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Methodological guidelines for validation and certification

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How to boost the process for the recognition and standardisation of the Social Theatre Operator profession at the European level?

The document consists of two main parts: the analysis of existing procedures for recognition and validation of learning outcomes, both formal and informal, and analysis of the opportunities for accreditation of the social theatre operator (STO) training course.

The comparative analysis is presented for 6 European countries: Italy, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. Research activities were carried out by six partner organisations from these conutries and consisted of desk research.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING PROCEDURES FOR RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The preliminary phase of comparative analysis consisted of looking for the procedure for recognising a new professional qualification, in this case, the social theatre operator (STO).

Approaching the analysis of existing procedures of recognition and validation of learning outcomes, we came over with many keywords that deserve to be clearly defined.
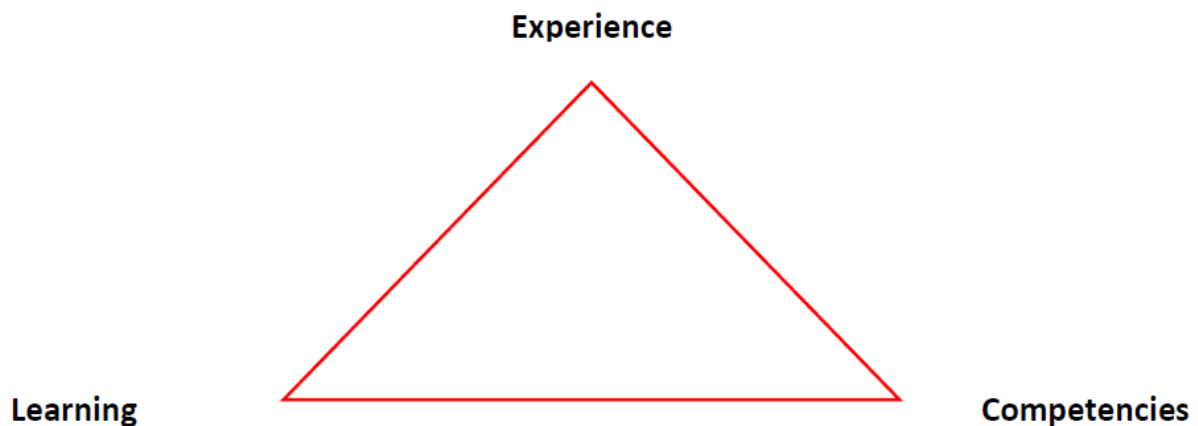
According to "Recognition and validation of competencies acquired through volunteering: good practices in Italy", written as a result of the Erasmus+ project *I'VE – I Have Experienced. Recognition and validation of volunteering through peer support and open source tools*, CSVnet (Coordinamento Nazionale de Centri di Servizio per il Volonariato) defines "learning" as a process of transformations of knowledge and behaviours, while "competencies" may be considered as the capacity to cope with a complex situation and in a potentially constant change. Specifically, learning produces competencies, but in the meanwhile, competencies need continuous learning. Experience represents both the starting and the ending point since it triggers learning and activates competencies, giving new elements of knowledge and inducing new behaviours.

UNESCO defines the process of recognising the learning that has taken place as "granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competencies, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value of society" (UNESCO Guidelines 2012, 8). Validation is a more formal process. The UNESCO definition states that it is "the confirmation by an officially approved body that learning outcomes or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies" (UNESCO Guidelines 2012, 8). The Council of Europe gave a similar definition, stating that validation is "a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes against a relevant standard (Council of the EU, 2021, p.5). It appears clear that the existence of defined standards against which to judge an individual's competencies is necessary. The presence of an official body that is in a legitimate position is also essential. In other words, organisations themselves are not able to validate the competencies. However, they may be responsible for evaluating and recognising them.

According to the European guidelines for validating non- formal and informal learning[1], the validation process is made up of four phases:

1. IDENTIFICATION of an individual's learning outcomes.
2. DOCUMENTATION of an individual's learning outcomes. It can be carried out through a portfolio, including a CV, a career history and pieces of evidence attesting their learning achievement.
3. ASSESSMENT of an individual's learning outcomes. An individual's learning outcomes are compared against specific reference points and/or standards in this stage. Actually, according to the guidelines, the learning-outcomes-based standard is considered to benefit validation. Focusing on what a learner knows, understands, and can do, a learning-outcomes-based assessment is not obliged to consider particular input-factors, such as duration of learning. As validation is about capturing diverse individual learning experiences, assessment tools need to be designed to capture and assess the learning specific to each individual and the context of this learning.
4. CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment of an individual's learning outcome. This phase is linked to the certification of the learning identified, documented and assessed. This can take different forms but is commonly the award of a formal qualification confirming the achievement of learning outcomes against a specific standard. A credible authority or organisation must manage this process.

The standard is essential to validation and the resulting outcomes. Qualifications generally relate to two main categories of standards:

1. Occupational standards: they focus on employment, what people need to do, how they do it and how well they do it in an occupational context.
2. Education/training standards: they follow the logic of education and training, focusing on what people need to learn, how they learn it, and how the quality and content of learning are assessed.

Some necessary conditions for the development and implementation of functional validation arrangements need to be met. The European guidelines emphasize the importance of:

− Impartial and comprehensive information, guidance and counselling throughout the process;
− Coordination of relevant actors at different levels and with different functions. The relevant actors are:
  ● A counsellor, whose work starts with reaching out to engage potential candidates for validation, then supporting the candidate in his or her preparation for the assessment, continues by guiding the candidate after the assessment decision. An essential part of the role is to work with the candidate to appraise the breadth and depth of evidence of learning.
  ● An assessor, who seek, review and check evidence of an individual's learning and judge, what meets specific standards.
  ● Managers of the validation process, who manage the process, the people and the physical or virtual centre where candidates, counsellors and assessors come together.

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[1] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073_en.pdf

- External observers, who provide a quality check on validation procedures, training of practitioners and outcomes for candidates.
- A group of supporting stakeholders who counsel, assess or manage centres. Their presence in the team is fundamental since they are directly interested in the quality and the successful operation of validation.
- Linking validation arrangements to national qualifications frameworks and systems;
- Referring to learning-outcomes-based standards, similar and7or equivalent to those used for formal education and training;
- Creation of quality assurance mechanisms;
- Provision of qualified professionals.

Tools for validation are important as they will influence the overall quality – the validity and reliability – of the validation process and its outcomes. They greatly influence the way individual learners experience the process and determine whether their experiences are captured or not. Some tools are used for extracting evidence and others are mainly used to present it.

Examples of tools for extracting evidence:
- Tests and examinations
- Dialogue or conversational methods, such as interviews and debates
- Declarative methods, based on individuals' independent identification and recording of competences
- Observations, extracting evidence from candidates while they perform everyday tasks
- Simulations, where individuals are placed in a situation close to real-life scenarios to have their competencies assessed
- Evidence extracted from work or other practice

Examples of validation tools for presenting evidence:
- CVs and individual statements of competences
- Third-party reports
- Portfolios

The existing procedures for recognising and validating learning outcomes are based on defined standards, phases and professional actors. Therefore, to enhance the recognition of STO professional profile, its qualification should be construed to fit with the European guidelines, especially in terms of indicators, expected results, and evaluation standards.

ITALY

In Italy, regions are the institutional body in charge of the recognition of qualifications, and each one collects qualifications through the qualifications repertoire, which is constantly updated. For example, the Emilia Romagna region website dedicates a specific section of its website to this issue (https://formazionelavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/qualifiche/approfondimenti/srq/richiesta-nuove-qualifiche). Here we could download a form to be filled in to initiate the procedure for the recognition of a new qualification. This procedure is named "source procedure".

The source procedure form focuses first on defining the new working profile, its role and working environment. Secondly, it focuses on its identifiability, especially when compared to other similar profiles already existing. Thirdly, it asks for competencies and innovative aspects of the new qualification. Fourthly, it questions how a person can acquire these competencies, the education process. Lastly, the form demands references, bibliography and any third body/stakeholder requests or recommendations supporting the qualification recognition proposal.

This form helped us understand how the STO qualification recognition will work and notice, that the three intellectual outputs of the RESTORE project are deeply interconnected and essentials to achieve the project's primary goal.

Our analysis in Italy focused on Emilia Romagna region procedures to verify competencies and certify them. From the beginning, it appears clear that European guidelines inspire this procedure, even if with a few terminologies changes.

The procedure is made up of four phases:
1. Individual counselling
2. Assessment through pieces of evidence
3. Assessment through an evaluating interview
4. Assessment through exam

The validation of assessment results finishes with the delivery of formalization and certification documents, such as:
- *Skills and knowledge statement*, a document that formalizes knowledge and skills corresponding partially or totally to a qualification, based on evidence
- *Certificate of competencies*, a document that, after a successful interview or exam, certifies skills and knowledge corresponding to one or many competence units
- *Certificate of professional qualification*, document that, after passing an exam, certifies skills and knowledge of a qualification.

Several specific professionals are involved in the procedure, such as:
- Competences formalization and certification responsible
- Evaluation process expert
- Expert on the specific professional area or qualification. While the first two profiles are internal of the education institution, this expert comes from the labour market. His or her task is to evaluate if the competencies acquired by the learner correspond to the qualification regional system standards.

The evaluating interviews are leaded by an exam commission composed of the evaluation process expert and the expert of the professional area. On the other hand, the exam commission in charge

of certifying the competencies of the entire professional qualification comprises the evaluation process expert and two experts of the professional area.

The structure of actors' and social animators' professional qualifications was analyzed in order to verify how competences are defined, recognized and validated. This qualification is divided into four competencies units, specifically:

1. Formulation of intervention of primary prevention
2. Social entertainment/animation
3. Educational entertainment/animation
4. Expressive-cultural entertainment/animation

Each competencies unit is connected to 3/5 specific indicators, 4 skills, 9/12 pieces of knowledge and an expected result.

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IRELAND

Ireland's White Paper on Adult Education (2000) was a landmark document for the sector. The outcome of many months of consultation, the Paper laid out the government's policies and priorities for the future development of adult education and highlighted the role and value of community based education in fostering education progression, employment, social inclusion and citizenship. The Paper also acknowledged learning as 'life-wide' (something that takes place across a multiplicity of sites) and proposed a national framework of accreditation that would be capable of recognizing multiple intelligences.

The idea of learning as life-wide is radical because it puts real value on the learning we acquire through everyday life (learning we acquire from our parents, from the jobs we do, from rearing a family). Although it was referred to in The White Paper the idea of life-wide learning has never been properly debated or laid down in policy in Ireland. A related idea has grown some legs though and that is Recognition of Prior Learning, or RPL. Though not as radical as the idea of life-wide learning, RPL is the policy and procedure in Ireland whereby prior learning is formally validated by the further education system. The following section will explore how RPL has been understood and applied within the Irish context. The national legal and institutional framework for RPL will be presented as well as a brief overview of how RPL has been implemented in the country by different education providers.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was made law in 1999. The 1999 Education and Training Act gave *individual citizens the right, in law, to have prior learning validated by the further and higher education system*. What this means is that if you have acquired prior learning (formally or informally) you can present it to the formal education system and have it formally validated.

In 2004, the then National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)[13] set up an advisory group to develop a set of national principles for RPL in Ireland. The group drew on national and international practice including the common European principles on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which were adopted during the Irish Presidency of the EU in 2004. Some of the key points in the NQAI document, which was adopted in 2005, included:
  - RPL ensures that we give value to all learning, no matter how that learning is achieved
  - RPL is part of an inclusive approach to learning by education and training providers and awarding bodies

In 2005, NQAI launched the brand new National Qualifications Framework (NFQ), which provided a 10 level qualifications spectrum for all FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council), HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council) and university accredited courses in the country.

FETAC oversaw awards from levels 1 to 6:
Levels 1 and 2: These are levels for those who are returning to the education system or may be engaging with learning for the first time. Courses at this level are about basic skills and confidence building.
Level 3: Some examples of courses at this level included basic computers, communications, and office procedures. This level is likened to the Junior Certificate (end of junior cycle examination).

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Level 4: Level 4 courses develop and expand on skills gained at level 3, and are preparation for undertaking the Leaving Certificate (end of senior cycle examination) or level 5 (equivalent). This level is a requirement for entry to many forms of employment.

Level 5: A level 5 award is the equivalent of the Leaving Certificate and is a preparation and link into Third Level study, and entry into a wide range of occupations. Courses at this level include childcare, office work, health care.

Level 6: Courses at this level are provided by Further Education Centres and linked to Institutes of Technology and Universities. After two years of study at this level learners are awarded a Higher Certificate.

HETAC and IUQB oversaw awards from levels 6 to 10:

Level 6: Higher Certificate (HETAC Colleges and Institutes of Technology only)

 Level 7: Bachelors

Level 8: Honors Degree/Higher

Diploma Level 9: Master's Degree

Level 10: Doctoral Degree

Validation of Learning

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 establishes the statutory basis for Quality and Qualifications Ireland's (QQI) engagement with RPL. Under Section 56 (1) and (2) of this Act, providers must establish and implement policies, criteria and procedure for learner access, transfer, and progression. These must 'include procedures for credit accumulation, credit transfer and identification and formal assessment of the knowledge, skills or competence previously acquired by learners' [Section 56 (3)]. These procedures must be submitted for approval to QQI [Section 56 (4)]. Where learners meet standards that QQI has established, they may apply to QQI for awards, and QQI may request providers' assistance to assess their achievements [Section 50 (3)(7)]. While methods for assessing prior learning differ, portfolios are a common method.

Quality assurance

QQI has a statutory role to develop QA guidelines under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, Section 27(1). The Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016) recognises that QQI Quality Assurance (QA) guidelines are a crucial component of a variety of QQI's functions, services and policies including RPL. These guidelines set out QQI's approach to developing and organising QA guidelines. It applies to the validation of formal, non-formal and informal competences.

The Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (QQI, 2016) sets out eleven core areas in which providers are expected to have quality assurance procedures in place, and what is expected of provider procedures in these areas. These core areas are:
- Governance and Management of Quality
- Documented Approach to Quality Assurance
- Programs of Education and Training
- Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment of Learners
- Supports for Learners

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- Information and Data Management
- Public Information and Communication
- Other Parties Involved in Education and Training
- Self-Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

The guidelines require that provider policies and procedures for learner admission, progression and recognition include 'fair recognition of education and training qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning' and that the provider ethos enables flexible learning pathways.

Good Practices

European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) Ireland hosts events, such as conferences for practitioners and policy makers, to promote the value of non formal and informal learning, and for practitioners to exchange best practices around RPL. ECVET Ireland also nominates practitioners and policy makers to attend international training ECVET conferences and peer learning activities on RPL. ECVET Experts are individuals who are recognised for their expertise in the area of vocational education and training, who promote RPL throughout their professional networks. ECVET is co-funded in Ireland by the European Commission and by SOLAS (the national Further Education and Training Authority). ECVET is managed in Ireland by Léargas, the National Agency for Erasmus+ in the fields of School Education; Vocational Education and Training; Adult Education; and Youth.

Adult and Community Education: Supported Learner Pathways 2020-2021 aims to build the capacity of community educators and develop new guidelines for using RPL in working with marginalised and vulnerable groups, and with employees with low qualifications. The programme is run by AONTAS (the national Adult Learning Organisation), as Irish National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL). EAAL is funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union and co-financed by the Department of Education through SOLAS.

The Adult Literacy Organisers' Association (ALOA) provides collective representation of Adult Literacy Organisers, funded by Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The Community Education Facilitators' Association (CEFA) is the professional representative association for Community Education Facilitators, who work within the Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to give support to local community groups. Both the ALOA and CEFA host training events and conferences, highlighting the value of non formal and informal learning, and offering guidance on RPL.

NALA the national civic organisation promoting adult literacy, has developed a cost effective distance learning tool to help people improve their reading, writing and numbers skills online. Users can study at their own pace and in their own time and use the service to improve their skills or get a national qualification. The content is pitched at FETAC level 2, 3 and 4 (NB: it can accredit learning at levels 2 and 3 but not level 4). It is RPL based because the first step is a skills assessment (i.e. looking at what the user already knows). The second step is a prescribed individual learning plan. At the end of the learning phase (and it may be that no 'learning' is required) users are presented with an option to have their skills assessed and request a national qualification. This is the first time that FETAC accreditation has been offered via the web in Ireland.

POLAND

In Poland, the ordinance of the Minister of national education of 19 March 2019 is a legal base for lifelong learning actions in the public sector. This regards also the work of art instructors, including Social Theatre Operators. The document specifies, among the others, types of institutions authorised to run lifelong learning programs, as well as their tasks and requirements regarding teaching programs to be implemented. Moreover, it presents ways of confirming the learning outcomes obtained as a result of completing the education provided and examples of documents issued after completing education. It is stated that each participant who completes the course according to the rules established by the training provider will receive a certificate. Some of the training ends with an exam. The training providers are obliged to include in the program of their courses a clear description of learning outcomes which are further confirmed by the certificate.

In addition to the above, there are also numerous public (non-educational) institutions and private and non-governmental organisations, which offer training and various courses in the field of art, including social theatre. These are, for instance theatres, cultural centres, associations of practitioners from various fields. However, most of them focus on the work with children and young people and only a few of them serve the needs of adults, especially seniors and people with disabilities. They use very different forms of recognition and validation of learning outcomes acquired through their training.

In some cases, very basic certificates are the only proof of the knowledge and skills acquired by training participants. Usually, they include at least the number of training hours and a short description of the leading theme of the course, as well as the names and qualification/expertise of the trainers. Such certificates seem to have very little value and cannot be taken as sufficient validation of the knowledge and skills acquired. But still, they are used by many institutions on a regular basis.

However, there are also some training providers in relevant fields, which treat the recognition and validation of learning outcomes very seriously. The following examples show different approaches, which are especially good and effective practices in recognizing and validating tangible results of the training activities.

Courses for theatre instructors run by "Ochota" Theatre in Warsaw[2]
These courses have already had several editions, hence the conclusion that they are popular and appreciated. The organisers describe them as a compendium of knowledge on how to run a theatre group, from the moment it is set up until presenting the performance to the audience. The classes are complemented by assistant practice at the Ochota Theatre Centre, work on various educational projects, as well as faculties in specific fields - movement theatre, puppet theatre, text interpretation, light direction and communication skills. So, it is a practical and immediate form of checking acquired skills and competences. Students together with their instructors can verify what they are already able to use in working with theatre groups and spot any gaps and fill them during the course. For example, at the end of one of the Course editions, 13 students conducted theatre classes with 11 groups of almost 100 participants. Their performances were recorded and the course was summed up with a

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[2] https://teatrochoty.pl/kurs-instruktorow-teatralnych/

two-day festival of created shows. At the end, students received a diploma of completion of the course with detailed information about the completed classes, and descriptive assessment of their work, including references with the list of strengths and points to be further developed and improved. This diploma included:

- A detailed list of thematic areas covered during the course and the number of training hours

- A review of the diploma performance created

- An individual recommendation written by the trainer.

E_Guide for theatre instructors created by "Mlyn" Foundation in Warsaw[3]

The Artistic Foundation "Mlyn" in Warsaw offers an interesting form of training for Theatre Instructors, which is a response to the pandemic's time limitations. The program was developed as a series of recordings published on the Web, in which interested people can participate and then obtain a certificate.

The e-guide deals with specific issues and problems faced by people producing performances with amateur groups. The set of six short video lectures includes practical advice and solutions supported by examples and experience of the author of the project – a theatre director and playwright who for several years has been working simultaneously as a director in a professional theatre and an instructor in an amateur theatre, as well as supervising and training theatre instructors.

The certificate confirming the completion of the course can be obtained only after completing the questionnaire, also online, which is a kind of virtual exam from the completed training. The questionnaire includes quite detailed questions referring to the knowledge that the participant should have acquired while watching the above-mentioned series of recordings. After completing the questionnaire, it is assessed by the training author and if the participant's knowledge proves to be sufficient, he or she receives a certificate of the completed course.

Courses for cultural animators run by Scientific and Educational Consortium in Kielce[4]

Courses for cultural animators are aimed at people who want to gain knowledge and skills in planning the process of promoting culture in order to activate the society by various methods, arouse interests, and show new methods of spending free time. The course is directed especially to people starting their activity in community centres, seniors' clubs, neighbourhood clubs and libraries, organisers of mass events, teachers, local government employees responsible for culture. The dominant method of conducting classes are activating and practical ways of education. During practical classes, students verify theoretical knowledge. Lectures are accompanied by demonstrations, simulations, exercises, exposing methods, and drama. In order to find out to what extent the goals of the training are achieved, and whether the methods and forms of activity are effective, it is necessary to conduct an evaluation. It is mainly based on observation: involvement of students in the classroom, independence and cooperation skills, the number of participants during the classes. Before starting each edition of the training, the organisers get acquainted with its participants in order to obtain information on the expectations of students, level of education,

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[3] http://poradnik-teatralny.pl
[4] https://college-med.pl/o-szkole

current employment, knowledge, skills and predispositions. The participants are also surveyed. The results are used to assess the quality of the teaching process and provide information on tangible results achieved and progress made by participants.

Specific procedures are used to assess the degree of acquiring knowledge and skills by the course participants. It is done mainly through the forms of oral control (answers, statements), work products, assessment of commitment and activities, creative action and final test. Based upon the results of the validation of learning outcomes the participants receive two certificates – one issued by the Ministry of Education and one from the organiser.

Summarising the conducted research into existing procedures for recognition and validation of learning outcomes in the area of training art instructors in Poland, it should be stated that simplified practices will prevail, limited to issuing a simple certificate without a deeper analysis of the obtained results and evaluation of the training process and achievements by the course participants. Still, some real efforts to ensure proper recognition and validation of teaching effects can be found and seen as a promising phenomena for the future.

PORTUGAL

Based on the Portuguese report[5] on "European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning", *"in Portugal, the validation of non-formal and informal learning is available through the national system for the recognition, validation and certification of competences - RVCC (in Portuguese, Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências), and through the accreditation of learning in higher education (HE) institutions. Validation of non-formal and informal learning in general education and in VET is characterised by standardisation (of the tools that are used, of the work done by practitioners) and is carried out by Centres for Qualification and VET (in Portuguese, Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional - CQEP) in the RVCC context. The RVCC grants school and/or professional certification. The accreditation of learning in higher education includes the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Although validation varies from one institution to the next, it is nevertheless possible to find framework legislation that is respected by all these entities. The result is that while there is systematic information regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning in general education and in VET, information about the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning in HE institutions is scarce. It is more difficult therefore to cover the situation in HE institutions in Portugal in the present update of the European inventory."*

Good practical examples on the recognition and validation of learning outcomes through informal and non-formal training

<u>National Level</u>: RVCC Process - Recognition, validation and certification of competences[6] Centres of Qualification and Professional Education

A national system for the validation of prior learning, called Recognition, validation and certification of competences, RVCC was put in place in 2001. At that time, RVCC only validated school competences equivalent to the ninth year of schooling and was intended for adults aged 18 or over.

The RVCC is the process through which adults demonstrate competences acquired and developed throughout life through formal, non-formal and informal ways, which are subject to validation and certification for obtaining a qualification.

For whom?

The recognition, validation and certification of competences is targeted for adults (18+ years old), without any suitable qualification to favour their labour market integration or progression. This pathway is particularly suitable for adults without completed basic or secondary education nor any other kind of formal educational training. Adults up to 23 years of age must have at least three years of professional experience.

Qualification level

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[5] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2016_validate_pt.pdf
[6] https://anqep.gov.pt/np4/RVCC.html

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The conclusion of the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences allows qualifications at levels 1 to 4 of the QNQ. The validation process comprises two main routes. Through the academic route, key competences acquired from adult education and training can be validated in terms of basic and secondary education qualifications (levels 1, 2 and 3 of QNQ/EQF). Through the professional route, QNQ/EQF levels 2 and 4 qualifications can be awarded.

Methodology

The certification methodologies included Life stories, by encouraging the trainees to create a portfolio from a personal narrative, intersecting with curricular contents: Portuguese, history, geography, mathematics, etc.

This process was largely developed in the first decade of the 21st century, allowing thousands of adults with low education levels to complete an intermediate level of qualification, progress in their professional careers and increase their levels of personal achievement.

Local examples - two experiences with youngsters NEET[7]

1. *TUM TUM TUM Project - Social Centre of Soutelo[8]*

TUM TUM TUM is an inclusive artistic project that uses music as a tool to empower and motivate participation, which emerged from the need to find distinct answers to fight against youth unemployment. The project presents itself as an instrument for social and personal empowerment, facilitating the employability of young people, aiming to achieve lasting and visible results, allowing young people to keep their jobs in medium and long terms.

In order to do that, the Educational Animation and Action Course was created, in partnership with the Institute of Employment and Professional Training, with the aim to train and certify young people between 18 and 30 years old, regarding issues of sociocultural animation and educational action. Simultaneously this course aimed to pass on the TUM TUM TUM methodology to these young people, providing them a differentiated working tool.

Methodology:

The Project's activity is developed within three axes: the TUM TUM TUM WORKSHOPS, the TRAINING and the performative group (XILOBALDES). At the same time, it seeks to develop a psycho-social monitoring of the young participants in order to reflect, think, design and develop life projects together.

The NEET YOUNG WORKSHOPS aim to promote the development of personal and social skills for employability, by seeking the artistic development of each participant. The workshops are specifically designed for young adults between 18 and 30 years, proposed in initial diagnosis. At the same time with the regular activity of the workshops, the project proposes to work on

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[7] Neither in employment nor education and training. COM (2010b). Youth neither in employment nor education and training (NEET). Presentation of data for the 27 Member States, Brussels.

[8] https://projetotumtumtum.wordpress.com/

professionalizing the participants, through the development of a certified training, funded by the Employment and Professional Training Institute (IEFP). The TRAINING course "Animation and Educational Action" was designed for sociocultural Animators and educational Agents to enable young people to develop sociocultural animation activities with children, young people and the elderly, according to the TUM TUM TUM methodology.

2. *ECOAR - Employability and Skills through Art (2014-2016)*
   Art and Citizenship Lab (2019-2021)

These two projects were developed by PELE and are based on an innovative methodology of validation and certification of personal and social skills through the participation in artistic projects.

To whom?

This approach is directed to groups of people between 18 and 30 years old, in prison context, with a pathway of school dropout / failure and who reveal greater resistance and struggle of getting integrated in the existing training activities. The participation in the artistic workshops aims to represent a first step to reach these young people, who would normally be more distant from this kind of processes, motivating them to experiment creative freedom while searching for possibilities to change and redesign their futures.

Methodology:

Since 2011, when integrated PEETA project - Personal Effectiveness and Employability Through the Arts, PELE has been improving this methodology in partnership with the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto (FPCEUP).

During the process, PELE chose to separate the artistic creation process from the process of validation and certification of skills, so that both develop without mutual contamination. For that reason, there were always two teams: the artistic and the pedagogic.

The pedagogic team included an element from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto (FPCEUP), and various tutors. Through participating observation, the team collects indicators based on five major learning goals: Personal development and self-confidence; communication; interpersonal relationships and teamwork; tasks management and reflection. The different workshops of artistic creation offered a space where these dimensions were gradually revealed and strengthened. Simultaneously, during individual and collective feedback sessions, the pedagogic team provoked a reflection over the transference of these competencies into other areas of the participants' life.

Taking into account the profile of the group of participants (school drop out and failure), this process of recognizing their personal and social skills from the artistic workshops had effectively a transforming effect. This was expressed in the evaluation report, as for the majority of these young people it was the first time they have ever received positive and constructive feedback about their behavior in a training context (even if it wasn't formal).

This way, through a process of self and hetero-evaluation based on the different pedagogic

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objectives and validation criteria, the certification process is materialized, validated by the Continuous Educational Service of the FPCEUP.

SLOVENIA

Each potentially new occupation in Slovenia could be recognized in two ways:

- Formally: national professional qualification, potential study programs (to add as a subject to current study courses), verification procedures or certificate acquisition

- Informally: tools for keeping a record of informally gained knowledge

A precondition for acknowledgment and recognition of mentioned is a record of occupation competence – the most suitable if done in accordance with an internationally comparable system (ESCO, 8 key competences of life-long learning etc.).

Formally

Besides formal study programs, there are two procedures considering Social Theatre Operator profile: National Professional Qualification and Verification of Social Custody Programs.

National Professional Qualification (NPQ); System of NPQ[9]: the path where an occupation can be formalised.

NPQ enables relatively quick and simple formalisation of professional qualification taking possibilities of work experience and informal education with their acknowledgment into account. When an individual does not meet the requirements referring to knowledge and skills of the program, there are additional shorter programs of training for compensating missing knowledge and skills which can nevertheless lead to formalisation of qualification although some possible lack of previously gained experience.

Verification of Social Welfare Program

Social Chamber of Slovenia based on the third paragraph of the eighteenth article and eighth alignment of fourth paragraph of article 77 of the Law of Social Welfare have run the procedure of professional verification of social custody programmes for three years as development programmes having been vitrificated in accordance with the procedure accepted by social chamber with a consent of minister in charge of social custody. Professional verification is a procedure of professional evaluation which in alignment with provisions of rule book and methodology establishes and confirms proficiency of the programme in accordance with demanding criteria for social welfare programmes defined within the social custody programme network. At the end of the professional verification procedure there follows the verification report. In case of a positive verification report

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[9] https://npk.si/za-podjetja/pot-priprave-npk/

showing adequate proficiency, an applicant is obliged to get a temporary receipt within 30 days till verification certificate is not issued.

<u>Informally</u>

On the web site of "belezimo.si" there are collected and listed tools for keeping a record and acknowledgment. In regard to the tools, it is mostly about keeping a record of competence whereas acknowledgment is left to authority on the side where one would like to achieve the acknowledgment (for example, at the university for a number of credit points). In this case, the occupation is not recognised fully, but individual competence transferable to other fields.

- Nefiks is a leading system for keeping a record of informally gained knowledge in Slovenia, which

  enables the youth to systematically gather in one place all informally gained and approved competence by institutions (employers, professional mentors. Within the project of "Nefiks-occupational solutions", it was updated to a platform for integrating youth with employers. It means that youth allow employers an insight of their competence whereas employers can choose among individuals and make connections.

- The IM-PROVE tool translates experience into competence. It helps to record volunteer

  experience, to find out to users which competence they have developed, to plan personal growth and transfer all gained competence into CV, Youthpass and Europass.

- Web tool for knowledge and study result recognition, which makes a study process a dynamic

  one. Youth becomes familiar with web and mobile applications, which suggests tasks enabling them to assure that they have already internalised studied topics showing a proof to evaluate their knowledge in a structured way through the mentioned platform.

- ORB makes notes of activities, personal growth, achievements and results of MEPI individuals

  within three possible difficulty levels (bronze, silver, gold) and four program areas encouraging youth to active, versatile activation and growth of personality.

- Record of student work is in accordance with Slovene legislation concerning work policy

  established as (among others) information system of personal electronic portfolio containing knowledge, experience and competence gained through occasional and time limited student work. Intermediaries of student work give data from accounted documentation of already done student work. All kinds of work are classified within Standard Occupation Classification (SKP-08), there are individual occupational groups in SKP-08 where transverse competence and occupationally specific competence tools of ESCO are linked to (originated from research conveyed in 2015). On the web site "e-di.si" individuals doing student jobs can access data from evidence, edit and export them. For individual types of work there are 20 to 100 competences planned. Individuals have a possibility to display up to five most important gained competence. Project SoftSkills4EU is dedicated to easier recognition and evaluation of one's own soft skills and encouragement for competence growth using special electronic badges within the Open Badge system for competence recognition. An individual is entitled to independently register and sign up into the platform <u>academy-softskills4.eu (instructions)</u>, study materials, read good practice cases and go through tests. Considering the work, she/he gets a suitable digital badge, which

she/he can use in Europass (description). She/he can refresh and upgrade knowledge anytime she/he wants.

Out of it, we have already been familiar with the portfolio of adult education universities.

E-portfolioof Andragogical Centre of Slovenia[10]
Electronic portfolio is an application where an individual can make a personal presentation of his informal knowledge, educational and occupational path. Within e-form you can create a job application or job offer and search for a job a bit differently using more modern and maybe more appealing ways.

=> We recommend e-Nefiks since it enables recording and approved competence by mentor/organisation. It also meets the requirements of faculties for acknowledgement of NFI and OIV….

SPAIN

Galeuropa, today the *Programa de Mobilidade Trasnacional Xuvenil* (Young Transnational Mobility Programme), begins in 2012 with the aim of boosting youth mobility by encouraging knowledge of cultural diversity and richness, which should contribute to their training and integration into the labour market (see http://xuventude.xunta.es/programaseu/galeuropa), as provided for in Article 15 of Law 6/2012, of 19 December 2012 of June, of youth from Galicia (DOG, 20. 07. 2012).

Iniciativa Xove[11] began its work in 2010 as a programme that strengthens leadership and cross-cutting competencies for employability of youth. It allows to strengthen the talent of young men and women through financing of projects designed and managed by them.

Voluntariado Xuvenil[12] is a program that has been developed since 2011, inspired by the European Volunteer Service of the Youth in Action, as a response to the need to give the younger generation an attitude of civic and social commitment, their involvement in the society of which they are a part.

Participation in the *Galeuropa* and Iniciativa Xove programmes entails the right to receive the Certificate of Non-Formal Education in Youth, according to the Order of 26 February 2015 (DOG, 25. 03. 2015). This certificate is a tool for confirming participation in non-formal education programmes and, above all, for validating the skills derived from this involvement that contribute to the personal development of young people, enrich their life-skills and promote active participation in society. Experiences in the *Programa de Mobilidade Trasnacional Xuvenil* give the right to the Certificate of Voluntary Experiences, as set out in the Order of 14 March 2014 regulating the Rexistro de Acción Voluntaria de Galicia (DOG, 20. 03. 2014).[13]

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[10] https://eportfolijo.acs.si/

[11] http://xuventude.xunta.es/iniciativa-xove

[12] http://www.voluntariadogalego.org/web/

[13] Nuevos itinerarios de Educación no Formal para jóvenes. "Educación no formal y empleabilidad de la juventud. Un análisis centrado en la evaluación de programas". Revista de estudios de juventud, nº 124, p. 23. (2021). http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/adjuntos/2021/03/injuve_124_web_pdfa.pdf

In the Spanish context, Royal Decree 1224/2009 of 17 July, on the recognition of professional skills acquired through work experience and other non-formal education channels, provides in its Article 12 the possibility of justifying the work experience acquired through volunteering through certification by the organisation where the services have been provided. The recognition it promotes of this Royal Decree focuses on the official accreditation of competences acquired through work experience and other non-formal education, based on units of competence listed in Spain's National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications.[14] The *Reconoce* project is supported by organisations such as the Youth Institute (INJUVE), the Ministry of Health, Social Affairs and Equality and Youth Associations, among others. This project aims to establish a new system of recognition for non-formal learning, to articulate a national network of organisations to promote the recognition of competencies developed through activities youth volunteering and developing an online accreditation system for non-formal voluntary action. The project represents a change from the more usual approach in Spain, which is based on initiatives by individual organisations for the recognition of skills acquired by young people in the context of volunteering and may lead to wider recognition in the future.

However, in Spain there are still relatively few initiatives that give recognition to skills in the educational system developed in voluntary contexts. Although there has been some progress in the development of recognition initiatives for skills developed through non-formal education in volunteer contexts over the past decade, this is still limited.[15] In fact, in 2014 only 18% of the volunteers in our country obtained a certificate for carrying out their work, when the European average was 27%.[16] The Youth Council of Spain claims that the work of volunteering is valued in the professional curriculum and, at the level of experience, is matched with paid employment. They are also committed to the validation of the skills acquired in the exercise of volunteering.

Since 2018, some universities such as the Polytechnic University of Valencia with its "Transversal Competences: UPV", or the University Jaume I through the program "UJI Accreditation in Employability and Entrepreneurship: Espaitec", are moving towards accreditation of competences transversal courses that can be developed and acquired within each subject of their degrees. These competences are being assessed through rubrics and tests designed by the faculty of each university.[17]

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[14] Nuevos itinerarios de Educación no Formal para jóvenes. "Voluntariado, educación no formal y juventud: conceptos clave, participación y reconocimiento en la Unión Europea". Revista de estudios de juventud, nº 124, p. 66 – 67 (2021).
http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/adjuntos/2021/03/injuve_124_web_pdfa.pdf
[15] Nuevos itinerarios de Educación no Formal para jóvenes. "Voluntariado, educación no formal y juventud: conceptos clave, participación y reconocimiento en la Unión Europea". Revista de estudios de juventud, nº 124, p. 68 –69 (2021).
http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/adjuntos/2021/03/injuve_124_web_pdfa.pdf
[16] El CJE reivindica más reconocimiento del trabajo de las personas voluntarias
http://www.cje.org/gl/sala-de-prensa/notas-de-prensa/el-cje-reivindica-reivindica-mas-reconocimiento-del-trabajo-voluntario/
[17] Nuevos itinerarios de Educación no Formal para jóvenes. "El *engagement* o compromiso estudiantil y la acreditación de las competencias transversales adquiridas en los entornos académicos". Revista de estudios de juventud, nº 124, p. 138 (2021).
http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/adjuntos/2021/03/injuve_124_web_pdfa.pdf

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In Spain, within Non-Formal Education, we can consider that one of the areas that has had the greatest development is Environmental Education, that has achieved international consensus and a basic theoretical framework.[18]

Since Lisbon 2000, a comprehensive strategy was established for the elaboration of the European Principles for the Validation of Non-Formal Education and of Informal Learning, which aim to make a comparison of the methods and approaches, and strengthen the quality of methods and systems validation and (where they do not exist) encourage their implementation. One of the proposed monitoring and evaluation systems for achievements is the portfolio. The portfolio is one of the few strategies that allows to assess the formative processes of the students from their own performances and executions, encouraging their active participation in the organisation and analysis of information and ensuring the interaction between the evaluator and the person evaluated, from reflection and the dialogue.[19]

The possibility of recognition of non-formal training processes for the acquisition of professional skills in the field of employment, which would facilitate access to the labour market, is another of the great challenges. In Spain, the Organic Law 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Training opens, at least in theory, the door to validate any training acquired in the different educational subsystems. Spain is on its way to improve the accreditation of non-formal education, and for that to be a reality it is necessary to make the products of non-formal education visible. This means that the formative instances in this sector would have to incorporate the issuance of certificates where the students' learning appears, and not only what they have done and when.

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[18] María del Mar Herrera Menchén. 2006. La educación no formal en España. Revista de Estudios de la Juventud p.24.
[19] Ídem

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ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCREDITATION OF THE STO TRAINING COURSE

The CEDEFOP publication Accreditation and quality assurance in vocational education and training[20] shows that accreditation is not only a process consisting of several steps. It is also the result of an external assessment of the quality of VET providers, used in a number of Member States to make sure that the whole organisation or a particular training programme adheres to certain predefined criteria and standards. Quality labels are not awarded forever but must be renewed in a continuous cycle with an average time span of about five years.

In some Member States accreditation is not only used in higher education but also in VET as a substitute for former inspections. Achieving accreditation is quite an extensive procedure and, in some cases, this characteristic marks the difference between accreditation and compulsory inspection processes by public authorities. For a provider, accreditation is not only connected with costs but also offers certain benefits. In Ireland, accreditation is the precondition to offering awards from the national qualification framework. In Italy, accreditation is a precondition for VET providers to participate in tendering processes in which publicly-financed training programmes are allocated.

IRELAND

In Ireland, the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 (hereafter the 2012 Act) established conditions that must be fulfilled before a provider may apply to QQI for validation of a programme of education and training. Primarily, a provider must have its quality assurance (QA) procedures approved by QQI before it can apply to offer programmes leading to QQI awards.

Initial Access to Programme Validation by QQI is, therefore, a two-stage process. The first stage enables the statutory conditions around QA approval to be fulfilled and the second stage constitutes the application for validation of a specific programme(s) for awards made by QQI.

It is important for applicants to appreciate that QQI sets standards for awards. It does not develop programmes for, nor give learner assessment support to, providers. Providers seeking access to validation must take responsibility for the development, maintenance, provision and internal quality assurance (QA) of their own programmes and procedures for the assessment of learners enrolled on those programmes.

QQI quality assures the providers of programmes that it validates. Therefore, it must ensure that providers have a minimum capacity in place before allowing access to programme validation. Adequacy of provider capacity will be evaluated in terms of, for example, the type of provision proposed (e.g. the number of programmes proposed; the award- type, National Framework of Qualifications [NFQ] level to which programmes will lead; and field of education and training in which programmes will be offered); the types and number of learners to be enrolled; and the resources

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[20] Accreditation and quality assurance in vocational education and training:
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4089_en.pdf.

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(financial, physical and human) in place.

Providers may also provide accredited education and training with other awarding bodies. To enable a provider to seek access to QQI validation of its programme, education and training must be a principal function of that provider. This does not mean however that it has to be the only function. Some large organisations have substantial training divisions, which might have the capacity to become providers.

Programmes of education and training take place in a variety of contexts and for many purposes. Not all of them can or should be validated by QQI and not all require recognition within the NFQ.

Process:

1. Pre-application engagement

Active participation in this phase is a compulsory part of the process. It will ensure that providers interested in applying for initial validation of a programme(s) will have every opportunity to be fully informed before committing to a formal application. If the provider has not previously offered formally accredited programmes, it is strongly recommended that they fully investigate the implications of seeking QQI validation. It is an important business decision and should not be taken lightly. The investigation should entail, at a minimum, market research for the proposed programme(s) and discussions with providers of similar scale who already have QQI validation. QA approval is the first stage of ongoing regulatory oversight, which includes annual monitoring and cyclical review. It is important to understand that building a system from scratch is difficult and requires many resources – human and financial.

2. An interested provider submits an Expression of Interest through QHelp

- Name of entity/organisation/college/group
- Contact details (telephone and email) and position of a contact person who will liaise with QQI
- Website details
- QQI awards it is proposing to offer - NFQ level and class of award.

Expressions of Interest are automatically acknowledged by return email and a Reference Number assigned.

Following submission of an Expression of Interest, a provider will be invited to the next scheduled QQI briefing. These briefings will give information on the requirements of the process and commitments of a provider during its lifecycle of engagement with QQI. There is no charge for these briefings.

An application for initial access to QQI validation from a provider who has not attended a briefing will not be accepted.

3. The Process

Making an application to QQI is a two-stage process:

Stage 1 Assessment of capacity and approval of QA procedures

Stage 2 Programme validation

Applicants must be successful at Stage 1 before they can proceed to Stage 2. The applicant will, following attendance at a briefing:

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- Notify QQI in advance of its intention to make an application.

- Submit the following documentation in soft copy (to a QQI designated cloud folder)

  o Application Form and supporting evidence
  o Draft QA Procedures and supporting documentation

- Pay the appropriate fee: The schedule of fees is published on the website. This fee is non-refundable.

Note that only when all elements have been submitted will an application be considered complete. Incomplete applications or incorrectly completed applications will not be accepted and will be returned to the applicant.

4. Stage 1 - Role of QQI

The role of QQI will be to:

- Review all submitted documentation and screen each application to ensure that all the requested evidence has been submitted. Applicants will be advised when applications have been identified as incomplete or incorrectly completed. The applicant may resubmit its application within the timeframe provided. If a re-submission is not received within this timeframe, or does not adequately address QQI screening feedback, the application is closed. In cases where applications are closed at the screening stage, up to 50% of the fee will be retained by QQI.

- Process applications only where the applicant has paid the appropriate fee.

- Acknowledge receipt of an application within 10 working days and provide timelines for the completion of the process. It is anticipated that Stage 1 will take a maximum of 25 weeks to complete.

- Establish a Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel to evaluate the application. The panel will be composed of experts in governance, quality assurance and assessment in education and training and, where appropriate, subject matter experts. Where providers propose to offer programmes of higher education and training, a learner will be included in the panel.

- Invite each applicant to an evaluation meeting (typically referred to as a "site visit") with the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel.

- Advise the applicant of the outcome of its Stage 1 application following a recommendation of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel, which will be considered under QQI's governance structures. Applicants will be informed no later than 21 days after the Approval and Review Committee meets.

5. The Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

The Panel will:

- Meet as frequently as required to evaluate an applicants' draft quality assurance procedures

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and their capacity to meet the criteria set by QQI.

− Review all the documentation submitted by each applicant and any additional documentation prepared by QQI in relation to each application e.g. a report from a financial expert on the financial viability of an applicant based on the evidence submitted by the applicant.

− Meet each applicant (virtually if necessary) to review its application and discuss the applicant's QA procedures.

− Following its evaluation of the application, make a recommendation to QQI about the approval of the applicant's QA procedures and the scope of the provision it may submit for validation.

− If applicable, recommend a number of conditions that must be met by the applicant before a programme can be submitted for validation.

6. Process Outline

The process involves the following steps:

1. The provider will review its resources (human, physical, financial); governance structures; and quality assurance structures, policies and procedures against current QQI statutory QA guidelines and will address any deficits identified. A Gap Analysis Tool is provided to assist in this process. It may be used a number of times to check progress.

2. The provider will notify QQI when it is ready to make its application. QQI will then issue an invoice and share a link to a secure folder to which the provider can upload its application documentation.

3. The provider will make an application to QQI comprising:
   o A completed Application Form and supporting documentation
   o Draft Quality Assurance Procedures
   o Fee

   QQI will acknowledge and record receipt of the application and will screen it for accuracy and completeness. QQI will acknowledge and record receipt of the application and will screen it for accuracy and completeness. QQI screening will seek to ensure clarity around the legal entity seeking access to QQI validation and its relationships with other providers of education and training nationally and internationally; details of owners and other key stakeholders; its capacity to offer programmes leading to QQI awards and the sustainability of proposed activities. QQI screening is not a qualitative evaluation of the QA procedures submitted. Where required, screening feedback will be provided to the applicant outlining gaps and / or errors in the application that need to be addressed before the application can proceed to evaluation by a panel. PLEASE NOTE: Failure to submit complete and accurate documentation within the specified timeframe in response to screening feedback may result in the application being closed. In such cases, QQI will retain up to 50% of the fee. Where an application is closed by QQI, a 'cooling off' period of six months commences during which no further application will be accepted from the provider.

4. A panel will be established comprising independent expert(s) appointed by QQI based on relevant experience and expertise. In some cases, the panel may include experienced QQI

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staff. All panel members will sign confidentiality agreements and both panel members and providers will be asked to confirm that there are no conflicts of interest.

5. QQI will confirm a mutually agreeable date for the panel meeting with the provider (known as the site visit). It is expected that the majority of such meetings will be at the provider base. Meetings will be conducted virtually if necessary.

6. QQI will facilitate a planning meeting for the panel 1 – 2 weeks in advance of the panel meeting with the provider. This is an opportunity for the panel to finalise the agenda for the meeting with the provider and identify any clarifications or additional information required to ensure the meeting with the provider is as effective and efficient as possible.

7. This site visit will entail a discussion between the panel and provider staff about the documentation submitted. The aim of the discussion will be to evaluate the adequacy and appropriateness of the provider's resources, governance and draft quality assurance procedures with reference to:

    a. QQI QA Guidelines
    b. Provider context and capacity
    c. Provider validated programmes

8. At the conclusion of the site visit, the Chair will provide a brief verbal summary of the panel's findings and recommendations to the provider. The panel may recommend one of following three outcomes:

    a. Approval of a provider's QA procedures. In this outcome, the panel may have some suggestions for how a provider might further enhance its QA infrastructure. Such suggestions will be set out as "Specific Advices".
    b. Refusal to approve a provider's QA procedures, with mandatory changes. In such an outcome, the provider will have six months from the date of QQI decision (not from the date of the site visit – see points 15 and 16 below) in which to make the changes and submit evidence to this effect to QQI. A panel may identify both mandatory changes and specific advice for a provider.
    c. Refusal to approve a provider's QA procedures.

9. In recommending approval of a provider's QA procedures, a panel may identify conditions of QA approval i.e. actions that must be taken by the provider within a specified time period in order for that approval to be maintained. These are known as Initial Access to QQI Programme Validation – Guide. V.4 May 2021 'conditions of QA approval' and are distinct and separate from 'mandatory changes', which are actions that must be addressed by a provider before its QA procedures can be approved.

10. Where a panel at a site visit identifies that a provider has a mandatory change(s) to make, but the change(s) is limited in scale and can be made speedily, a panel can defer its decision for six weeks to allow the provider time to address the proposed mandatory change(s) identified. After six weeks, the panel will reconvene (virtually, if necessary) to complete the process and in so doing, determine whether the proposed mandatory change (s) identified at the previous site visit has been satisfactorily addressed by the provider and thus make an overall recommendation to QQI.

11. Following the site visit, the panel will produce a report which will make one of the following possible recommendations:

    a. Approve a provider's QA procedures (possibly with conditions of QA approval) together with a specified scope of provision.

b. Refuse to approve a provider's QA procedures pending mandatory changes.

c. Refuse to approve a provider's QA procedures.

12. The report will be sent to the provider for a factual accuracy check (using a QQI template designed for this purpose) and a formal response on the provider's headed paper.

13. The final panel report and the provider's formal response will be brought to QQI's Approvals and Reviews Committee (ARC) for decision. This committee is part of QQI's corporate governance. In approving a provider's QA procedures, the ARC may impose conditions of QA approval (see bullet 10 above). These may be those identified by the panel in its report and / or other / additional conditions deemed appropriate byQQI.

14. QQI will notify the provider and the panel of the ARC's decision.

15. A provider may appeal an ARC decision not to approve the provider's quality assurance procedures using the statutory appeal process.

16. QQI will publish the ARC's decisions, the associated reports and provider response.

17. A provider whose quality assurance procedures are approved will publish the approved procedures to its website and submit a link to it to QQI.

18. Providers will notify QQI immediately of any changes to approved QA procedures.

19. Providers will comply with any conditions of QA approval imposed by QQI and report on progress in implementing approved QA as required.

7. Outcome of Stage 1

The outcome of the process is determined by the 2012 Act. QQI may decide one of the following three outcomes:

a. To approve a provider's QA procedures. In this outcome, the panel may suggest further enhancements to a provider's QA system. Such suggestions, if approved by QQI, will be set out as "Specific Advices" in the panel report. In recommending approval of a provider's QA procedures, a panel may identify conditions of QA approval i.e. actions that must be taken by the provider within a specified time period in order for that approval to be maintained. These are known as 'conditions of QA approval' and are distinct and separate from 'mandatory changes', which are actions that must be addressed by a provider before its QA procedures can be approved (see b). below).

b. To refuse to approve a provider's QA procedures pending mandatory changes. In such an outcome, the provider will have six months from the date of QQI decision in which to make the mandatory changes and submit evidence to this effect to QQI. A panel may identify both mandatory changes and specific advice for a provider.

c. To refuse to approve a provider's QA procedures.

Successful outcome - Approval of QA procedures

If the applicant is successful at Stage 1 of the process, it may submit an application for validation programme(s) within the provider's approved scope of provision. Each applicant has up to a maximum of 6 months to submit the programme(s) for validation from the date of notification of QA approval from QQI. If the programme(s) is not submitted within 6 months, the Stage 1 approval will lapse. Applicants will be required to make a new submission. The appropriate fee will apply. The implementation and effectiveness of the provider's approved QA procedures will be monitored and reviewed thereafter. A provider that wishes to extend its scope of provision may seek to do so as part of a subsequent application for programme validation (as per Section 30(1a) of the 2012 Act as

amended). QQI will put in place a process to evaluate the provider's additional QA procedures in conjunction with the validation process.

As noted above, any conditions of QA approval imposed by QQI must be complied with. Providers must notify QQI immediately of any changes to approved QA procedures and report
to QQI on the implementation of approved QA procedures as required. The provider must publish its approved QA procedures to its website.

<u>Unsuccessful outcome - Non-approval of QA procedures pending mandatory changes</u>
Applicants who are refused approval pending mandatory changes may resubmit their revised QA policies and procedures and additional evidence requested within six months of notification of QQI's decision to refuse.
There is no fee charged for a resubmission. Where practicable, the same panel which carried out the original evaluation will evaluate the resubmission and make a recommendation to QQI. The outcome of that evaluation will be final i.e. Approval or Refusal to approve. The panel report will be published when the overall process has concluded.

<u>Unsuccessful outcome - Refusal to approve QA procedures</u>
Applicants who are refused approval of their draft QA procedures and who fail to demonstrate their capacity to meet the QA criteria will be notified in writing and the reasons given for the refusal. Such applicants may submit observations to QQI for consideration by the Approvals and Review Committee within a specified time period. Applicants will have access to a statutory appeals process.

8. Stage 2 - Submission of Programme(s) for Validation

Following approval at Stage 1, the provider progresses to Stage 2 - the submission of programme(s) for initial validation leading to QQI awards. The provider will:

− Be required to attend a briefing on QQI validation requirements.

− Have a maximum of 6 months to submit a programme(s) for validation after approval at Stage 1.

− Only apply for validation for programmes, which lie within the approved scope of provision decided at Stage 1.

− Pay the appropriate non-refundable fee for the validation of its programme(s). Evaluation will not commence until the fee is paid.

The role of QQI in Stage 2 of the initial access to programme validation process is to:

− Arrange briefings for providers successful at Stage 1 on the Stage 2 process to inform them of the validation requirements in the context of their approved scope of provision.

− Evaluate the submitted programme(s) according to the evaluation criteria for further or higher education and training - whichever is most appropriate to the scope of provision that has been approved at Stage 1.

- Appoint an external expert panel of subject matter, industry and quality assurance experts as appropriate to evaluate the proposed programme. The number of evaluators will depend on the NFQ Level and complexity of the proposed programme. QQI will determine the number of evaluators assigned to each panel. A (virtual if necessary) site visit / panel meeting will typically form part of this evaluation. The panel will make a recommendation to QQI about the programme(s) evaluated. They can also recommend conditions that must be met before approval and completion of the validation process.

- Consider the recommendation of the panel and make a decision on the outcome. Following consideration of the evaluators' recommendation, QQI will inform the applicant of the outcome within a maximum of 25 weeks of the programme submission. Multiple submissions may take longer to process.

- Publish reports on the outcome of the process on www.QQI.ie

9. Outcome of Stage 2 - Programme Validation

The 2012 Act para 45 deals with the outcome of the evaluation of programme validation:

(1) Upon receipt of an application under section 44(5), the Authority may (a) subject to subsection (2), validate the relevant programme of education and training where the programme satisfies the criteria established by the Authority under section 44(1), or (b) refuse to validate the programme and give reasons for the refusal.

Successful outcome - programme is validated by QQI

An applicant approved to offer a programme(s) leading to QQI awards commits to a range of obligations associated with QQI approval and programme validation: these include provision of information to QQI and to learners, monitoring and review.

Unsuccessful outcome- programme validation is refused

An applicant who is refused validation for the programme(s) they have submitted may appeal the decision under the 2012 Act.

10. Timelines

QQI is aware that applicants will want an efficient process to enable them to have programme(s) validated within a reasonable time frame. It is anticipated that Stage 1 will take a maximum of 25 weeks and Stage 2 will take a maximum of 25 weeks. However, QQI will put in place measures to shorten that time frame where possible by:

- Arranging regular briefings for providers who express an interest in this process.

- Meeting the deadlines given on screening applications.

- Communicate with applicants to ensure they are kept informed of the progress of their application.

11. Building a quality assurance system
    11.1 Overview

The purpose of S1 of the process (QA approval) is to provide confidence to QQI and, through QQI, to the rest of the education system and prospective learners that a provider haste resources, governance and QA systems in place to successfully develop and deliver programmes, which will be consistent with the standards of the National Framework of Qualifications.

Because a provider will be operating autonomously for the most part, it is critical that it can demonstrate the capacity to do so in a manner which will maintain the integrity of the awarding system. This requires clarity as to its responsibilities at every level of its operations, as well as a governance system, which will have sufficient objectivity to provide oversight and accountability for all significant decision making.

QQI provides guidelines for providers as to what their quality assurance systems should address, and these are an essential starting point for any potential provider. The guidelines are for all types of provider and need to be interpreted and localised by each provider to suit the type and scale of provision they intend to offer.

A provider's quality assurance system (policies, procedures, governance system) should be documented so as to be understood and used by the provider's staff and other stakeholders in the future. It should be possible to map the provider's procedures to QQI's Guidelines so that a panel will be able to see how and where a provider has documented an approach to implementing a particular guideline.

This mapping should be made explicit in the application form as this is the way the panel will navigate through the documentation.

It is also really important to understand that the QA policies and procedures are not just an entry criterion for QQI, but will be critical for any new provider as they will provide the guidance and security for staff and learners that the right processes are being followed and the quality of programmes is being monitored.

11.2 What are quality assurance policies and procedures?

In this context, a policy will be a statement or series of statements, which set out a provider's position and commitment(s) on a particular area of education and training provision. It should show that a provider is aware of its obligations in the area and is committing to deliver on these obligations.

A policy will:

- Be written for all stakeholders, internal and external and will have the primary purpose of informing

- Align with QQI Guidelines on QA

- Comply with QQI Policy and Criteria for Validation of Programmes

- Be available to all stakeholders e.g. on a website

- Have the understanding and backing of senior management

- Inform learners of what they should expect from the provider

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- Inform staff of what is expected of them

- Provide a protection and support to provider staff in carrying out their work

A procedure will:

- Describe a process intended to deliver all or part of a policy commitment

- Be written to be available and understood by the people who will be operating the process or engaging with it

- Address the practicalities of the process – actions, forms, actors, timelines, information flows, records etc. be designed with the intention of delivering quality and consistency

- Be capable of being monitored i.e. records and / or indicators will be generated which should show if the procedure is being followed and, crucially, if it is effective

- Evolve over time as possible improvements are identified and implemented.

11.3 Monitoring and Review Systems

An essential element of a quality assurance system is the methodologies used to regularly monitor and review programme quality through:

- Stakeholder feedback (learners, staff and external)

- Ongoing checking of adherence to procedure and effectiveness of same

- Ongoing checking of adherence to programmes as validated

- Formal review of programmes – review procedures are an essential part of QA systems.

The products of monitoring and review should be available for internal and external oversight. Reports of formal self-assessments done as part of a review procedure should be published.

11.4 Quality Assurance Responsibilities and Structures

It is important that lines of responsibility for quality assurance and governance be clear. Where there are such roles, held by individuals or committees, it will be expected that purpose and responsibilities are clear and appropriate.

Where there are committees e.g. Academic Councils, Programme Boards, Advisory Boards etc, the following should be made explicit:

- Terms of reference

- Membership

- Quorums

- Frequency of meetings

- Reporting relationships

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It is recommended that wherever possible, diagrammatic representations be used to show the layers of responsibility and reporting.

11.5 Where do I start?

If a prospective applicant to QQI is an existing provider, offering programmes within the proposed scope of provision but accredited by another awarding body, it is likely that it will have at least some of the policies and procedures in place already. It should proceed to the Gap Analysis phase to identify what needs to be developed.

If, on the other hand, the applicant has not been offering formally accredited programmes, it is strongly recommended that it do substantial research as to the implications of seeking QQI validation. This should entail, at a minimum, market research for the proposed programme(s) and (ii) discussions with providers of similar scale who already have QQI validation. It is important to understand that building a system from scratch is difficult and requires many resources – human and financial.

11.6 Gap Analysis Phase

To prepare for application, a provider is expected to do a gap analysis / self-assessment of its current resourcing and quality assurance relative to QQI capacity criteria and QA guidelines.

Tool / Action Plan is designed to assist in this process. It asks a series of questions, which are relevant to the conduct of providers offering nationally validated programmes. The applicant needs to be able to show that it has the resources, policies and procedures in place to be able to answer these questions or identify why the questions are not relevant to the provider's particular context.

Gap Analysis/ Self-assessment involves collective reflection on questions important to the consistent and sustainable provision of programmes leading to nationally and internationally recognised qualifications with a view to identifying strengths and any areas which require attention.

Such reflection should then lead to work designed to fill any gaps and vulnerabilities identified. This may be followed by a further gap analysis phase(s) to incrementally identify and address issues. These periods of gap analysis and development / updating of systems, processes and documentation will take time, effort and expense and this needs to be planned for.

When the provider feels that the self-assessment process is completed and the significant issues identified have been addressed and definite action plans are in place for other less critical issues, an application should be assembled.

ITALY

The regional context research has shown that:

– Training courses are not subject to accreditation. However, adult education centres and/or VET providers that want to offer a training course need to be accredited.

– Accredited adult education institutions and VET providers who want to realise a training course can apply to specific calls published by Regions, the institutional body in charge of setting professional, educational, and certification standards. The course has to be referred to

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a specific qualification foreseen by the regional qualification framework. At the end of the training course, the education institution delivers a certificate of competencies to the student.

– For courses of 60 hours at the most, adherence to a specific existing qualification is unnecessary. This kind of course is classified as life-long learning. However, when completing it, the student would receive just an attestation.

Applying these findings[21] to ReStoRe's objectives, to accredit or recognise the STO course, the organisation would have:

– To become accredited adult education institutions and/or VET providers. To do so, it needs to demonstrate financial viability, to work mainly with education, and to cover all the necessary profiles (Competences formalisation and certification responsible, Evaluation process expert)

– To initiate the procedure for the recognition of STO as a new qualification (which seems to be quite hard work in Emilia Romagna Region)

– To choose another qualification similar to STO and promote the course in connection with it (alternative to the previous option)

– To reduce the course length and propose it as a life-long learning course (alternative to the previous option).

POLAND

After conducting a research into the possibilities of granting accreditation to institutions and projects related to out-of-school training for a Social Theatre Instructor/Operator in Poland, we can say that the entitled authority granting this type of accreditation are the Boards of Education (Kuratoria Oświaty).

The Board of Education is an education management unit that operates within the framework of government administration in all voivodeships in Poland. The tasks and functions of the Board of Education are strictly defined by the Ministry of Education. They include: implementation of the state educational policy, i.e. the implementation of the core curriculum, as well as the distribution of funds allocated to co-finance education and the development of appropriate programs that will increase the level of education and teachers' competences.

In Poland many organisations, institutions and social projects receive accreditation of the provincial branch of the Board of Education appropriate for a given area. Among them there are also projects related to those educating Social Theatre Instructors/Operators. Therefore, we can assume that a correctly prepared application for accreditation for the project of educating STO – training program elaborated and tested as part of the RESTORE project has a good chance of obtaining it.

This type of accreditation is granted for a period of 5 years and ensures that a given course, training, workshop meets all the conditions of proper and effective education.

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[21] DGR 1298/2015: https://formazionelavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/sifer/archivio/dgr-1298-2015

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The main condition that must be met by an out-of-school education facility or project is to ensure high-quality lifelong learning.

Accreditation may be obtained by an institution or centre that:
- has conducted education in an out-of-school form or forms for a period of at least 3 years;

- develops and applies a system for ensuring the quality of education and systematically improves it;

- provides a space equipped with teaching aids - in the scope of a given out-of-school form;

- provides qualified staff - in terms of a given out-of-school form;

- provides the appropriate curriculum, in accordance with the regulations provided by the Board of Education;

- provides conditions for the implementation of practical vocational training (if needed);

- provides safe and hygienic conditions for the implementation of education in a given out-of-school form;

- makes teaching materials available to participants of a given out-of-school form.

A set of relevant documents must be also provided[22]:
- Application for accreditation in accordance with the template;

- A proof of payment or a statement that the institution provides all education free of charge;

- A copy of the founding act of the public institution or a certificate of entry of the non-public institution in the register of non-public institutions kept by the local government unit;

- A copy of the statute of the institution or other entity providing non-school continuing education, and if this entity does not have a statute - another document constituting the basis for its operation, along with information on the organisation and scope of activities carried out by this entity;

- Own assessment of lifelong learning in out-of-school forms conducted by the institution or other entity providing lifelong learning in out-of-school forms, prepared by the director of the facility or a person representing another entity providing lifelong learning in out-of-school forms, in accordance with the model.

Documents necessary to obtain accreditation for non-school continuing education:

https://bip.kuratorium.katowice.pl/index.php/zalatwianie-spraw/kartyinformacyjne-zalatwianie-spra w/karta-nr-32-uzyskanie-akredytacji-na-ksztalcenie-ustawiczne-w-formie-pozaszkolnej/

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[22] https://kuratorium.krakow.pl/akredytacja-placowek-i-osrodkow-prowadzacych-ksztalcenie-ustawiczne-w-formach-pozaszkolnych/

Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 29, 2019 on the accreditation of lifelong learning in non-school forms:

https://kuratorium.katowice.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/du-2019000169201.pdf

However, the above mentioned accreditation is not always necessary for institutions and centres providing lifelong learning in out-of-school forms.

Accreditation, regardless of the legal status of the institution, must be held by the persons conducting the course, the curriculum of which covers the content selected from the curriculum for the profession approved for school use by the minister of education. This is stated in §2 section 3 of the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of February 3, 2006 on the acquisition and supplementation by adults of general knowledge, skills and professional qualifications in non-school forms (Journal of Laws No. 31, item 216).

It should be recognized that the training centre must be accredited to provide professional qualification courses. Accreditation is not required for the organisation of other courses. Therefore, organisers of e.g. seminars, practical workshops, apprenticeships or other courses do not have to acquire it, regardless of their duration.

Trainers who conduct training on the basis of an entry in the economic register or the National Court Register are allowed to issue certificates of completion of the course. They have the same rank as the certificates issued by educational institutions, but it is only about training, increasing the knowledge and improving the skills of the employee.

This does not apply to courses which give formal qualifications. These trainings and examinations should be organised in accordance with § 21 et seq. Of the ordinance of the Minister of National Education of February 3, 2006 or in accordance with the regulations issued by other ministers or heads of central offices.

PORTUGAL

The research on the Portuguese context has shown some possible ways to accredit the STO course:

a) The first step is to make the correspondence between the course *macroareas* and UFCDs - Unidades de Formação de Curta Duração (Short Term Training Units)
   - These modular units aim to support a flexible and diversified training offer, as part of the National Qualifications Catalogue [Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações]. Besides, these training units aim to complement and increase professional qualification;
   - Organised as short term training units (25 or 50 hours), this training typology wishes to fill the gaps of the trainees skills and competences, during their professional careers. Besides, it aims to adjust the competences of the unemployed people to the labour market demands, to help their professional integration process.

Important: all the training units should match to the same referential area. For the STO case, the most suitable area would be "Social Cultural Animation".

b) The second step is to seek a partnership with a certified VET provider:
   - This public and private entities need to be previously certified by DGERT - Direção-Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho;
   - Some examples are the Qualifica centres and IEFP - Employment and Professional Training Institute;
   - Another option is the Continuing Training Centres - this kind of services are targeted for teachers who wish to attend these extra training courses, in order to update or acquire new competences and skills, also as a way to boost and value their professional career. These services are often embedded in the Universities, with the aim to develop, support and promote training projects designed to respond to specific needs of certain professional groups and organisations.
     • One local example is SEC (Serviço de Educação Contínua) from FPCEUP - Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences of University of Porto (FPCEUP) who offers several courses for continuing and specialised training;
     • Important: the partner entity has to have a suitable area/code of training, in order to certify the STO course. For instance, in FPCEUP case, the STO course would have to fit in one of the institution's major areas: Psychology or Education Sciences.

c) The third (and optional step) would be to become a certified training provider, by applying to the DGERT accreditation process.

Portuguese certification system of training providers

The principal objective of the system is to improve capacity, quality and reliability of vocational education and training (VET) through the accreditation of VET providers. Certified VET providers

enjoy a competitive advantage, while a guarantee of clear commitment to higher quality is offered to learners. Certified VET providers also receive from DGERT an exclusive certificate and a logo. DGERT ensures the promotion of certified VET providers, as well as certificate revocation and expiry.

Certification can be granted to any legally established public or private entity, which meets requirements regarding its structure and training practices.

Certification benefits
- Quality certification
- Training diploma referenced to national qualifications system
- Access to national or community public funding programmes for vocational training
- Tax exemption on VAT for training products and services
- Deduction of training expenses in individual income tax

Certification process
The requirements for the certification of VET providers are divided into two groups:
1. Prerequisites: To apply for certification, VET providers should meet essential legal conditions.
2. Quality requirements: The quality requirements of VET providers refer to:
- The internal structure and organisation (human resources, facilities and equipment) of the provider;
- The development process of training programmes (planning, design, organisation, development and training assessment);
- Assessment of outcomes and continuous improvement (post-training follow-up, annual assessment of results, constant improvement measures).

As in the following graph, certification is organised in two main stages, in which both VET providers and DGERT take part.
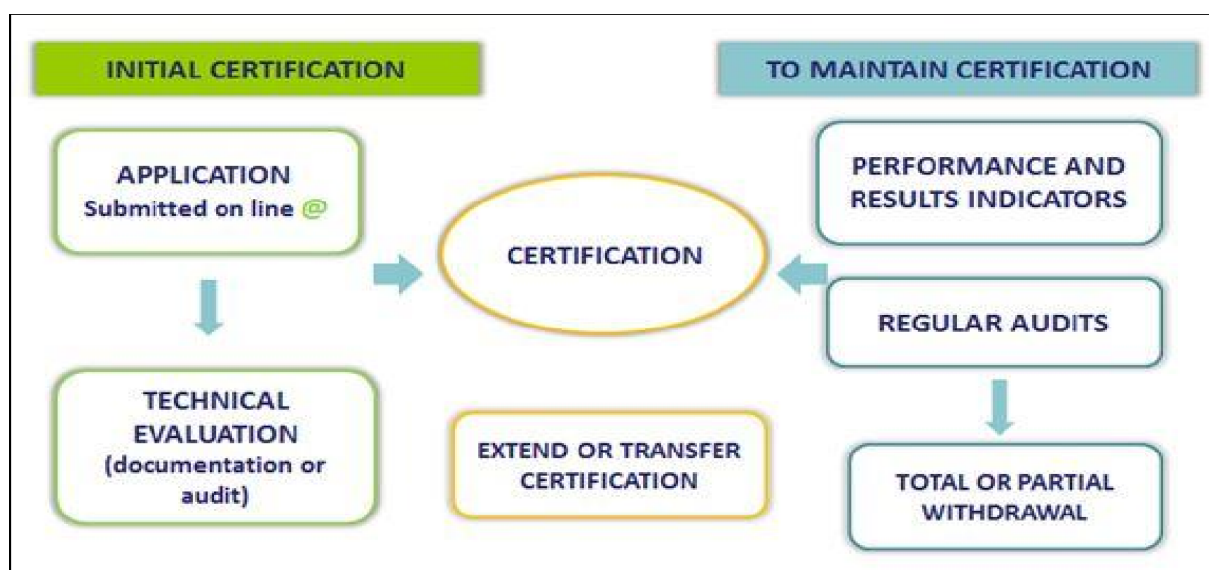
Initial certification

VET providers should define the training or education programme, which will be under evaluation and self-evaluate its structure and practices against the quality standards.

Subsequently providers submit an electronic request for certification to DGERT, which can then carry out evaluation (technical, documentary or audit-supported) to certify that they can develop a training programme in a specific thematic area.

As long as certified VET providers meet requirements, they can develop a new training offer and request extension of their certification to other education or training thematic areas. It is also possible to transfer the certification to another VET provider, given that the structure and the organisation of the training programme remain unchanged.

Regular audit

Once certified, VET providers must ensure compliance with the requirements under which the certification was awarded, as well as with the related duties defined in the standard. Maintaining certification is assessed by DGERT through audits considering the results of providers' training activity. This can also include a process of self-assessment and evaluation of performance indicators.

Some useful links:
- Portugal: certification of training providers
- VET-in-Europe country reports
  LOCAL LINKS:

- UFCDs search database
- DGERT - Direção de Serviços de Qualidade e Acreditação of Direção-Geral do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho
  - Certification entity
  - Certification process
  - Certificação de entidades formadoras
- Teachers Continuing Training
- SEC - FPCEUP - Uniiversidade do Porto
- Continua - Universidade de Aveiro
- Qualifica Centres

SLOVENIA

For the needs of accreditation of occupation for Social Theatre Operator we have chosen the NPQ tool since it is basically the most adequate. In the following, we are learning about the experience of Youth worker occupation, which can be comparable with Social Theatre Operator where the above mentioned NOQ tool was also applied.

Procedure of preparation for a new NPQ is in general divided into three phases:
1. Sending the initiative for NPQ, treating it and naming a workgroup for the preparation of NPQ
2. Preparation, approval and official release of catalogue for NPQ
3. Assurance of conditions for implementation of testing and validation procedures of NPQ

Procedure of acquiring the NPQ certificate is in general divided into three phases:
1. Sending the application for acquiring NPQ at the contractor of testing and approval of NPQ
2. Consultancy to a candidate for NPQ and completing the main folder (receipts, certificates, letters of reference, products, awards etc.)
3. Testing and validation of NPQ

Workgroup for preparation of catalogue for NPQ is methodologically coordinated by the Centre for Professional Education of the Republic of Slovenia offering whole professional, technical and administrative support in preparing NPQ catalogue. The Centre also offers all required help in preparing and sending the initiative for preparation of a new NPQ. Preparation of new NPQs – from the initiative of an institution for preparation of NPQ to its official approval – is achieved using quick procedures. Time of the NPQ preparation mostly depends on the coordination and engagement of social partners in preparing NPQ.

Example from the catalogue: Youth worker (code 3365545011)

Classification of Juvenile worker includes following data:
1. Name and code of professional knowledge and skill standard catalogue - Youth worker (code 3365545011)
2. Required professional knowledge, skills and special requirements of a candidate wanting to gain professional qualification
2.1. Professional knowledge and skills (See the professional standard for Youth worker)
2.2. Specific requirements of a candidate wanting to gain professional qualification:
   - At least one year experience in the area of working with juveniles which a candidate proves with letters of reference from institutions covering mentioned domain
3. Connectedness with programs for gaining formal education
4. Ways of professional knowledge and skill testing
4.1. Approval
In the procedure of consultancy, a candidate prepares personal main folder, which the commission evaluates, and if a candidate has submitted credible, valid and adequate certificates of knowledge, skills and competence from professional standard, it can:

   - acknowledge the contents of professional standard in thorough,

- acknowledge the contents of professional standard partially and define such knowledge, skills and competence which are to be tested,

- cannot acknowledge any contents of professional standard since a candidate does not prove any knowledge, skills and competence, and is to test sensibly the whole professional standard.

4.2. Way of testing

A. The commission will test a candidate using a method of written exam with an additional defense in case she/he does not prove adequately or none of required knowledge, skills and competence from the following operational tasks:

- plans programs of youth work in a cooperation with youths

- implements programs of youth work in a cooperation with youths

- evaluates programs of youth work

- implements activities for spreading the results of youth's work

A candidate can make a written product before testing. Instructions for preparing the product and the tasks that have to be done preliminarily by a candidate are defined by the commission after having a check of the personal main folder. With the product a candidate proves proficiency of required professional competence through requirements of professional standard. In presenting the product at testing an oral defence of an accomplished task is done including testing of skills and knowledge connected to individual operational work in accordance with professional standards for Youth workers.

B. The commission will test a candidate using a method of practical testing with an additional defense in case she/he does not prove adequately or none of required knowledge, skills and competence from the following operational tasks:

- Establishes and maintains cooperative and confidential relationships with a juvenile

- Works with youths in groups and teams

- Enables youths to acquire competence

A candidate with a practical work task proves proficiency of required professional competence through requirements of professional standard. Together with practical tasks, there is also an oral defence of accomplished tasks including presentation of accomplished work and testing of knowledge linked to operational work in accordance with professional standards for Youth workers.

For the needs of dealing with the occupation, it is determined/defined as follows:

- Written exam followed by an oral defence for this case.

- The occupation and parts of assignments within the occupation which can be operationalized after formally gaining professional qualification together with code.

- The level of difficulty is determined; in this case 5. Level of education (secondary school, high school; 4-year study).

- Adjustments for people with special needs - There are no adjustments for people with special needs.

- Material and human resource requirements, which need to be fulfilled by those carrying out the procedures for defining and approving professional qualifications (contractors) are determined.

- Time limitation of issued certificates - no time limitations for issued certificates.

- Key standards of professional knowledge and skills are determined.

- In the case of Youth worker there is an obstacle: only 5. Level of secondary school is acknowledged. It is a challenge in the process of approving NOQ: consensus of social partners and some lobbying is needed.

Establishing of formal study - the programme for the case of Youth worker

Establishing a new study course at Master degree level.
Conditions: Determination of adequate faculties and potential lecturers – holders.
Obstacle: Lecturers will be academicians, a lot of lobbying – less real chance.

Establishing the subject within the present study course at graduate or postgraduate study.
Steps: Determination of potential study courses – the subject would probably be non-obligatory.
Determination of adequate interested holders of subjects; having meetings with them.
Challenge: Readiness of faculties for cooperation reflecting in changed curriculums

Verification of the programme

Procedure of programme verification could be as such implemented only within programmes under the Law of Social Welfare and is as such inadequate for the reason that the occupation of Social Theatre Operator is much broader.

Conclusions

From the current existing options for formalising and accreditation of the Social Theatre Operator as a profession in its own right, the NPQ system appears to be the most optimal, as it allows the profession to be relatively quickly integrated into the existing range of occupations in the education and training system in the Republic of Slovenia. Of course, this will be preceded by a thorough analysis of the pilot training and other results of the RESTORE project.

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SPAIN

The Spanish education law from 2006 establishes that every person has the right to get an education all throughout their lives, inside and outside of the education system. In a chapter dedicated to the education for adult learners[23] it establishes as a basic right that every adult can start their learning process through formal and non-formal education activities, as well as through professional experience or social activities. To do this, some connections will have to be established between both sides and measures would be taken in order to ensure validation of these learning processes.[24]

Regarding the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, it is the state that defines the standards of each diploma and professional certificate, as well as the requirements and procedures for validation. In Spain, for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, there are:

a) Access tests: these allow access to an educational level without fulfilling the academic entry requirements. They are intended to assess the maturity required to attend an educational level. Passing the tests allows access to vocational training cycles, artistic education, and sports education (both intermediate and higher levels) as well as to university. They are subject to a certain age condition.

b) Tests to attain qualifications: established by the competent administrations, they allow to verify the mastery of the competences and objectives of the corresponding qualification. It is possible to obtain the title of Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate and the titles of Technician and Higher Technician.

c) Procedure to assess and accredit professional competences acquired by persons through non-formal means: passing the established tests implies the total or partial accreditation of a vocational qualification (Technical Qualification or Higher Technical Qualification in the corresponding profession) or a certificate of professionalism (Occupational certificate).

d) Tests to attain special awards or occupational licences. In some cases, students who complete vocational training studies also obtain professional licences to practice the corresponding profession.

e) Training exemptions. For accredited work experience: there is the possibility of exempting part of the training for those who have accredited a certain work experience. For example, the Workplace Training Module of Vocational Training degrees.

The recognition of professional competencies assessed to those who have acquired them through work experience or non-formal training, is made through vocational training diplomas and certificates of professionalism. When the professional qualifications required for a vocational training diploma or a certificate of professionalism are not accomplished, the recognition of the competence will be carried out through a cumulative partial accreditation, with the purpose of completing the training in order to subsequently obtain the corresponding diploma or certificate.

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[23] Ley Orgnánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, Educación. https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2006/05/03/2/con
[24] Informe Nacional España. Reconocimiento de los aprendizajes no formales e informales. P.30

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In the absence until now of a legal framework to promote the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, there is no concrete data available to assess the degree of resistance of higher education institutions and employers in the application of these procedures. In the field of non-university higher education and vocational training, tests have been applied for years to obtain the different higher technical degrees, thus recognizing non-formal and informal learning, without any major resistance or difficulties having been detected, only those related to the design of the tests.

In Spain, for a course to be validated, it needs to be included in the Spanish Qualifications Framework[25], since it integrates the validation of non-formal and informal learning. A Royal Decree that will establish the foundations for its implementation is currently under preparation. In such a project, the establishment of a committee including social actors, ministries, trade unions and the most representative employers' associations, as well as experts in vocational qualifications of different sectors, is recommended.

In the field of education, it is the Autonomous Communities that have the power to grant the authorizations to institutions, centres and organisations to issue official recognition. If a training centre is authorised or homologated by an Autonomous Community, this means that its studies and the degree issued are official and valid throughout the national territory, regardless of the Autonomous Community in which they were taken[26]. In this regard, Magenta does not have experience in giving official accreditations for it is not an authorised or homologated centre, it can only issue certificates of attendance for the courses it offers. Only when Magenta is hired by a homologated centre to teach a course is when official accreditations can be issued.

In conclusion, although non-formal and informal organisations can give accreditations, this usually does not mean they can give official recognition, for this is a competence of official state organisations or institutions authorised by said organisations. The competences that can be officially recognised have to be part of a Vocational Training Degree or a Certificate of Professionalism[27]. Thus, some kind of Social Theatre Operator course would have to be part of the Spanish Qualifications Framework in order to be officially recognised by any organisation.

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[25] National Qualifications Framework
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/national-qualifications-framework-79_en
[26] Formacciona. ¿Cómo saber si un centro de Fomación Profesional es oficial?
https://www.formacciona.com/centro-formacion-profesional-homologado/
[27] TodoFP. Acreditación de Competencias Profesionales
https://www.todofp.es/acreditacion-de-competencias.html