQF, referencing to the EQF, establishing local offices for delivery of the SQF, inclusion of all levels of education and recognised on the labour market.
- Vocational Education Act (2006): validation is not directly addressed by the act but it enables students to progress through school years with respect to the recognition of non-formal learning. Non-formal learning can also be used in the process of forming grades.
- Vocational Education Act (2017)⁵: The changes that were implemented in the Vocational education Act in 2017 addressed validation of non-formal learning of VET students and will be further discussed in section 2.2.
- Post-secondary Vocational Education Act (2004): the act does not address validation directly, but directs schools to prepare regulations and organise validation when necessary. A number of changes were proposed by the government and were adopted as amendments and supplements to the Act in 2013. The proposal includes some aspects of validation, especially during enrolment, but does not include detailed regulation. At the time of writing, the proposal is awaiting debate in Parliament.

Act on Adult Education (2018): The aim of the Act⁶ was to define the organisation and financing of adult education institutions and the provision of publicly funded services in adult education; those are provision of primary school education for the adult population (including the possibility of validation and recognition of prior

⁴ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO6958>, Official Gazette 104/15

⁵ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO6822>, Official Gazette 68/17

⁶ <https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/2018-01-0222?sop=2018-01-0222>, Official Gazette 6/2018

learning), provision of guidance and counselling for adult learners in all levels of education and counselling for the identification and documentation of prior learning). The new Act from early 2018 stipulates that one of the activities in the field of adult education is identification and documentation of knowledge, skills and competences, acquired through non-formal and informal education based on documentation, for personal development, further education and integration into the labour market. However, the validation procedures are not defined in the act and neither it is stated who could be responsible for the implementation of validation within the system of adult education in the broader sense, not just with reference to national vocational qualifications. The Act defines that the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is responsible for preparing the guidelines for the implementation of counselling as the public service.

- Higher Education Act (2012)⁷: changes since 2009 include the KLASIUS classification as part of compulsory evidence of higher education institutions; it administers entrants and students in relation to the right of validation of prior knowledge, and obliges institutions to prepare measures for validation and to form a commission for validation.
- The Labour Market Regulation Act (ZUTD-D)⁸: The act defines the national-level electronic portfolio of knowledge, experience and competencies that students acquire in performing temporary and part-time work (called student work). Slovenian Student Union (ŠOS) received a public authorization for providing the electronic portfolio.⁹ It has not been established yet but it is in the process of preparation.

2.2 Validation in education and training

Validation of non-formal learning has covered all education subsystems, regulated by sector-specific acts and regulations since 2006. The 2016 Report stated that the minister responsible for education has allocated tasks to the relevant individuals and organisations with the aim of preparing a national system for validation for all levels up to the higher education level. In 2017, the analysis and evaluation of informal and non-formal learning was conducted, based on which proposals for professional solutions in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning were prepared. The results were shared with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which are responsible for proposing and implementing potential changes in legislation¹⁰.

In recent years, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has implemented several projects related to validation of non-formal learning in the field of adult education. In that way, it has brought education and training closer to adults who have not acquired formal qualifications that would enable them to more easily find employment. The Institute's main aim is to allow participation in formal education and to enable and support acquisition of national vocational qualifications. In addition to that, the Institute also develops projects dedicated to documentation and validation of adult knowledge and experience with the aim of providing greater flexibility in the labour market, personal growth and development of key

⁷ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO172>, Official Gazette 32/12

⁸ <https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/2017-01-2523?sop=2017-01-2523>, (ZUTD-D, Article 123a), Official Gazette 55/17

⁹ <http://www.studentska-org.si/projekti/evidenca-studentskega-dela/>

¹⁰ Communication with the representative of Ministry of Education, Science and Sports

competences¹¹. More information about this will be provided in section 10 (e-Portfolio).

Vocational education and training

The 2017 Act called Amending the Vocational Education Act¹² formulates the possibility for the VET student to be graded and to progress through educational levels by implementing validation of non-formal learning. The Amendment stipulates that schools or educational organisations that perform part-time education can adapt the educational programmes to the needs of each student, taking into account the achieved credit points or previously acquired knowledge, which is proven by a public document, or non-formal knowledge which is proven by examination or some other way. The Amendment also states that in the process of awarding a grade to a VET student, non-formal knowledge, evidenced by a public document, an examination or any other way, should be taken into account. When VET students are progressing to the next study year, non-formally acquired knowledge should also be taken into account. The Minister responsible for education shall prescribe in detail the method and procedure for examining and assessing knowledge, for obtaining credit points, validating non-formal knowledge, as well as the form and content of public documents certifying completion of education.

Adult education

In Slovenia validation has two main purposes: to enable participation in formal education programmes and to gain national vocational qualifications. Providers of validation procedures to enable participation in formal education are educational institutions and providers that carry out formal education programmes. Providers of national vocational qualification procedures are different, i.e. they are educational institutions, employers, chambers, folk universities, etc.

More recently the third purpose of validation is to make progress towards providing better flexibility on the job market and to achieve personal growth and develop key competences. Documenting and assessing individuals' knowledge and experience (competences) is an important factor. These activities are still at development project stage. At the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, after the completion of the ESF funded project Literacy Development and Identification and Recognition of Non-formal Learning that lasted from 2011 until 2014, the continuation project begun in 2016 that will last until 2022. It is also funded by ESF. The project is entitled "Expert support to informative advisory activities and validation of non-formally acquired knowledge"¹³. Within the project attention is given to the continuation of activities in the provision of information and counselling as well as validation and recognition of previously acquired knowledge in adult education. The target group is adult workers, in particular those with low level skills, educationally inactive and those over 45 years of age. The overall objective of the project is the development of professional materials, programmes and new approaches for the implementation of information and consulting activities, cooperation with social partners and stakeholders and implementation of expert advice. The new approaches will focus on the development of new advisory tools for the validation of key competencies and

¹¹ <https://www.acs.si/podrocja-dela/vrednotenje/>

¹² <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO6822>

¹³ <http://vpnz.acs.si/portal/node/13>

other supporting documents which assist with the validation of non-formal knowledge; preparation of new professional materials for adult educators who will provide counselling and conduct validation; and the development of ICT support tools. The social partners involved are counselling centres, adult education centres, trade unions, employers' associations, etc.

During the project, the procedures for validation of non-formal and informal knowledge will be carried out by counsellors at folk universities, school centres, and secondary schools organised in consortia selected by public tender. The validation will be carried out by 15 consortia, consisting of 41 partner organisations, under the guidance and with the expert support of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

The result of the validation procedure within the project is a prepared portfolio for an adult candidate and opinions which are awarded to individuals. The opinion is prepared by the counsellor and external expert (when it is needed) which describes non-formal knowledge acquired, experience and competences that have been evaluated, and the possibilities of using the results for further formal validation, for participation in further education or for employment. An opinion does not have formal value but anyway fulfils the quality criteria of a good validation evidence (authenticity, actuality, and adequacy). The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education prepared expert guidelines for the preparation of opinions.

The project is also focused on upgrading the website VPNZ (validation and certification of non-formal knowledge) that was developed during the first project.

The VPNZ portal clearly acknowledges previous projects that resulted in outputs, procedures and tools for the quality implementation of validation in formal education. This is strong evidence that the national method of developing a validation system and validation approaches in the area of adult education is to build on previous experience and knowledge of completed projects.

There is no information on whether the knowledge acquired through open education resources (OER) can be validated.

Higher education

Approaches to validation on higher education level are defined by the Act on Higher Education (2012) which defines the right to validation of prior knowledge, and obliges institutions to prepare measures for validation and to form a commission for validation (Kosmrlj K., 2016)¹⁴. Even though there were no significant changes in the legal framework since 2016, there is evidence that universities are creating frameworks that enable implementation of validation measures. The recent example of the University na Primorskem demonstrates the inclusion of validation in regular university activities. The Rulebook on the procedure and criteria for the recognition of formal and non-formally acquired knowledge was developed at university level in 2012. Individual faculties thereafter developed their own Rulebooks with individual and specific rules on validation of formal and non-formal knowledge in relation to the subject of the study programme. The validation is performed for students who would like to enrol at university and for those who are already enrolled in studies. The validation leads to accepting the knowledge which, in terms of the content, scope and complexity, correspond in whole or in part to the general or subject-specific competences determined by the study programme in which the student would like to

¹⁴ Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

enrol or is already enrolled in it. Examples of faculties that have developed their own Rulebooks are the Faculty of Health Sciences (2018)¹⁵ and Faculty of Management (2017)¹⁶. The approaches and methods to validation are different and will be reported in more detail in section 10 of this report.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

As described in the 2016 Report, the legal framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning for the labour market also provides the already mentioned National Professional Qualifications Act that falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Validation applies only to professions and vocations for which the catalogues of standards for technical knowledge and skills (hereinafter referred to as: catalogue) are adopted by the Minister of Labour. The occupational standards and catalogues are proposed by social partners and therefore should reflect labour market needs.

The database of the catalogue of standards for technical knowledge and skills¹⁷ is available online on the portal of the National Reference Point for Occupational Qualifications. The catalogue of vocational standards¹⁸ is also available on the same portal.

In 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities adopted two new rules - the Rules on the method and procedure for the validation of national professional qualifications and the Rules on keeping the register of providers of national vocational qualifications assessment and validation. The aim of these rules is to improve the validation procedures of assessors (the rules specify more detail about the validation procedure) and assessment centres (limit and raise the quality of assessment centres and institutions).

Some good practice examples of the benefits of validation of vocational qualifications are presented on the web-site of the National Vocational Qualifications portal¹⁹. The companies that implemented validation for their employees, have all expressed a good experience with validation and have acknowledged its significance for the improvement of production processes or services and for enabling on-the-job training for employees.

However, data on validation practices and procedures conducted for the needs of companies are not publically available and there is limited information on the institution that would be responsible for collecting and sharing this information.

2.3.1 Skills audits

The Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education has launched a website²⁰ "Moja Izбира" (My Choice) in 2008 whereas in 2014 it was redesigned, refreshed, updated (by means of ESF funds) and is kept up-to-date with the information of new professions as they develop over the years. The portal is dedicated to professional orientation targeting pupils, students, parents, adults and

¹⁵ http://www.fvz.upr.si/sites/default/files/p_o_post_in_mer_za_priznav_pridob_znanja_2018.pdf

¹⁶ http://www.fm-kp.si/Media/Default/predstavitev/Interni_akti/2017-10_Pravilnik-o-priznavanju-znanja-in-spretnosti_sprememba-2017_.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.nrpslo.org/baze-podatkov/katalogi-znanj.aspx>

¹⁸ <http://www.nrpslo.org/baze-podatkov/poklicni-standardi.aspx>

¹⁹ <http://www.npk.si/>

²⁰ <http://www.moja-izbira.si>

counsellors (school counsellors, career advisers, counsellors in lifelong learning). It includes the most important information on professions and education. The main aim of this website is to provide a one-stop shop for all target groups with easy and effective access to information that will assist them either in deciding on a further career, education or life-path/orientation. Nowadays, the database contains textual descriptions of professions, and video presentations for more than 350 professions. The information on educational programmes that offer education and training for professions from the database is linked to the description of professions. The data in the database is collected and updated from the databases of different stakeholders: Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, the Chamber of Craft and the Employment Service of Slovenia. Moreover, data on schools are continually updated by all secondary schools in Slovenia²¹.

The Slovenian Employment Service has developed a web portal e-Svetovanje (e-Guidance) which enables self-assessment of competences²² (general and specific) through different questionnaires and by obtaining results of the analysis. The tool also enables assessment of the compliance between the existing competences and the occupation in which the individual would like to be educated.

The Slovenian Student Service²³ has developed a digital portfolio “Moje izkusnje” (My experience) that can be used by all students who used the services of the student service (e-student service).²⁴ The main aim is to record skills and competences acquired through student work. It is also an informative presentation of acquired skills and competences for future employers as students can print-out the certificate, create a PDF version or send the certificate to the employers electronically. As such, it is indirectly made available to around 16 000 employers that e-Studentski Servis works with annually. Most of the employers that e-Studentski Servis works with recognize the certificate as the proof of previous work experiences when candidates apply for the student job. Many of the employers recognize the certificate as proof of previous student work experiences when candidates apply for regular jobs. Most of the users (students) are aged 15-29 years old. However, some of them use the certificates even after that age in case they need it in the processes of searching for job (unemployment), changing the job or negotiating for higher wages on the basis of previous work experience. The certificate “Moje izkušnje/My Experience” consists of information of all student jobs an individual performed: about the employer/company where the student worked, the type of work, the year, the number of hours the student worked, the basic competence gained (for example IT skills, foreign languages, the ability to perform basic administrative duties, communication with customers, etc.) and about the additional competencies gained²⁵. The information on the certificate is acquired from employers and the student service directly; therefore it is accurate and serves as formal evidence of student working experience.

It is worth noting that “Moje izkusnje” has gained international recognition by the ILO (International Organisation of Labour) when it was awarded a title “2nd Best Practice for Youth Employment in Europe and Central Asia”.²⁶²⁷ As ILO noted²⁸: “The Moje

²¹ ibid

²² <https://esvetovanje.ess.gov.si/KajZnam/SplosneKompetence/VprasanikiZaSamoocenoKompetenc/Default.aspx>

²³ <https://www.studentski-servis.com/studenti/moje-izkusnje>

²⁴ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/my-experience>

²⁵ <https://www.moje-izkusnje.si/en/about-moje-izkusnje>

²⁶ ibid The ILO Call for Good Practices on Youth Employment, Summary Report (p. 21-22, 36-37, 46).

Izkusnje (My experience) programme acts as an intermediary between students and employers and facilitates the recognition of non-formally gained competencies, skills, and knowledge, which students acquire by working in student jobs. It addresses the young people's need to demonstrate their competencies to potential employers when searching for their first regular employment as well as the need of employers to identify the best candidates for job vacancies. The Moje Izkusnje platform has been used by over 135 000 students and pupils during the first year of implementation.” In addition to the development of the tool itself, e-Studentski Servis (Student Service) has initiated a national campaign for the better recognition of young people's competencies gained outside formal education, targeting a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. youth NGOs, policy makers, formal education, employers, etc.).²⁹ The awareness campaigns initiated by the Moje Izkusnje programme influence employers' perceptions, leading to better recognition of young people's work-related competencies and abilities³⁰.

The practice of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and its adult education guidance centres can also be linked to skills audits, but it is still worth mentioning here because the users are adults seeking employment, education and career opportunities and thus their skills play an important role when providing them advice. In the period 2001-2017, a total of 17 regional centres were established³¹. The centres offer, amongst other activities, free guidance for making decisions and choosing appropriate education and learning; planning further educational paths; and validation of prior knowledge. In that sense the counsellors analyse acquired skills and competences by adults and present them the possibilities of further educational paths, including opportunities for validation. These activities reflect all three steps of Upskilling Pathways, i.e. the skills assessment, tailored learning offer and validation. By the end of 2017, over 150 000 adults received individual guidance services.

There are no quality assurance procedures in place for skills assessment approaches. In addition, the data on the level of participation is not publically available.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

The relevant text from the 2016 Report states that the Resolution on validation and recognition of youth non-formal education³² was issued in 2013. The Resolution includes other groups (e.g. young couples, single young people and people after dismissal from the educational institution and foster care) and also gives recommendations for measures needed to implement the system-wide regulatory framework for the recognition of all aspects of non-formal education. The existing connection between education and the labour market is weak and young people do not always acquire the competencies required by employers in formal education, but may acquire them through non-formal learning and experience.

²⁷ ibid

²⁸

²⁸ https://www.moje-izkusnje.si/images/docs/The_ILO_Call_for_Good_Practices_Summary%20_Report_Moje_izkusnjep_1-2236-3746.pdf (p. 21-22, 36-37, 46)

²⁹ <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/my-experience>

³⁰ The ILO Call for Good Practices on Youth Employment, Summary Report (p. 36).

³¹ http://arhiv.acs.si/drobni_tisk/ISIO_centres-leaflet.pdf

³² https://www.uradni-list.si/files/RS_-2013-090-03261-OB-P001-0000.PDF

Since there were no significant legal changes in relation to validation in the third sector, this report examines some of the existing practices further.

There are some good examples of already existing practices of validation of non-formally gained competences within the youth sector. For example, the Slovenian Association of Scouts³³ recognises qualifications through different systems of recognition of knowledge. One of them is the internationally recognised system of training the trainers, the so called Woodbadge system. Its aim is to recognise informally acquired management knowledge and staff training as well as the creation of internationally unified levels/titles. It is based on three levels: unit leader, assistant leader trainer and leader trainer. The first level provides a minimum standard of knowledge for quality work with young people. The second and third are graduated and represent an educational path for the individual's education.

The Slovenian Association of Scouts has also developed a TAborniski PASsport (TaPas) of knowledge and skills. It represents a tool for identifying and evaluating own experience, knowledge and skills acquired during voluntary work. TaPas rewards and encourages performance of various tasks within the organisation, at the same time raising awareness of the learning, and the acquisition and implementation of useful skills and experiences for life, such as management skills, communication skills, team work, including entrepreneurship and creativity, and in particular active citizenship and cooperation. However, the information on the number of scouts being awarded TaPas is not publically available. Further research would be needed to investigate for what purposes the document was used and whether employers recognised it.

MEPI - Duke of Edinburgh Award³⁴: The Duke of Edinburgh Award, known as MEPI in Slovenia, is a universal, world-renowned youth programme. The programme is accessible to all young people aged 14-25 years. It consists of four areas: voluntary work, expedition, skills and sports activities. Each activity is recorded in so-called Index of achievements, which can be used as a reference for further education and training or when looking for a job³⁵.

New developments in the field of validation in the youth sector are being supported by means of ESF funds, Operational Programme 2014-2020, and Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. The project Zavod Nefiks³⁶ and its e-Nefiks tool are very good examples and further details as presented on the website are provided in the box below.

Case study 1 – Project Zavod Nefiks and e-Nefiks tool

The Nefiks is a unique nationwide system for recording non-formal knowledge that allows young people to systematically collect in one place (in a digital format or in the form of booklet) all non-formally acquired and certified competences. The purpose is to record the evidence of the knowledge that could be used for the needs of continuing education or the needs of employment. The approach to developing the system was to take into consideration all relevant developments

³³ http://stencas.taborniki.si/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/tab-org-2016_web_S.pdf

³⁴ <https://www.britishcouncil.si/en/programmes/society/duke-edinburgh-award>

³⁵ http://www.mss.si/datoteke/dokumenti/Priloga-primeri_dobrih_praks_na_podrocju_priznavanja_NFI.pdf

³⁶ <http://www.nefiks.si/>

and instruments on the EU level, such as Youthpass and Europass, as well as creating an alignment with the Rulebook on validation of non-formal learning at higher education level.

The tool collects knowledge and competences in six thematic areas, based on the Scandinavian model, which are the following: active citizenship and participation in projects; employment-engagements through the student service; knowledge obtained in organised forms of education (e.g. seminars and courses); knowledge gained as scouts and in volunteering; experience acquired abroad and other ways of acquiring knowledge. The knowledge and competences can be recorded either in the e-Nefiks online tool and/or in the Nefiks Booklet.

Once an activity is recorded, it is confirmed in the system/tool by the education provider or the employer in the form of an electronic confirmation. If the activity is recorded in the booklet, it is then confirmed with a stamp and signature. Young people entering and describing the activities in the system are encouraged to focus on acquired competences rather than on the description of activities / duties that were performed during the work placement.

The e-Nefiks tool counts for almost 16 000 users at the time of preparing this report.

3 Links to national qualification systems

The Slovenian Qualification Framework (SQF) is currently in the process of implementing many of its aspects compared to 2016. The main principles described in the 2016 Report have remained the same: learning outcomes can be used for validation of prior learning for study programmes up to ISCED level 4. In the higher education sector, validation processes are not yet systematic. In vocational education, validation is available for parts of courses, courses or modules and it can also lead to awarding a national vocational qualification. In general, in secondary education and in higher education, single courses, parts of courses or modules can also be obtained through validation; degrees however can only be obtained through enrolment and completing at least part of the study programme at the given institution.

The SQF contains ten levels with level descriptors referring to learning outcomes described as knowledge, skills and competences. The three different categories of qualifications are included in the SQF as defined by the SQF Act (2015): ones obtained through education which is demonstrated by a public document on completed education, national vocational qualification, and supplementary qualifications.

The National Coordination Point (NCP) of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework³⁷ has the main role of coordinating the work of the expert commission of the National Coordination Point which is appointed for a term of four years. The NCP operates within the Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI). The expert commission is comprised of seven members and is appointed by the minister in charge of labour, as follows: three members proposed by the ministry responsible for labour; one member by the ministry responsible for education; one member by the ministry responsible for the economy; and two members by the Economic and

³⁷ <https://www.nok.si/dodatne-kvalifikacije/strokovna-komisija-nkt-sok-eok>

Social Council. Among the tasks allocated to the expert commission, the two most relevant ones in relation to supplementary qualifications are setting the criteria for placing additional qualifications within the SQF and preparing proposals for the placement of additional qualifications in the SQF.

Recent developments of new and existing web portals link the national qualification system with national vocational qualifications and also to the different databases of standards that all contribute to validation opportunities. However, national vocational qualifications and supplementary qualifications do not have assigned ECVET/ECTS points.

Register of qualifications of the SQF³⁸, which was proposed in the SQF Act, was operational by the end of 2016. This register contains publicly available information on all qualifications (educational qualifications and national vocational qualifications) that can be obtained through state-approved education, study programmes and catalogues of standards of vocational knowledge and skills. The SQF Register is linked to the EQF Portal thus enabling comparability, transferability and transparency of the Slovenian qualifications compared to EU-wide qualifications.

The SQF portal provides an overview of the qualifications, the education that leads to the achievement of the qualification and a link to the appropriate SQF level. The so-called 'Table of qualifications'³⁹ summarises the classification of individual qualifications by SQF levels with regard to the type of qualification (formal qualification obtained through formal education, vocational qualification and supplementary qualification). The National vocational qualification certificate can be awarded at SQF levels 2,3,4,5, and 6 (corresponds to EQF levels 2-5) and is linked to validation procedure described in section 10. In brief, the committee for the verification and validation in the relevant field assesses the candidate's portfolio and concludes on the catalogue content of the qualification in part or in full. In cases when the committee is not able to recognise all skills, knowledge and competences from the catalogue for a certain qualification, the candidate is assigned tasks for verification⁴⁰.

Verification and assessment are carried out by committees for the verification and validation of national vocational qualifications, appointed by the National Examination Centre (NEC). Committee members must be licensed by the National Examination Centre.

It is interesting to note that the Slovenian Qualification Framework⁴¹, in addition to regular/formal qualifications obtained through the formal education system, includes the possibility of inclusion of a "supplementary qualification" in the SQF. The supplementary qualification is a qualification that complements the individual's competence at the level achieved and in a specific field of expertise and is related to the needs of the labour market. These qualifications are awarded by private providers and companies and are not regulated by national laws. The Act⁴² states that the application for the placement of a supplementary qualification within the national qualification framework may be filed by an employer, a group of employers

³⁸ <https://www.nok.si/register-kvalifikacij-sok>

³⁹ <https://www.nok.si/en/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.nok.si/en/register/certifikat-o-nacionalni-poklicni-kvalifikaciji>

⁴¹ Official Gazette 104/2015

⁴² <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO6958>, Official Gazette 104/15

or the Employment Service of Slovenia. Supplementary qualification can be obtained after completing the prescribed training programme and passing the defined assessment procedure. In the procedure for the acquisition of supplementary qualifications, there are no predicted systematic measures for validation, as they can be obtained through the completion of the corresponding training programme. However, the provider of supplementary qualifications can voluntarily define specific validation measures for recognition of some parts of the corresponding training programme, but they have to be previously defined in Application for supplementary qualification which is approved by the national authority for supplementary qualifications⁴³.

The costs of the procedure are covered by the applicant of the additional qualification and are regulated by the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for vocational education. Since July 2016⁴⁴, the centre has determined that the costs amount to EURO 1 000 and have to be paid to the Centre.

The **portal NVQ – National Vocational Qualifications**⁴⁵ is managed by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The website is available in both Slovenian and English and its development was financed by a combination of ESF and national funds, and is kept up to date with the new qualifications. The added value of the portal is the broad variety of information on assessment procedures and validation of knowledge and skills obtained through non-formal learning.

The information on the website for applicants is straightforward and clearly structured with respect to the main issues:

1. The NVQ is intended for adults who:
 - acquired different vocational competences throughout their lifetime, but did not have them assessed or awarded;
 - have reached the age of 18 or are exceptionally younger and who no longer enjoy the status of an apprentice or secondary school student and have gained relevant work experience;
 - wish to be promoted in their professional career without obtaining a higher level of professional education or completing a formal education programme
2. The benefits of NVQ
3. Description of the NVQ assessment and award procedures that is conducted in relation to a selected NVQ catalogue. The main segments of the procedure are the following: submission of the application; counselling and compilation of a portfolio (such as recognition documents, certificates, supporting documents, reference letters, etc.); NVQ assessment and award. In cases when the applicant does not meet the certification conditions, he/she is offered training options. The NVQ catalogue contains descriptions of more than 300 vocational qualifications.

The NVQ portal is also dedicated to employers and aims to actively engage them not only in the process of validation, but also in the process of putting forward

⁴³ Communication with the representative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports

⁴⁴ <https://www.nok.si/nacin-placila-visina-strokov-umescanja-dodatne-kvalifikacije-0>

⁴⁵ <http://www.npk.si/index.php?lang=en>

proposals for new NVQs, by defining competences, skills and knowledge required by companies. The portal states that “the NVQ system helps companies to assure requisite qualifications, but it also gives an overview of existing qualifications in companies and enables better knowledge management of employees – identification, assignment, enhancement and assessment of knowledge in companies, tapping into the hidden potential of employees, retraining, redeployment of labour resources etc. The benefits of the National Vocational Qualification system include flexibility and adaptability as it makes it possible to quickly respond to training needs of companies when compared to the school education system”.

The National Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is responsible for the management of databases linked to validation within the system of NVQs. There are different databases: demographic data on candidates for NVQs (those who applied for it, those who were successful and those who did not pass the validation process), number of NVQs issued, data on assessors, assessing institution, etc. (Some examples of databases presented in more detail are mentioned in different sections throughout this report).

4 Standards

The SQF defines a standard of qualification as a description of the qualification that sets the learning outcomes, the level of qualification, the conditions for obtaining a qualification, and the procedures for checking the learning outcomes.

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is a central development institution in the field of vocational and professional education in charge of the development of vocational qualifications, occupational standards and catalogues of NVQs. In addition, the Institute contributes to the acquisition of professional qualifications for new professional and vocational areas, and development and monitoring of the system of national vocational qualifications.

The occupational standard determines the content of the vocational qualification at a certain level of complexity of work and defines the required knowledge, skills, and competencies which are based on the Bloom taxonomy of learning outcomes. Using occupational standards as a basis, educational programmes for professional, vocational and higher vocational education as well as catalogues of NVQ are developed. The occupational standards are also the basic document for the validation and verification of vocational qualifications acquired through the validation of non-formal learning. The occupational standard is therefore a link between vocational education and the system of national vocational qualifications⁴⁶.

The basis for the validation of vocational qualifications is the catalogue of occupational standards (knowledge and skills).

New educational programmes are based on the occupational standards and in 2018 there are more than 300 national vocational qualifications registered in the national vocational qualification catalogue.

⁴⁶ https://www.gzs.si/skupne_naloge/izobrazevanje/vsebina/Javna-pooblastila/Poklicni-standardi/Razvoj-in-priprava-poklicnih-standardov

As described in the 2016 Report⁴⁷ standards are not generally defined for higher education, mainly because the process is led autonomously by each higher education institution. It is common, however, to compare the skills, knowledge and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning to those that should be acquired through the formal study programme. Validation against learning outcomes is not very common and few higher education institutions have yet implemented learning outcomes in their study programmes. Standards are usually oriented towards study programmes rather than job requirements and are designed and implemented in cooperation with teachers responsible for the delivery of courses and modules rather than labour market requirements.

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

The 2016 Report provided an overview of the main institutions involved in the validation arrangements. The overview is also presented here with the later addition of the roles carried out by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education is in charge of validation in the CVET sector at ISCED levels 2, 3, 4 and 5b. It is responsible for development of the system, providing information and helping to raise awareness. Professional associations are involved in the process through the development of standards and catalogues, since awarded qualifications enable candidates to participate in the labour market. Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education is in charge of the certification system based on occupational standards and catalogues which are the basis for validation. The National Examination Centre is responsible for assessors and assessment centres in accordance with the National Professional Qualifications Act. It also appoints the assessors who validate candidates in the validation centres.

At higher education level, each educational institution is autonomous in determining and pursuing their own process of the validation of prior learning.

The Ministry for Education is responsible at national level for the implementation and coordination of validation at all levels and sectors of education, but does not interfere with the daily work of the above-mentioned institutions.

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is involved in organising and conducting training for assessors that act as validation practitioners within the system of the validation of National Professional Qualifications (section 7 of this report).

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising

The approach to raising awareness of validation amongst different target groups, such as counsellors, educational and training providers, employers, employees, trainers, young people and adults, etc., was the creation of the website of the

⁴⁷ Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

National Reference Point for national vocational qualifications and their validation⁴⁸. The website contains well-structured information for future candidates, for the potential members of the commission, for counsellors and for institutions conducting the validation process. The information is kept up-to-date and also several important databases can be searched: database of occupational standards; catalogues of vocational knowledge and skills; database of institutions conducting validation; database of licenced members of the commission; and database of counsellors/validation practitioners.

The other previously mentioned web portals also contribute to awareness raising and visibility since they can act as reference points of information for any individual looking for guidance and information on validation opportunities.

Within the ESF-funded project “Professional support to information and advisory activities and the validation of non-formally acquired knowledge 2016-2021”, one of the core activities will be fostering collaboration with social partners and stakeholders. Through professional and promotional activities, different partners will be connected to new and more effective ways to support the dissemination of project results. Above all, the project also aims to contribute to the strategic and professional positioning of the information advisors and counselling advisors, as well as raising the awareness on the importance of validation of non-formal learning, in particular focusing on benefits for adult employees.

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

According to the Rules on Method and Procedure for the Assessment and Award of National Vocational Qualification⁴⁹, the provider or the institution who undertakes validation is obliged to provide information and counselling to the applicant on possibilities and requirements for the acquisition of NVQ, which was reported in the 2016 Report.

This section further details on how the counselling procedure is defined in the above Rules since it is important to understand the approaches that could be the model for setting the national validation framework.

During the counselling procedure, the applicant together with the counsellor collects documents and other evidence needed for the award of vocational qualifications, and also elaborates on the personal portfolio. The evidence in the form of public documents or data from official records issued by state authorities, local communities and bodies exercising public powers is gathered. In addition to the personal portfolio, the assessment and award procedure also includes the preparation of documents forming a mandatory and constituent part of the documentation in the procedure. They are prescribed by Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and published on the web site of the National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications.

⁴⁸ <http://www.nrpslo.org/>

⁴⁹ Official Gazette 37/2010

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The profile of validation practitioners has not changed since the description provided in the 2016 Report (Kosmrlj K., 2016)⁵⁰. The conditions for becoming a validation practitioner have not yet been further developed.

The validation practitioners are employees in the school or institution, or members of the association where the validation takes place. They are either professionally involved in lifelong learning or education as teachers or researchers or they are administrative workers in the field. Often, they are teachers or academics who do not necessarily research the topic but have acquired a strong personal interest in the subject.

In the system of National Professional Qualifications, the assessors are professionals in the specific field of qualification for which they perform the assessment. They usually work in companies as practitioners but if they are teachers, the assessors typically have a proven professional background and practical experience in the occupation concerned. In accordance with the National Professional Qualifications Act, the assessors are selected by the NEC and must fulfil the requirements specified in the catalogue.

It is common that more than one practitioner is involved in the validation process. This procedure is followed so that an expert in the field, an expert in education (pedagogy, andragogic) and/or an employer representative and an administrator manage the application, assessment and awarding of qualification or part of study programme (i.e. exemptions through awarding ECTS).

However, it is important to mention that there is a set of ethical guidelines that needs to be followed by the counsellors and assessors which is also an integral part of the training and examination process for the NVQ counsellors and assessors. The ethical guidelines refer to the principles of respect, impartiality, transparency, confidentiality and accuracy/diligence⁵¹.

7.2 Qualification requirements

As stated in the 2016 Report⁵², being a validation practitioner is not typically a self-standing qualification or position in Slovenia. It is more an additional task, assignment or function (depending on the organisation of validation) within a given job. Validators on all levels must fulfil the relevant legislation and internal regulations and meet the requirements of the qualification system and field in question. No significant changes have occurred in this respect since the 2016 Report until May 2018. Occasionally, seminars on the topic are organised but there are no mandatory

⁵⁰ Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

⁵¹ <http://www.npk.si/svetovalci/eticne-smernice-v-svetovanju/>

⁵² Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

administrative requirements. Usually validators are people professionally involved or interested in lifelong learning as teachers, trainers and facilitators⁵³.

However, the exception is the system of the National Professional Qualification which has established that counsellors are of different profiles, such as school counsellors, adult education organisers, teachers of different subjects and many other individuals acting in education, training and adult counselling service, and that they have completed a necessary training programme provided by the National Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (twice a year). They are usually employed at organisations examining individual National Vocational Qualifications or at counselling centres for adult education⁵⁴.

The preconditions for obtaining the license for assessor / committee members are clearly stated on the website of the Ministry of labour, family, social affairs and equal opportunities. The individual has to have a specific qualification from the qualification catalogue, at least last five years of professional experience in the profession from the qualification catalogue, which is determined by the Minister on the proposal of the Professional Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education⁵⁵. They also have to complete a necessary training programme, provided by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. Proof of competence can also be obtained by candidates for committee members by direct verification based on a catalogue of skills set by the minister.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

As mentioned above, training is organised for the validation practitioners and counsellors involved in the system of National Professional Qualifications. The training for assessors is delivered by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education⁵⁶ in cooperation with the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and National Examination Centre. The training for counsellors is delivered by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education.⁵⁷

A training programme for validation practitioners for verification and validation of vocational qualifications was developed in 2002. It was changed in 2010 based on the assessments and evaluations of the efficiency of the training programme as described above. As a further result, the need to supplement the content and objectives of the programme was clearly identified⁵⁸.

The Act on national vocational qualifications also prescribes that a candidate for a commission member may obtain evidence of possession of the appropriate competences by direct verification of the basis of the knowledge and skills catalogue determined by the minister responsible for labour. Because of this, a

⁵³ ibid

⁵⁴ <http://www.npk.si/svetovalci/>

⁵⁵ http://www.mddsz.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/trg_dela_in_zaposlovanje/nacionalne_poklicne_kvalifikacije/preverjanje_in_potrjevanje_nacionalnih_poklicnih_kvalifikacij/

⁵⁶ <https://www.acs.si/projekti/druga-dejavnosti/usposabljanje-clanov-komisij-npk/>

⁵⁷ <http://www.npk.si/svetovalci/kako-postanem-svetovalec/>

⁵⁸ https://izobrazevanje.acs.si/dokumenti/NPK/2017/npk_maj_17/program_usposabljanja_kandidati_clani_komisij_npk_24_1_2017.pdf

proposal was developed in 2017 for the Competence Standard and the Catalogue of Knowledge and Skills for direct examination of candidates for members of the commission of national vocational qualification was developed⁵⁹.

In 2017, a new programme⁶⁰ was developed that connects modules of the Training for Counsellors for national vocational qualifications with the modules of the training for candidates for commission members for verification and validation of NVQs. This approach makes it possible for individuals to apply the principles of reciprocity and transparent recognition of individual modules within the training programmes. The training programme lasts 32 training hours. The knowledge is assessed based on the competency approach in written form or by the method of interview. Candidates for the members of the commission take the exams at the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, the training provider.

The National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications manages the database of licenced counsellors⁶¹.

In the evaluation of the analysis of the profile of counsellors involved in NVQ certification in the fields of pharmacy, production technologies, ICT, services for households, technique, stone industry, health sector, it is worth noting that counsellors were employed in vocational schools, people's universities, special educational institutions, inter-company training centres and other educational institutions (Drofenik, K., 2017)⁶². Overall, they mainly originate from the institutions that are providing adult education. The counsellors surveyed have stated that they are mainly employed in the institutions where they provide counselling to candidates in relation to their portfolios. Half of the counsellors questioned have stated that the portfolio related counselling is part of their regular job. It is interesting to note that half of the counsellors surveyed believe that the value of counselling determined by the pricing for the acquisition of the NQF certificate is adequately rewarded whereas the other half of them considered that counselling work is underestimated. The analysis also showed that counselling is provided by persons who are not fully trained according to the training programme described above. The personal portfolio of the candidate is mainly created according to the form available on the NVQ website. The evaluation of the work of the members of the certification commission is mostly carried out after the prescribed methodology. In 50% of cases the deadlines for certification and awarding of NVQs are made public according to the number of interested candidates, whereas in 44% cases the certifying qualifications providers act in accordance with the Laws. The analysis further showed that the counsellors spend one hour in providing information to potential candidates and in helping them to create their portfolio. The majority of counsellors use the available databases mentioned earlier in this report, including the catalogue of standards of vocational knowledge and skills when analysing the entry conditions for candidates.

⁵⁹ ibid

⁶⁰ Official Gazette 24/2017

⁶¹ http://www.nrpslo.org/baze-podatkov/seznam_svetovalcev.aspx

⁶² Drofenik K. et al (2017) Accompanying the certification system in professional fields: Pharmacy, Education, Production Technologies, Journalism and Information, Computers, Household Services, Technology, Transport, Health, Environmental protection, Stone industry (Spremljava certifikatnega sistema na strokovnih področjih:

Farmacija, Izobraževanje, Proizvodne tehnologije, Novinarstvo in obveščanje, Računalništvo, Storitve za gospodinjstva, Tehnika, Transportne storitve, Zdravstvo, Varstvo okolja, Kamnarstvo), Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana

8 Quality assurance

The quality assurance on all educational levels is described in detail in the 2016 Report (Kosmrlj K., 2016)⁶³.

Due to the fact that the quality assurance for validation is more developed in both legal and practical terms on the level of national vocational qualifications by the National Professional Qualification Act, the focus of this section will be on this aspect.

One of the aspects of quality assurance is the accreditation of assessing centres/institutions for national occupational qualifications. The licence is awarded by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and it enables performance of assessment and accreditation procedure of national occupational qualifications. There is also an online database⁶⁴, managed by the National Examination Centre, that is publicly available on the website of the National Reference Point, which includes a database of accredited centres/institutions, such as inter-company training centres, schools, adult education organizations and chambers that carry out publicly valid educational programmes and fulfill the material and personnel conditions set out in the catalogue of standards of professional skills and other acts.

These institutions have obtained permission to conduct procedures for verifying and validating the NVQ. This is regulated by the Act on Verification and Certification of NVQs⁶⁵. In cases where conditions in the organisations are not fully given, the National Examination Centre selects the person performing the procedures for establishing and certifying professional qualifications on the basis of a public tender. The detailed procedure for the inclusion into the database is governed by the Rules on keeping a register or providers of procedures for verifying and validating national vocational qualifications⁶⁶.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

There have been no significant changes regarding the funding of validation since 2016. Policy-making and implementation at national level is funded by the government. The establishment of both the NVQ and SQF was funded and co-funded by European funds, as already described in this report⁶⁷.

⁶³Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

⁶⁴http://www.nrpslo.org/en/databases/accredited_assessing_agencies_for_national_occupational_qualifications.aspx

⁶⁵ Official Gazette 1/07

⁶⁶ Pravilnik o vodenju registra izvajalcev postopkov za preverjanje in potrjevanje nacionalnih poklicnih kvalifikacij.

⁶⁷ Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

With regard to institutions such as universities and schools, validation is funded by individual applicants. Individuals pay a validation fee that covers the cost of work undertaken by the committee or validator and for issuing a certificate⁶⁸. Some examples will be provided in the following section.

The funding of the individual validation process of employees is covered by the individual or the employer. Some examples of companies participating in validation of their employees were mentioned in section 2 of this report.

In relation to at-risk groups, such as long-term unemployed people, marginalised groups, minority ethnic groups, the Employment Service of Slovenia has a budget for additional support. The Employment Service also organises training as a method of informing and advising participants about the opportunities for learning (including validation) available to them.⁶⁹

9.2 Distribution of costs

Costs for validation of formal or non-formal knowledge, skills and competences that is conducted at the 'University na Primorskem', as described in section 2 of this report, are covered by the candidate and are determined by each member of the University, i.e. Faculty. The Faculty of Health Sciences exempts from the payment non-regular students who claim recognition of professional practice, clinical training or practical training. The costs of the procedure are paid by the candidate after the submission of the application, based on the price list determined by the Faculty. Both the Faculty of Management and Faculty of Health Science state that the fee for the application for recognition of formal knowledge and skills is EURO 46.80, whereas the fee for the application for recognition of non-formal knowledge and skills is EUR 175.50^{70, 71}.

As described in the 2016 Report, in the NVQ system the price for the assessment and recognition process is determined at the national level in the Rules on method and procedure for the assessment and award of national professional qualifications. Rules were subject to changes in 2015 with regard to the validation procedure, selection of assessment centres/institutions and also to the costs of the procedure. Overall, costs for candidates have increased. The cost of validation procedure is determined by the assessment centre/institution and can include:

- up to EUR 132 for administrative costs of assessment centre/institution, advisor (guidance counsellor) and other costs,
- between EUR 64 – 92 for assessment commission,
- EUR 3 can be charged if the candidate cannot attend the assessment due to justifiable reasons (Kosmrlj K., 2016)⁷².

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

⁶⁸ ibid

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ http://www.fm-kp.si/en/study/recognition_of_knowledge_and_skills

⁷¹ http://www.fvz.upr.si/sites/default/files/cenik_up_fvz_2017_18_0.pdf

⁷² Kosmrlj K. (2016) 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, Country Report Slovenia, ICF International, CEDEFOP, https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_validate_SI.pdf

In the analysis of the benefits to certification candidates (Kunčič-Krapež B., 2017)⁷³, conducted by the CPI on 778 candidates with almost half of them being unemployed, it showed that half of the respondents decided to participate in the certification process based on their own decision, whereas 16.2% of candidates were sent by their employers and 15.5% by the employment service. One third of the candidates decided to take the NVQ certificate because they wanted to increase their employment opportunities, whereas less than 15% of candidates stated that their reason was the intention to become self-employed. The majority of respondents (88.6%) decided to participate in the preparations for the verification process and NVQ certification.

The role of counsellors was highly appreciated and the majority of respondents had more than one meeting with the counsellor and also consultations by telephone and e-mail were also organised. A very high response (98%) expressed satisfaction with the counselling process, information obtained and the support given by the counsellors. In some cases, the whole process was managed and regulated by the employer. For 44% of candidates the situation after awarding the NVQ certificate changed – most of them were assigned to carry out additional activities at their workplace, almost 13% of candidates gained employment in the selected field, almost 8% of certificates supported further professional promotion and several candidates were awarded permanent employment. The majority of candidates (more than 60%) were required to participate in the certification test in order to obtain a certificate, while the rest have obtained the NVQ by the commission reviewing their personal portfolios.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

The number of NVQ certificates issued in 2018 and 2017 was significantly lower than those issued in 2015 and 2016 (2015: 4 758 NVQ certificates; 2016: 4 674 NVQ certificates; 2017: 3 996 and in 2018: 3 840 NVQ certificates). However, as stated in the conclusions of the evaluation of the analysis of NVQs certification procedures in certain fields (Drofenik K., 2017)⁷⁴, it is not possible to identify trends from the number of certificates issued in each area of certification, in particular because they vary considerably in terms of the volume and number of certificates issued.

⁷³ Kunčič-Krapež B. et al. (2017) *Accompanying the NVQ certification system: candidates in the verification process and validation of national vocational qualifications* (Spremljava certifikatnega sistema NPK: Kandidati v postopku preverjanja in potrjevanja nacionalnih poklicnih kvalifikacij), Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana.

http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Publikacije/NPK_spremljava_kandidati.pdf

⁷⁴ Drofenik K. et al (2017) *Accompanying the certification system in professional fields: Pharmacy, Education, Production Technologies, Journalism and Information, Computers, Household Services, Technology, Transport, Health, Environmental protection, Stone industry* (Spremljava certifikatnega sistema na strokovnih področjih: Farmacija, Izobraževanje, Proizvodne tehnologije, Novinarstvo in obveščanje, Računalništvo, Storitve za gospodinjstva, Tehnika, Transportne storitve, Zdravstvo, Varstvo okolja, Kamnarstvo), Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana.

http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Publikacije/NPK_spremljava_11podrocij_2017.pdf

However, certain trends can be observed and are linked to the changes in the legal acts or in the changes taking place within the education system. For example, in the awarding of NVQs in the field of personal protection and property (Košorok B., 2017)⁷⁵. It was observed that in 2005 a small number (46) of NVQs were awarded because in those years a single vocational training system for security personnel was just set up. This change included the upgrading of adults in all forms of occupations in private security activities and also the training for the NVQ became mandatory within the procedure for obtaining the license for protecting persons and property. Therefore, in 2006 an extremely large number (2 512) of certificates was awarded, in 2007 it fell by half and in the period 2007-2013, the trend of awarding NVQ in the area of protection of persons and property remained stable (ranging from 775 – 979).

9.4.2 Validation users

The profile of the validation users can be assessed in general terms as described in the 2016 Report.

Information about users of validation is not publicly accessible. For national vocational qualifications, applicants are mostly practitioners that did not complete secondary education or are looking for a higher level of qualification or are changing field or occupation. In other cases, including unemployed people, especially long-term unemployed people are selected to take part in validation by the employment service consultant in order to improve their employability.

In the higher education sector, applicants are mostly students who enrolled in a study programme and wish to validate their prior knowledge and experience for a given course or part of study programme. Some are also drop-outs looking to re-enrol to continue their studies or students trying to change institutions or study programme.

9.4.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

In 2017 a Decree on conditions and methods for ensuring the rights of persons with international protection⁷⁶ was adopted. This Regulation specifies the terms and conditions for ensuring the rights of refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection (hereinafter: persons with international protection), among other, namely to education. It enables the integration of persons with international protection for whom formal education is not proved by documentation into secondary, higher professional education and higher education programmes.

The Decree defines the enrolment in the first year of programmes of lower and secondary vocational education, secondary vocational education and general education for persons with international protection for whom formal education cannot be proved by documents. Enrolment is possible on the basis of a certificate of successful completion of the examination, issued by the Institute of Slovenian

⁷⁵ [Košorok B. et al. \(2017\) Accompanying the certification system in three professional areas: business and administration, protection of persons and property, art](#) (Spremljava certifikatnega Sistema na treh strokovnih področjih: Poslovanje in uprava, Varovanje oseb in premoženja, Umetnost), Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ljubljana.

http://www.cpi.si/files/cpi/userfiles/Publikacije/NPK_spremljava_2014.pdf

⁷⁶ Uredba o načinih in pogojih za zagotavljanje pravic osebam z mednarodno zaščito, Official Gazette 72/17 <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=URED7189>

Education, and if the person fulfils the specific enrolment requirements set by the educational programme. The examination includes testing of general knowledge in the disciplines of social sciences, literature, arts and humanities and mathematics literacy and communication in English. The detailed contents of the examination and organization of the implementation of the examination is prescribed by the minister responsible for education on the basis of professional platforms institution. The costs of examination relating to the preparation, organization, execution and evaluation of the examination is determined annually by the Institute in agreement with the Office of the Republic of Slovenia for care and integration of migrants (hereinafter: Office). The candidate can perform an examination three times for free.

The Decree also defines enrolment in the first year of programmes of higher professional education for persons with international protection for whom formal education cannot be proven by documents. Enrolment is possible on the basis of a certificate of examination, issued by the National Examinations Centre (hereinafter: RIC) and passing a test of special talents, skills and psychomotor performance, if it is determined by the educational programme. Also they can enrol in the first year of higher education study programmes on the basis of a certificate of satisfactory completion of examination issued by the RIC, and passing a test of special talents and mental and physical ability, if it is determined by the study programme. The examination comprises two exams that comprise a written examination in mathematics and written and oral examinations in English. Examination, which can be executed in the English language, is the test of a basic level of general secondary education in accordance with the catalogue of knowledge for the exam in each subject. The Catalogue of knowledge is prescribed by the minister responsible for education on the basis of a RIC. The costs of examination relating to the preparation, organization, execution and evaluation of the examination is determined annually by RIC in agreement with the Office. The candidate can twice repeat the examination for free, each time with the option of overwriting one exam, he or she had failed. The costs in this case are borne by the Office.

10 Validation methods

The procedure for validation under the National Professional Qualifications Act was described in detail in the 2016 Report, but at that time there was less focus on the method of portfolio in validation. The aim of the portfolio will be presented in this report, followed by some good case practices.

The NVQ portal⁷⁷ describes the definition and the aim of the **portfolio** (consolidated folder) which collectively attests to the applicant's competence acquired through learning (formal, non-formal, informal) or experience (work, life). Documents demonstrating the applicant's learning achievements, work or other experience, acquired competences and qualifications are systematically structured in respect of vocational standards and catalogues of expertise and skills standards when National Vocational Qualifications are assessed and awarded. In the National Vocational Qualification assessment and award procedure, the portfolio serves as a tool helping the commission to form an opinion about the applicant, his/her work experience, education and training and as an assessment method. Counsellors have to consider this when they are helping the applicants compile their portfolios.

⁷⁷ <http://www.npk.si/zbirna-mapa/struktura-zbirne-mape/>

The applicants' personal portfolio consists of the documents in which and by which the applicant demonstrates his/her work experience, education and training programmes attended (certificates, diplomas, licences, certificates issued by a company) and other supporting documents demonstrating the completion of study obligation; CV; and references. It is described that a certain type of document could be taken into account, such as evidence about performed practical work in the workplace; written documents the applicant elaborated in the workplace; description of services provided in the workplace. In addition, the following supporting evidence is also taken into consideration: authorship and co-authorship of books and other publications, competition awards, articles, products, etc.

The portfolio is not returned to the applicant after the certificate is issued or after the rejection regarding the certificate issue becomes final, as defined in the Rules on the method and procedure for the validation of national professional qualifications⁷⁸.

Project Professional Support and Information and Advisory Activities and validation of non-formal knowledge 2016-2022, managed by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is financed by means of ESF funds and funds from the Ministry of education, science and sport. The project started in June 2016 and will last until March 2022. The aim of the project is to systematically regulate the individual's evidence of acquired skills and competences by documenting everything that was learned. This is the foundation for validation of different paths through which the knowledge was acquired, including skills and competences from non-formal, formal and informal learning or from working and life experiences. It enables proof of the already gained learning achievements of an individual, but it can also record the acquired competences during the learning process. For the purpose the e-portfolio was developed as the main method for documenting learning achieved in different ways. The previous version of the e-Portfolio was developed during the implementation of the project Identification and recognition of non-formal learning of adults from 2012-2014. Besides the e-portfolio, different tools for validation of key competences were developed (digital competence, social and civic competences, learning to learn, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship).

As already described in Section 2 Rulebooks on validation published by two Faculties mainly take into account certificates, portfolio, inventions, patents, other scientific achievement evidence, certificate of the professional practice or the employment record, confirmation on participation in projects, knowledge that an individual has acquired through self-learning and which can be tested. The knowledge and experience can be verified by the commission using the following approaches: oral or written exam, interview, conversation, defence of the seminar work or of the project, assessment of procedures performed by the candidate in the practical test, during demonstration or simulation, by evaluating products and services.

11 The position of validation in society: visibility and trust

Recent trends in organising relevant information linked to the SQF and validation developments on several related portals made the information about validation more

⁷⁸ Official Gazette 67/2015, <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=PRAV12486>

publicly available and transparent to all actors, institutions and users involved in the process.

The development of the Register of Qualification within the SQF, that is made public to all interested users, has contributed to the development of the transparency level of the qualifications system⁷⁹. The benefits to different users, such as participants in education at all levels of the system, employees, employers, educational institutions, professional commissions, professional advisers and others, are increasingly being recognised by those individual users.

A list of licenced assessors for the verification and validation of NVQ, as described in section 3 of this report, is maintained on the portal of the National Reference Point and is publicly available⁸⁰. In addition to that, the portal contains another database of accredited centres/institutions⁸¹. These include inter-company training centres, schools, adult education organizations and chambers that carry out publicly valid educational programmes and fulfill the material and personnel conditions set out in the catalogue of standards of professional skills and other acts.

These institutions have obtained permission to conduct procedures for verifying and validating NVQs. This is regulated by the Act on Verification and Certification of NVQs⁸². In cases in which conditions, as set by the legal acts, in the organisations are not fully given, the National Examination Centre selects the person performing the procedures for establishing and certifying professional qualifications on the basis of a public tender. The detailed procedure for inclusion into the database is governed by the Rules on keeping a register of providers of procedures for verifying and validating national vocational qualifications.

⁷⁹ <https://www.nok.si/register-kvalifikacij-sok>

⁸⁰ <http://www.nrpslo.org/baze-podatkov/licence-za-clane-komisij.aspx>

⁸¹ http://www.nrpslo.org/en/databases/accredited_assessing_agencies_for_national_occupational_qualifications.aspx

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