



Developing Innovative and Attractive CVET programmes in industrial shoe production

Comparative report on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Portugal, Germany and Romania

IO 2

This project is funded with support from the European Commission.
The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union





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Project data:

Programme: Erasmus+

Project title: Developing Innovative and Attractive CVET programmes in industrial shoe production

Acronym: DIA-CVET

Project 2020-1-DE02-KA202-007600

Duration: 01.09.2020- 31.08.2023

Website: www.dia-cvet.eu

Editor: Andreas Saniter

Authors: DE: Sabina Krebs, Tatjana Hubel (PFI Pirmasens);
Klaus Ruth, Andreas Saniter, Vivian Harberts (ITB);
PT: Rita Souto, Cristina Marques (CTCP), Fátima Martins,
Ricardo Sousa (CFPIC), André Fernandes (CARITÉ);
RO: Aura Mihai, Bogdan Sarghie, Arina Seul (TU Iasi).

Content

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Recognition of Prior Learning in Germany, Romania and Portugal.....	5
2.1	CVET systems in Portugal, Germany and Romania	6
2.2	Objectives of recognition of prior learning in Germany, Portugal and Romania	8
2.3	Legal framework	8
2.4	National Authorities involved and responsible for the processes and other promoters	9
3	Mechanisms of RPL process.....	11
3.1	General view	11
3.2	Different mechanism in Portugal, Germany, Romania	12
3.3	Quality control of RPL processes	16
3.4	Strengths and weaknesses	17
4	Exploitation of the findings in DIA-CVET	20
5	References	21

1 Introduction

Besides formal school, people also learn at work, in social life, in civic life.

Nobody would deny that it is a waste of time and de-motivating if people who acquired already some knowledge, skills and competences during their educational or working life have to re-acquire those when changing the educational track.

Everything that people accumulate as knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) is not always credited to them for the purposes of certification, to obtain a diploma. The acquired KSC should be recognised, in other words, incorporated in the stairway of each individual qualification.

However, how to measure and assure the equivalence of these prior knowledge, skills and competences and the requirements of the new track?

It's important thus, to recognize and validate skills acquired based on life and work experience, with a view to help all individuals to:

- design professional and personal development pathways;
- legitimate and socially certify those KSC in terms of employability;
- enhance the level of qualification recognized by a country / member state;
- facilitate the integration in labour market;
- allow starting an own business in crafts and/or other legislated jobs.

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

In this way, any person, throughout life, must be able to see their KSC evaluated and complete them for the purpose of obtaining a diploma, being able to resume, at any time, their education / training process, according to their personal and professional perspective.

Developing Innovative and Attractive Continuous Vocational Education and Training (DIA-CVET) project includes this subject in its work-plan, namely in the Intellectual Output 2 (IO2); which envisages at:

- finding and applying a method for **structural** Recognition of Prior Learning via:
 - analysing different approaches of RPL in different countries through literature analysis and benchmarking.
 - jointly deciding which approaches to apply and agreeing on a method which should be translated to potentiate its dissemination and assimilation.
 - comparing the findings of the Task Analyses and the relevant IVET (Initial Vocational Education and Training) curricula from the project countries in the sector for potential structural RPL.
- finding and applying a method for **individual** RPL via:
 - identifying existing methods to apply RPL, such as interviews, assessment centres or work samples.
 - jointly deciding which methods to use.
 - selecting the candidates for piloting which will happen in Intellectual Output 6 dedicated to the Piloting.

This report aims at comparing the mechanisms and examples following a pragmatic approach, envisaging answers to leading questions such as:

- Has the mechanism real benefit for both the learner and the educational provider?
- How is the quality assured? Are the prior learning outcomes (LO) really comparable to the new requirements?
- Who is responsible for the process of RPL? How are the relations between the providers of the new track and the institution being in charge for RPL?
- Which of the mechanisms detected fit best to DIA-CVET project aims (to develop, pilot and evaluate CVET-profiles in industrial shoe production) in terms of RPL?
- Which of the mechanisms are, according to national laws and regulations, legally applicable for CVET on European Qualification Framework levels 5 to 7?

This report joins the Portuguese, Romanian and German approaches and drafts a comparative analysis, focusing on the questions listed above, and introduces a RPL mechanism to be applied within DIA-CVET project piloting phase (IO6), when choosing the beneficiaries.

2 Recognition of Prior Learning in Germany, Romania and Portugal

Different stakeholders in different countries have developed a wide number of mechanisms in the recent years. This report presents briefly the most relevant respective successful ones in Portugal, Germany and Romania, the 3 countries of the consortium.

Portugal

The Recognition of Prior Learning in Portugal allows the “Recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC)” acquired and developed throughout life by adults, in non-formal and informal contexts, with a view to obtain a school (basic or secondary level), professional or dual qualification certification.

This process is developed within the framework of the national network of specific centres - QUALIFICA Centres - promoted by the Employment Centres / Employment and Vocational Training Centres of the IEFP, IP network. The Professional and Educational RVCC processes constitute the main attribution of these structures, along with the attribution of providing candidates with training/education orientation processes.

In this context, the recognition of prior learning has assumed, in recent years, as the return of the bet on the qualification of Portuguese adult population, promoting investment in bringing hundreds of thousands of people together in a qualification, namely through the promotion of the recognition of competences and learning and the adequacy of training paths to the profiles and individuals’ needs.

Moreover, after decades stacked to the level 2, 3 and 4, in 2022 a new possibility of RVCC has arrived for active population with level 4 EQF willing to progress to level 5. In fact, the new regulation of RPL in Portugal focuses on encouraging people who have left incomplete routes so that, using different paths, they can complete their paths and to see their training completed, as well as in the deepening of recognition responses, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) under the QUALIFICA Program.

Germany

Formal qualifications play traditionally a very important role on the German labour market. When applying for a job, the most important question is: “What qualification do you hold?”, not “What skills do you have?”. Two examples might illustrate this, partly bizarre, relation:

To work as a researcher at a university, a university master degree is needed, independent of the experience in the subject.

Entrepreneurship in certain sectors such as crafts obliges to hold the degree of a handcraft foreman certified in Germany (EQF 6).

Two different ways of RPL must be distinguished: Whether attending the lessons/courses and passing the assessments is mandatory or whether passing the exams is sufficient. Examples for the first case are general schooling and Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET, EQF 3 or 4), for the latter Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET, EQF 6) and, with some exceptions, Higher Education (HE, EQF 6 or 7).

Romania

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.

In the following sections, a more concrete description is made about the 3 countries involved.

2.1 CVET systems in Portugal, Germany and Romania

Which are the qualification based on which is possible to implement RPL processes at the moment in the 3 countries involved?

Portugal offers the possibility to recognize all qualifications existing in the Portuguese Sectoral qualification framework for Footwear composed by 6 qualifications:

- Footwear Manufacturing Operator – which comprehends all footwear production process – EQF level 2
- Footwear Production management technician – EQF level 4
- Footwear machinery maintenance technician - EQF level 4
- Footwear handcraft production technician (very dedicated to niches) – EQF level 4
- Footwear pattern making technician – EQF level 4
- Technical Specialist in Footwear Design – EQF level 5 which is recent and lack referential for RPL

Adults can obtain basic education through recurrent education, completion of an adult education and training courses (EFA – Education and Training of Adults), through a process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC), or through certified modular training (FMC).

The system also provides a training offer linked to literacy – the training program in basic skills (FCB).

Adults can obtain secondary education through attending an adult education and training (EFA) course, through a process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC), through certified modular training (FM) or through other pathways to secondary education completion.

In RPL the result of the comparison between the competences demonstrated by the candidate and those foreseen in the respective RPL referential allows determining the certification to be awarded, which may correspond to all or parts of the foreseen competences.

Thus, the completion of an RPL process in which all units of competence have been certified assigns:

- Certificate of Qualifications, if the candidate does not yet have the schooling associated with the respective qualification level (Level 2 - 9th year; Level 4 - 12th year);
- Qualification Diploma, level 2 or level 4, if the candidate already has the schooling associated with the respective qualification level.

In case that the candidate obtains a partial certification, a Certificate of Qualifications is also issued, which contains only the validated competence units and a Personal Qualification Plan (PPQ) that identifies the training units that must be attended to obtain full certification.

Germany provides two important CVET qualifications being potential subjects of RPL:

- Industrial foreman (EQF 6) All German foreman profiles consist of 3 (industry, then part 3 and 4 are joined) or 4 (handicraft) parts:
 - Vocation-overlapping skills (entrepreneurship, bookkeeping, etc).
 - VET trainer ordinance.
 - Vocation-specific, practical.
 - Vocation-specific, theoretical.

Holders of a corresponding IVET qualification with some years of work experience are allowed to register for the 3 respective 4 examinations on the parts, but without preparation via seminars they would probably fail. Offering these preparation seminars is a business model for German chambers of commerce and industry respective handicraft, participants must pay quite a lot. Often parts of the (or even the whole) amount are paid by the company, for which the candidate is working.

- State-certified Technician (EQF 6, as well). Beside the foremen, who are the focus of the DIA-CVET project, another established CVET-qualification exists: State-certified technicians. Compared to the foremen qualification, technicians usually acquire more academic knowledge (science, materials, etc.) and less work practice-relevant skills. Technicians are sometimes named as “the little brother of an engineer”. This report neglects the technician qualification as DIA-CVET focusses on operational Spheres of Activity (SoA).

In **Romania** 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.

2.2 Objectives of recognition of prior learning in Germany, Portugal and Romania

The objectives of RPL in all the 3 countries are common as follow:

- to increase the level of professional and educational qualifications of adult population.
- to improve the employability levels of the active population.
- to encourage lifelong learning by valuing all the lessons learned.
- To facilitate the integration in labour market.
- To allow starting their own business what concerns crafts and/or other legislated job (for Germany).

2.3 Legal framework

Portugal

- Ordinance No. 232/2016, of 29 August, which regulates the creation and organization and operation of QUALIFICA Centres.
- Ordinance No. 60-C/2015, of 2 March, amended by Ordinance No. 181-A/2015, of 19 June, no. 190-A/2015, of June 26th and 148/2016, of May 23rd, which publishes the specific regulation of the domain of Human Capital that applies to the processes of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC).
- Ordinance No. 61/2022 January 31 EDUCATION AND WORK, SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL SECURITY regulates the recognition, validation and certification of competences within the scope of the QUALIFICA Program.

Germany

No formal law exists.

Recognition of Prior Learning, as well as of foreign qualifications, are regulated via the “recognition ordinance” (cp: <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/index.php#>).

Romania

- 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.

2.4 National Authorities involved and responsible for the processes and other promoters

In **Portugal**, the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education, I.P. (ANQEP, I.P.) is a public institute integrated in the indirect administration of the State, with administrative, financial and pedagogical autonomy. It has oversight and joint supervision of the Ministries of Education, and of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, in coordination with the Ministry of Economy and Digital Transition. ANQEP mission is to contribute to the improvement of the qualification levels of young people and adults in Portugal, promoting both a growing demand for educational and professional qualifications (double certification), at the non-higher level, as well as an offer of initial and long-term training of life that is broadly attractive, of good quality and relevant to the labour market (Decree-Law no. 36/2012, of 15 February).

Within the scope of the National Qualifications System, ANQEP I.P. has the following attributions:

- To design and permanently update the National Qualifications Catalogue, an instrument that regulates non-higher level dual certification qualifications;
- To regulate and boost the offer of dual certification education and professional training aimed at young people and adults, the offer of specialized artistic education and the system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC), in the school and professional scope, aimed at adults;
- To promote and guarantee the necessary information and guidance devices, the complementarity and flexibility of the education and vocational training systems and the quality of the aforementioned offers, in articulation with the other entities responsible for these matters;
- To coordinate the design of pathways, curriculum development and specific methodologies for dual certification professional education and training aimed at young people and adults and RVCC processes;
- To participate in the development of references for initial and continuous training of teachers, trainers and other professionals involved in the qualification of young people and adults;
- To contribute to the international comparability of qualifications and mobility between education and vocational training systems for young people and adults, through mechanisms of representation and cooperation at European and international level.

The Qualifica Centres support the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education, I. P. (ANQEP, I. P.), with regard to their specific competences' definition of network structuring criteria and implementation of monitoring mechanisms and monitoring of education and training offers.

They are responsible for:

- Information, guidance and referral of candidates, namely for vocational education and training offers, based on the different qualification modalities and seeking to adapt existing offers to the profiles, needs, motivations and expectations of candidates and the dynamics of the labour market;
- Recognition, validation and certification of skills developed by adults throughout their lives by formal, informal and non-formal ways, in the school environment, professional or dual certification, based on the references of the National Qualifications Catalogue;

- The development of information and dissemination actions aimed at young people and adults, companies and others employers, about education and training offers available for professionals and on the relevance of lifelong learning;
- Stimulating and participating in partnership territorially based networks that contribute, in the context of education and professional training, to a more integrated and consistent, in the identification of needs concrete qualifications and in the organization of responses useful for the populations, namely that they facilitate the signalling and identification of young people who are outside the education and training system and promote its path towards adequate qualification responses;
- Monitoring the path of candidates referred to qualification offers.

In **Germany**, there are 79 regional Chambers that are entitled to perform RPL in VET.

- For IVET, they compare the differences between foreign qualifications or the learning outcomes of previous work of unskilled workers and the curricula of the aspired vocation. Afterwards they decide which parts of the qualification have to be acquired to be allowed to participate in the examination.
- In CVET, they are responsible to check whether a holder of a master foreman certificate from another sector is allowed to exempt from parts of the examinations.

In Higher Education (HE), each university applies its own rules.

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.

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.

3 Mechanisms of RPL process

3.1 General view

Portugal

The recognition of competences consists of the identification of skills developed over the course of life, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, through the development of specific activities and the application of a set of assessment instruments suitable, through which the candidate evidences the previously carried out learning, namely through the construction of a reflective portfolio and documentary.

In the processes of recognition, validation and certification of school competences, the portfolio is an instrument of a reflective nature, in which evidence of skills acquired by the candidate throughout life, which aggregates documents of a biographical and curricular nature, in order to allow the validation of the same against the competence requirements is documented.

In the processes of recognition, validation and professional skills certification, the portfolio aggregates documents and other supporting evidence intended to demonstrate competences and prove the execution of professional achievements. It may also have a reflective dimension depending on the candidate's profile, in order to allow their validation against the reference of professional competences.

The validation of competences comprises the self-assessment by the candidate and the assessment carried out by the trainers or teachers of the different areas, formalized in a meeting called and chaired by the coordinator of the QUALIFICA Centre.

The process of recognition, validation and certification of competences must be registered in standardized instruments, based on a model defined by the ANQEP, I.P. – PASSPORT QUALIFICA.

The portfolio, in paper or electronic form, must include a copy of all instruments mobilized during the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences, as well as the reports that support the validation of competences.

Germany

When talking about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), two different ways of regular acquiring qualifications must be distinguished:

- whether attending the lessons/courses and passing the assessments is mandatory – Example: general schooling and Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET, EQF 3 or 4);
- whether passing the exams is sufficient. Example: Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET, EQF 6) and, with some exceptions, Higher Education (HE, EQF 6 or 7).

From a quantitative perspective, RPL in Germany is most important in IVET: Unskilled or semi-skilled workers with vast working experience or people qualified in other countries without bilateral agreements of accepting qualifications might prove evidence that they learnt what an average apprentice in Germany has learnt.

In order to do so, there are different options:

1. The worker can get information on the website "Recognition in Germany" (<https://www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/index.php#>). There he can find out whether it is possible to get enrolled in an equivalence assessment in order to get an equivalence certificate for Germany of his professional qualification. It takes about 1-3 month and costs approximately 100-600 Euros.
2. If there is not enough proof that the foreign qualification is equivalent to the German, it is also possible (if certain formal requirements are met) to undertake the final examinations of a regular apprenticeship (examination of externals/Externenprüfung (cp. IHK 2022)).
3. If the evaluation of the work evidence has the result, that some spheres of activity of the corresponding vocation are missing, certain constraints might be negotiated; for example, to visit seminars or to undergo practical training to close the skills gap in these spheres before being accepted as an external candidate for exams.

Romania

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.

3.2 Different mechanism in Portugal, Germany, Romania

Portugal

The RPL process in Portugal is characterised by being an intervention very centred and oriented to the individual, in the following fundamental stages:

Register - The reception consists of the attendance, the registration and in the clarification of the candidates about the mission and the scope of intervention of the QUALIFICA Centre.

Diagnosis - The diagnosis consists of analysing the candidate's profile, namely through clarification sessions, curricular analysis, assessment of the respective life course and professional experience, consideration of your motivations, needs and expectations, application of diagnostic tests, conducting individual and collective interviews or using other appropriate strategies, depending on whether young or adult.

Information and guidance -The information and guidance process aims to provide the candidate with support in the identification of individual education and professional training projects and make available the necessary information that allows the choose the answer that best suits your profile and that contributes to realistically making possible the paths of further studies and/or market integration of work.

Routing - The referral to an offer of education, professional training or dual certification is the result of an agreement between the QUALIFICA Center's team and the candidate, based on prior process diagnosis and/or guidance.

Training - Candidates must attend complementary training, namely in the development of the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences, ensured by the trainers or teachers of the QUALIFICA Centre team or by other training entities to which candidates are referred. The minimum number of hours of additional training that candidates must attend is 50 hours.

Recognition of competences - consists in the identification of the competences developed by the adult throughout life, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, having as support a competency framework. For the purposes of recognition of school and professional skills, the adult prepares a reflective and documental portfolio that, in a structured way, aggregates documents of biographical and curricular nature. Within the scope of the competence recognition process, in addition to the mobilization of the assessment instruments provided by ANQEP, I. P., the Qualifica Centre team can also mobilize other assessment instruments considered necessary, depending on the candidate profile. Adults must actively participate in the recognition process, being responsible for defending the process, provide additional evidence if necessary and to be able to carry out a self-assessment of their competences.

Validation of competences - consists of the verification and evaluation of the competences of the candidates against the competences defined in the respective referential. For the purposes of the provisions of the previous number, the use of instruments of assessment specifically designed for this purpose, according to the respective benchmarks. The validation referred to in the previous numbers is formalised in a validation session convened and chaired by the coordinator of the Qualifica Centre, with the presence of members of the team involved in the respective process, and from which minutes are drawn up.

Certification of competences - The certification of validated competences requires the presentation of the candidate before a certification jury, made up in accordance with the provisions of the following article, which call from the promoting entity of the Qualifica Centre. The decision of the jury regarding certification of competences is based on the candidate's performance in a certification test, combined with the analysis of the portfolio and of the evaluation instruments applied during the stage of recognition and validation of competences. In the certification of school skills, the test certification consists of the presentation, before the jury, of an exhibition and reflection subordinated to an integrative theme worked within the scope of the portfolio that evidence knowledge and skills of the different areas of key competences of the respective referential. In the certification of professional skills, the certification test consists of an eminently practical demonstration, before the jury, of the skills held within the framework of professional competences. The certification of competences can be total or partial, the latter occurring whenever the assumptions mentioned below are not verified. Obtaining a full school certification, it is always verified that the candidate:

- At the basic level, certify all units of competence listed in the key competence framework the level at which it is proposed;
- At secondary level, certify at least two competencies in each competency unit of each key competence area.

Obtaining a full professional certification depends on the certification of all units of competence, identified in the competence framework professionals concerned. The methodological guidelines and regulatory standards relating to the competence certification stage are prepared and published by ANQEP, I. P. The Qualifica Centre files a copy and/or record of the certification test carried out by the candidate.

Germany

There 2 main mechanisms applied to all educational areas:

- A. General/structural RPL: Each holder of a certain qualification receives an exemption. A non-bureaucratic approach, applied on different levels:

IVET: Each apprentice with good grades and/or the university entrance diploma (Abitur) might shorten the length of their apprenticeship programme by ½ year.

IVET: The certificate of a 2-year/EQF level 3 qualification (in our sector the leather processing worker/Fachkraft Lederverarbeitung) is fully accredited against the corresponding 3-year/EQF level 4 qualifications (in our sector the industrial shoemaker/industrieller Schuhfertiger). If leather-processing workers want to proceed to level 4, they have to participate only in the third (last) year of this apprenticeship programme.

CVET (EQF 6): A holder of any foreman qualification (EQF6) is exempted from examinations on the (by far smallest) part 2 (VET trainer ordinance) when acquiring the foreman qualification in another sector.

HE (EQF 6/7): Students who change their programmes (f. e. from engineering to technical VET-teacher) are exempted from lessons already learned in the previous programme. Students qualified in technical IVET/CVET programmes are exempted from few lectures, f. e. technical drawing.

All the drafted examples rely on identical curricula/exams or established good practice; thus, no additional quality assurance (QA) measures are applied.

- B. Individual RPL applies mainly when talking about exemptions from visiting courses or seminars or undertaking an apprenticeship, thus it plays only a minor role in CVET. Interesting examples are:

As drafted above, RPL in IVET (EQF3/4): Workers with experience or qualified in other countries without bilateral acceptance of qualification might apply at their local chamber for RPL via a portfolio. As Germany has 79 chambers (responsible for their region), measures applied are manifold and often do not follow QA principles; the local labour market and political beliefs nebulise objective measures. In regions of Germany, where the lack of skilled workers is already obvious, chambers developed generous concepts: They accept a lot of evidence and offer tailor-made support to pass the exams. On the other side, in poorer regions unskilled workers, especially from abroad (refugees) are seen as

competitors: Regional chamber bureaucrats and other stakeholders are brilliant in throwing obstacles in the processes of RPL.

CVET (EQF 6): A holder of any foreman qualification (EQF6) might be exempted from examinations on part 1 (Vocation-overlapping skills) when acquiring the foreman qualification in another sector. Comparable to the approach applied by chambers drafted above, the acceptance and the procedure depend strongly on the sector and the region.

1. "Upon application, the competent body may exempt the candidate from the examination in the examination section "Vocation-overlapping skills" [...], if in the five years preceding the application, an examination has been successfully passed before a competent body, a public or state-recognized educational institution, or before a state examination board, which meets the requirements of the relevant examination content under this Ordinance. In the area of the foremen's examination there is (mostly) no automatic recognition, but there is an exemption after an individual case examination by the committee. The decision then naturally also applies to comparable cases. Since the examinations are often structured differently, however, one field of activity is usually not completely covered. The most likely exemptions are in the areas of order processing or operations management." (own translation of the answer of the chamber in charge for industrial shoe sector.)
2. Thus, a complete exemption from examination is hardly possible – independent of former qualifications. Here it is important to highlight again, that CVET is a business model for chambers and educational providers: People, qualified via corresponding IVET and with a certain work experience (6 months or 1 year) are allowed to apply for the examinations without visiting any course. But examinations are linked this close to the courses that most candidates would fail. The reason is very simple: People, participating only in the examination, have to pay a fee of 550€ (2019) – if they visit the courses, as well, they have to pay additionally 7380€ (2019).

HE (EQF 6/7): Students who studied already at another faculty, in another country or have experience as skilled workers might apply for individual RPL. Again, no general or reliable QA measures exist; it depends strongly on the person being in charge of RPL. A rather curious side-effect of Bologna reforms, aiming (beside other) at increasing transnational mobility, can be reported: Before Bologna, students who spent a semester abroad, were depending on the good-will of their professors when talking about recognition of their learning outcomes (LO) from abroad. Nowadays, with all the detailed module descriptions, that differ at least slightly from university to university, begrudging professors have evidence for non-acceptance ...

Romania

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.

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 evidence regarding learning outcomes;
4. Granting credits.

For recognizing professional experience and qualifications gained abroad, a 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;
3. Recognition of a certificate of qualification acquired outside the education system, through an authorized vocational training providers / competence assessment centre;
4. Recognition of prior experience (with/without supporting documents) with or without a qualification certificate.

3.3 Quality control of RPL processes

Portugal

The monitoring and evaluation of the operation and activity of the Qualification Centres is the responsibility of ANQEP, I. P. The functioning, results and impacts resulting from the activity of the Qualifica Centres network may be subject to regular external evaluation, to be contracted with entities of recognized merit and scientific competence.

Germany

All the above described examples of *structural* RPL rely on identical curricula/exams or established good practice; thus no additional quality assurance (QA) measures are applied.

Laws do not regulate the examples of individual RPL, any QA measures are up to the recognizing institution.

Romania

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.

3.4 Strengths and weaknesses

Portugal

RPL in Portugal, also called RVCC (Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences) is a well-structured process based on a PROGRAM (Qualifica Program) and developed Referential, implemented by well-trained teams (Qualifica Centres), with interventions reported in Qualifica Passport.

The referential will be renovated in a very near future.

One of the weaknesses was the tied range of level of EQF qualifications possible to apply – from 1 to 4. With the new regulation in force in February 2022, the level is extended to 5.

The program is flexible and dedicated to a wide range of target-group, mainly adults in labour market.

Strengths

- Well-structured process based on a PROGRAM (QUALIFICA)
- The program is flexible and dedicated to a wide range of target-group, mainly adults in labour market.
- RPL process centred in the individual
- Existence of Portfolio
- Referential for RPL process

Weaknesses

- Tied range of level of EQF qualifications possible to apply – from 1 to 4

Opportunities

- Now to be extended to level 5 EQF
- New referential are coming

Threats

Germany

Strengths

- Structural RPL well established.
- Many options of individual RPL.

Weaknesses

- Overwhelming relevance of formal qualifications.
- Individual RPL without QA standards and depending on good-willingness of competent institution.

Opportunities

- Options for mutual learning from other countries.
- Lack of skilled workers might accelerate German inert system

Threats

- Established and recognized CVET-qualifications might be challenged by “plug and play” certificates.

Romania

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.

Strengths

- Well established system for recognizing prior learning

Weaknesses

- Administrative capacity of existing competence assessment centres.

Opportunities

- Further develop of the model for recognizing previous learning
- To extend the geographical coverage of RPL centres.
- Improve information to potential beneficiaries about the benefits of the assessment and certification process and the opportunity to improve their chances on the labour market.
- Training provided by organizations from the public sector to be validated and certified.
- 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

Threats

4 Exploitation of the findings in DIA-CVET

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?

Portugal

According to the legislation, the mechanism of recognition of prior learning targets part of national system of qualifications from 1 to 5, not including level 6. It's feasible to apply to level 5 professional RPL.

Germany

As the aim of DIA-CVET in Germany is not to invent a new system, but to revive the industrial shoemaker foreman, we recommend applying within DIA-CVET mechanisms comparable to those drafted above. The DIA-CVET approach is more modular (5 or 6 modules to be tested in the participating countries); thus, participants who have already learnt the content of a sector-independent Sphere of Activity (e. g. environmental management) elsewhere should receive structural recognition for this sphere.

Romania

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. It's then possible to test the correspondent 5 to 6 level.

5 References

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