



Developing Innovative and Attractive CVET programmes in industrial shoe production

Country Report on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) - Romania

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1 Introduction and recognition of prior learning in Romania

a. Introduction

Nobody would deny that it's a waste of time and de-motivating if people who acquired already some knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) during their educational or working life have to re-acquire those when changing the educational track. However, how to measure/assure the equivalence of these prior KSC and the requirements of the new track? Dozens or even hundreds of mechanisms have been developed in the recent years by different stakeholders, this national report sketches briefly the most relevant respective successful ones in Romania.

It does not aim at delivering a comprehensive overview of any mechanism possible; mechanisms and examples described follow a pragmatic approach; leading questions were:

- Has the mechanism real benefit for both the learner and the educational provider or does it turn out as a technocratic nightmare (like some word-by-word comparisons of curricula of different educational tracks)?
- How is the quality assured; that the prior learning outcomes (LO) are really comparable to the new requirements?
- Who is responsible for the process of RPL? Are there any potential conflicts between the provider of the new track and the institution being in charge for RPL?
- Which of the mechanisms detected fit best for the sake of the aims of DIA-CVET project (to develop, pilot and evaluate CVET-profiles in industrial shoe production)?
- And, finally, which of these mechanisms are, according to national laws and regulations, legally applicable for CVET on European Qualification Framework level 5 or 6?

b. RPL in Romania

Recognition of all forms of learning results is a precondition to create an open lifelong learning system and ensure that the transition between the education sub-sectors is facilitated.

In Romania, the recognition of prior learning is regulated by the **National Education Law** and **coordinated** by the **Romanian National Authority for Qualifications (in Ro: Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari – ANC)**.

The recognition of prior learning is regulated by legal framework and procedures:

- Legal framework:
 - **system / mechanism** elaborated by the **Ministry of Education** through the **“Education Law”** for recognizing the competences acquired / obtained in other contexts / in other ways than the formal / non-formal ones;
 - **Romanian National Authority for Qualifications** - institution with attributions in recognition of the competences acquired / obtained in other contexts / in other ways than the formal / non-formal ones.
- Procedures developed by the **Ministry of Education** and **Ministry of Labour**.

Currently, the recognition of prior learning in Romania is covered by three National strategies approved by government decisions, as follows:

- **National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2015-2020**, approved by: GD no. 418/2015, in force since June 2015;
- **National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015-2020**, approved by: GD no. 565/2015, in force since July 2015;
- **Romanian Education and Training Strategy in the period 2016-2020**, approved by: GD no. 317/2016, in force since May 2016.

The **National Authority for Qualifications** is a public institution subordinated to the **Ministry of Education**, according to ART 342 National Education Law / 2011 and coordinates at national level the activity of evaluation and certification of the professional competences obtained in other ways than the formal ones.

Romanian National Authority for Qualifications and has the following roles:

- to elaborate the **Romanian National Qualification Framework** (in RO: Cadrul national al calificariilor - CNC) based on the European Qualifications Framework – EQF;
- to manage the **National Register of Qualifications** (in RO - Registrul national al calificariilor – RNC);
- to manage the **National Register of Adult Vocational Training Providers** (in RO: Registrul national al furnizorilor de formare profesionala a adultilor. RNFPFA – RNFPFA).

The implementation of Romanian National Qualification Framework targets the national system of qualifications obtained in general secondary education, in vocational and technical education, in continuing vocational training, in apprenticeship, in higher education, both in formal, informal and non-formal contexts, from the perspective of lifelong learning and allows the recognition, evaluation and linkage of all learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts and ensures the coherence of qualifications and certifications.

The existence of **Romanian National Qualification Framework** helps to avoid duplicate and overlapping qualifications, helps learners to make informed decisions about career planning and facilitates professional development, in the perspective of lifelong learning.

2 Main mechanisms of RPL in Romania

2.1 Public and private authorized legal entities in evaluation and certification of professional competencies

Regarding Recognition of Prior Learning, the **Romanian National Authority for Qualifications** has the following responsibilities:

- authorizes evaluation centres and bodies, based on evaluation reports prepared by external evaluators;
- coordinates the authorization of professional competence assessment centres and the certification of professional competence evaluators;
- evaluates and certifies the evaluators of professional competences, the evaluators of evaluators and the external evaluators;
- draws the National Register of professional competence evaluators, evaluators of evaluators and certified external evaluators.

At the level of the **National Authority for Qualifications**, a council with a consultative role was constituted to assist the **National Authority for Qualifications** in establishing national strategies and action plans for the **National Qualification Framework** and adult vocational training development. The **Consultative Council** is composed of representatives of pre-university and university educational institutions, students, professional associations, central public administration, employers, trade unions and sectoral committees.

The process of **assessing professional competences** obtained through other ways than formal ones has the following characteristics:

- it is a voluntary process;
- refers to the occupational / professional training standards;
- for each unit of competence, the evaluation is completed with the result "competent" or "not yet competent".

The professional competencies can be evaluated and certificated by authorized **Legal entities** of public or private law (Romanian or foreign) who wish to carry out activities of evaluation and certification of professional competencies obtained in other ways than formal ones, completed by certificates of competence with national recognition.

The legal entities are authorized for occupations / qualifications for which there are existing occupational / professional training standards and can assess all competence units within an occupational / training standard or only for one or more competence units from that standard, depending on the request of the person concerned.

Professional competences assessing mechanism:

- The persons who wish to be evaluated in order to recognize their professional competencies obtained in other ways than the formal ones, address an authorized centre for the respective occupation / qualification.
- Each candidate submits a written application to the authorized centre;
- Each candidate is assigned a professional skills evaluator who is responsible for implementing the entire assessment process.

- Before entering the evaluation process, the candidate analyses, assisted by the professional skills evaluator, his own professional performance in relation to the content of the occupational / professional training standard.
- Depending on the result of the self-assessment, the professional skills evaluator recommends the candidate to enter the assessment process for the entire standard or for part of the occupational standard or not to enter the assessment process.
- The decision to enter the evaluation process belongs to the candidate, who attaches to the submitted application the list of competence units for which he wants to be evaluated and the list of competence units of the occupational standard
- by following legal requirements, each centre establishes a concrete way of evaluation, so that the applied methods to demonstrate the competence as a whole.
- It is mandatory that the written test and a method of practical demonstration of competence be part of any combination of methods chosen by the centre / evaluator of professional skills.

2.2 European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) and recognition of prior learning

In 2019, the Ministry of education issued a **Guide for the user of the European transfer and accumulation system of ECTS / SECT credits** having a section regarding the role of ECTS in Lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. One mentioned method for recognizing prior learning and experience is the **Portfolio method** through which learners must collect documents to demonstrate individual skills acquired in different ways. To support learners preparing their portfolios, education institutions should develop recognition policies for non-formal or informal learning which should include elements such as advice, feedback for students on the results of the evaluation and the possibility to file an appeal. These policies should be implemented through consultancy, counselling and recognition centres.

The process of granting credits has four main stages:

1. Initial advice and guidance (process, costs, roles and responsibilities, learning paths);
2. Support (understanding and identifying learning outcomes, collecting and selecting evidence);
3. Recognition / evaluation of evidences regarding learning outcomes;
4. Granting credits.

2.3 Recognizing professional experience and qualifications gained abroad

A **Guide for recognizing professional experience and qualifications gained abroad** [<https://cnred.edu.ro/ro/Ghid-recunoastere-experienta-profesionala-si-calificari-dobandite-in-strainatate>] was recently developed at the initiative and under the coordination of the **Department for Romanians Abroad** (in RO: Departamentul pentru Românii de Pretutindeni - DRP), with the contributions of the **Ministry of Labor and Social Protection**, the **National Agency for Employment**, the **National Centre for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas**, the **National Qualifications Authority** and the **INCA Romania Association**.

The guide covers the following scenarios:

1. Recognition / equivalence of pre-university and university diplomas;
2. Recognition of professional experience gained in EU, EEA or Swiss Confederation Member States;
3. Recognition of a certificate of qualification acquired outside the education system, through an authorized vocational training providers / competence assessment centres;
4. Recognition of prior experience (with/without supporting documents) with or without a qualification certificate;

Quality assurance

To ensure the compatibility of prior learning results with the existing requirements, the recognition process has to report to the existing occupational / training standards which are constantly updated and the competence assessment centres should be constantly monitored by the National Authority for Qualifications.

Strengths and weaknesses

According to the **National Strategy for Lifelong Learning**, to facilitate the transition between the sub-sectors the education system the recognition of all forms of learning is prerequisite and a well-established system for recognizing prior learning is essential for the efficient use of the National Qualification Framework. Romania needs to further develop its model for recognizing previous learning and the administrative capacity of existing competence assessment centres needs to be improved to recognize the learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. One option to improve the learning recognition structure is to extend the geographical coverage of these centres. Part of the improvement measurements should be designed to inform potential beneficiaries about the benefits of the assessment and certification process and the opportunity to improve their chances on the labour market. Additionally, it is important that the training provided by organizations from the public sector to be validated and certified.

To support learners preparing their portfolios, education institutions should develop recognition policies for non-formal or informal learning which should include elements such as advice, feedback for students on the results of the evaluation and the possibility to file an appeal. These policies should be implemented through consultancy, counselling and recognition centres.

3 Which of these mechanisms can be put in place on CVET-levels 5 or 6 respective in-line with the national regulations for these levels?

According to the legislation, the mechanism of recognition of prior learning targets the whole national system of qualifications (covered by general secondary education, vocational and technical education, continuous professional training, apprenticeship and higher education) obtained in formal contexts and in informal and non-formal ones, from the perspective of lifelong learning.

4 Summary

The recognition of prior learning is regulated by the **Romanian National Education Law** and **coordinated** by the **Romanian National Authority for Qualifications**, a public institution subordinated to the **Ministry of Education**. The Romanian National Authority for Qualifications elaborates the National Qualification Framework which targets the national system of qualifications obtained in formal, informal and non-formal contexts, allows the recognition, evaluation and linkage of all learning outcomes and ensures the coherence of qualifications and certifications.

The recognition of prior learning in Romania is covered by three National strategies: National Lifelong Learning Strategy, National Strategy for Tertiary Education and Romanian Education and Training Strategy.

Romanian National Authority for Qualifications also authorizes evaluation centres and bodies, coordinates the authorization of professional competence assessment centres and evaluates and certifies the evaluators of professional competences. Authorized centres and bodies assess and recognize the professional competences obtained through other ways than formal ones.

To support the process of recognizing prior learning, additional guides were developed and made available: Guide for the user of the European transfer and accumulation system of ECTS / SECT credits and Guide for recognizing professional experience and qualifications gained abroad.

Romania needs to further develop its model for recognizing previous learning and the administrative capacity of existing competence assessment centres needs to be improved to recognize the learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. Education institutions should develop recognition policies for non-formal or informal learning and implement them through consultancy, counselling and recognition centres.

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