

Charter

EUROPEAN CULTURAL
HERITAGE SKILLS ALLIANCE

Report on existing quality standards and certification schemes

Deliverable D3.3

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Executive summary

Work Package 3 – Deliverable D3.3 “Report on existing quality standards and certification schemes” gives an overview of the European landscape for standards and certification schemes to support mutual recognition and promotion of certifications, also for non-academic pathways. It also takes into account the results on this subject of other past and on-going Erasmus+ projects.

Education and training (E&T) are at the heart of all Blueprint alliances, initiatives set up by the European Commission to solve skills shortages in certain employment sectors. Skills needs can only be addressed effectively by first identifying existing skills gaps and, secondly, filling these very gaps through E&T opportunities which are fit-to-purpose and support the overall sectoral strategy.

Work Package 3 of the CHARTER Alliance has committed to work towards these goals for the cultural heritage sector by pursuing the following objectives:

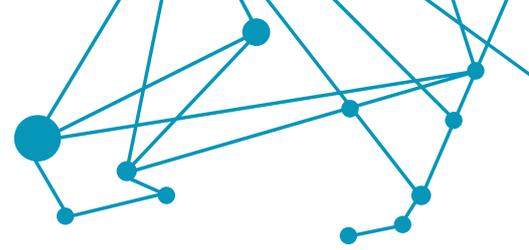
- investigate how formal and non-formal education are transmitted and develop a database of existing cultural heritage E&T institutions and programmes linking them to qualifications and professions in the field;
- develop a literature collection on cultural heritage E&T;
- benchmark innovative/emerging curricula;
- explore quality standards and certifications schemes;
- identify gaps and needs in existing education and training programmes;
- propose innovative/emerging occupations and curricula guidelines.

Report D3.3 provides an overview of existing European quality standards for formal higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET). It explains their main features and outlines their development as well as implementation. Moreover, we explore the complexities of continuing education and training (CET) and the national standards which have been defined in this context.

A separate section is dedicated to the subject of validation/certification. It illustrates their emergence via the Lisbon Agenda and outlines how they can be utilized for making non-formal and informal learnings visible and thus support individuals in having their learnings recognized for the purposes of lifelong learning and professional advancement.

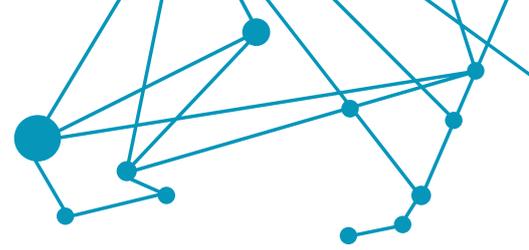
The final section of the report at hand contains 10 case studies which demonstrate the practical application of quality standards and/or validations/certification in diverse contexts across Europe and in a variety of settings.

In concluding the authors summarise the main learnings from their research and suggest policy changes with the potential to significantly enhance cultural heritage E&T in Europe.



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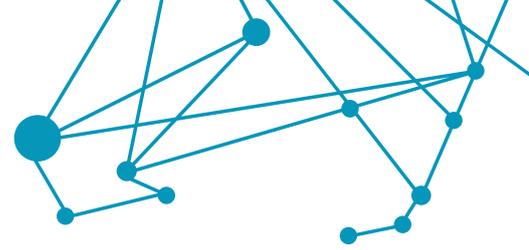
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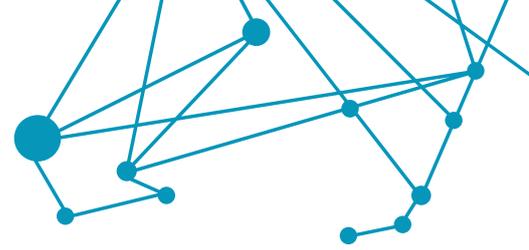
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Abbreviations

BP.....	Blueprint project
CET	Continuous education and training
CH	Cultural heritage
ECTS.....	European Credit Transfer and accumulation System
ECVET.....	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
ECQA	European Certification and Qualification Association
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG.....	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
E&T	Education and training
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
IET.....	Initial education and training
LLL	Lifelong learning
LO.....	Learning outcomes
MoU.....	Memorandum of Understanding
NQF	National qualifications framework
NRP	National Quality Assurance Reference Points
QA	Quality assurance
SQF	Sectoral qualifications framework
VET	Vocational education and training



1. Introduction

'Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training.'
EU Charter of Fundamental rights, art. 14

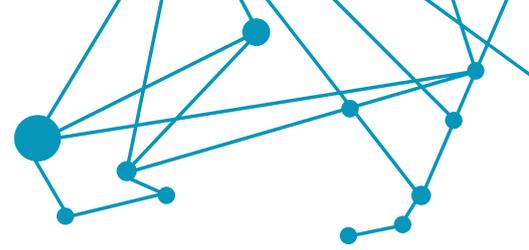
The task of this report is to provide an overview of existing European quality standards and validation/certification schemes as they relate to cultural heritage education and training. This remit encompasses all three learning formats: formal, non-formal and informal learning. This means that we address both the higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET) sectors. Moreover, this report covers both initial education and training (E&T), i.e. the kind of E&T which takes place before someone enters working life, as well as continuing education and training (CET), i.e. the kind of E&T which happens after entering the workforce.¹ One particular focus of the deliverable at hand is to take into account the lessons learned from previous and ongoing Erasmus+-projects on the subject matter.

We begin this report by exploring existing European quality standards for E&T for HE and VET. For both of these sectors, the quality standards defined only apply to formal education programmes. They have been developed and agreed to within the frameworks of the Bologna Process (HE) and various EU recommendations (VET). Thus, when we say “European” in those two instances we refer to quite different concepts. In the first instance, the quality standards agreed for HE encompass 49 Bologna Process signatory countries which extend far beyond EU borders and even what may be considered geographical Europe. In the second case, EU recommendations on quality standards for VET only apply to the EU27.

However, what unites these two types of quality standards is that compliance with them is voluntary. This is due to the facts that the Bologna Process is a supranational voluntary agreement and that education and training belong to those areas which the European Union leaves up to national/regional governments to legislate on (principle of subsidiarity). In addition, both quality systems foresee reporting and monitoring mechanisms, which is why we have quite solid information available on their various states of implementation, at least for those countries which voluntarily comply with reporting obligations. Furthermore, it must be stressed that these being sectoral quality standards, they cannot by definition be specific for cultural heritage. At the same time, they do also apply to cultural heritage E&T programmes in VET and HE and hence are highly relevant for the CHARTER Blueprint.

CET does not fit the mould of a European E&T sector in the way VET and HE do, because its organising principles differ widely from country to country or even region to region. It can take place within either HE and/or VET, or within an entirely separate institutional structure. It can be either formal, non-formal or informal in format. Moreover, in CET private, for-profit E&T offerings play a considerable role in some countries, which leads to even more individualised structures. Because

¹ All of these education and training concepts have been explored in detail in WP3's first report for CHARTER. See: Baatz, W. De Luca, M. Piccininno, M. Riegler, K. (2021). Report: Cultural heritage education & training – pathways to qualifications. CHARTER Consortium.



of these complexities, we have dedicated a separate chapter to CET. In order to be able to understand the difficulties involved in joint quality standards and validation/certification for CET, we provide a short history of the terminology and conceptual frameworks. This is then followed by highlighting various national attempts at ensuring quality and validating/certifying learning, as distinct EU standards for CET do not exist.

The following chapter highlights how previous Blueprint projects addressed the question of quality standards and validation/certification in their sectors and the lessons we have learned from them.

We then continue our report with an enquiry into European principles for validation/certification of non-formal and informal learning and its strategic foundation in the Lisbon Agenda. Validating learning which took place in a non-formal or informal context is notoriously difficult, to a certain extent it is no less than an attempt at squaring the circle. However, as the Lisbon Agenda makes clear, working towards this goal is indispensable to ensure participation in lifelong learning and continued access to the labour market for all individuals, in particularly those whose skills, knowledge and competence (responsibility and autonomy)² have been acquired not or not primarily through formal E&T.

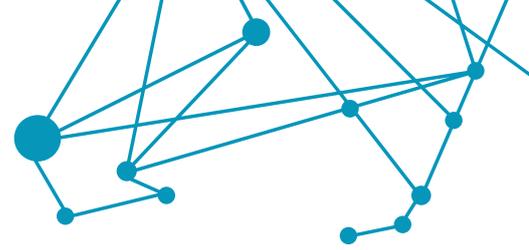
The 2012 “Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning” can be seen as the decisive moment in this context, which is why this report thoroughly examines it in detail, together with other tools which have been developed by the European Union to promote the implementation of this Council Recommendation. In doing so, we explain the relevant terminology and the validation principles outlined by this Recommendation.

The final chapter of this report consists of 10 case studies which illustrate how validation/certification work in practice across Europe and in different educational and training contexts. This chapter also provides us with the opportunity to zoom in on E&T for cultural heritage and to provide insights into the diversity of CH occupations and, consequently, the E&T which lead to these occupations.

We have included two national case studies, one from the Netherlands and one from Romania, and two regional case studies from Belgium and Italy, respectively. The Dutch account tackles a subject at the heart of cultural heritage, namely endangered traditional crafts,³ and describes a national approach to preserving them through the implementation of quality standards and re-structuring the E&T programmes. The Romanian case study addresses the very same issue and outlines a forthcoming initiative on how to validate non-formal and informal learning in the field of traditional crafts. The Belgian regional case study provides insights into a Flemish initiative on validating competence acquired mainly through socio-cultural youth and adult work. Finally, the Italian regional case study outlines the validation systems for non-formal and informal learning in the Italian regions of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna.

² The European Qualifications Framework was set up in 2008 and revised in 2017. In the earlier version, the learning outcomes for its 8 levels were described in terms of “knowledge, skills and competence”. In 2017, the third element was changed from “competence” to “responsibility and autonomy.” See: European Council (2017). Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning 2017/C 189/03.

³ See supra note 1, pp.21



This section also includes several case studies on European projects which dealt with the question of validation/certification in non-formal and informal contexts relevant for cultural heritage. Here, we take a closer look at MU.SA – Museum Sector Alliance, BIBLIO addressing the European library sector and two projects which utilised badges as a form of validation, BADGES and LEM.

The final two cases concern two highly specialised professions of great relevance for cultural heritage: conservators-restorers and the sailing profession. Both have developed unique ways via self-regulation to ensure that education and training follow agreed quality standards.

The annexes contain additional information on chapter 2.4 as well as a summary of EU Sectoral Alliances/Blueprints concerning qualification, certification and quality standards.

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2. European quality standards for education and training

This section explores existing quality standards in European E&T, their development, and current state of implementation. These have been defined for both VET and HE in the course of distinct processes. Due to its lack of European standards and unique structures, relevant national quality frameworks for CET are discussed separately. Moreover, we looked at how previous Blueprint projects addressed the issues of quality standards and validation/certification and the lessons we can learn from them.

2.1. Higher education

Quality assurance (QA) and the development of a European system for quality assurance in higher education has been at the heart of the Bologna Process/the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since 1999. By setting standards for quality assurance which are directed at higher education institutions (HEIs) as well as at external quality assurance agencies and by creating a Register of these quality assurance agencies, a three-tier framework of quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area has been established.⁴

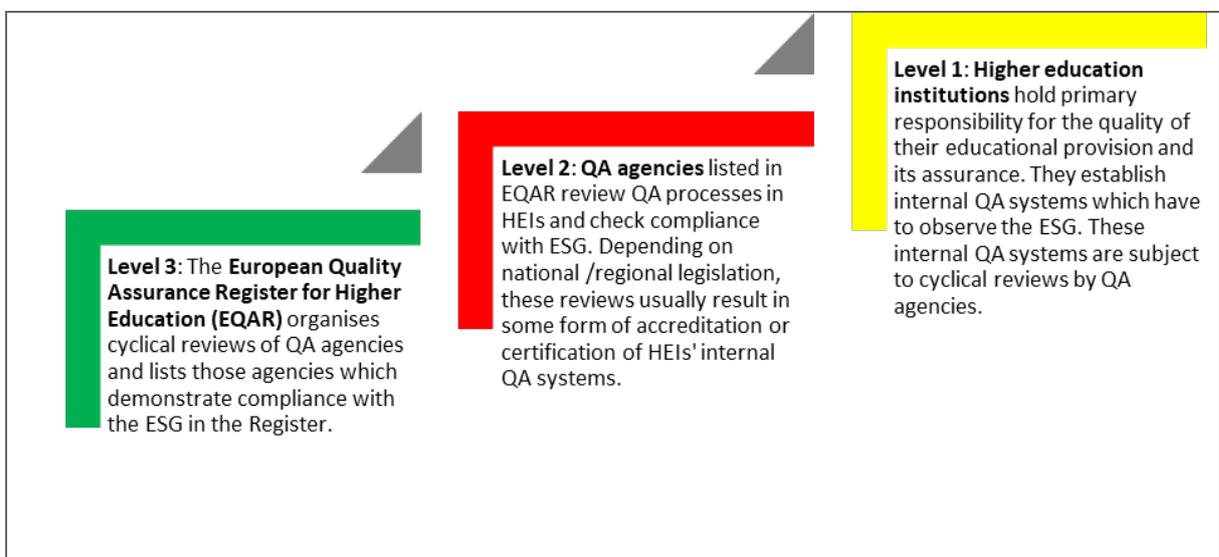
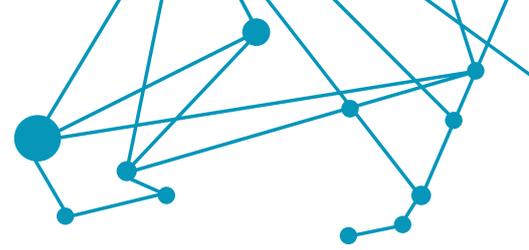


Figure 1: Three-tier European quality assurance framework for HE

⁴See WP3's summary in supra note 1, pp. 40.



Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

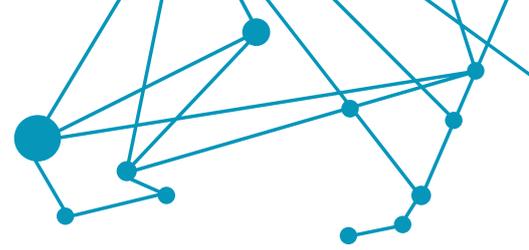
In 2005, in the Bergen Communiqué,⁵ signatory states of the Bologna Declaration agreed to implement the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, commonly referred to as the “European Standards and Guidelines” (ESG). The ESG were first published in 2005 and revised in 2015.

Standards are complemented in the ESG with guidelines which explain the importance of a standard and how it may be implemented. Thus, the guidelines provide instrumental assistance to HEIs for the design of their internal quality processes as well as for quality assurance agencies for the structures, policies and measures they should look out for when checking compliance with the ESG. Moreover, the guidelines also provide instructions to the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), which will be explored further on in this chapter, on which aspects EQAR should focus in its reviews of QA agencies.

The ESG address three levels of QA:

1. Internal quality assurance at HEIs;
2. External quality assurance at HEIs;
3. Quality assurance for external quality assurance agencies.

⁵ Bergen Communiqué (2005).



Level 1. Internal quality assurance at HEIs

The ESG consider QA processes to originate with the HEIs themselves. Consequently, institutions are seen as having the primary responsibility for the quality of the education they offer.⁶ The ESG list the following ten standards for HEIs to comply with:

Standards for internal quality assurance at HEIs

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

1.2 Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student "life cycle", e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

1.5 Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

1.7 Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

1.8 Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.

1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Figure 2: Standards for internal quality assurance (ESG 2015)

⁶Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015), p.8.



Level 2. External quality assurance at higher HEIs

As we have seen above, the 10th standard for Level 1 obliges HEIs to complement their internal quality assurance processes with external reviews. Thus, the second tier of the ESG consists of standards for external quality assurance processes which are employed by QA agencies in their reviews of HEIs:

Standards for external quality assurance

2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance

External quality assurance should address the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance described in Part 1 of the ESG.

2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose

External quality assurance should be defined and designed specifically to ensure its fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for it, while taking into account relevant regulations. Stakeholders should be involved in its design and continuous improvement.

2.3 Implementing processes

External quality assurance processes should be reliable, useful, pre-defined, implemented consistently and published. They include

- a self-assessment or equivalent;
- an external assessment normally including a site visit;
- a report resulting from the external assessment;
- a consistent follow-up.

2.4 Peer-review experts

External quality assurance should be carried out by groups of external experts that include (a) student member(s).

2.5 Criteria for outcomes

Any outcomes or judgements made as the result of external quality assurance should be based on explicit and published criteria that are applied consistently, irrespective of whether the process leads to a formal decision.

2.6 Reporting

Full reports by the experts should be published, clear and accessible to the academic community, external partners and other interested individuals. If the agency takes any formal decision based on the reports, the decision should be published together with the report.

2.7 Complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals processes should be clearly defined as part of the design of external quality assurance processes and communicated to the institutions.

Figure 3: Standards for external quality assurance (ESG 2015)



Level 3. Quality assurance for external quality assurance agencies

The third tier of the ESG looks at quality assurance agencies, i.e. the bodies which are charged with conducting external quality assurance reviews at HEIs.

Standards for external quality assurance agencies

3.1 Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities as defined in Part 2 of the ESG on a regular basis. They should have clear and explicit goals and objectives that are part of their publicly available mission statement. These should translate into the daily work of the agency. Agencies should ensure the involvement of stakeholders in their governance and work.

3.2 Official status

Agencies should have an established legal basis and should be formally recognised as quality assurance agencies by competent public authorities.

3.3 Independence

Agencies should be independent and act autonomously. They should have full responsibility for their operations and the outcomes of those operations without third party influence.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Agencies should regularly publish reports that describe and analyse the general findings of their external quality assurance activities.

3.5 Resources

Agencies should have adequate and appropriate resources, both human and financial, to carry out their work.

3.6 Internal quality assurance and professional conduct

Agencies should have in place processes for internal quality assurance related to defining, assuring and enhancing the quality and integrity of their activities.

3.7 Cyclical external review of agencies

Agencies should undergo an external review at least once every five years in order to demonstrate their compliance with the ESG.

Figure 4: Standards for external quality assurance agencies (ESG 2015)

In order to act as reliable partners in the European framework of QA, quality assurance agencies themselves have to fulfil these seven standards and, as standard 3.7 states, have to undergo cyclical reviews themselves. The body responsible for conducting these reviews of agencies is the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

Before we continue with this third tier of the European system of QA in higher education, a few general observations on the ESG:

- The ESG are geared towards supporting the twin purposes of all QA activities: accountability and continuing enhancement.⁷ This applies to the processes both HEIs as well as quality assurance agencies employ.
- Since they apply to all types of HEIs, including those offering transnational and cross-border educational provision, in all signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration (49 at the time of writing), the ESG are by necessity fairly generic.
- The ESG focus on learning and teaching in HE. This includes the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. But the ESG are clear that they do not cover

⁷ ESG (2015) p. 7.



activities apart from learning and teaching and that HEIs have to develop quality policies and processes for activities such as research, governance and services in addition to observing the ESG.⁸

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

EQAR was established in 2008 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law, as its seat is in Brussels. Its membership consists of the founding members, that is the so-called E4 group⁹ and the social partners.¹⁰ In addition, all governments of the signatories of the Bologna Declaration can become members. At the time of writing, 42 of 49 Bologna signatories were members of EQAR. The members are represented in the association's General Assembly. The association is led by a President and an Executive Board and supported by a Secretariat.

The Register Committee is the body responsible for conducting reviews of QA agencies and deciding on their inclusion into the Register. It is complemented by an Appeals Committee which handles appeals to the decisions of the Register Committee. The Register Committee is chaired by the President (without voting rights) and consists of 10 additional members, all nominated by the E4 and the social partners, respectively. Five of the governmental members act as observers (without voting rights) in the Register Committee. The Appeals Committee consists of 6 members who are elected by the General Assembly and must not hold any other position within EQAR.¹¹

EQAR also follows the model of accountability and continuing enhancement for its own processes by undergoing a self-evaluation every five years and an external evaluation every ten years. Reports resulting from these evaluations are made public.¹²

QA agencies broadly speaking fall into two categories: 1.) national or regional agencies which deal with all HEIs or a segment thereof in their countries/regions and 2.) agencies whose work is restricted by subject matter. Examples for the former are AQU - Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency¹³ for a regional agency and AQ Austria - Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria¹⁴ for a national agency. Examples for the latter are EAEVE - European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education,¹⁵ EQ-Arts¹⁶ and MusiQuE - Music Quality Enhancement,¹⁷ to name just a few.

EQAR reviews and lists both types of QA agencies. At the time of writing, EQAR contains 51 QA agencies from the European Higher Education Area. In addition to listing agencies, EQAR also publishes all its decisions and reports on individual agencies. Moreover, it provides transparent information on formerly listed and suspended agencies and the reasons for exclusion/suspension.

⁸ ESG (2015) p. 7.

⁹The E4 consist of the European representative organisations of students (<https://esu-online.org/>), universities (<https://eua.eu/>), non-university HEIs (<https://www.eurashe.eu/>) and quality assurance agencies (<https://www.enqa.eu/>)

¹⁰ The social partners are the European education unions (<https://www.ei-ie.org/en>) and national business federations (<https://www.buinessseurope.eu/>).

¹¹ For detailed information on EQAR and its bodies, see <https://www.eqar.eu/about/eqar-structure/>

¹² <https://www.eqar.eu/about/evaluation-of-eqar/>

¹³ <https://www.aqu.cat/>

¹⁴ <https://www.aq.ac.at/de/>

¹⁵ <https://www.eaeve.org/>

¹⁶ <http://www.eq-arts.org>

¹⁷ <https://musique-qe.eu/>



EQAR also hosts a database of external quality assurance reports that have been issued by the listed QA agencies. Currently, this database contains 78 133 reports from 3 402 HEIs.¹⁸

A high degree of adoption of this QA framework by Bologna signatory states has been demonstrated by the most recent Bologna Process implementation report. 30 out of 49 signatories reported to have “[a] fully functioning Quality Assurance system [...] in operation nationwide, in which all higher education institutions are subject to regular external Quality Assurance by an agency that has successfully demonstrated compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) through registration on EQAR.” A further six countries reported that they had “[a] Quality Assurance system [...] in operation nationwide and [which] is aligned to the ESG, but the agency/ies performing external Quality Assurance are not registered in EQAR.” Six additional countries reported that “[a] fully functioning Quality Assurance system is in operation nationwide, but only some higher education institutions are subject to regular external Quality Assurance by an agency that has successfully demonstrated compliance with the ESG through registration on EQAR.” In contrast seven signatories reported that “[a] Quality Assurance system is in operation nationwide, but has not (yet) been fully aligned to the ESG” and only one country reported that it had “[n]o Quality Assurance system [...] in operation.”¹⁹ Thus, 42 out of 49 Bologna signatories reported some alignment with the ESG in their national QA structure for HE.

The finding that the European quality assurance framework created by the ESG has taken hold at HEIs has been strengthened by our own research in CHARTER. The Benchmarking analysis of innovative/emerging curricula showed that all 16 HE curricula contained in our sample of 29 curricula had internal quality assurance mechanisms based on national/regional regulations which in turn were based on the ESG.²⁰

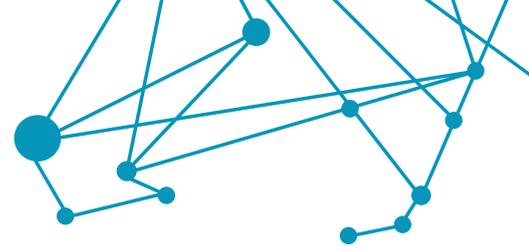
These results suggest that the European framework for quality assurance has led to considerable convergence in the field of quality assurance level within the EHEA on a voluntary basis. This is remarkable given that even within the EU – whose members only make up slightly more than half of the Bologna signatories - the principle of subsidiarity applies to education, which leaves any legislation on the matter solely up to national/regional governments. However, it must also be underlined that the ESG avoid being prescriptive on issues that have been hotly debated within the QA community such as the QA methods employed, the focus of reviews (programme or institutional level) and thus create a lot of leeway for national/regional legislation in this regard. Moreover, there is a difference between formal adoption and actual implementation of the ESG in practice.

A 2019 study commissioned by the European Commission described the adoption of the ESG 2015 as a “major achievement” which “achieved success in setting clear and universal standards and inspiring discussions and actions on newly-introduced or better-emphasised issues (student-centred learning, teaching as the core mission of higher education, learning outcomes, the use of QA data).” Nevertheless, the same study warned that it “observed differences in compliance with the ESG among national QA systems based on their maturity. Representatives of advanced QA

¹⁸ <https://www.eqar.eu/qa-results/search/>

¹⁹ For further information and all quotes see: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (2020). The European Higher Education Area in 2020. Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 73.

²⁰ Baatz, W. De Luca, M. Drda-Kühn, K. Hofland-Mol, M. Lavarello, C. Marcuccio, M. Musso, S. F. Piccinino, M. Pirri Valentini, A. Riegler, K. (2022). Report: Benchmarking analysis of innovative/emerging curricula. CHARTER Consortium, p. 16.



systems reported that compliance with the ESG required minimal additional effort. In these systems, [the] focus lied on further development of specific aspects of quality culture and enhancement. For QA systems with a shorter history, compliance with the ESG 2015 posed a significant challenge.”²¹

Given the diversity of EU member states and HE systems this is not surprising and leads us to summarize that while a lot has been achieved already towards a European quality assurance framework for HE in terms of legal convergence, there is still some way to go towards actual implementation.

2.2 Vocational education and training

The mainstream methodological and theoretical framework for Quality Assurance principles in VET is the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) introduced in 2009²² as a European-wide framework (and network) to support quality assurance in VET across Europe. It has been enriched and updated since then, also in combination with other EQAVET-related initiatives such as the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) and the system-level peer reviews.

EQAVET is based on 10 indicators and a four-stage cycle process which supports continual improvement of quality assurance.

The 10 EQAVET indicators to assess the quality of VET

- Indicator 1: Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers
- Indicator 2: Investment in training of teachers and trainers
- Indicator 3: Participation rate in VET programmes
- Indicator 4: Completion rate in VET programmes
- Indicator 5: Placement rate of graduates from VET programmes
- Indicator 6: Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace
- Indicator 7: Unemployment rate in the country
- Indicator 8: Prevalence of vulnerable groups
- Indicator 9: Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
- Indicator 10: Schemes used to promote better access to VET and provide guidance to (potential) VET learners

Figure 5: 10 EQAVET indicators

²¹ All citations in this paragraph: European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2019). Study to evaluate the progress on quality assurance systems in the area of higher education in the Member States and on cooperation activities at European level: final report, Publications Office of the European Union p. 124.

²² European Parliament and Council (2009). Recommendation of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) 2009/C 155/02.



The QA cycle includes the following steps:

- planning: set up a clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources;
- Implementation: establish procedures and operational settings, including allocation of adequate resources, to ensure the achievement of the objectives;
- evaluation/ assessment: design mechanism to collect and process data relevant for assessing and evaluating the achievements;
- review/revision: to support the achievement of the targeted objectives by processing of feedback, analysis and definition of appropriate corrective measures.

For each step, EQAVET defines a selection of descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET system and VET provider levels.



Indicators for each phase of the quality cycle: system level

1. Planning	2. Implementation	3. Evaluation	4. Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ Goals/objectives of VET are described for the medium and long terms, and linked to European and Sustainable Development Goals taking into account environmental sustainability considerations ∨ Social partners and all other relevant stakeholders participate in setting VET goals and objectives at the different levels ∨ Targets are established and monitored through specific indicators (success criteria) ∨ Mechanisms and procedures have been established to identify the training needs of the labour market and society ∨ An information policy has been devised to ensure optimum disclosure of quality results/outcomes subject to national/regional data protection requirements ∨ Standards and guidelines for recognition, validation and certification of competences of individuals have been defined ∨ VET qualifications are described using learning outcomes ∨ Mechanisms are established for the quality assurance of the design, assessment and review of qualifications ∨ VET programmes are designed to allow flexible learning pathways and to respond quickly to changing labour market needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ Implementation plans are established in cooperation with social partners, VET providers and other relevant stakeholders at the different levels ∨ Implementation plans include consideration of the resources required, the capacity of the users and the tools and guidelines needed for support ∨ Guidelines and standards have been devised for implementation at different levels. These guidelines and standards include assessment, validation and certification of qualifications ∨ Implementation plans include specific support towards the training of teachers and trainers, including for digital skills and environmental sustainability ∨ VET providers' responsibilities in the implementation process are explicitly described and made transparent ∨ A national and/or regional quality assurance framework has been devised and includes guidelines and quality standards at VET-provider level to promote continuous improvement and self-regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ A methodology for evaluation has been devised, covering internal and external evaluation ∨ Stakeholder involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process is agreed and clearly described ∨ The national/regional standards and processes for improving and assuring quality are relevant and proportionate to the needs of the sector ∨ Systems are subject to self-evaluation, internal and external review, as appropriate ∨ Early warning systems are implemented ∨ Performance indicators are applied ∨ Relevant, regular and coherent data collection takes place, in order to measure success and identify areas for improvement. Appropriate data collection methodologies have been devised, e.g., questionnaires and indicators/metrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ Procedures, mechanisms and instruments for undertaking reviews are defined and used to improve the quality of provision at all levels ∨ Processes are regularly reviewed and action plans for change devised. Systems are adjusted accordingly ∨ Information on the outcomes of evaluation is made publicly available

Figure 6: Indicators for the quality cycle at system level²³

At VET-provider level, the EQAVET Framework includes indicative descriptors which help VET providers to analyse their approach to quality assurance and gauge how much progress has been made in improving the quality of provision. The EQAVET Network agreed on a methodology which consists of selecting one of two contrasting statements for each indicative descriptor. In this way, the VET providers can identify areas where they could make changes and improvements.

²³ Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1570&langId=en>



Indicators for each phase of the quality cycle: provider level

1. Planning	2. Implementation	3. Evaluation	4. Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ European, national and regional VET policy goals/objectives are reflected in the local targets set by the VET providers ∨ Explicit goals/objectives and targets are set and monitored, and programmes are designed to meet them ∨ Ongoing consultation with social partners and all other relevant stakeholders takes place to identify specific local/individual needs ∨ Responsibilities in quality management and development have been explicitly allocated ∨ There is an early involvement of staff in planning, including with regard to quality development ∨ Providers plan cooperative initiatives with relevant stakeholders ∨ The relevant stakeholders participate in the process of analysing local needs ∨ VET providers have an explicit and transparent quality assurance system in place ∨ Measures are designed to ensure compliance with data protection rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ Resources are appropriately internally aligned/assigned with a view to achieving the targets set in the implementation plans ∨ Relevant and inclusive partnerships, including those between teachers and trainers, are explicitly supported to implement the actions planned ∨ The strategic plan for staff competence development specifies the need for training for teachers and trainers ∨ Staff undertake regular training and develop cooperation with relevant external stakeholders to support capacity building and quality improvement, and to enhance performance ∨ VET providers' programmes enable learners to meet the expected learning outcomes and become involved in the learning process ∨ VET providers respond to the learning needs of individuals by using a learner – centred approach which enable learners to achieve the expected learning outcomes ∨ VET providers promote innovation in teaching and learning methods, in school and in the workplace, supported by the use of digital technologies and online-learning tools ∨ VET providers use valid, accurate and reliable methods to assess individuals' learning outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ Self-assessment/self-evaluation is periodically carried out under national and regional regulations/frameworks or at the initiative of VET providers, covering also the digital readiness and environmental sustainability of VET institutions ∨ Evaluation and review covers processes and results/outcomes of education and training including the assessment of learner satisfaction as well as staff performance and satisfaction ∨ Evaluation and review includes the collection and use of data, and adequate and effective mechanisms to involve internal and external stakeholders ∨ Early warning systems are implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ∨ Learners' feedback is gathered on their individual learning experience and on the learning and teaching environment. Together with teachers', trainers' and all other relevant stakeholders' feedback this is used to inform further actions ∨ Information on the review is widely and publicly available ∨ Procedures on feedback and review are part of a strategic learning process in the organisation, support the development of high-quality provision, and improve opportunities for learners. ∨ Results/outcomes of the evaluation process are discussed with relevant stakeholders and appropriate action plans are put in place

Figure 7: Indicators for each phase of the quality circle: provider level²⁴

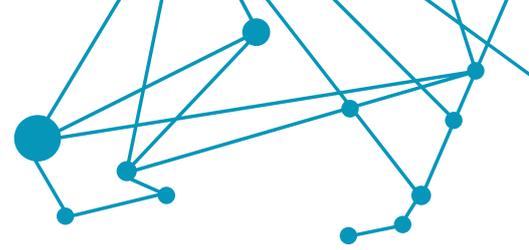
Indeed, at VET-provider level, the approach used and the range of applicable descriptors/phases depends on the VET provider's degree of autonomy, flexibility, support and funding: that is to say characteristics that are set at the national or regional level, and influence each VET organisation's ability to adapt their provision to meet emerging skills and labour market needs (EQAVET at system level).

EQAVET does not prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach, instead it provides a framework of common principles, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving the quality of VET systems and VET provision alongside many dimensions:

- learning environments (e.g., school-based provision, work-based learning, apprenticeships, formal, informal and non-formal provision)
- all types of learning contexts (e.g., digital, face-to-face and blended)
- public and private sector VET providers
- VET awards and qualifications at all levels of the EQF

EQAVET can be therefore regarded as a 'toolbox,' from which the various users may choose those descriptors and indicators that they consider most relevant to the requirements of their quality

²⁴ ivi.



assurance system. Each user (VET provider, policy makers, associations etc.) is encouraged to choose and adapt the EAQVET toolbox according to its specific aims and targets.

While the structure of EQAVET was defined in 2009, a report of the EQAVET secretariat in 2018 analysed the application of the EQAVET indicators in initial and continuing VET during a period of 10 years, and highlighted poor application and the need to redefine the guidelines for implementation.²⁵

A new version of the recommendation was issued in 2020²⁶. It focuses on the characteristics of the VET system as a whole, thus setting the priorities and principles to be applied by members states and all relevant stakeholders as follows:

- VET is agile in adapting to labour market changes
- Flexibility and progression opportunities are at the core of VET
- VET is a driver for innovation and growth and prepares for the digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand
- VET is an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training/skills
- VET promotes equality of opportunities
- VET is underpinned by a culture of quality assurance

In order to support the achievement of these goals, the EC stresses the role of the National Quality Assurance Reference Points (NRPs) to bring together relevant stakeholders at the national and regional level to implement and further develop the EQAVET framework, engage a wide range of stakeholders, support self-evaluation of VET providers and stakeholders, provide updated descriptions of the national quality assurance arrangements based on EQAVET and engage in EU level peer review to enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements.

The 2020 guidelines also strive for the NRP to support the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) and the introduction of EU level peer reviews of quality assurance in VET at system level.

The CoVEs are associations and/or networks of partners that develop local "skills ecosystems" to provide high quality vocational skills to young people and adults, and contribute to regional development, innovation, industrial clusters, smart specialisation strategies and social inclusion.

²⁵ EQAVET Secretariat Survey (2018). Supporting the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, see in particular pp. 167. See also no 18 of the 2020 Council Recommendation: "During the ten years of its implementation, EQAVET has stimulated reforms in national quality assurance systems, but did not contribute significantly to the improvement of transparency of quality assurance arrangements. Furthermore, it was mostly applied in school-based initial vocational education and training. Therefore, the 2009 EQAVET framework should be integrated into this Recommendation and elements addressing the shortcomings of its implementation in relation to the quality of learning outcomes, certification and assessment, stakeholders' consultation, the role of teachers and trainers, work-based learning and flexibility of vocational education and training should be added. In order to improve mutual learning, enhance the transparency and consistency of quality assurance arrangements in the provision of vocational education and training and reinforce mutual trust between EU Member States, EU level peer reviews of quality assurance at system level should be introduced."

²⁶ European Council (2020). Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01.



On the one hand, CoVEs promote vocational excellence at local level, on the other hand, CoVEs cooperate on the European/international level to promote consistent application of VET quality standards and practices.

The 2020 VET Recommendation defines a peer review as *'a type of voluntary mutual learning activity with the objective to support the improvement and transparency of quality assurance arrangements at system level not leading to accreditation procedures, based on a specific methodology to be developed by the European Network for quality assurance in vocational education and training.'* Participation in the EQAVET peer reviews is voluntary, and it is up to the concerned EU country to manifest interest. The work of the peer-review group can support the implementation of the EQAVET by gathering and suggesting best practices from different sectors, also drawing on the experience of the Erasmus+ supported programmes and blueprints.

In summary, the EQAVET system, including the indicators and descriptors, the initiatives promoted by the EQAVET secretariat and the EQAVET NRP provides a full range of tools to be adopted by VET-providers, national stakeholders and VET-initiatives to support the improvement of the overall quality of the vocational and education training in responding to societal needs, including the occupation and the protection of natural resources and heritage.²⁷

2.3 Continuing education and training

The changes occurring in our society affect the job sector in terms of jobs available and skills required. Technology related jobs are increasing versus the decrease of manufacturing jobs in advanced economies, making a new set of skills necessary. At the same time, new jobs are emerging and they ask for a new combination of skills. This is an ongoing trend. A research of OECD (2017) forecasts that 32% of current jobs will change and further 14% of the jobs today will become totally automated. The need for changes in skills required has been made even more evident with the Covid-19 crisis. Within this framework, Continuing Education and Training is considered to be fundamental to ensure the upscale of existing skills in adult individuals. Documents on CET highlight its contribution to improving the human condition, as long as there is a clear understanding of what has changed and what is necessary as a consequence (Mc Lean, 2022). The emphasis is on the role of CET to support the employability of the working-age population (Leow, Billett, Le, & Chua, 2022) answering to the rising demand of changing skills (OECD, 2022).

This chapter aims to provide an overview on CET focusing specifically on qualification of CET. Talking about CET it is important to point at a basic ambiguity in the use of the term. As evidenced in the part below on the definitions, when looking at documents about and organizations working

²⁷ This chapter has been mainly based on the information provided by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146&newsId=9986&furtherNews=yes> (Draft EQAVET peer review concept) and <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1536&langId=en> (EQAVET - European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training).



in CET it becomes evident that the difference between CET and Lifelong Learning (LLL) is not clearly marked.²⁸ Also when it comes to CET the definition provided shows some differences.

Development and definition of Continuing education and training (CET)

Although perceived as an innovative didactical concept, the idea of learning throughout life is anything but new. The need for learning throughout one's life has been underlined in societies since ancient times (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001). And although it is argued that Continuing Education (CE), professional development, Lifelong Education (LLE) and Lifelong Learning (LLL) are synonyms that refer to "a consistency in learning over one's life in and beyond formal educational settings." (Laal, Laal & Aliramaei, 2014 p. 4052), other scholars notice that the term 'lifelong learning' is used in a wide variety of contexts and that its meaning remains often unclear (Aspin & Chapman, 2007). This chapter therefore starts with exploring the evolution and definition of Lifelong Learning.

After the Second World War, there was a renewed interest in adult education, for one because of the experiments with liberal adult education for servicemen and women. Besides, adults needed to be retrained to work in key industries and the armed forces (Field, 2001). And although the conception of LLL was the result of the intellectual and social movements of the 1960s, it was in the 1970s that the ideas started to enter the world of educational policy making (Field, 2001). A turning point was the report for UNESCO, *Learning to be* by Edgar Faure et al. (1972), in which a rather holistic perspective on LLL was put to the fore arguing that:

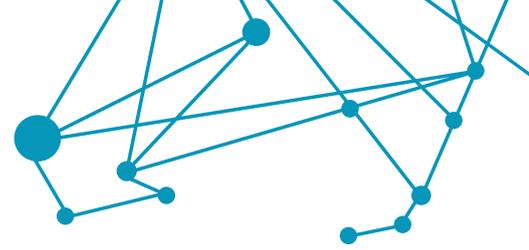
"Every individual must be in a position to keep learning throughout his life. The idea of lifelong education is the keystone of the leaning society. The lifelong concept covers all aspects of education, embracing everything in it. With the whole being more than the sum of its parts. There is no such thing as a separate "permanent" part of education which is not lifelong. In other words, lifelong education is not an educational system but the principle in which the over-all organizational of the system is founded and which accordingly underlies the development of each of its component parts." (Faure, 1972, p. 181-182)

In order to operationalise Faure's approach, the Institute on Research on Lifelong Education was established in 1972. One study maintained that *lifelong education* entails *formal, informal* as well as non-*formal* forms of learning²⁹, throughout a person's life, aiming at enhancing one's personal quality of life and that of society. Obviously these three forms of learning have existed already before the publication of these reports. However, by defining them explicitly, *lifelong education* was introduced "as [a] norm for educational practice at national level and for the whole range of age groups and educational services" (Carelli in Dave, 1976, p.10). In other words, the concept of education was to be viewed as a whole, incorporating and integrating all forms and phases. Lifelong education was conceived as a holistic and cohesive approach to constantly improve the quality of life, both personal and collective (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001).

Dealing with unemployment was the central task for adult education in the 1980s. In 1996 a key policy study was published which was to replace lifelong education by *lifelong learning* (Field, 2001; Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001). Delor et al (1996) argued that lifelong education needed to be revised, joining three dynamics being "competition, which provides incentives; co-

²⁸ For a thorough illustration of LLL see infra section 3 of this report.

²⁹ For more information regarding the three forms of adult education see section 3 of this report.



operation which gives strength; and solidarity which unites” (p.18). The UNESCO report maintained further that:

*“There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole beings-their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role and work in the community.”*Delor et al (1996).

Based on this perspective the report championed to evolve towards a *learning society*. However, life always presents opportunities for learning and doing, both at the societal and personal level. It appears that lifelong learning became more individual-oriented whereas lifelong education represented the community. Moreover, by emphasising individual responsibility, welfare governments seem to give up their responsibility to offer economic incentives to employees to take up LLL opportunities (Medel-Añonuevo, Ohsako, & Mauch, 2001).

A short survey of CET today

The need to upscale and/or update adults’ skills call for the organisation of CET programmes.

OECD (2021a:12) defines CET as “(...) learning undertaken by adults who have already completed their initial education and training and entered working life”. OECD (2021a) further distinguishes ‘Job-related CET’, meant to allow adults to acquire new skills to increase their employability or their career, and CET non-job related, which aims at the personal development of individuals.

Formal and non-formal education and training as well as informal learning are included in CET (OECD, 2021a). In order to understand the possible qualification system used, this distinction is important. Formal education and training programmes correspond to intentional, institutionalised learning activities recognised by relevant institutions and have the duration of at least one semester (e.g. upper secondary education, or bachelor). Non-formal education and training includes intentional, institutionalised learning activities (e.g. short courses, seminars, workshops) that either have a short duration or are not recognised by the relevant authorities. Informal learning is intentional, non-institutionalised, less structured than the previous two and can take place everywhere (e.g. learning by doing or from colleagues and friends).

The differences in the outcome of these forms of CET emphasise the importance of guidance services as well as the variety of the institutions involved. An ideal CET system should include different aspects and it should be, in fact, preceded by guidance³⁰ and validation³¹ of existing skills and include certification of both formal and informal learning (OECD, 2021a).

³⁰ Guidance is meant to help individuals in making educational, training and occupational choices and provide them information. Counseling, mentoring and skills assessments can be part of guidance. Services support individuals in planning their career (OECD, 2021b).

³¹ Validation is a process conducted by an authorised body to assess the acquired skills of an individual with reference to a set of relevant standards (OECD, 2021a), see section 3 of this report.

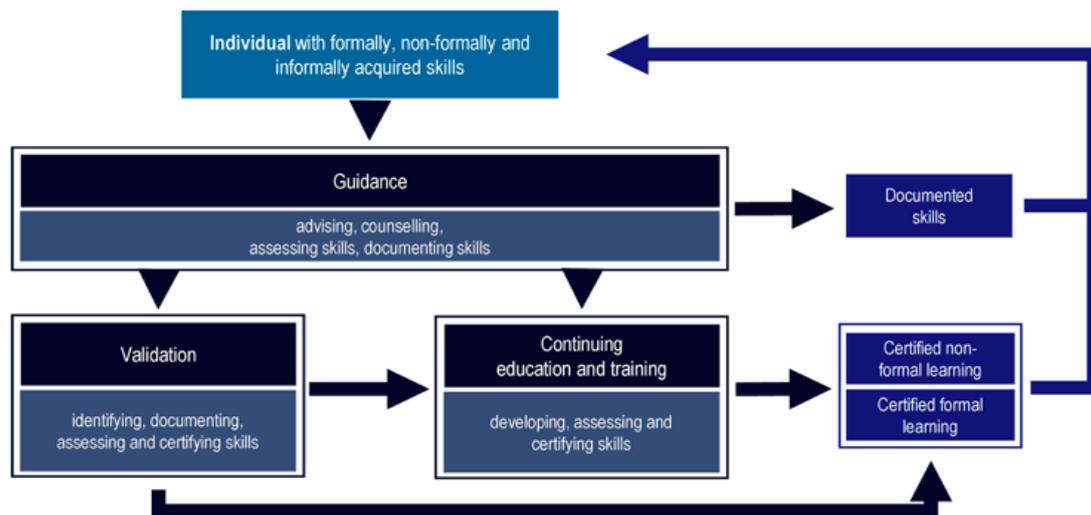


Figure 8: Visual representation of an ideal CET system, see: OECD (2021a)

First of all, who is to provide them and how to assess the qualification of participants in these programmes? Higher educational institutions often organise CET programmes according to the needs of the labour market, the resources and capacities available as well as the institutional setting. However, they are not the only CET providers. As a matter of fact, CET provision is organised in a rather varied manner across OECD countries (OECD, 2021a). There are several types of CET with different objectives that target different groups. They are presided over by different organisations, from educational institutions to governments, from trade unions to professional organisations. OECD (2021a) refers to “CET landscapes” to indicate this complex frame.

The presence of such a varied set of CET providers calls for the need to ensure the quality of the education supplied. First of all, this relates to the quality of the organisations supplying CET. Here, again, the 'landscape' feature of CET is evident as there are not univocal ways of dealing with it. For instance, in Germany, there are no certification standards set for providers. On the contrary, since 2000 Switzerland has a certification framework (eduQua), which is an Educational Quality Label recognised by the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER). It is run by an umbrella non-governmental organisation, the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SVEB), which represents the variety of public (20%) and private (80%) CET providers (associations, in-house training organisations, individuals). They correspond to one third of CET providers in Switzerland (OECD, 2021c). This certification system requires CET providers to demonstrate that they have set standards in relation to the training offered, transparency, the quality of trainers, quality assurance mechanism and their own organisation. Austria, too, has a national accreditation system based on a single quality label since 2012: Ö-Cert. This sets minimum quality standards for providers which were developed by the federal provinces with representatives of CET providers, and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (*BMBWF*), in cooperation with researchers from universities and research institutes. Other countries have developed legal frameworks for validation. Denmark has a national law (law no. 556, Act on Change of Different Laws within the area of the Ministry of Education) that acknowledges the right of an individual to get validation of previous learning acquired through adult education and CET programmes. The validation is executed by the education institutions that offer the corresponding programme. France introduced a validation system of experience in 2002, which allows a full or partial qualification depending on the skills acquired. In the Netherlands, the Education and Vocational



Education Act from 1996 (*Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs, WEB*) introduced the system for the validation of formal and informal learning.

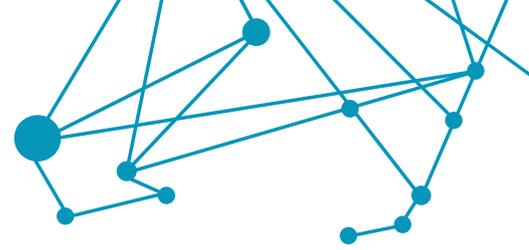
Qualification is the formal assessment by a competent organisation stating that an individual has reached the learning outcomes defined according to specific standards. It can correspond to a degree, a diploma, or a certificate. Several countries have introduced 'partial qualifications', i.e. modular components of formal full qualification. CET programmes adopt modules which are given specific points as part of an education and training programme. The rationale behind the adoption of partial qualification and modules is that they increase the flexibility of CET. Using the skills they already have, individuals can upgrade their skills faster than with a full qualification. Modules are also used by individuals who want to get a full qualification over time, or by those who want to specialise or, simply, to update their skills. Moreover, modules can be more easily modified and adapted to the needs of the labour market.

The utility of modules/partial qualification for their flexibility is widely acknowledged (Cedefop, 2015). In Denmark, adults can combine modules for different CET creating a personalised formal qualification. In Finland, too, CET is modularised and providers follow vocational qualification requirements defined by stakeholders to ensure the link with the market. In Scotland, too, modularised qualification is used and awarded by Cities, Guilds and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Modules increase the chance of adult individuals to acquire full qualification and when this happens, it has been shown that the chances to get a job increase (Desjardins, 2020). One aspect to be noted that CET programmes are often aimed at low qualified adults to help them acquire an upper secondary degree (OECD, 2021a).

However, across Europe and beyond there is not a unified model of qualification. For instance, in Portugal, more than 300 centres (*Qualifica*) provide guidance, validation and partial qualification. They are open to everybody and provide personalised qualification plans indicating the skill gaps as well as the modules to be attended to achieve full qualification. In Iceland, there is a network of Lifelong Learning Centres providing services for the upgrading of adults' skills. What matters is which institution provides CET. The data mentioned above show the variety of providers and the differences among them. The accreditation might also be realised by ad hoc bodies, for example the organisation of the International Accreditors of Continuing Education and Training (IACET).

Certainly, when CET is provided by a university, the qualification process is somehow easier as the university educational system applies, and diplomas, certificates, degrees can be assigned accordingly. However, the framework is much more complex, and it is not possible to identify a unified model. In some cases, we saw how the presence of a system of accreditation of the organisations providing CET implies the recognition of the quality of the programme provided and of their qualification. In other cases, professional bodies team up with universities to provide CET programmes. For instance, in Europe, the University of Oxford dedicates special attention to CET offering undergraduate, graduate, short and summer courses for adult learning.³² An interesting example comes from Singapore where, within the National University the School of Continuing and Lifelong Learning (NUS) has been established. The aim is to help people to achieve long-term professional goals such as "Today's skills will not match tomorrow's jobs". This last case shows how CET programmes and their qualification depend on the group they target (adults with low qualification vs adults who want to upscale their qualification). The involvement of working-age

³² See: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/continuing-education>.



adults and the success of these programmes depend also on their capacity to address governments' and employers' goals, needs, objectives (Leow, Billet, Le & Chua, 2022).

Concluding remarks

Far from pretending to provide a thorough illustration of CET, this section intended mainly to underline the ambiguities in the definition, and the consequent ambiguities for accreditation and validation of qualifications of CET programmes as well as of the bodies providing this type of education. When it comes to the heritage sector, this is an aspect to take into consideration. The changes taking place call for an upscale and upgrade of heritage professionals, as it has also become clear at our CHARTER meeting in Milan.³³ Yet, how to guarantee the quality of the CET offer on the European level remains a challenge.

2.4 Lessons learned from other Blueprint projects

As mentioned before,³⁴ the ultimate aim of the Erasmus+ Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills is to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions in the industrial ecosystems as set forth in the EU industrial policies. To this end, the Blueprints are required to gather skills intelligence focusing on skills and competence's gaps, to develop a sector skills strategy, to identify priorities and milestones for action and to develop concrete solutions, such as creating and updating curricula and qualifications based on changing or new occupational profiles and long-term action plans.

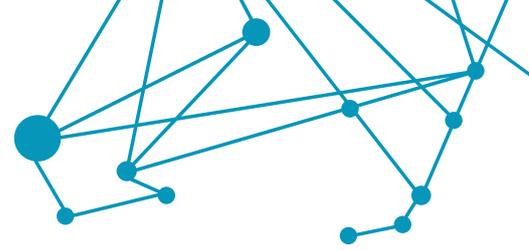
Within this general common structure, each Blueprint developed its own approach and proposed different solutions regarding the development of the curricula, consistently with the characteristics of the sector and the resources available within the skills alliance.

It should also be mentioned that sectoral BPs specifically refer to vocational education and training offers, while others cover the whole range of E&T offer, including higher education. In the second case, the analysis is broader and more general as it refers to systems which have their own standards.

One main characterising element of this approach is the availability of sectoral qualification frameworks (SQFs), as this affects the availability of pre-defined criteria for specific sectoral skills and competences. If the SQF is not available, reference is made to EQF and, eventually also to ESCO, instead.

³³ See the resources from the Milan meeting at <https://charter-alliance.eu/resources/>.

³⁴ See supra note 1 p. 8.



Notwithstanding the existence of an SQF, BPs follow one of two different approaches regarding the training offer:

- Definition of a closed/specific number of suggested curricula
- Providing tools to select amid the available E&T offer

In the first case, the training curriculum is generally rather detailed in terms of learning outcomes, duration, topics, teaching methods and material and, in most cases, the training provider is “authorised” to provide such curricula. A certificate of completion of the training is provided, while the validity/recognition of such certificate at European level depends on the status of the training provider and national/regional regulation.

In the second case, the focus of the BP is to state the characteristics of the target learning outcomes in relation to the skills and competences needed to perform an occupation or role within the sectoral industry, while leaving it up to stakeholders (including training providers/employers, public authorities and professionals/learners) to use such tools to design the training offer, provide regulation/guidelines and support, select training courses based on their respective needs.

The different foci of the BPs analysed are summarised in the table of Annex I at https://charter-alliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annex-I_D3.3.pdf.

The approach used to quality and certification standards for suggested curricula also reflects the difference in the overall BP approach.

In addition, some sectors have sector-specific (international) quality standards for professions (e.g. ECQA - European Certification and Qualification Association) and/or training (EQAVET), while others refer to “transversal” quality standards.

Another characterising element is the focus of the Blueprints: a group of BPs refers to all skills and competences (within the remit of the project) while the other group of BPs refers specifically to green, social and digital-alike competences.

The main approaches used in benchmarked Blueprints regarding quality standards and certification are summarised in the table of Annex II at https://charter-alliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annex-II_D3.3.pdf.

While all the BP departs from the identification of existing and needed skills and education and training, there is not a common methodology used by skills alliances to define proposals for E&T and their quality. Indeed, the latter strongly depend on the resources available both in the sector as a whole and the Blueprint projects’ consortia. It is also linked to the wideness of the scope of the Blueprints in terms of EQF levels, type of education (VET, HE, both) and variety of occupations included in the analysis.

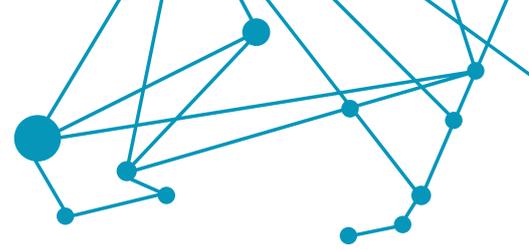
At the same time, and with specific regard to quality standards and certifications, four different approaches, with an increasing level of specification and details, can be identified as follows:

- Delivering a matrix indicating skills and competence on one side and learning outcomes on the other side is provided as a basis for helping stakeholders to select his/her own training and career path (learners) or designing/providing courses;



- Identifying a closed or open list of training curricula and/or training providers dealing with the needed skills and competences, including general guidelines and/or references for including quality assurance standards;
- Identifying a specific list of training curricula leading to specific qualifications and certification released by specific training providers, with no direct link to European or international qualification/certification.
- Identifying a specific list of training curricula leading to specific qualifications and certification released by specific training providers and linked with European or international qualification/certification.

These approaches cannot be ranked in terms of efficiency or quality as they are closely linked with appropriateness and consistency with the analysis performed by the BP themselves.



3. Non-formal and informal education: certification and validation

As the case studies in section 4 of this report demonstrate, a great deal of learning takes place in non-formal or informal contexts in cultural heritage. This concerns many traditional crafts, but also a large variety of other skills acquired through working or participating in various activities in the sector. Therefore, certification and validation of these non-formal or informal learnings is such a central issue for the CHARTER Blueprint. For many individuals active in cultural heritage, validation/certification mechanisms provide the only way out to have their skills recognised in the workplace, for lifelong learning or mobility purposes. Section 3 outlines the strategic foundations and European tools for making this a reality.

3.1. The Lisbon Strategy and the European area of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning has been at the core of EU policies since the Lisbon Strategy. Launched in March 2000 and lasting until 2010, the Lisbon Strategy³⁵ aimed at making Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion".

The strategy, developed at subsequent meetings of the European Council, rested on three pillars:

- An *economic pillar* laying the groundwork for the transition to a competitive, dynamic, knowledge-based economy, with emphasis on adapting quickly to the information society and on investing in research and development;
- A *social pillar* designed to modernise the European social model by investing in human resources and combating social exclusion. The Member States were expected to invest in education and training and to conduct an active policy for employment;
- An *environmental pillar*, which urged a decoupling of economic growth from the use of natural resources.

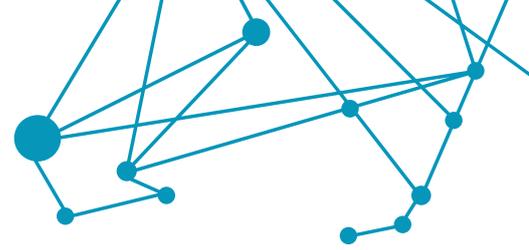
In order to achieve the Strategy's very ambitious goals, investing in the acquisition of competences by European citizens in a lifelong learning perspective was mandatory³⁶. To facilitate the shift to a

³⁵ European Parliament (2000). Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000. Presidency Conclusions.

³⁶ Under the heading *Education and training for living and working in the knowledge society*, the Presidency Conclusion of the 2000 Lisbon European Council (supra note 35) state: "26. The European Council accordingly calls upon the Member States, in line with their constitutional rules, the Council and the Commission to take the necessary steps within their areas of competence to meet the following targets:

-a substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources;

-the number of 18 to 24-year olds with only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training should be halved by 2010;



knowledge-based society, in fact, the Commission promoted the establishment of strategies and activities to achieve a European area of lifelong learning. The executive summary contained in the 'Communication from the Commission - Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality' specifies what it is meant by this expression:

"This Communication contributes to the establishment of a European area of lifelong learning, the aims of which are both to empower citizens to move freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries, making the most of their knowledge and competences, and to meet the goals and ambitions of the European Union and the candidate countries to be more prosperous, inclusive, tolerant and democratic.

This development will be facilitated by bringing together within a lifelong learning framework education and training, and important elements of existing European level processes, strategies and plans concerned with youth, employment, social inclusion, and research policy. This does not imply a new process, nor can it involve the harmonisation of laws and regulations. Rather, it calls for more coherent and economical use of existing instruments and resources, including through the use of the open method of coordination. In order to achieve the Lisbon aim of a knowledge-based society, close links will be established between the European area of lifelong learning and the European research area, particularly with a view to raising the interest of young people in science and technology careers³⁷.

Even though the Lisbon Strategy failed to meet its objectives, it left an important legacy with regard to the key role attributed to education, training and learning throughout life, lifelong learning indeed, which is understood as "all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within personal, civic, social or employment-related perspectives." In a lifelong learning perspective, learning is not limited to a single, specific phase in life, that of the years at school, but also happens in different contexts, over the course of one's lifetime and in informal or non-formal situations.

The commitment of the EU to lifelong learning as declared by the Lisbon Strategy led also to the launch of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, which funded several projects focused on

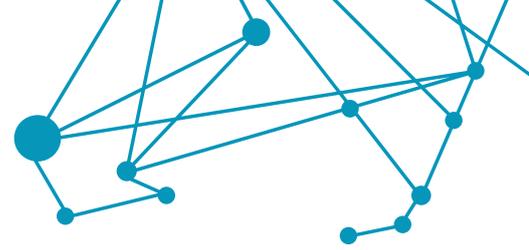
-schools and training centres, all linked to the Internet, should be developed into multi-purpose local learning centres accessible to all, using the most appropriate methods to address a wide range of target groups; learning partnerships should be established between schools, training centres, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit;

-a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills; a European diploma for basic IT skills, with decentralised certification procedures, should be established in order to promote digital literacy throughout the Union;

-define, by the end of 2000, the means for fostering the mobility of students, teachers and training and research staff both through making the best use of existing Community programmes (Socrates, Leonardo, Youth), by removing obstacles and through greater transparency in the recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training; to take steps to remove obstacles to teachers' mobility by 2002 and to attract high-quality teachers.

-a common European format should be developed for curricula vitae, to be used on a voluntary basis, in order to facilitate mobility by helping the assessment of knowledge acquired, both by education and training establishments and by employers".

³⁷ Communication from the Commission - Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality. "When planning for a year, plant corn. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people." Chinese proverb: Guanzi (c. 645BC) COM/2001/0678.



lifelong learning for professionals also in the cultural heritage field, in particular through the Grundtvig funding strand which supported adult education³⁸.

Although the organisation and content of education remain the sole responsibility of Member States, the European Union supports lifelong learning by coordinating cooperation between them. This is done through the Open Method of Coordination which was adopted as an instrument and a new framework for cooperation by the Lisbon Strategy, but also, for example, by hosting the ePlatform for Adult Learning in Europe, EPAL, a multilingual online space funded by the Erasmus+ programme that brings together communities of practice and is part of the European Union's strategy to promote more and better learning opportunities for all adults³⁹.

The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training approved in 2009 (ET 2020)⁴⁰ included lifelong learning as the first of its 4 strategic objectives:

Strategic objective 1: Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality

'[...] While new initiatives in the field of lifelong learning may be developed to reflect future challenges, further progress with ongoing initiatives is still required, especially in implementing coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies. In particular, work is needed to ensure the development of national qualifications frameworks based on relevant learning outcomes and their link to the European Qualifications Framework, the establishment of more flexible learning pathways — including better transitions between the various education and training sectors, greater openness towards non-formal and informal learning, and increased transparency and recognition of learning outcomes [...]'⁴¹

3.2 The 2012 Recommendation of the validation of non-formal and informal learning

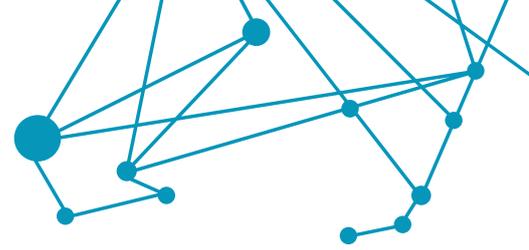
By assigning a prominent role to lifelong learning starting with the Lisbon and the following EU Strategies, the EU acknowledged and enhanced the multiple ways in which people learn outside of formal education and training contexts. However, in order to enable citizens to move between different learning settings (formal, non-formal and informal) and also to support mobility within Europe, appropriate mechanisms of credit recognition and transfer had to be put into place.

³⁸ To name a few: "Lifelong Museum Learning" <https://online.ibr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/l/libri/pdf/LifelongLearninginMuseums.pdf> , "Voch, Volunteers for cultural heritage" <https://www.eccom.it/en/project/voch-volunteers-for-cultural-heritage/> , "MAP for ID - Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue" http://www.comune.torino.it/museiscuola/bm~doc/gruntvig_gmp_134603_it.pdf, Aqueduct https://issuu.com/ingridgb/docs/aqueduct-manual_en/86

³⁹ <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en>

⁴⁰ European Council (2009). Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) 2009/C 119/02.

⁴¹ Ivi, p.1



Since the early 2000s, measures were taken and documents were issued at European level to encourage and accompany the process of recognition and validation of the learning achieved outside formal contexts.⁴²

In 2010 the 'Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'⁴³ with its flagship initiatives 'Youth on the Move' and the 'Agenda for new skills and jobs' emphasised the need for more flexible learning pathways and prompted the empowerment of people through the development of skills throughout their lifecycle.

In 2011 the renewed European agenda for adult learning⁴⁴ defined as one of its priority areas for the period 2012-14 the putting in place of fully functional systems for validating non-formal and informal learning.

But it was the 2012 'Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning'⁴⁵ which can be seen as a decisive moment by marking the beginning of a new stage for the validation of learning occurring in non- formal and informal contexts in Europe.

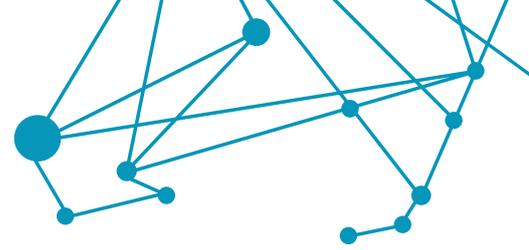
⁴² The documents to which the 2012 'Council Recommendations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning' refers to are:

- 2004 Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences established Europass, a European portfolio which citizens can use to better communicate, record and present their competences and qualifications throughout Europe.
- 2004 First publishing of a European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning containing up-to-date information on current validation practices in European countries, published regularly ever since.
- 2006 Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the recognition of the value of non-formal and informal learning within the European youth field. The Resolution invited the Member States to enable the identification of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, with a view to their recognition on the labour market.
- 2006 The Youthpass was created as a transparency tool for participants in projects funded by the 'Youth in Action' programme
- 2008 The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning invited Member States to relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework and to promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning in accordance with the Common European Principles agreed in 2004.
- 2009 The Council conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) noted that lifelong-learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework
- 2009 The 'EU Strategy for Youth – "Investing and Empowering; a renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities" called for better recognition of skills acquired through non-formal education for young people and stressed the need for full use to be made of the range of tools established at EU level for the validation of knowledge, skills and competences for the recognition of qualifications.
- 2009 Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education 2009: successful policies for lifelong learning should include basic principles and procedures for the recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes.
- 2009 publishing of European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning.
- 2010 Bruges Communiqué (VET) prompted Member States to develop, no later than 2015, national procedures for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, supported, as appropriate, by national qualifications frameworks.

⁴³ Communication from the Commission (2010). EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth COM/2010/2020 final.

⁴⁴ European Council (2011). Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning 2011/C 372/01.

⁴⁵ European Council (2012). Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning 2012/C 398/01.



The Recommendation sets out by stating: “The validation of learning outcomes, namely knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning can play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility, as well as increasing motivation for lifelong learning, particularly in the case of the socio-economically disadvantaged or the low-qualified” (1).

It continues by saying that: “[...] the validation of relevant knowledge, skills and competences has an even more valuable contribution to make in improving the functioning of the labour market, in promoting mobility and in enhancing competitiveness and economic growth.”(2).

“Employers, trade unions, [...] education and training providers, youth as well as civil society organisations [...] are named as “key stakeholders with an important role to play in facilitating opportunities for non-formal and informal learning and any subsequent validation processes”. (3)

All Member States were called to have in place by 2018 “arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to

- (a) have knowledge, skills and competences which have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, including, where applicable, through open educational resources;
- (b) obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification, on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences [...]”⁴⁶

In this context of renewed interest and greater political commitment, two tools which had already been launched in 2004 to support the implementation of validation arrangements in Europe, namely the European Guidelines and the Inventory for validating non-formal and informal learning gained more prominence. Both documents are published and updated by Cedefop.

The Guidelines, first published in 2009 and then in 2015⁴⁷ as the result of cooperation between the European Commission and Cedefop in consultation with the Member States, “seek to clarify the conditions for implementing validation, pointing to the critical choices to be made by stakeholders when implementing validation arrangements. The Guidelines do not advocate right or wrong answers; any approach to validation will be determined by the specific setting and context in which validation is implemented”.

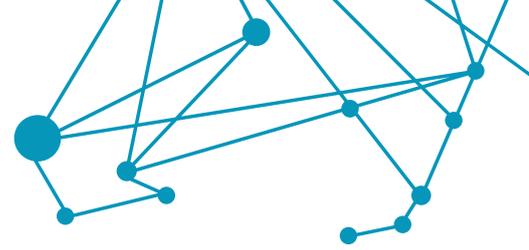
The Guidelines are complemented by the European Inventory for validating non-formal and informal learning, which Cedefop started to elaborate in 2004 and which is now in its seventh edition⁴⁸. This latest edition published in 2018 is particularly significant, as it proves that “All member States have taken up the challenge set in 2012 and have been putting in place, each in its own context, national arrangements for validation. Progress has been made in developing validation strategies, but these are typically neither comprehensive in scope, nor fully implemented on the ground”⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ See supra note 45 p. 3, point 1 (a) and (b).

⁴⁷ CEDEFOP (2015). European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning.

⁴⁸ CEDEFOP, European Commission, ICF (2019). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update. Synthesis report.

⁴⁹ ivj, Foreword, p.i



In the foreword to the European Inventory, it is also clearly explained why acknowledging learning outside formal situations is important: “The urgency of lifelong learning has never been clearer. The speed of change in the labour market and wider society means that building skills throughout life is more than ever a must. Formal education and training can only partly cope with the skills challenges. People learn through work, volunteering, leisure activities, company-based training, online learning and more. However, all too often, individuals cannot use these new skills to access further education or to progress in their careers [...] Learning from whatever source has a value – so it needs to be validated.

Validation is defined as the process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard.

In short, validation makes learning visible and gives it value. Validation is therefore a crucial building block of a real lifelong learning society. It allows better matching of skills with labour demand, helps transferability of skills between companies and sectors, and supports mobility across the European labour market. It combats social exclusion by improving the employability of early school leavers, the unemployed, low-skilled adults, third country nationals, and other groups at risk⁵⁰.

3.3 Principles set up by the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

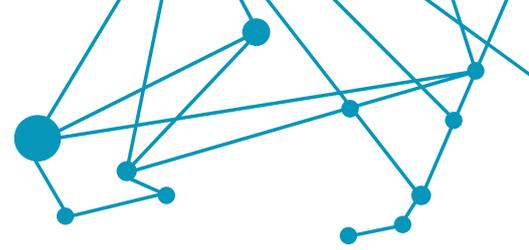
The Recommendation and the European Guidelines on the validation of non-formal and informal learning established some key principles:

- a) **Validation is a process that encompasses four stages:**
- ‘**Identification** of an individual’s learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning’. This phase is supported by advisors and counselors that enter into a dialogue with the candidate, to establish which validation procedure is more appropriate.
 - ‘**Documentation** of an individual’s learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning’. This entails the collection of evidence of the learning outcomes acquired, e.g. through a portfolio.
 - ‘**Assessment** of an individual’s learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning’. At this stage the individual’s learning outcomes are evaluated against specific standards.
 - ‘**Certification** of the results of the assessment of an individual’s learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate’.⁵¹

This differentiation of stages is an important element, as it adds to the flexibility of the validation arrangements. When aiming at a formal qualification, the formal assessment and certification

⁵⁰ *ivi*, Foreword, p.i

⁵¹ See *supra* note 45 p. 3, points 2a to 2d.



stages will be more important. In other cases, for example in relation to voluntary work, identification and documentation will be given more emphasis. However, the four phases should always be present, but might bear different weights within the overarching validation process.

b) The centrality of the individual

The 2012 Recommendation underlines that the individual must be at the centre of the validation process. Validation must therefore be designed according to the needs and interests of individual learners. Validation arrangements should be presented in a way that allows individuals to choose the form best suited to their particular needs, as some people might be interested in obtaining a formal qualification, but others might be happy to just receive evidence of learning acquired at work or in voluntary activities, without this leading to any form of qualification.

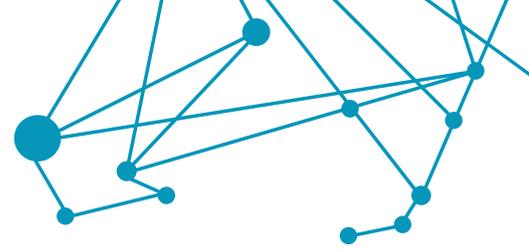
c) The conditions for developing and implementing validation

- The provision of **information, guidance and counseling** to candidates throughout the validation process.
- The **involvement and coordination of the relevant stakeholders**, 'such as employers, trade unions, chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, national entities involved in the process of recognition of professional qualifications, employment services, youth organisations, youth workers, education and training providers, and civil society organisations'.⁵²
- **Links to national qualification systems and frameworks (NQFs)** to ensure the integration of validation and NQFs. This allows to map the learning acquired in non-formal or informal contexts to a system of learning outcomes that is identifiable, known and widely accepted also by employers and to avoid repeating learning already achieved.
- **Standards and learning outcomes**, meaning that the standards used to determine skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning should be equivalent to those obtained through formal education, that is they should be described in terms of learning outcomes, expressing what a candidate knows and is able to do.
- **Quality assurance**: The Guidelines state that "Validation needs to be supported by transparent quality assurance arrangements addressing all phases and features of the process"⁵³; in the 2018 European Inventory it is showed that 15 countries out of 35 have developed quality assurance arrangements specific to validation⁵⁴.
- **Professional competences of practitioners**: The adequate provision of professional development opportunities of staff involved in validation in all phases and roles (counselors, assessors, process managers, external observers) is key to maintaining quality assurance.

⁵² *ivi.* p. 4, points 4 and 5.

⁵³ *Supra* note 47 p. 32.

⁵⁴ *Supra* note 48.



d) Validation contexts

- Validation in education and training

The Recommendation recognizes the key role played by education and training institutions in the validation process: 'education and training providers should facilitate access to formal education and training on the basis of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings and, if appropriate and possible, award exemptions and/or credits for relevant learning outcomes acquired in such settings.'⁵⁵ The VET sector in particular plays a major role in validating non-formal and informal learning, due to the extensive use it makes of learning outcomes and competence-based standards which are easy to relate to occupational standards and therefore to previous work experience.

- Validation and open education resources (OERs)

OERs include, among others, full courses, course modules, quizzes, games, simulations, resources contained in digital media, MOOCs (Massive open online courses). In order to be validated, OERs must be described in the form of learning outcomes. If credits or badges are given, they must be described and explained in a transparent way.

- Validation in enterprises/ at the workplace

Validation in this context requires the cooperation of enterprises in competence assessment. Transferability and portability of competences acquired in this context need to be guaranteed via the connection to national validation systems.

- Validation in the voluntary sector

Experiences in the voluntary sector can be very relevant for advancing in education and training, but also in the labour market and should therefore be admitted to validation. The Recommendation states: '[...] youth organisations and civil society organisations should promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired at work or in voluntary activities, using relevant Union transparency tools such as those developed under the Europass framework and Youthpass'⁵⁶

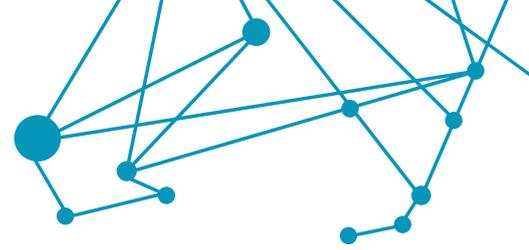
- Skills audit and the labour market

The Recommendation states that 'disadvantaged groups, including individuals who are unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, are particularly likely to benefit from the validation arrangements, since validation can increase their participation in lifelong learning and their access to the labour market.' It further states that 'individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment have the opportunity, in accordance with national legislation and specificities, to undergo a 'skills audit' aimed at identifying their knowledge, skills and competences within a reasonable period of time, ideally within six months of an identified need'⁵⁷ A skills audit is a 'process aimed at identifying and analysing the knowledge, skills and competences of an individual, including his or her aptitudes and

⁵⁵Supra note 45 p. 4 point 4b.

⁵⁶ i.vi.p. 4 point 4a.

⁵⁷ i.vi, p. 4 point 4a.



motivations in order to define a career project and/or plan a professional reorientation or training project.⁵⁸

- A skills audit can use different tools, but normally is done using a combination of dialogue and standardized approaches, including self-assessment.

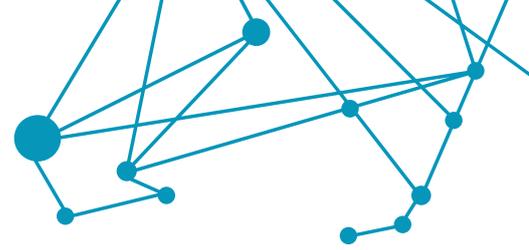
e) Validation tools

Appropriate tools should be developed and shared for validation, all of which must be: valid, reliable, fair, capable of capturing the candidate's learning, fit for purpose. Among them:

- **Texts and examinations**
- **Dialogue or conversational methods**
- **Declarative methods**
- **Observations**
- **Simulations**
- **Tools that extract evidence from work or other practices.** Such evidence can be presented by using tools such as: CVs and individual statement of competences, Third party reports or Portfolios⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ Supra note 48 p. 37.

⁵⁹ Supra note 47 p. 47-51.



4. Case studies

The case studies contained in this section offer a glimpse at the diversity of cultural heritage contexts for which quality standards and certification and validation are relevant. They also provide the reader with detailed information on what can be at stake for individuals and for the sector without these tools, with endangered crafts being a very obvious case in point. Moreover, the examples listed here illustrate the different contexts on which quality standards and certification/validation have been developed: on the national or regional levels, by EU projects or via self-regulation by professions.⁶⁰

4.1 From notification to qualification: Preserving education programmes for unique, specialized crafts in the Netherlands

Because of several reasons, attention for specialised crafts in the Netherlands has risen: first, the re-evaluation of crafts and the realisation that specialized crafts cannot exist without specific vocational education and training (VET); second, specialised crafts fulfil a vital link for other professionals and products; and lastly, the added value of specialised crafts since they often form the base for spreading innovation across products, processes, and professions. Moreover, skilled craftspeople keep up quality norms that are essential for the Dutch economy (SVGB, 2015). Therefore, the Meld- en expertisepunt Specialistisch Vakmanschap (Reporting and Expertise Centre for Specialized Craftsmanship⁶¹ - REC) was introduced as a protective measure to prevent education programmes in rare, specialised crafts from disappearing.

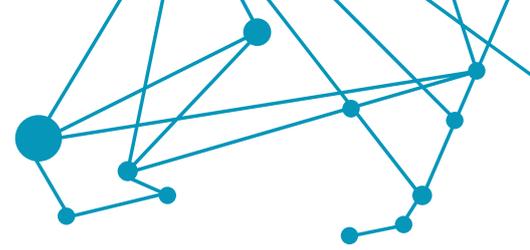
This case study introduces the REC explaining its formation and approaches. An example of threatened education programmes in restoration describes the route, context, and suggestions for viable solutions to overcome the disappearance of these vulnerable cultural heritage education programmes. The case is interesting as it represents an example of ad hoc measures that are organised to cover the actual need for education and qualification and, at the same time, avoid the loss of skills deemed necessary by society.

Introducing the Reporting and Expertise Centre for Specialized Craftsmanship (REC)

The REC was opened by the minister of Culture, Education and Science in 2011 launching a specific point for small, specialised VET whose existence was threatened, and for small occupational groups, who noticed a shortage of craftspeople in their field of expertise. From 2011-2015 seventy-eight job description occupations, representing hundred rare crafts specialised groups, found their

⁶⁰ Given this diversity of contexts and the fact that some of the initiatives highlighted here were concluded some time ago, it is challenging in some cases to provide source materials. In these cases, the authors rely on the expert knowledge of those colleagues who drafted these case studies and who can draw from their own experience regarding said initiatives. The authors can be reached via the CHARTER website for any questions.

⁶¹ The CHARTER consortium in general strives to avoid gender-based terminology. However, in this instance, this cannot be avoided as the term is used in the context of a translation.



way to the RET to sound the alarm. During that period the RET was the part of the Kennis- en Opleidingscentrum voor Specialistisch Vakmanschap (Knowledge and Education Centre for Specialized Craftsmanship - SVGB) which was one of the seventeen Knowledge and Education Centers in the Netherlands. These KEC's conducted tasks on the instructions of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science regarding senior secondary vocational education (VET level 1-4). For example, accrediting and coaching work placement companies, for work practice placements and apprenticeships. Next to that, the centres developed the qualification structure and provided information about practice placements and the labour market ('SBB,' n.d.). From 2015 onwards, the seventeen KEC's were joint in one organisation: the Samenwerkingsorganisatie Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven (Foundation for cooperation on Vocational Education, Training, and the Labour Market - SBB) and took over the legal responsibilities and duties of the KEC's.

The notifications received between 2011 and 2015 were for professions such as framers, metal roofers, sewing machine technicians, forest- and nature assistants, urban designers, and neon glass blowers. What these notifications had in common was their enormous concern regarding the survival of the specialised crafts programme at hand since education institutes were unable to organise the programme in a sustainable way, and appropriate education is crucial for small, specialised professions to survive. The fear of education programmes disappearing had not been imaginary and programmes that had disappeared were difficult, and sometimes impossible, to recover (SVGB, 2015). Thus, what is the role of the REC and what do they do to help prevent the previously described scenario?

The REC investigates the notifications received, maps possible bottlenecks of the notified cases, and supports the parties involved in finding solutions as well as in developing and implementing ad hoc educational arrangements. Moreover, the REC monitors the developments of small, specialised education programmes, pools and shares the expertise collected to organise and secure specialised crafts.

When the REC receives a notification from a rare profession or educational institute, it starts to collect information through working visits and additional research. This way it gets a full perspective considering the professions, the programme, the labour side, and the context. As means of assessment the decision tree visualised in Figure 9 is used during the intake interviews. The decision tree is an analysis-tool to determine whether the notification at hand comes from a scarce specialised professional group, which has concrete labour possibilities but whose continuity is threatened. Using five indicators, the decision tree aims at showing to what extent the notification: 1. Relates to scars and small scale professional group or education programme in The Netherlands; 2. The profession has a specialised character; 3. The profession has a future perspective in economic, consumer, cultural as well as historical value next to value for health and wellbeing; 4. Is threatened for continuity; 5. There is shared ownership regarding the problems and solutions between professional groups and educators.

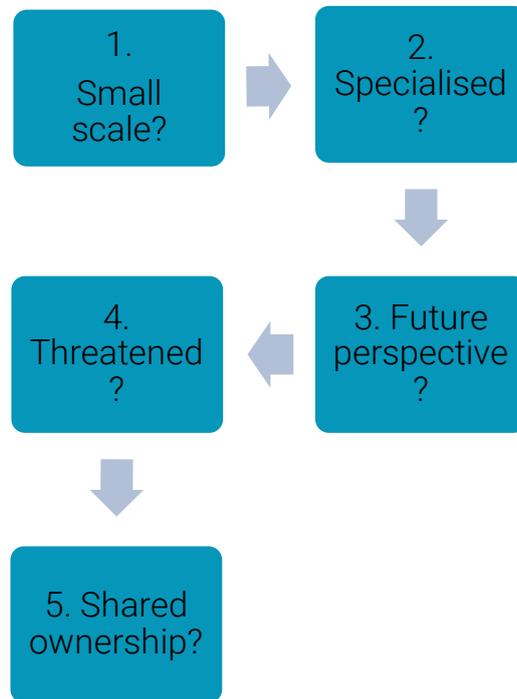
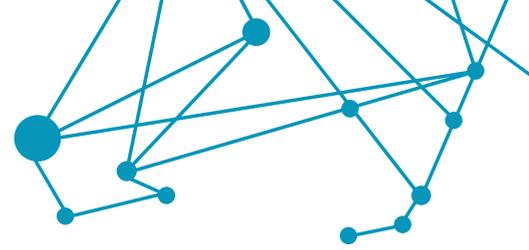


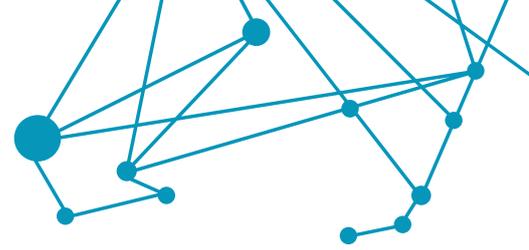
Figure 9: Decision tree Reporting and Expertise Centre for Specialized Craftsmanship (REC), Source: Ditmeijers' (2017, p. 26).

The result of the assessment of the abovementioned five indicators leads to a decision about the degree of intervention by the REC. What does this mean in practice? Using the restoration technique as an example the way this process works is described below.

The restoration sector: the case of the Specialist Restoration Craft

The restoration sector forms a small (1%) but significant and specialised part in the building activities in the Netherlands (SVGB, 2015). The Dutch building sector has suffered from the economic crises as well as Covid-19. Next to that, government policies have had an impact since subsidies for the building sector have been cut down. Moreover, due to the aging of the working population, a relatively high influx of new well-trained craftspeople is needed (SVGB, 2015).

The restoration sector in VET represents a wide range of small-scale specialised professions and profession groups. For example, restoration carpenters, masons, painters, plasterers, natural stone workers, smiths, and joiners. Professions such as carpenters and masonry are large. Whereas blacksmiths, joiners and natural stone workers are small. There are about fifteen branch associations representing various restoration specialisations. One of the biggest bottlenecks for the education programmes is the fragmentation in the sector. An example: the programme for All-round Bricklayer Maintenance and Restoration had forty-three students in 2013 on thirteen locations. In the same year, the programme for Restoration Carpenter had eighty-one students in seventeen locations. There are numerous partnerships between branches and education institutions. However, on the national level there is little coordination. The founding of the Platform



Erfgoedopleidingen (Platform Heritage Education - PHE) in 2013 aimed at organising the cooperation within the sector.

The platform wants to develop a futureproof knowledge and education structure. Next to that, PHE aims at realizing a joint quality securing and structural knowledge sharing with all its partners. In previous years, REC has picked up signals regarding the possible disappearance of qualifications and the threat of discontinuing education programmes in the restoration sector. A special arrangement is made with a joint project called the Centrum voor Restauratietechniek (The Centre for Restoration Technique) accommodated by the minister of Education, Culture and Science. With this project, the restoration sector has chosen a national approach to create a sustainable education and knowledge infrastructure and quality securing. The aim was to align the number of graduates with the demand on the job market by 2018, and to make sure that the qualification structure for restoration education programmes meets the requirements and wishes of both the work and education field. Moreover, the specialised character of the different restoration professions needs to be assured within the education programmes (SVGB, 2015).

This four-year project, or transition trajectory, formed a breeding ground for innovative ideas and solutions. It has shown how fruitful cooperation can be since:

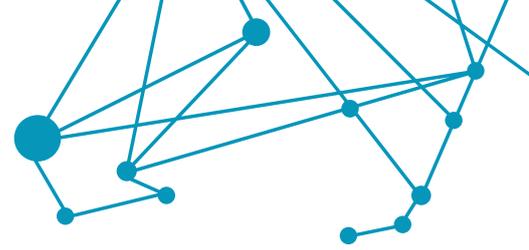
- The branches and nineteen education locations for restoration carpentry and bricklaying have been able to create an effective, efficient as well as qualitative education offer. They have formulated a plan of (quality) requirements which formed the base of the ideal model for the renovation of education infrastructure.
- An updated qualification for the Specialist Restoration Craftsmanship programme has been drawn up composed of two qualifications: Specialist Restoration Carpentry (level 4) and Specialist Restoration Masonry (level 4).
- Three technical schools for restoration painting have investigated how the continuous education line VET-Bachelor-Master can be ensured. One of the results of their research was that there was a need for an Associate Degree (AD) since a bachelor's degree is lacking. Next to that an AD trajectory could be helpful to develop an Excellence programme.
- And lastly, the demands that are put on the restoration performance are high. A project group studies existing qualification systems to explore the possibilities for personal certification by performing pilot projects with restoration smiths and joiners (SVGB, 2015).

Currently both qualifications Specialist Restoration Carpentry (level 4) and Specialist Restoration Masonry (level 4) have a formal as well as non-formal education trajectory each one at two education institutes in the Netherlands.

Evaluation and recommendations for the future of the REC

The SBB executed an external evaluation to decide if the REC can continue with its activities or if they need to be placed elsewhere. The evaluation consists of a study of the existing reports. Next to that, data was collected through a survey and interviews among stakeholders.

In general, the REC has been valued positively in its support for specialised crafts education programmes in the Netherlands. Due to the expertise and commitment of its employees, the REC has succeeded to acquire a unique and mostly appreciated role within the education field. This



expertise could be used to expand into a knowledge platform (in combination with a website) or to advise (prospective) students. In both the education and work field, there is overall consensus regarding the need and necessity of the REC. Continuation of the subsidy or financing in other forms is therefore greatly desired. Also in this case, as with small, specialized crafts education programmes, expertise which has been built up easily disappears when the REC would size down or close. However, financing the REC is still a point of discussion. Stakeholders such as the VET Council, the Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (Federation of Dutch Trade Unions – FNV) and the VNO-NCW (The Confederation of Dutch Industry and Employers) argue that funding is a task for the Dutch Government, more specifically the Ministry of OCW. However, the Ministry of OCW maintains that REC should continue as part of the SBB. Still, the REC is not equipped to lobby politically. Here there could be a role for the above-mentioned stakeholders FNV, the VET council and VNO-NCW (Ditmeijers’ Group, 2019). If the REC would be abolished, specialised craft programmes could join existing education programmes, for example, as a specialisation or as a minor. A second alternative would be to choose for so-called contract education in the Netherlands or abroad (Ditmeijers’ Group, 2019).

The REC has significantly contributed to the continuation of the education of small and specialised professions. The REC brings together the necessary actors and in doing so contributes to a lasting solution to the issues at stake. The qualitative as well as quantitative analyses shows that the REC fulfils its role well and can fulfil it for education programmes whose survival is at risk (Ditmeijers’ Group, 2019). From 2023 onwards the REC will be granted continuous financial support which has secured its existence and is a recognition for its relevant work (Rijksfinancien, n.d.).

4.2 “Casa Artelor” (“The House of Arts”): a new creative and training HUB in the historic Centre of Sibiu

Quality standards and certification schemes in Romania

The Romanian system for adult education is mainly created for formal education - formal adult education - and for non-formal and informal competences’ recognition through dedicated centres for recognition of competencies. In practice, there are two subsystems, one formal and one informal. For the Romanian formal system, the responsibility belongs to the Ministry of Labour which authorises the institutions which carry out the formal education, in accordance with the occupational standards.⁶² On the other hand, the responsibility for the Centres of evaluation of non-formal and informal competencies lies with The National Authority for Qualification (ANC),⁶³ which carries out the authorisation and the accreditation of such centres by following a methodology that is in line with the EU recommendations.

The professional certification scheme in the field of intangible cultural heritage, in this case, specialist in the interpretation and exploitation of intangible heritage, is constituted by the following stages. The person is achieving higher education studies, in a formal setting, at the 6 level, and

⁶² <http://www.anc.edu.ro/standarde-ocupationale>

⁶³ <http://www.anc.edu.ro>



professional/research studies at level 7-8; during which someone acquires knowledge, skills, and competencies within specialised courses and programs, as well as the certain number of credits. At the end of each level, the person is evaluated. As a result, they are certified by the higher education institution, state or private, by issuing a diploma or study certificate. Afterwards, the person has the possibility to follow lifelong and continuing professional learning and training programs in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts. The quality standards required from these professionals are high knowledge of the domains and categories of intangible cultural heritage; a continuously accumulated experience of working and communicating with the ICH bearers (e.g. craftspersons, folklore performers); skills and competencies of synthesis and interpretation of the primary materials, etc.

According to the legislation, the certificate of professional competencies has a similar value as the qualification certificate/ graduation certificate obtained in formal contexts.

Regarding the persons who perform an occupation associated with traditional crafts, related to the occupational standards, they are required to complete compulsory education and professional qualification through professional education (level 5-3) at the professional profile school or popular art school or professional training programs in the system of professional training of adults. The person will be awarded with graduation and qualification certificates, then the National Authority of Qualification will evaluate in order to provide a certificate of professional competence.

Occupational skills and competencies can also be achieved continuously at the workplace, craft workshops, production workshops, etc. The quality standards of specialists are ensured by specialised studies; knowledge and high execution of services and products; correct use of materials, tools, and techniques, etc.

Regarding craftspersons there is no official procedure for certifying their status, taking into account that the knowledge and techniques associated with the traditional crafts they perform are transmitted informally, usually within the family or local community.

Casa Artelor's training and certifications programme

A "Centre for Activities and Regional Resources" (C.A.R.R.) is currently being developed in the historic Centre of Sibiu (Romania), within the premises of two 15th century historic buildings, restored for the occasion. The new facility will take the name "Casa Artelor"⁶⁴ ("The House of Arts") and is planned to function as a creative HUB, built around the traditional crafts of Transylvania and involving the remaining active craftspersons from the Sibiu region.

The project was designed by ASTRA Museum⁶⁵ and has received € 2m funding from the EEA Grants 2014 – 2021 within the RO-CULTURE Programme⁶⁶. It is being implemented with the help of two cultural partners: "Future Capital" (Romania) and "The Museums of South Trøndelag" – MiST (Norway). Started on the 1st of October 2020, the project will run until the 31st of March 2024 and

⁶⁴ <https://casaartelor.ro/en>

⁶⁵ <https://muzeulastr.ro/en/> The ASTRA Museum of Traditional Folk Civilization

⁶⁶ <https://www.ro-cultura.ro/en/about/ro-culture-programme>



will cover both the restoration of the two buildings and their transformation into a Cultural and Creative Hub.

Situated in one of Sibiu's landmark Squares (Piața Mică), within the Historical Centre, the future "House of Arts" will reside in one of the city's emblematic buildings from the late Medieval times (15th C), former premises of the guild of butchers and of the guild of furriers, now listed as historical monuments. The site will go through a complete process of restoration and adaptive re-use, with the re-organization of the entire building in order to welcome the future exhibition, training, work and debate spaces.

Once complete, the new cultural Centre will implement a wide range of cultural, education, training and social activities, showcasing the crafts that have shaped Transylvania throughout the centuries. A tailored heritage interpretation programme combined with the use of new technologies (such as augmented or immersive reality) will translate the exhibition to a large audience (both international, national and local), while situating Sibiu within the larger context (the urban area, the older neighbourhoods, the former rural landscapes and Saxon villages), connecting the tangible and intangible heritage to the cultural landscape that created it.

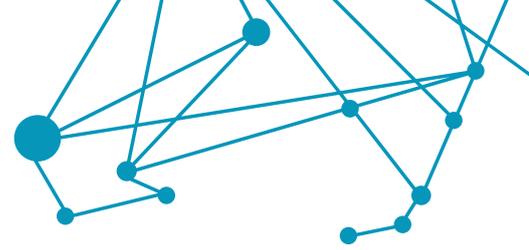
Among the many activities of the future "House of Arts", for the purpose of this research we focus on its training and certification programme, tailored for the sector of traditional craftsmanship. The programme was designed to increase the competitiveness of the traditional craftspeople in the labour market and the transferability of traditional knowledge and abilities.

As a remnant of its rich cultural past, present day Romania still hosts a large number of craftspersons, skilled in many cultural trades and crafts. However, there is a lack of official certification for their status, as a result of the non-formal learning process which is specific for the traditional forms of knowledge transfer. In order for these craftspersons to properly function within the labour market, and for them to take advantage of the mobility and development opportunities offered by the European area, a recognised form of certification is required.

Therefore, the "House of Arts" programme will focus on initiating a process for the formal recognition of the status of traditional craftspeople through the accreditation of the ASTRA Museum as a Centre for evaluating and certifying professional competences obtained through non-formal means. In itself, this is a pilot project, as the ASTRA Museum will become the first Romanian institution to issue valid certificates for traditional craftspeople. The certification process will be complemented by a training module, including classes in economics, marketing and communication, delivered through formal and non-formal activities. In addition to the training delivered in Sibiu, the participants will also benefit from training sessions in Norway, coordinated by the MiST (Museene i Sør Trøndelag)⁶⁷. MiST will organize its own specialisation in the traditional building techniques on the restoration site of the Open air museum in Sverresborg and will host exchanges in both Sverresborg and Røros sites.

The Certification process itself is planned to take place involving a minimum of expenditure on the side of the craftspeople. For this purpose, the certification sessions will be scheduled within larger activities, such as the manifestations organised by ASTRA Museum during the summertime, the Museum being able to cover a part of the costs for their accommodation, transportation and meals. The process is expected to stretch over at least 3 days and to consist of distinct theoretical and

⁶⁷ <https://mist.no/en>



practical examination sessions: interviews, qualitative assessments of the handcrafted products and observations during the practical demonstrations. During the rest of the year, such sessions will be held in the four makerspaces of the newly restored building.

For the first years, the expected number of participants is approximately 100 craftspersons active in the region of Sibiu. However, once the Centre is open, the certification process will become available to all craftspersons across Romania.⁶⁸



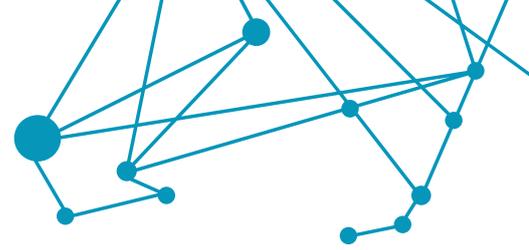
Figure 10: The “House of Arts” (“Casa Artelor”) in Sibiu, Romania, was visited by the CHARTER Project partners during the Regional Workshop held in April 2022. ©ASTRA Museum

4.3 Flemish database for the validation of competencies (2009-2018)

The database called “Oscar” was the result of a Flemish Portfolio project. The website existed only between 2009 and 2018, which is why it is not possible to provide an internet link to this website/database.⁶⁹ The aim was to develop a single instrument to support the (re)recognition of

⁶⁸ <https://casaartelor.ro/prezentarea-proiectului>

⁶⁹ This case study is primarily based on unpublished documents in the archives of FARO – the Flemish support centre for cultural heritage <https://faro.be/>.



acquired competences in recognised and/or subsidised socio-cultural youth and adult work. Its origins lay in making visible and valuing learning in non-formal and informal learning contexts.

This database was

- A tool for organisations to recognise and document competences;
- An online portfolio in which the user could see (assigned) competences, could upload consult and download (assigned) competency documents.

It was similar to the Europass system, but on a smaller, Flemish scale.

The website was launched in 2009 within social-cultural work and youth work. Since 2012, pupil councils, student councils, amateur arts, heritage organisations and municipal youth services were also supported to start working with competency documents. FARO, the Flemish support centre for cultural heritage, supported heritage organisations in drawing up and distributing competency documents. In the 9 years of its existence more than 26,000 people received such a document. In 2018, the system ended, due to privacy-legislation and financial difficulties.

Strengths and weaknesses of the former Flemish system

Strengths:

It valued the commitment of volunteering:

The inclusive approach was highly appreciated. Especially for people who received little or no recognition for their actions elsewhere, the competency documents could be a very important tool. After all, in validating competencies, an organisation could show that it valued the people who are active within it. Through the database, competences that someone acquired alongside school or work became visible. As such, the project contributed to the awareness of life-long (and life-wide) learning.

It gave users insight into their competences

Young people and adults learn a great deal through training they attend or engagements they take up in heritage organisations. Yet, they often do not have a clear picture of the competences they acquire. An insight into these competences, however, is of enormous added value. Indeed, it can strengthen and help in making all kinds of choices.⁷⁰ The project addressed this by identifying the competences of young people and adults gained in this way and documenting them.

It helped name competences, demonstrate them and promoted reflection.

Several competences acquired in heritage work are also useful in other areas of life. For example, if one learns to 'lead a meeting' by being chairperson of a historical society for several years, this

⁷⁰ See for instance the results of the project "Teaching and learning with living heritage" <https://ich.unesco.org/en/news/teaching-and-learning-with-living-heritage-lessons-learnt-from-unesco-eu-pilot-project-13277>. This was a part of the joint UNESCO-EU project "2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage: Engaging Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable Europe": <https://ich.unesco.org/en/engaging-youth-for-an-inclusive-and-sustainable-europe-01051>.



competence also comes in handy in a professional context. The project made it possible for young people and adults to name and demonstrate such competences, both to themselves (e.g. in the function of a personal development plan) and to others (e.g. when applying for a job or for the purpose of recognition for a study programme).

It provided a lever for strengthening processes of informal learning in heritage organisations

The project demonstrated the importance of non-formal and informal learning in general, and in heritage work in particular. After all, the more competence documents were issued, the better it was understood which kind of learning had taken place or which skills and competences were acquired. Working with the database also made organisations consciously deal with and think in terms of competences by building their services around this, for example.

It helped to name and document competences in a unified way.

Even for professional organisations, it is not always easy to focus on and name the competences that come into play in their daily work. Let alone documenting them consistently for their participants and volunteers. Moreover, the database facilitated a uniformity in the heritage sector, as different organisations used the same tool to name and document competences.

It offered guidance for future employment

Numerous young people and adults take on all kinds of voluntary tasks, follow all kinds of training courses and are active in various organisations. The database brought together the competences they acquired in all these activities, providing a handy overview across years, organisations and activities. Competence documents were issued and automatically stored in a central, online, location. They could be used in guidance pathways to employment.

Weaknesses

It contained fragments, not the whole story

A competency document was always the concrete translation of a snapshot. It did not document a whole life story.

Responsibility for quality lies with the issuer

Competence documents were created by organisations. They could choose from a basic list of competences which they could supplement with competences specific to the organised training or task. The quality of the described competences depended on the volunteer or professional involved and their proficiency in drafting that kind of document.

Financial basis as a project

Adapting, maintaining and managing the database and website were a major concern and required a serious investment in time and resources.

Varying depth of use by organisations



The project coordinators noticed that quite a few organisations participated or wanted to get started with the database. However, often, the knowledge to shape and build this was strongly tied to only one staff member. If this person left the organisation, the database was also forgotten.

Users didn't activate their personal portfolio

We saw some of the reasons for this listed below:

- the competency documents were non-committal
- It was insufficiently known in higher education
- It was insufficiently known to career advisors and employers.

Competency documents in the Flemish heritage sector: "A nice extra for young volunteers"

Following the evaluation of the project in 2015, FARO contacted by phone all heritage organisations at that time working with it. The survey revealed that most organisations handed out competency documents ad hoc and on demand to (especially young) volunteers. Only a few organisations systematically handed out competency documents to entire groups of volunteers or trainees.

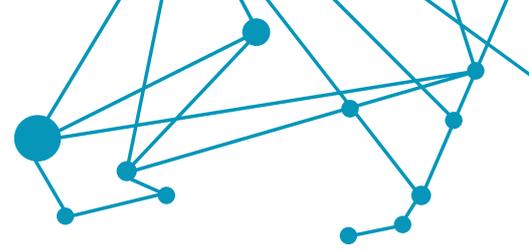
According to respondents, the main added value of competency documents lay in valuing volunteers: they gave younger job-seeking volunteers an extra push. Only a few organisations mentioned an internal added value, namely that, thanks to the project, they started thinking more profoundly about the goals of their volunteering and the competences they want to bring in or develop. Strikingly, these were also the most enthusiastic organisations. Many other organisations limited themselves to drawing up and issuing a document and didn't always see the further added value of this.

In addition, competency documents could really be a threshold for older volunteers (local history societies). These people were not concerned with competence development but sought concrete help for the problems they encountered. A competency document then formalised too strongly a learning path, while the volunteers were not actually looking for that themselves.

Thus, Flemish heritage organisations saw the project's strength mainly in CV-building for young jobseekers, but questioned its real value on the labour market. If there were more guarantees that employers would actually take the competency documents into account, many felt this would be a good thing. When asked whether people would want to pay for this service, most respondents answered in the negative. They indicated that the competency documents were a nice extra for young jobseekers, but that this was not their core-business to draw them up.

The end of the website in 2018

The database and website instrument were closed in early 2018. The immediate reason for this was the tightened privacy legislation, which made it impossible to keep that much data on participants. Moreover, there was no structural funding for this tool, and additional adjustments to



the website were no longer financially viable at that time. With this, a potentially very powerful tool disappeared from Flanders.⁷¹

To conclude: lessons learned:

- Working with a unified tool that is cross-sectoral (adult education, youth work, heritage sector) is important: not developing fragmented tools, but issuing similar documents together is an added value.
- Validating informal learning paths of volunteers and young people has great potential, provided it can be linked to recognition of these documents in higher education and the labour market.
- The Flemish system contained no formalised tool for validation, for example no competence levels had been formulated and competency documents could also be drawn up without structured assessments. This presented many opportunities, but also made the value of a document difficult to assess: was it more than a proof of participation?
- To enhance the credibility of the documents, quality assurances were needed from the awarders. The Flemish system deliberately never went about accrediting or monitoring. Perhaps that is desirable for such a system.
- In order to make such a tool work, heritage organisations need to see the validation of informally acquired competences as a core task. They need additional training and education to do so.

4.4 Validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts in Italy - The Regions Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna

Since the 2010s, the actions aimed at the definition, experimentation and implementation of strategies and systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning have acquired new impetus and concreteness in Italy.

The most important legislative acts include:

- Law 92/2012 which reformed the Labour market and anticipated the institution of a national system of competence certification and validation of non-formal and informal learning;

⁷¹ As outlined above, the “Oscar” website is no longer online, and it is near to impossible to find any reference materials online. However, Flemish socio-cultural organisation Socius offers some basic information on its website as well as a contact for questions: <https://socius.be/stappenplan-formuleren-competenties-deelnemers/>



- Legislative Decree 13/2013 which established the National system of certification of competence and validation of non-formal and informal learning and started the implementation phase;
- An Inter-ministerial Decree, DI (Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Education - 30 June 2015), which defined the National Framework of Regional Qualifications according to Decree 13/2013.

The Italian National Qualification Framework (NQF) established a mechanism of mutual recognition among regional qualifications and system standard procedures for the services of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and certification of competences.

The development of the NQF responded, among others, to a need for integrating the different qualification systems, improving the legibility, transparency and comparability of qualifications of different systems, nationally and regionally, and aiding geographic and professional mobility at national and European levels.

All Italian Regions have acted with respect to the problem of how to ensure that citizens can have their skills recognized, no matter where and how learned. Some are still in an initial stage of a strategic approach to the issue, others have made significant achievements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, connecting such recognition with the regional repertoires of qualifications which represent the basis to identify, and describe the skills to be validated and the levels of recognition (individual units of competence, professional profiles).

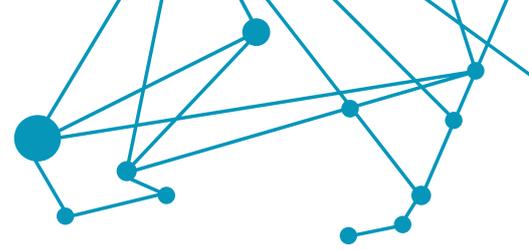
Two of the most advanced systems are to be found in Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna.

Tuscany

The Region Tuscany's Competence System⁷² is aimed at allowing all persons interested and in possession of specific requirements, to see the competences they have acquired in the different formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts recognised. The Identification, Validation, Certification (IVC) service is aimed at people who demonstrate or self-declare that they have gained experience through their work/professional life, education and training, volunteering and social engagement or via family life contexts and who formally request access to the service. It is activated at the request of the person concerned and is aimed at recognising the person's skills through a reconstruction and evaluation of the experiences acquired in the various fields. The experiences must be appropriate and relevant to one or more qualifications included in the Regional Directory of Professional Figures (Regional Qualification Framework).

The certification procedure envisages the issue of a certificate or a third-party attestation (Qualification Certificate or Certificate of Competences) with the value of a public act on the whole national territory. The certificate represents a formal title relative to the competences acquired by the person in the various learning contexts for recognition also at a European and international level. In fact, the activation of the certification procedure can guarantee the mobility of the person, increase the productivity and competitiveness of the production system, favour the matching between demand and supply in the labour market and the transparency of learning and needs, as well as the wide expendability of the certifications in the national and European sphere. Possession

⁷² <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/i-servizi-di-individuazione-validazione-e-certificazione-delle-competenze>



of a Certificate of Qualification or a Certificate of Competence may also constitute a training credit upon entry to formal training courses.

Emilia-Romagna

The Emilia-Romagna Region has also defined and implemented a regional strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This strategy envisaged the implementation of a competence validation device within the Regional Certification System, the Regional System for the Formalisation and Certification of Competences (SRFC)⁷³, which allows to formalise and certify the competences acquired by people, not only as a result of training courses but also through work experience, in relation to the professional standards of the Regional Qualification System. The system is aimed at the acquisition of a certificate of competences or a professional qualification according to the Regional System of Qualifications (SRQ). Regional Law No. 12 of 2003 in fact provides for the recognition of people's right to certification and recognition of skills acquired in different learning situations: schooling, vocational training, professional and personal experience (e.g. voluntary work, associative life, etc.). In the regional strategy on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁷⁴ it is stated that the certification process is aimed at formalising and certifying the competences possessed also by people with experience gained in working and/or informal contexts and/or with certificates obtained in relation to formal learning situations, interested in obtaining a formalisation and certification document.

The SRFC applies:

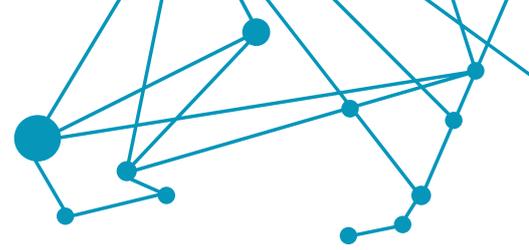
- in all training courses in which technical and professional skills are developed;
- in apprenticeships and community service;
- in employment, as a complement to the active policy measures provided by the employment centres and by the accredited private subjects of the Active Employment Network.

It is aimed at people:

- who participate in a training course;
- who intend to have skills acquired in formal (education and training), non-formal (work and professional contexts) and informal (social and individual life contexts) contexts recognised.

⁷³ <https://formazione lavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/qualifiche/approfondimenti/srhc/sistema>

⁷⁴ "Modifiche e integrazioni al sistema regionale di formalizzazione e certificazione delle competenze di cui alla dgr. n. 530/2006", "Il sistema regionale di formalizzazione e certificazione delle competenze"
<https://formazione lavoro.regione.emilia-romagna.it/qualifiche/approfondimenti/atti-amministrativi/srhc/disposizioni/atti-di-sistema>



4.5 MU.SA – Museum Sector Alliance

Mu.SA⁷⁵ was an Erasmus + Sector Skills Alliance project implemented between 2016 and 2020, which addressed the training needs of museum and cultural heritage professionals in the digital sphere, taking into account the disconnection between formal education and training and the museum work, deriving from digital technologies.

The project set itself the following objectives:⁷⁶

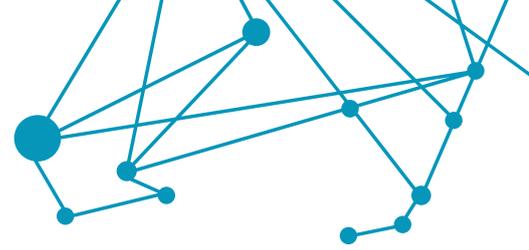
1. Identify Europe-wide emerging job role profiles for museum professionals and map them to EQF and NQFs of the participating countries;
2. Apply a learning outcome-based methodology to the design of training modules, using ECVET to facilitate recognition of learning and mobility;
3. Contribute to a European standard for learning outcomes, to occupational standards (i.e. ESCO) and frameworks (i.e. eCF);
4. Develop a modular European VET curriculum (composed of a MOOC, e-learning modules, in presence training and work-based learning) to be adapted to national needs;
5. Promote quality assurance in the VET curriculum using EQAVET system;
6. Develop an integrated online platform to deliver the VET curricula and to stimulate sharing, exchange and flow of knowledge, experiences and best practices;
7. Pilot the VET curriculum in 3 project countries;
8. Evaluate the outcomes and produce handbooks and guidelines;
9. Promote, disseminate and exploit the results at national and European levels.

Following a sector and training needs analysis in the three participating countries – Italy, Greece and Portugal - Mu.SA identified four profiles of emerging job roles in museums:

- Digital Collections Curator
- Digital Strategy Manager
- Online Community Manager
- Digital Interactive Experience Developer

⁷⁵ <http://www.project-musa.eu>

⁷⁶ Kameas, A. Polymeropoulou, P. eds. (2000). The future of Museum Professionals in the Digital Era. The Success Story of Mu.SA, Hellenic Open University Press, p. IX.



The training programme, developed to deliver the competences connected to the four profiles, consisted of a MOOC and in four specialisation courses, one for each profile, which combined e-learning, face to face instructions and workplace learning.

The MOOC “Essential Skills for Museum Professionals” was focused on basic competences; by attending it museum professionals acquired 17 digital competences: 8 advanced competences from e-CF and 9 basic digital DigComp competences. 3.800 people from 45 countries enrolled in the MOOC and 1370 of them completed it successfully.

In the Mu.SA 4 Specialization Courses participants specialized in the competences allocated to the selected role profile: 21 advanced competences from e-CF and 6 basic DigComp competences. In addition, both the MOOC and the specialisation courses delivered so called ‘transferable’ skills, such as communication, teamwork, creative thinking, leadership, time management, mentoring, networking, ethical skills, etc.

Those who successfully completed the MOOC and the specialisation course were awarded a certificate (EQF level 5) which describes the nature, content and duration of the course, as well as the skills and competences acquired. The certification was awarded by the Mu.SA Consortium partners⁷⁷, led by the Hellenic Open University.

In compliance with the EU 2012 “Recommendation the validation of non-formal and informal learning”⁷⁸, the modular structure based on learning outcomes of the four Mu.SA VET curricula allowed participants to have prior informal and non-formal learning validated, in case they could demonstrate to have completed self-directed learning or trainings modules similar to those offered by Mu.SA, or to have professional experience in the cultural field, that could exempt them from taking some of the Mu.SA modules.⁷⁹

The legacy of the Mu.SA project includes three online Communities of Practice established at national level in three of the four partner countries to continue a process of peer learning and exchange among museum professionals, as well as online educational materials (OERs) which are still available on the project web site.⁸⁰ Mu.SA has also been included in the “DigComp into Action”⁸¹ and “DigComp at Work”⁸² publications by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission as a selected case study.

⁷⁷ The consortium was made of 11 partners from four EU countries, including three universities: Hellenic Open University (lead partner) (GR), University of Porto (PT), Link Campus University (IT); three museum umbrella organisations: Istituto Beni Culturali (IT), ICOM Greece (GR), ICOM Portugal (PT); one VET provider, AKMI (GR); three cultural organisations: Symbola and Melting Pro (both IT), and Mapa das Ideas (PT); and one European network, Culture Action Europe (BE).

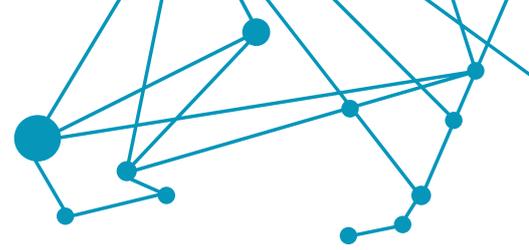
⁷⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2801%29>

⁷⁹ A. Kameas, supra note 76, p. 25-26.

⁸⁰ <http://www.project-musa.eu/results/oers/>

⁸¹ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC110624>

⁸² <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC120376>



4.6 BIBLIO - Boosting Digital Skills and Competences for Librarians in Europe

BIBLIO⁸³ is a 42-months Erasmus+ project involving five EU countries (Italy, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece and Latvia) and lasting until April 2023.

The project addresses the skills gap in the library sector due to digital transformation that is changing the role of libraries and library professionals. The project targets library professionals and unemployed people in the library sector by enabling them to offer innovative services for the users. It facilitates the acquisition of digital and transversal skills for library professionals by setting up a system for skills assessment, learning offer, validation, and recognition.

Project objectives

- To identify the existing and emerging skills needs for the library sector, mapping them to EQF and NQFs feeding these findings into the European Skills Panorama;
- To identify the Europe-wide emerging job profiles in the library sector of the 21st century;
- To support the development of highly skilled, qualified and mobile workforce in the sector, addressing the mismatch between formal education and labour market;
- To develop a European VET curriculum that can be adapted to national needs;
- To support the recognition of the new VET qualification at EU level, promoting quality assurance of VET curricula using EQAVET system;
- To promote work-based learning and intergenerational learning in VET.

Results so far

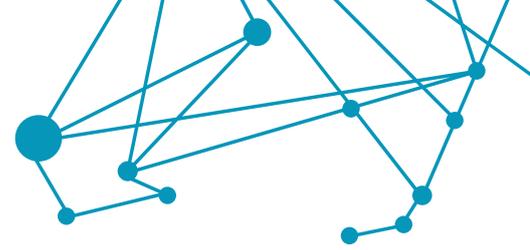
1. Analysis of the training needs and offers⁸⁴ in the library sector.
2. Two emerging job role profiles based on the above-mentioned analysis: Community Engagement and Communication Officer (CECO)⁸⁵ and Digital Transformation Facilitator (DIGY)⁸⁶. Both curricula have been mapped within DigComp, EntreComp and European eCompetence frameworks. For each profile, a modular VET curriculum addressing EQF 5 was designed, applying a VET methodology based on learning outcomes and on the blended learning principles. The curricula are based on a set of digital OERs (Open Educational Resources) supporting the acquisition of 40+ digital and transversal competences.

⁸³ <https://www.biblio-project.eu/>

⁸⁴ https://www.biblio-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BIBLIO_WP2_Mapping-Professional-Needs_Report.pdf

⁸⁵ https://www.biblio-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/BIBLIO-WP2-Del8-Emerging-Job-Role-Profile_Community-Engagement-and-Communication-Officer.pdf

⁸⁶ https://www.biblio-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/BIBLIO-WP2-Del8-Emerging-Job-Role-Profile_Digital-Transformation-Facilitator.pdf



3. A MOOC addressed to European library professionals which ran for 8 weeks⁸⁷.
4. A Specialization Training course (240 hours total in blended modality; 25 trainees per country). ECVET – European credit system for vocational education and training, and EQAVET – the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training are applied⁸⁸.

Quality assurance

The BIBLIO quality assurance approach⁸⁹ is based on the recommendation on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET) adopted in 2009 to contribute to quality improvement in VET and to increased transparency of, and consistency in, VET policy developments between Member States, thereby promoting mutual trust, mobility of workers and learners, and lifelong learning⁹⁰. It describes the need to set goals and metrics for evidencing achievement, collecting evidence to measure how these metrics are achieved, and then reviewing this information to identify any actions that could improve performance.

EQAVET quality assurance cycle affects all the steps for the joint development and delivery of the BIBLIO project training activity, namely:

- Planning: agreement upon explicit goals/objects and target group among all stakeholders, clear information and localisation/customisation of the training based on needs analysis;
- Implementation: training of staff involved in delivery both on hard and soft skills, continuous monitoring and open feedback system to ensure the achievement of learning objectives;
- Evaluation: all evaluation dimensions covered direct target groups (learners, VET providers and employers) and external relevant actors (e.g. libraries' staff and users) with a particular focus on work-based learning;
- Review: evaluation results are validated by relevant stakeholders and contextualised both in the revision of the training content, methodology and assessment measures.

VET Curricula, Methodology and Training Toolkit evaluation

The DIGY VET Curriculum and the digital OERs have been evaluated and validated, taking into account the following elements:

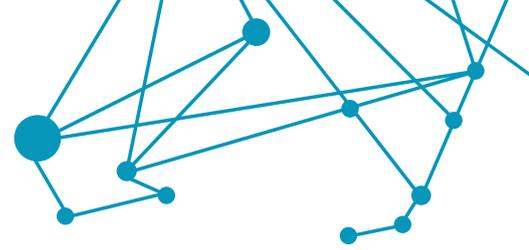
- adequacy of proposed modules (EQF 5);
- compatibility of learning objectives and outcomes with expected level of competence;

⁸⁷ <https://mooc.cti.gr/biblio.html>

⁸⁸ <https://mooc.cti.gr/biblio-sc.html>

⁸⁹ Report "VET methodology", 2021: https://www.biblio-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BIBLIO_VETMethodology.pdf.

⁹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009H0708%2801%29>.



- any lacking elements;
- contents clearness;
- redundancies;
- pertinence to the identified training path.

MOOC evaluation

The external evaluation of the MOOC mentioned above as number 3 of the preliminary results was carried out in November 2021 and involved digital experts coming from the piloting countries (Italy, Greece, Bulgaria and Latvia). It was done taking into consideration the functionality, reliability, usability and efficiency.

The main tools used for reaching target groups after the end of the project took into account:

- the exploitation of the modular VET curricula;
- methodology for realising VET curricula;
- project's training toolkit and digital OERs;
- MOOC and online platform for blended training.

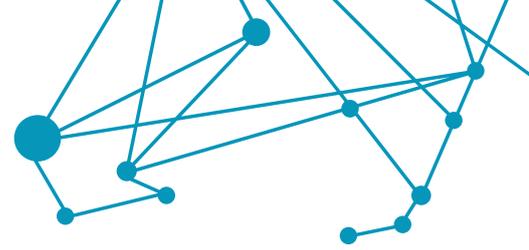
Specialisation course evaluation

Both the blended training and the work-based learning will be evaluated following the Kirkpatrick evaluation model⁹¹ based on four levels (reaction, learning, behaviour, result): different actors will be interested in the activities to evaluate the training programme adequacy (learners, trainers and employers).

In particular:

- **Evaluation of blended training** - the evaluation of blended training will involve questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with the trainers and trainees. It will include items such as structure, format, organisation, access, feedback, learning motives, adaptation etc.
- **Evaluation of work-based learning** – the evaluation of work-based learning will involve questionnaires with trainees, their supervisors/tutors, and the libraries' directors where the learning process was realised. Participants will be asked to fill questionnaires before,

⁹¹ Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). Evaluating Training Programs: the Four Levels. San Francisco: Emeryville, CA: Berrett-Koehler, Publishers Group West [distributor].



during and after the work-based learning activities. Focus groups are being organised with the trainers and hosting libraries and reports are to be shared by next March 2023.

BIBLIO learning agreement

The BIBLIO project defined a learning agreement template to set the quality standards and expected outcomes of a learning mobility organised within the framework of the project and following the model provided by the Erasmus+ programme.

The learning agreement provides documentation for the implementation of the work-based learning and describes the learning outcomes, the associated tasks, the mentoring and monitoring arrangements, and the monitoring and evaluation of the learning.

It is being implemented through agreements with regions, which assures the formal recognition of the learning path.

4.7 BADGES for learning

In cultural heritage contexts, there is great potential for informal learning and lifelong learning. A lot of cultural and natural heritage sites nowadays play the education card. Most of the educational activities are focused on youngsters and school children, and on gaining (historical) knowledge.

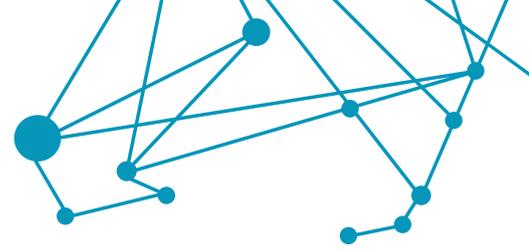
The Erasmus+ project BADGES stated that heritage education in this context should be understood not only as education *about* heritage but also as education *through* and *for* heritage: using heritage assets as a learning environment to develop different kinds of personal and social competences, for the benefit of the learner but also for the benefit of heritage itself. This learning not only focuses on youth but also on adults. However, this learning is often not visible and not recognised.

The BADGES project has developed a framework to shape attractive competence-oriented learning in heritage contexts. BADGES offers heritage sites, museums and also cultural organisations a tool to validate their visitor's learning by issuing electronic badges.

What is a badge?

A 'badge' is a recognition of a learning experience. It is extensively used in youth movements, where badges are given to the members to reward their efforts or their learning. Imagine youngsters or adults, visiting a museum (or a nature park, a historic site ...) and watching, listening, acting, participating and learning, who, at the end of the visit or, back at home, have the opportunity to give proof of what they learned and are awarded a badge. A badge can be a simple token, a sign, real or electronic, preferably linked to a (short) description of the learning activity/ies and the competences involved. It can be handed out on the spot or be sent electronically afterwards.

Such badges share several benefits of introducing validation systems for learning in cultural settings:



- At social and personal level, it can improve self-esteem, confidence, motivation, possible greater access to participative structures and/or social activities;
- At the educational level it can improve access and transfer, stimulate self-reflection on prior learning, provide feedback to the learning process or learning career;
- At the economic level it can improve access to employment / promotion.

Badges make learning explicit. It is a kind of 'validation light'. In the United States, when visitors leave of a museum, they often get a badge. But this badge only proves that has been there, usually the link with what they might have learned is not clear. The European BADGES project wanted to go further and to make the learning competence oriented, mission related, explicit, and visible.

Goals of the project BADGES

The Erasmus+ project Badges for quality learning approaches and validation of non-formal learning in cultural/heritage contexts ran from 2017 to 2019.

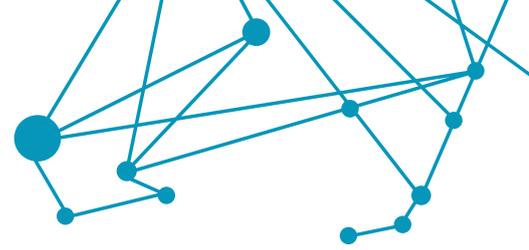
It was a consortium of 8 partners from 6 countries:

- Landcommanderij Alden Biesen (BE) – www.alden-biesen.be
- Adult education institute BUPNet (DE) – www.bupnet.de
- Landkreis Kassel – www.landkreiskassel.de
- Trendhuis (BE): www.trendhuis.be
- PLATO - University of Leiden (NL) – www.plato.leidenuniv.nl
- Malopolska Institute of Culture (PL) – www.mik.krakow.pl
- Imago Mundi (IT) – www.imagomundionlus.it
- IPLeira (PT) – www.ipleira.pt

The project wanted to install a standardised European validation and award system by issuing electronic badges on quality learning approaches and validation of non-formal learning in heritage contexts. A valued badge should award relevant competence development, based on thoroughly planned learning activities, linked to the place, the functioning and mission of the heritage asset (site/collection/park...).

Thus, the main aims of the project were threefold:

- Develop a methodological frame for competence based informal and non-formal learning in cultural and natural heritage sites and beyond;
- Set up a technical platform for issuing electronic badges for competence development;
- Build staff capacity for developing and organising validated non-formal learning.



Results of the project

The project developed a badges system, each badge contained:

- Details about the organisation issuing the badge;
- What the individual has done to earn the badge;
- The criteria that the badge has been assessed against;
- That the badge was issued to the expected recipient;
- The badge earner's unique evidence (optionally included);
- When the badge was issued and whether it has expired.

Technically the project's badges were issued via a Moodle Learning Management System.

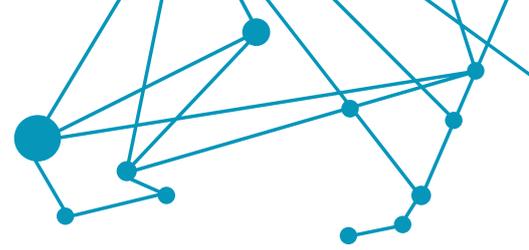
The project has developed a 5-level scale to assess the competencies:

COGNITIVE/KNOWLEDGE		ACTIVITY		AFFECTIVE	
2	3	2	3	2	3
Level Titles	Individual description/ explanatory statement	Level Titles	Individual description/ explanatory statement	Level Titles	Individual description/ explanatory statement
5 Intuitive transfer	Knowing how to interpret and relate events of other cultures to your own culture. Knowing how to relate your own heritage to the meaning making frames of other cultures. Knowing how to help other people interpret their and your heritage.	Developing/ Constructing	Automatically interpret your and other peoples' heritage and relate to your own frames. Spontaneously help other people interpret your own or their heritage.	Regulating (with) others	To find it important to inspire others to value and interpret their heritage. To find it important to incorporate interpretation of other heritage and meaning making frames.
4 Know when (Implicit understanding)	Profound knowledge of interpretative rules. To know how to interpret different types of heritage and relate to your own life & frames. To know the value and meaning frames of other cultures or time periods.	Discovering/ acting independently	Actively looking for new approaches to interpretation. Using a wide range of interpretation techniques. Exploring the meaning of heritage assets on frames of other cultures or time periods.	Affective self-regulation	To find it important to improve your own interpretation capacity. Being inclined to explore the meaning of heritage in different cultural frames. Attitudes of curiosity, respect, empathy, open mindedness.
3 Know how	Acknowledgement of cultural difference with regard to behaviour and values. Knowing how to interpret and relate specific heritage elements to one's own life and value & meaning frame.	Deciding/ selecting	Deliberately applying interpretation techniques when experiencing heritage. Actively refer to personal life and meaning frames when experiencing heritage.	Empathy	To find it important to value cultural heritage. Attitude of acceptance of differences with regard to meaning and value frame. To find it important that people relate to heritage in their own way.
2 Know why Distant understanding	Knowing that yourself, other individuals and groups of people have a specific meaning and value reference frame and therefore see/appreciate/understand heritage differently	Application, Imitation	Sporadically applying interpretation techniques when participating in cultural heritage experiences.	Perspective taking	Generally valuing the importance of heritage interpretation and its value for personal development and for society.
1 Know-that	Knowing that the meaning and value of heritage differs from person to person.	Perception	Observing that heritage has a different meaning for & impact on different people.	Self-centred	Feeling the need to find a specific and personal meaning of heritage assets.

Figure 11: Reference System: Personal heritage interpretation⁹²

Moreover, the BADGES team created a methodological frame for every step in the process: action field - learning field - learning objects – learning path – referencing – documenting - awarding. The team also set up a technical platform for app-driven assignment development and for issuing electronic badges. A BADGES toolbox and training opportunities built heritage staff capacity for developing and organising validated non-formal learning.

⁹² BADGES – Validation system, p. 15., see: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/0041ad6a-5958-4ef0-8811-b563e8d70f79/IO3_BADGES_Validation_approach.pdf



A pilot project was performed at Alden Biesen (BE) where various assignments integrated in the exposition, leading to a badge for a 'self-interpretation competence' of the visitor.

Lessons learned

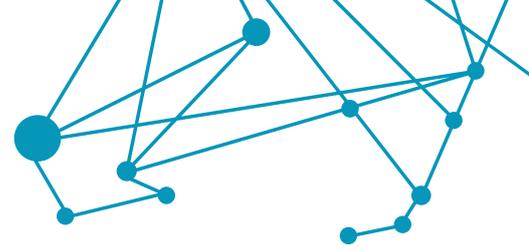
- A badges system can only work well when various organisations join a shared system. One isolated badge has less meaning, the more organisations join in, the more value a badge has.
- A badge is the outcome of a concise design process. When an organisation wishes to issue badges, it should think differently about its education system and develop programmes that explicitly lead to competences.
- The assessment of the competences that are reached is crucial to make a badge valuable. Therefore, one will need a competence model with various levels. This system can only work if badges are not issued automatically.
- It is important to help heritage asset managers and staff realise that their site or asset can be a rich learning environment for professionals, volunteers, and visitors.
- A badges system introduces a new way of looking at education and volunteering work. Thus, heritage staff must be trained to formulate competencies, develop learning paths and assess learning.
- A culture of validation (badging) of non-formal learning in heritage contexts requires a change of mind on two sides:
 - in the heritage sector itself: to recognise the learning aspect, to be willing to make it explicit, and to foster its added value for the sector
 - with the people: to value the learning in cultural heritage settings as a lifelong learning asset for personal development⁹³

4.8 LEM: Using badges to certify competence acquired by participating in an EU funded project

The project LEM – The Learning Museum⁹⁴ was funded between 2010 and 2013 under the Lifelong Learning Grundtvig 'networks' strand with the aim of creating a permanent network of museums and cultural heritage organisations focused on education and lifelong learning.

⁹³ Detailed information on the BADGES project including all published materials is available from the Erasmus+ projects results database at: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2017-1-DE02-KA204-004204>. In addition, this contribution profited tremendously from an interview conducted in December 2022 with Guy Tilkin, the chair of the board of FEST, the Federation for European Storytelling. He was involved as a partner in the BADGES project.

⁹⁴ Due to the fact that the project concluded 10 year ago, the project website is no longer online.



LEM was the arrival point of several projects on museum education, intercultural dialogue, cultural volunteering, lifelong learning, all funded by the European Union between 2003 and 2010.

Bringing all the knowledge, reflections, experiences and especially personal contacts developed over many years in prior cooperation initiatives into one single network that aspired to be a permanent forum for discussions on learning, access and dialogue in museums, was the challenge LEM intended to face.

Although many partners had previous experience in running multilateral cooperation projects, there was also an awareness that networks are rather different enterprises: while the former are focused on products, the latter are focused on processes and require different sets of skills, as well as assessment criteria.

“European networks can be regarded as an attempt to overcome the prevalent thinking in terms of isolated projects. [...] An EU-funded network is expected to become a key player in its respective field at European level [...] which involves a long list of tasks the network should fulfil.”⁹⁵

“Networks are about learning and networking...the objective of European networks should be to bring together practitioners, experts and policy makers in a specific field and create an organisational framework for networking.”⁹⁶

Given the specificity of the project and the competences that consortium partners were acquiring by participating in the project, it was decided to measure and acknowledge the learning which had happened in the non-formal and informal context of the European funded project.

Using the tools and reference systems developed by the EU funded project VIP⁹⁷, consortium partners filled in 3 different questionnaires first at the beginning, and then towards the end of the three-year period of the project duration to self-assess their competences in three areas:

- Intercultural awareness
- Teamwork
- Networking

⁹⁵ Bienzle, H., Gelabert, E., Jütte, W., Kolyva, K., Meyer, N. and Tilkin, G. (2007). The Art of Networking, “die Berater”, Wien, p. 26.

⁹⁶ *ivi*, p.33.

⁹⁷ <http://www.vip-eu.org/index.php?id=1> The project VIP (Validation of Informal Learning in Grundtvig Projects and Partnerships) developed a methodology for assessing competence development of team members working in European education projects and partnerships. In contrast to collaboration on the national level, activities in transnational teams require not only stronger efforts in terms of resources (time, personnel, funds) but also additional competences and knowledge. Participants of multilateral projects and partnerships acquire these new competences in the European projects they are involved in. The evaluation of these internal learning processes of European project partners is very often an unknown territory although this collaborative learning bears a tremendous European potential since project actors are multipliers of the idea of European integration. The main objective of VIP was the development of a specific evaluation system in regard to “learning in European collaborative projects and partnerships”. With this, VIP wanted to contribute to a substantial approach to assess, visualise and manage collaborative learning competences in European projects and partnerships to improve the visibility of “informal learning in collaborative projects”.



Given the multinational character of the people involved and the impossibility to map the skills they had acquired to any one national system of qualifications, digital badges⁹⁸ were used to recognise and visualise their learning, so each individual involved in the project who had successfully acquired new skills in networking, teamwork and intercultural awareness, was awarded the badge of “Museum networker”.

4.9 The Conservator-Restorer

This case study documents the efforts to create standards for certification and quality assurance mechanisms by the members of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer Associations (E.C.C.O.). The conservator-restorer is an emerging profession which has been developing for many decades and is still in a state of transformation into a distinct profession characterised by formalised, specific education and professional recognition in some European countries.

Damaged works of art have been repaired or restored for many centuries. However, only in the course of the 19th century did this activity turn into a regular occupation, which was initially mostly performed by artists or craftspeople. Already quite early a few specific education courses were established, but it was only in the 1930s that HE courses commenced. In the 1950s, the first conservator-restorer association was founded in Germany, which was followed by numerous others in Europe over the years.

Despite these early efforts the first definition of the conservator-restorer and the occupation dates only from 1984 (ICOM-CC): “The Conservator-Restorer – a Definition of the Profession”⁹⁹. This decade was also characterised by the increasing impact of science on the discipline and the beginning of a boom of specific literature. The avalanche of specific knowledge creation, not only in the field of material sciences, but also in the humanities, has not ceased to slow down until the present.

At the end of the 1980s in most European countries, conservator-restorer associations existed, and in 1991, the umbrella organisation E.C.C.O. was founded.¹⁰⁰ The aim of E.C.C.O. is laid down in the statutes: “[...] to promote the conservation and restoration of Cultural Heritage, to promote and develop a high level of education and training, research and practice in the field of conservation-restoration, in accordance with the definition adopted by E.C.C.O., to work toward legal recognition of professional standards in order to affirm and obtain recognition of the professional status of Conservator-Restorer at National and European levels [...]”¹⁰¹.

E.C.C.O. took the ICOM-CC definition of the conservator-restorer as a starting point and developed professional guidelines, which consist of a definition of the profession (1993), a code of ethics (1993) and a third part on education and training (1994) which already aims at HE.

⁹⁸ For more information on badges in general, see chapter 4.7 of this report.

⁹⁹ ICOM-CC (1984). The Conservator-Restorer: a Definition of the Profession.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.ecco-eu.org> E.C.C.O. has 26 members in 24 countries.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e-c-c-o/statutes/>



In 1998, the European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education (ENCoRE) was founded.¹⁰² In the statutes its aims are described as being based on the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines and the Document of Pavia as a result of a European summit of conservator-restorers.¹⁰³ Only institutions offering a degree programme with conservation-restoration as the core subject can become members of this network of universities.

In 2003, the “E.C.C.O.-ENCoRE Joint Paper”¹⁰⁴ was published. It states that 300 ECTS in conservation-restoration as the core subject leading to a master's degree are the necessary condition to access independent professional practice as a conservator-restorer. The ECPL project in 2007 confirmed that the level for the fully professional conservator-restorer should be EQF 7, corresponding to the master's level.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, in 2011, E.C.C.O. published a paper on standards for accessing the conservation-restoration profession.¹⁰⁶ The following impact of all these activities is clearly reflected by the educational change of the last 20 years: HE education in conservation-restoration at master's level has become a standard which is followed by the majority of European educational institutions offering programmes in that field.

Conservation of cultural heritage is in the public interest. However, only few European countries legally specify the qualifications of the conservator-restorer, to prevent uninformed and improper interventions on listed and/or state-owned cultural heritage: Italy, Greece, France, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia. These specifications only apply to listed heritage, all other objects are mostly not protected in this way, regardless if they are privately or state-owned.

These legal provisions differ significantly from country to country; however, they all do require formal E&T, with a tendency towards higher education at EQF level 6 or 7, in accordance with the national education frameworks. In addition to E&T, sometimes also a certain period of practice is prescribed. Individual evaluations of the professional qualifications of applicants by a ministry commission may be part of the procedure. (However, in some cases the qualifications of the members of these commissions are not sufficiently defined to ensure that they all have the necessary know-how to judge the specific competences of the conservator-restorer.) Most of these laws have been passed relatively recently. One common element of them is to foresee a transition phase for those professionals who have been active for many years, never having had the opportunity of a formal education or at a lower EQF level.

Conservator-restorer associations always have had certain membership requirements, based on professional qualifications or recognition of competences. Because initially there were hardly any opportunities for formal E&T, the associations had to develop certain assessment and certification procedures for their members. The certification of the professional knowledge and competences of their members has served not only the sustainability of cultural heritage, but is also an extremely valuable quality indicator for clients. In some countries listed heritage is off limits to those who are not certified through such systems.

However, membership policies changed over the years, and in particular with the statement of E.C.C.O.-ENCoRE, the transition from previous to new requirements had to be implemented

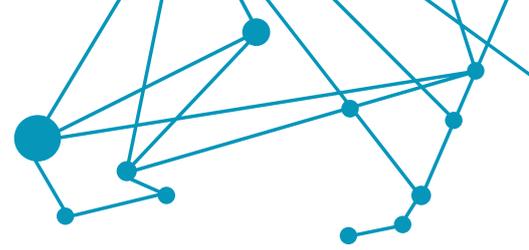
¹⁰² <http://encore-edu.org/>

¹⁰³ <http://encore-edu.org/Pavia.html?tabindex=1&tabid=188>

¹⁰⁴ E.C.C.O – ENCoRE (2003). Paper on Education and Access to the Conservation-Restoration Profession.

¹⁰⁵ ECPL (2007). Defining common standards for conservation-restoration. A handbook. In: *Defining Common Standards for Cultural Heritage Conservation-Restoration – ECPL*, 1st ed., CD-ROM, Valletta: Heritage Malta.

¹⁰⁶ E.C.C.O. (2011). Competences for access to the conservation-restoration profession.



gradually; and it turned out to be a rather slow process. The younger generation could of course easily fulfil the requirement of an academic education in conservation-restoration. But numerous professionals without academic qualifications, yet with many years of experience in the field, wanted to join the conservator-restorer associations as well. For them so-called “grandfather’s clauses” were the first immediate solution, introduced by most of the associations, and accepting those professionals who had practiced in the field for many years. Moreover, all those who had already been members in the association could remain so, even if they did not fulfil the new requirements. Moreover, for a few specialisations, there have been and are still very few HE programmes or none at all available. Yet, there have always been autodidactic highly competent professionals for these specialisations. Hence, for these cases specific entrance conditions, such as accreditation of professional competences, have been developed.

The question of how to ascertain professional quality has been resolved in different ways. In case of a lack of a defined educational path there are accreditation mechanisms based on a peer assessment process with interviews, individual experience and portfolios, parameters varying from country to country and from association to association. Usually, two or three members are involved in conducting such accreditation procedures, with the final decision on membership usually taken by the general assembly or sometimes by the board. Sometimes even a recommendation by two members may be a prerequisite for accepting a new member.

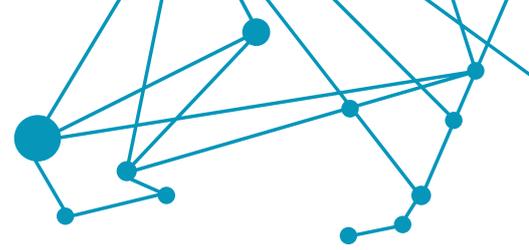
To explore the current situation of membership conditions we conducted a survey among the E.C.C.O. full members (21 associations in 19 countries), with a focus on members in the associations having voting rights, thus excluding student members, honorary members etc. Information could be collected from 20 conservator-restorer associations.

It has to be mentioned that some conservator-restorer associations are currently revising their statutes or will do so in the near future, and will hence be about to update their membership requirements. However, the survey revealed a situation which can be described as follows:

In most cases the entrance conditions require what E.C.C.O. and ENCoRE ask for as a standard. Sometimes, depending on the specific national educational offer, the association asks for a bachelor’s degree instead of a master’s degree as entry condition, when there is or was no HE institution in the country offering such a master’s programme (e.g. Spain, Denmark, Norway). Sometimes in addition to the proof of HE qualification, one to three years of practice are required.

In some countries the title “conservator-restorer” (in the national language) has been legally defined, together with other titles (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovak Republic, Slovenia).

Several associations also accept candidates with non-academic qualifications, due to the above-mentioned transition clauses being also reflected in the national laws, because of exceptional cases or due to the lack of existing programmes (Ireland). Furthermore, the lack of a programme for a specific specialisation may lead to acceptance of individuals after completion of an accreditation procedure.



4.10 S.T.A.G. Sail Training Association Germany

The Sail Training Association (STA) was established in 1956 first in the UK and later became a worldwide foundation of national "Sail-Training-Associations" in 1984.

1984 was the same year in which the Sail Training Association Germany (S.T.A.G.)¹⁰⁷ was founded in Bremerhaven on the model of an English Sail Training Organisation to be able to provide more intensive support to German youths, adults, ship owners and port cities.

S.T.A.G. is a non-profit association with charitable tasks, which receives funding from donations and membership fees. Today, the S.T.A.G. has over 4000 members, more than 30 member ships and several member harbours and supports young people who cannot fully finance a sail training trip on a sailing ship themselves.

S.T.A.G. is also a member of the Joint Commission for Historic Watercraft (GSHW), the German umbrella organisation for traditional ships in service. There it represents the national interests of traditional sailing vessels vis-à-vis the Federal Ministry of Transport about safety issues on traditional vessels.

In the conviction that sailing can represent a valuable and educational experience for young people, S.T.A.G. started a sail training programme which makes it possible for youths and young adults to sail aboard member ships at a lower price. The developed training programme aims at bringing together young people from all over the world, training them in seafaring, navigation, maintenance and operation, while practicing tolerance and team spirit. During the training traditional seamanship is passed on: handling ropes, manoeuvre knowledge, weather knowledge, etc., but at the same time self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for others are promoted.

The course has been developed according to recognised training standards, with detailed descriptions of skills, competences and professional roles needed on board of large and small traditional sailing ships.

As a consequence, a "Qualification certificate" is issued to any young person/crew member who successfully completes the training for his/her specific position onboard.

The hope is that the positive, life-changing experience that young people are exposed to during the training course, will make them want to commit to traditional sailing, as the craft of seamanship on traditional sailing ships can be considered as intangible cultural heritage.

Indeed, in November 2021, with the support of other German organisations and stakeholders focused on sail training, S.T.A.G., submitted an application to the German UNESCO commission to have "Sail training" entered into the federal-register of intangible cultural heritage as an example of good practices.

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.sta-g.de/die-s-t-a-g/>



5. Conclusions

This concluding chapter summarises the main learnings from this report with relevance for cultural heritage E&T. The focus is on those areas in which we felt that clarifications and/or policy action was most urgently required to initiate positive change in European cultural heritage E&T.

European quality standards for VET and HE

European quality standards for formal VET and HE have been successfully established and implemented across Europe. This has certainly fostered mutual trust and thus has aided recognition and mobility in these sectors. At the same time, it is obvious that the degree of implementation of EQAVET and the ESG, respectively, can vary a great deal from country to country. This is particularly pronounced in the VET sector, in which the implementation of EQAVET appears to have been patchy at best. One specific concern is that even where EQAVET has been implemented, this happened almost exclusively in school-based initial VET, and not in practical training at companies, which in some countries constitutes by far the major element of VET. Therefore, we recommend that the implementation of European quality standards is fostered across Europe, with a particular focus on VET and its practical training component. Many of the vocational occupations with high relevance for cultural heritage suffer from a lack of employees. Ensuring the quality of practical training may turn out to be an important element in attracting qualified and motivated trainees.

Continuing education and training

Given the importance of CET for up-skilling and re-skilling the European workforce, the fact that there are no European quality standards for this field of education constitutes a void waiting to be filled. Even though such standards could only be voluntary, we have seen in HE and, albeit to a lesser degree, in VET, that voluntary quality standards do work and would complement the various national systems which have been developed for CET.

The value of non-formal and informal learning

Formal E&T, with its standardised quality assurance and qualifications awarded in most cases, has no need for complex validation and certification processes and thus may look like the preferred way forward. However, we would like to underline that the value of non-formal and informal learning paths must be recognised as well. They allow both the learner and the teacher/trainer far greater flexibility in terms of time and learning/teaching methods than formal E&T ever could. Moreover, there are some fields where the costs and administration required by formal E&T simply would not make sense or would be even detrimental to successful learning. Yet, to ease validation/certification efforts, we recommend that the following principles are observed:

- Define shared quality standards for informal learning paths, including levels of competences (by applying Bloom's Taxonomy or other such taxonomies which are fit for purpose for the respective learning path) and ways to recognise them;



- Support shared tools that make the competences acquired through informal learning paths visible. In order to make them comparable, several levels of recognition should be possible (attendance certificate, portfolio assessment, exam assessment) and monitoring procedures for quality assessment should be in place;
- Link these documents to recognition of these competences in higher education and the labour market: make them worthwhile and valuable in other contexts.

Conservator-restorer

The result of the survey shows that the conditions for practice as a conservator-restorer differ considerably from country to country. This is of course at odds with the notion of a common European cultural heritage sector based on shared quality standards for conservation-restoration. In order to foster a joint European cultural heritage sector, which after all is at the heart of the CHARTER Alliance, and to facilitate the mobility of professionals both in the private and public sector, we recommend that a process is initiated towards the goal of including conservators-restorers in the list of recognized professions as defined by the Professional Qualifications Directive.¹⁰⁸ Inclusion in this Directive would also aide the profession in overcoming current national legal constraints for joint standards.

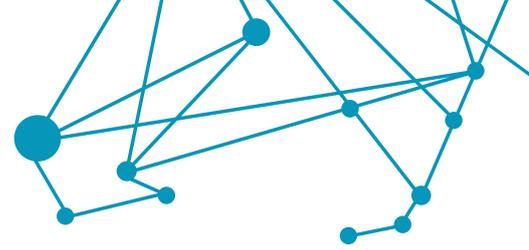
Furthermore, such a solution would finally enable study programmes in conservation-restoring to fully participate in European exchange programmes (Erasmus+, etc), which is near to impossible at the moment. Clearly defined and transparent quality criteria for conservators-restorers based on the E.C.C.O. and ENCoRE statements¹⁰⁹ and included into the Professional Qualifications Directive would surely also foster the trust of private owners of tangible heritage. For ultimately this would entail that every private citizen hiring a conservator-restorer could rest assured that this individual has been trained to a standard defined by European law.

The EU Directive on a proportionality test before adoption of a new regulation or profession¹¹⁰ of 28 June 2018 outlines that “the safeguarding and conservation of the national historic and artistic heritage” is among the overriding reasons in the public interest, as recognised by the European Court of Justice. We therefore suggest initiating the process of EU recognition via national application of the proportionality test as outlined in the 2018 Directive.

¹⁰⁸ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

¹⁰⁹ See supra notes 104 and 106.

¹¹⁰ Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on a proportionality test before adoption of ta new regulation or profession 2018/958.



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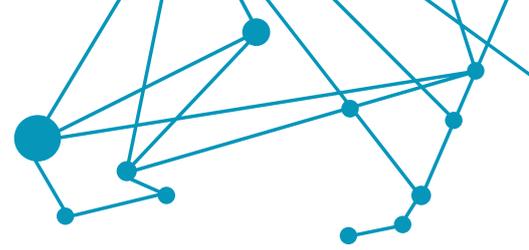
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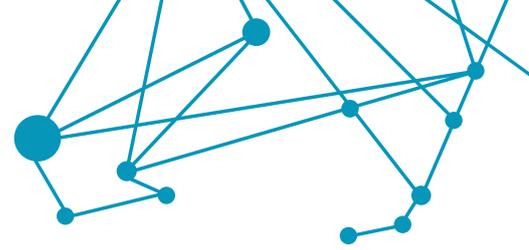
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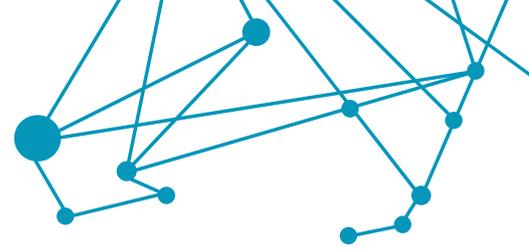
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Annex 1: Foci of the analysed Blueprint projects (chapter 2.4)

https://charter-alliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annex-I_D3.3.pdf

Annex 2: Main approaches used in benchmarked Blueprints regarding qualification, certification and quality standards in professions and training

https://charter-alliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annex-II_D3.3.pdf

Annex 3: Summary of EU Sectoral Alliances/Blueprints concerning qualification, certification and quality standard in professions and training

https://charter-alliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Annex-III_D3.3.pdf



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