REPORT

WP 1.2

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Deutsche Universität für Weiterbildung
Berlin University for Professional Studies

AUTHORS:

Eva CENDON

Peter DEHNBOSTEL

With assistance of:

Tina BASNER

Yvette PAVLICEK

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A) INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

The central aim of work package 1 (NIL validation methodology) led by the DUW team has been

▶ the conduct of a complex analysis of existing systems of NIL validation within the partners

▶ to analyse advantages and disadvantages of the systems in European and Russian universities and

▶ to elaborate a methodology that is based on this analysis.

The two deliverables of WP 1 are:

1.1 VALIDATION METHODOLOGY based on the results of the analysis („methodology")

1.2 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS of NIL validation systems („report")

1 Approach: The Plan

Following an understanding of participatory research within WP1 we decided within the VALERU consortium at the kick-off Meeting in Moscow to conduct WP1 in a process of three phases, as shown in the following figure:

Phases	Topics	Time frame	Involved partners
Phase 1 Providing the basis (Framing)	definitions of validation national frame conditions and regulations existing projects and initiatives universities as players assessment/resume	March – June 2014	all partners
Reflection and Focus (DUW, UoC, DUK, UBO, MIIGAiK) July 2014, Online Workshop			
Phase 2 Focus and analysis (Analysing)	comparative analysis of NIL validation – advantages and disadvantages	July -August 2014	all partners
Reflection and Focus (DUW, UoC, DUK, UBO, MIIGAiK) at Bologna Seminar (September, Russia), 1 day workshop			
Phase 3 Methodology	development of validation methods and procedures as methodology	September - November 2014	DUW, UoC
Reflection and Dissemination (all partners) December 2014			

Table 1: WP1 – a process in three phases

1.1 Framing

Framing formed the basis for a mutual understanding of the different (national) definitions, regulations and approaches. At this stage national or international projects and initiatives should be singled out and described, engaged universities as examples identified.

All partners were asked to undergo a stock-taking structured in the following way:

A) Definition of validation

B) Frame conditions and regulations

C) Existing projects and initiatives

D) Engaged universities

E) Assessment/Resume

1.2 Analysing

The second phase insights from phase 1 (framing) were and the review and reflection process. A closer look on selected existing validation concepts and procedures led to a comparative analysis of NIL validation which is available in the report (deliverable 1.2) of work package 1.

1.3 Methodology

The last phase of WP 1 has been dedicated to the development of a methodology (deliverable 1.2) – based on the outcomes of the first two phases and closely linked to the circumstances in Russia. Methodology is defined as methods and procedures for validation of non-formal and informal learning at Russian universities and closely linked to the European validation procedure. The methodology should be both used for the development of the NIL platform (WP 2) and for development of the trainings for experts (WP 3).

2 Adaptions and Developments: Chronology of the Process

During the process of conduct some developments and amendments had to be made. The chronology of the process as it was finally conducted shall be outlined briefly:

JULY 2014: Virtual meeting of the reflection and focus group (DUW, DUK, MIIGAiK, UoC): Review and discussion of draft reports sent by partners: Decisions: 1) feedback and questions for partners to become more concrete in reports. 2) MIIGAiK coordinates one Russian report (instead single reports from different Russian partners).

SEPT. 2014: Chester Working Meeting: Presentation of methodology, draft and short update to reports for all partners by DUW, reminder for handing in reports.

DEC. 2014: Workshop in Berlin: Presentation of methodology, discussion of drivers, challenges, aims and target groups for VNIL in Russian Federation, testing of methodology in workshops, discussion on Russian report (approved by Russian Ministry of Education in December).

FEB. 2015: presentation of outcomes of Berlin-Workshop (challenges, roles in validation procedure) in Krems.

MARCH/APRIL 2015: Last report handed in and finalization of Report with Country Reports as annexes (WP1.2) and Methodology (WP 1.1), upload on VALERU-Website.

B) EUROPEAN SETTINGS – CENTRAL POINTS OF REFERENCE

1 Definition of Key Terms

1.1 Validation

In the European context the term *validation* has become the umbrella term for different sorts of terms and understandings such as the accreditation of prior learning (APL), accreditation of learning outcomes, recognition of prior learning (RPL) recognition of learning outcomes, certification of prior learning and certification of learning outcomes (CEDEFOP, 2008; 2014). The definition of validation implies two elements: it is both a *procedure* and the *outcome of this procedure*.

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDFOP) assumes a very important role regarding the development of the understanding of validation. CEDEFOP is a decentralized agency of the European Union that focuses on European vocational education and training (VET) policies, supports their development and contributes to their implementation. (CEDEFOP, 2015) Validation is defined in the following way: „Validation of non-formal and informal learning is described as a process of confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with requirements of a validation standard." (CEDEFOP, 2008, 199; 2009, 15; 2014, 288) The Council of the European Union (2012, C 398/5) in its recommendation follows a similar understanding of validation: "validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard (…)."

An understanding of *validation as procedure* is provided the European guidelines for validation (CEDEFOP, 2009) and the Council of the European Union recommendation on validation (2012). Both underline that validation of non-formal and informal learning can normally be described in four distinct phases:
"(a) identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;
(b) documentation to make visible the individual's experiences;
(c) formal assessment of these experiences; and
(d) recognition leading to certification, for example, a partial or full qualification." (CEDEFOP, 2014a, 26).

1.2 Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning

When referring to validation a closer examination of the term *learning* is necessary. Following CEDEFOP and the European Commission in the European context learning is defined as a "process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas and values and thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences" (CEDEFOP, 2014, 155). Important especially for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is the comment: "learning occurs through personal reflection, reconstruction and social interaction. It may take place in formal, non-formal or informal settings." (ibid.)

The learning in different settings, bound to the individual leads to different forms of learning: *formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning.* These three forms of learning are commonly accepted from different European organizations and institutions (Royal Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006; CEDEFOP, 2014; Council of the European Union, 2012). They differ slightly in their definitions but in general, they are consistent with each other. Following the understanding of the latest definition of the Council of the European Union (2012, C 398/5) they can be described and distinguished as follows:

"(a) formal learning means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education;

(b) non-formal learning means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public;

(c) informal learning means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective; examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child)."

1.3 Qualifications/ Competences

The term *qualification* consists of different aspects (CEDEFOP, 2008):

a) As a formal qualification: "qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards". (Council of the European Union, 2012, C 398/5).

b) As "job requirements: the knowledge, aptitudes and skills required to perform the specific tasks attached to a particular work position". (CEDEFOP, 2008, 144)

Competence in the understanding of the European Commission and CEDEFOP focuses on the application of knowledge in a specific context – hence, competence is closely linked to the person and to his or her performance. CEDEFOP (2008, 47) defines competence in the following way: "The ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development)." In 2014, CEDEFOP (47) includes a second definition of competence as "ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological

abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development." Both definitions emphasize that competence includes besides *cognitive aspects* also *practical skills* and *interpersonal characteristics* (CEDEFOP, 2008, 2014)

With regard to *competences assessed in companies* CEDEFOP (2014a, 14f.) derives the following types of competences specifically focused in employee appraisals:

(a) specific job-related skills and competences (relevant to most types of staff, occupation, positions)

(b) social and personal competences (relevant to management positions and career progression)

(c) digital literacy (relevant in almost every positon)

(d) language skills both foreign and/or mother tongue (relevant for management positions and jobs with significant customer contact)

(e) analytical and mathematical competences (relevant for accountants, bookkeepers, managers and engineers)

1.4 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are the lowest common denominator within the European context. While the understanding of competences and its use and relevance differs in different countries and languages, the term *learning outcomes* is quite clear: "learning outcomes means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences" (Council of the European Union 2012, C 398/5) Or, more detailed in the way learning outcomes can be expressed: "Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal."

Central is that learning outcomes focus not on the *process* of learning but on its *results*. Knowledge, skills and competences as way to structure learning outcomes are defined in the following way:

"'knowledge' means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual;"

"'skills' means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments);"

"'competence' means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy."

These definitions of terms show that there is a shift from the institutions and the formal settings to the individual and his/her learning, achievements, competencies, and last but not least, learning outcomes. The concentration on the individual is accompanied and framed by the European developments that promote lifelong learning and hence, validation.

2 Frame Conditions and Regulations

Certain frame conditions and regulations at European level are shaping the development in the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Three strands of European developments level can be distinguished (Cendon/Dehnbostel, 2015):

- ▶ Lisbon Process: focus on lifelong learning
- ▶ Bologna Process: focus on higher education
- ▶ Copenhagen Process: focus on vocational education and training

2.1 Lisbon Process

With the *Lisbon Strategy* (European Council, 2000) lifelong learning advanced to a strategy of the European Union. Primary strategic goal within the Lisbon strategy and the following process is "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" (European Council, 2000) having lifelong learning as its central tool. After a first consultation process lifelong learning is understood as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective" (European Commission, 2001, 9) Already at this point the whole range of learning as formal, non-formal and normal learning is considered. With focus on mobility within Europe the European Commission sees as prerequisite for lifelong learning the valuing of learning as "the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning" (European Commission, 2001, 4).

An important breakthrough with regard to "a European area of lifelong learning" (European Commission 2001, 3) is the development of the *European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).* The EQF includes the whole education system from general education to vocational education and training and to higher education. It functions as an instrument of translation and as a meta-framework for national qualifications systems of the member states. The aim of the EQF is to make national qualifications transparent and comparable within Europe - regardless whether acquired through formal, non-formal and formal learning. It functions as reference tool to compare the different qualification levels of national qualifications systems and frameworks. As a result, mobility between the different national qualifications systems and mobility on the European labor market shall be facilitated.

Within the EQF qualifications are described in learning outcomes. The EQF consists of eight levels defined by descriptors. The learning outcomes are described within a set of descriptors for each level, namely knowledge, skills and competence. It is recommended that the member states "use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning." (European Union, 2008, C 111/3)

With this approach the EQF has the potential to make an important step towards the implementation of lifelong learning. It initiates a change of perspective from input (what has to be learned) to outcome (what an individual should be able to do at the end of a learning process) and a change of perspective from the educational institution to the learner.

2.2 Bologna Process

The *Bologna process* has been initiated with the Bologna Declaration signed by 31 ministers from 29 European countries in June 1999 (until March 2015 49 countries signed). It marks the most radical voluntary process of change and cooperation by European higher education institutions. Its main goal is the creation of the *European Higher Education Area (EHEA).* A central pacemaker of the Bologna process is the promotion of international competitiveness of the higher education sector. International comparability shall promote Europeanisation and internationalization of the tertiary sector. The following action lines were agreed at the first follow up conference in Prague (Prague Communiqué, 2001):

▶ adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

▶ adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles (BA/MA)

▶ establishment of a system of credits (ECTS)

▶ promotion of mobility for teachers, students, researchers and administrative staff

▶ promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance

▶ promotion of the European dimensions in higher education

▶ implementation of Lifelong learning strategies

▶ involvement of higher education institutions and students

In the Berlin Communiqué the ministers already "urge Higher Education Institutions and all concerned to enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level including the recognition of prior learning." (Berlin Communiqué 2003, 6). The Bergen Communiqué (2005, 3) puts the focus on the flexible learning paths into higher education and on the improvement of the "recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programmes." The London Communiqué (2007) emphasizes the necessity of a common understanding of higher education within lifelong learning and especially with regard to recognition of prior learning. In the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009, 3) the ministers stress the possibility of obtaining qualifications "through flexible learning paths, including part-time studies, as well as work-based routes". They underline "the need for basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes". The Bucharest Communiqué (2012) focuses on the social dimension of higher education e.g. through offering alternative access routes to higher education and through recognition of prior learning.

Overall, the development and elaboration of the Bologna process show interesting aspects for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Lifelong learning – since Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) including widening participation – has a central role. Main aspects are the support of flexible learning paths, the offer of adequate modes of delivery of programmes and the development of validation procedures for the recognition of prior learning (as non-formal and informal learning). Common currencies alongside with credits are learning outcomes (at least in all policy documents). They become relevant especially for the permeability and for the comparability between different systems. In addition, cooperation between higher education and the vocational world (here esp. the workplace) plays a stronger role. The new connections advanced between higher education institutions and the professional world range from work based learning to the cooperative development of programmes. And last but not least the *national qualifications frameworks (NQF)* play a more important role in the documents.

2.3 Copenhagen Process

In the *Copenhagen Declaration* the European ministers for Vocational Education and Training aim at the creation of a European dimension in vocational education and training. The overall aim is to make development, validation and assessment of vocational acquired competences on all levels become reality. (Copenhagen Declaration, 2002) Copenhagen Declaration can be regarded as basis for further processes as strengthening vocational education training at European and at national level.

The Maastricht Communiqué (2004) emphasizes validation and mutual recognition of qualifications in VET as preconditions for increasing mobility on the European labor market. Hence, it becomes highly relevant to identify and validate competences and learning outcomes acquired through different pathways, including non-formal and informal learning. For this purpose, a European credit system similar to the ECTS in higher education is proposed: the *European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).* (Maastricht Communiqué, 2004) The credit system ECVET is understood as methodological framework and shall ensure transnational mobility and the access to lifelong learning in vocational education and training. It is based on learning outcomes and is therefore compatible with different qualifications systems. ECVET shall promote individual and flexible learning paths for apprentices. Through a coherent structure it enables the development of common conventions for references for vocational qualifications. (Commission of the European Communities, 2008)

The recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council "intends to facilitate transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals who are aiming to achieve a qualification." (Commission of the European Communities, 2008, 14) Learning outcomes can be achieved through different learning paths, including learning in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Although closely connected the central difference between EQF and ECVET is stated: "While the main objective of the EQF is to increase the transparency, comparability and portability of acquired qualifications, ECVET will facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes of individuals on their way to achieving a qualification." (Commission of the European Communities, 2008, 15) At the moment, member states are on the way to adapt their national frameworks for an application of ECVET and start piloting and reviewing the ECVET methodology.

The ECVET system provides a good way for more transparency, mobility, and comparability within VET at European level. What needs to be further observed while piloting with ECVET is whether modularization and division in small unites strengthens or weakens vocational competences. As in many countries VET is structured in holistic qualifications, a very detailed modularization involves the danger of the erosion of vocation. Here, a good balance in construction and organization will be needed.

C) PARTNER COUNTRIES AND THEIR APPROACHES

In this chapter the different approaches of the VALERU partner countries are sketched following the presented structure from the introduction. The main focus is put on definitions and the frame conditions and regulations, partly followed by special initiatives or engaged universities. There are more aspects on focusing on definitions and frame conditions: First, the different definitions and implementations of VNIL within different European countries show the possible spectrum and variations in the specific contexts. Above, the issue of terms and definitions has been identified in several VALERU meetings. Hence it is important to clarify the different national understandings and definitions. They show the importance to be clear upon what is understood by a term and for taking European definitions as common reference. Finally, a closer look on frame conditions and regulations provides our Russian partners a basis for possibilities and hindrances regarding VNIL within different frame conditions. The evaluation can be a stepping stone for advancement of VNIL within the Russian frame conditions. For more in-depth information on all countries the country reports can be found as annexes to this report on the VALERU website.

1 France

In France, validation is understood as "the confirmation by a competent authority that the results and learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and / or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal context were assessed according to predefined criteria and meet the requirements of a standard (or reference) validation. The validation results in the allocation of all or part of a degree." (Mamoune/Ribaud, 2014, 3) non-formal/informal learning and learning outcomes are defined in line with the definition by CEDEFOP (2009).

The validation procedure in France as *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)* (validation of prior experience) "is a procedure for obtaining all or part of a recognized qualification (university degree, professional diploma or professional qualification certificate) via the formal recognition and accreditation of skills acquired through prior experience and learning, notably work experience." (Mamoune/Ribaud, 2014, 3)

In France, the validation of prior experience has a long history. Legislation and regulations date back to the mid-1980s. The validation of prior experience (VAE) "is an individual right enshrined in the Social Modernization Law of 2002, the Labour Code and the Code of Education." Hence, in France validation is possible in all fields of education. Most important and most radical for higher education is the *Loi de Modernisation Sociale* (Social Modernization law) from 2002 as it "opened up the possibility of granting any type of degree or certification based only on the prior

experience of the candidate. This is the law that led to the creation of the Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE) procedure." (Mamoune/Ribaud 2014, p. 6) VAE opens up the possibility for universities to validate a candidate's prior experience from "Baccalauréat" (school leaving certificate and at the same time first academic degree) up to Ph.D. level. The validation process consists of six stages: (Mamoune/Ribaud, 2014, 4-5)

(1) *information networks* (built by universities) help the candidates to identify the degree that is the most closely related to their experience.

(2) *coaching centre* within the universities assist the candidates in formulating their application.

(3) experts of the degree concerned and the department responsible for validation examine the *admissibility* of the application. All competences and experiences are analyzed in relation to the requirements of the degree concerned. At the end of this stage it is decided whether the candidate can continue to stage 4.

(4) The candidate has to submit *an application portfolio* detailing the knowledge, skills and abilities. A VAE advisor (from the coaching centre) works with the candidate to clarify, formalize and generalize his/her formal, informal or non-formal learning and experience. The portfolio includes two parts:

   ▶ *administrative part:* identity, education, qualifications already acquired or, employment contracts, various certificates, etc.

   ▶ *experience part:* "contains the description and analysis of the experience that the candidate is basing his/her application on." (Mamoune/Ribaud, 2014, 5)

(5) A validation committee convened by the university holds *an interview* with the candidate based on the application portfolio, which they have received and examined in advance. The committee is specific to each candidate including a majority of faculty members and business or industry professionals from the field concerned by the degree. The committee has to form its personal conviction at this time.

(6) The validation committee discusses and deliberates for *a decision* based on the application portfolio and the interview. "The committee must ensure that the candidate has the same skills, aptitudes and knowledge as a graduate of the degree concerned, and is capable of implementing them, including in a development dynamic" (Mamoune/Ribaud 2014, p.5). Finally, the committee can decide to either grant the full degree, only part of the degree or can provide the candidate with recommendations to complete the degree.

For this whole process quality criteria are defined to:

   ▶ "provide adequate reception conditions and ensure the transparency of the procedure,

   ▶ guarantee the confidentiality of the process,

   ▶ deliver a quality service and offer wait times and durations consistent with the needs and constraints of the public,

   ▶ allocate the necessary resources,

   ▶ professionalise actors,

   ▶ develop cooperation and sharing of information between institutions,

   ▶ ensure equal treatment of applicants." (Mamoune/Ribaud, 2014, 11)

2 United Kingdom

In United Kingdom the term *validation* "is used to describe the approval of a programme of learning by a University." (Talbot, 2014, 3) In terms of validation as recognition the word *accreditation* is used. It is understood as „any process that acknowledges and establishes publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place and can be assessed to have done so." (QAA, 2004, 17) Non-formal and informal learning are not used in the UK. Instead, the terms being applied are *experiential learning* and *prior learning* – both types of learning can be certified or not. The UK Quality Code refers to „prior experiential (or informal) learning"(QAA, 2013, 4). "

Universities in the UK are autonomous in developing programs as they are not subject to parliamentary laws. Universities practices are governed by the Privy Council (responsible for awarding University status) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (Talbot, 2014, 3). QAA audits the universities and publishes guidelines and quality standards, e.g. the Quality Code (QAA, 2013). With regard to non-formal and informal learning the QAA has an important role: "The QAA provides a series of guidelines including practices in respect of informal learning and is also responsible for regular institutional audits to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and quality." (Talbot, 2014, 3)

"Academic credit is awarded for past experiential learning (the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning- APEL) and past certificated learning – learning which has a recognized credit value (APCL). We also award credit for current experiential learning, usually for workplace projects. (…) The process of turning past learning, whether certificated (ie formal) learning or experiential (ie informal) into new academic credit is usually referred to as the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). APL using formal learning – ie certificated, credit bearing learning is usually referred to as the Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL). Where past learning is informal (ie experiential) it is referred to the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). APL and APEL are features in some vocational programmes." (Talbot, 2014, 5, emphasis added) Interesting in the understanding of experiential learning is its range from past to present to future.

A central validation procedure besides awarding academic credit to experiential learning at universities is validation in *Work Based Learning (WBL) programs:* "Such programmes enable students to negotiate a curriculum and award title relevant to their learning requirements in the workplace. WBL dispenses with the key organising principle of most education programmes – subject discipline – in favour of learning tailored to the needs of the learner. This results in the abandonment of another staple of educational practice – didactic instruction – in favour of the facilitation of learning. Accompanying this change is a third radical departure – a recognition that knowledge is socially constructed, distributed and has value even when it is not universal. Finally learning itself is not seen as abstracted from context. Its value is seen from the perspective of the learner and is therefore assessed by its utility- its ability to inform changed practices." (Talbot, 2014, 5).

Such programs mainly consist of four components:

▶ „individual (or part-individual and part-group) programmes that are negotiated around a learning contract or agreement

▶ recognition of previous learning, both for credit and as the starting-point for the programme

▶ the use of live, methodologically-sound projects and practitioner research, backed by appropriate forms of learner support

▶ valid forms of assessment, normally referenced to generic criteria representing the relevant academic level." (Lester/Costley, 2010, 563)

Universities engaging in WBL programs in the UK are the ones that also engage more deeply in APL. They are "mostly newer, more vocationally and teaching oriented institutions." (Talbot, 2014, 7) The University of Chester has developed a framework called *Work Based and Integrative Studies (WBIS)* "which enables individuals, cohorts and organisations to create programmes and award titles precisely tailored to their requirements in the workplace" (Talbot, 2014, 7).

Some characteristic of the validation process within the WBIS (Talbot, 2014, 7f):

▶ *No formal entry requirements* to take part in WBIS, judgements are made in the application.

▶ *Tutor as counterpart* during the whole process: Jon Talbot assumes that "this process is quite resource intensive at the beginning of a student's programme, tutor input declines over the course of the programme as students are able to assume greater responsibility for their own learning." (p.8).

▶ *Diagnostic module:* students "formally assess their own learning achievements as the basis for APL claims before identifying what they need to learn as the basis for their own curriculum"; ensure that they are on the appropriate level of study; exercise in reflective learning "to sensitise them to the programme's underpinning philosophy of improving practice by means of formal study of experience. " (6)

▶ Students develop the *cognitive ability* through individual tuition and extensive use of formative assessment following Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding: "concentrates on the 'zone of proximal development'", students construct "their own meaning (in assessment) and engages in dialogue with their tutor." (6)

▶ *Negotiated Experiential Learning Agreement (NELA):* students negotiate their own learning outcomes and how to demonstrate their achievement in the assessment process.

▶ Student submits a *draft for formative assessment*.

▶ *Summative assessment:* the prior focus of feedback "is on learning for the future rather than describing what the student has done in order to justify a grade." (8)

3 Germany

In Germany the term *validation* is used in alignment with European definition of validation. The broader term used especially in the context of higher education is *recognition (Anrechnung)* defined both as the procedure and as the outcome of the procedure. The terms non-formal and informal learning, qualifications, competences as well as learning outcomes are defined in line with the European definition of the European Commission (2012).

Up to now, in Germany no legal framework and overall system of validation of non-formal and informal learning exists; this also has to do with the state of a Federal Republic. In the last years the development of the *German Qualifications Framework (DQR)* has fueled the discussion of permeability between higher education and vocational education and training. DQR provides a framework that could act as a *mediator* between the different forms of learning when it comes to validation. Whereas the *Framework Act for Higher Education* (1999/2005) provides the general frame for admission to higher education "all specified regulations on admission are subject to the provision of Land legislation." (Cendon et al., 2014, 4) Hence, depending on where people study in Germany they have different regulations concerning the validation of their non-formal and informal learning (Cendon et al., 2014) specified regulations on admission are subject to the provision of Land legislation (BMBF 1999/2005, p. 10–11).

Mediating body between Federation and Länder is the *Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Standing Conference).* Relevant for validation of non-formal and informal learning are resolutions of the Standing Conference:

 In 2002 it was agreed "that recognition of competences of up to 50% of a degree course is possible, presumed that content and level is equivalent." (Cendon et al., 2014, 6) In 2008 the possibilities of recognition were specified with (1) individual recognition, (2) blanket recognition, and (3) combined recognition. " Important (…) is the differentiation between the recognition as higher education entrance qualification (e.g., a precondition for studying) and the credit transfer of prior learning (acquired in vocational education and training) for studies. Nevertheless, it is possible to combine admission examination and placement test." (Cendon et al., 2014, 6)

"In 2009, the Standing Conference opened up access to higher education for professionally qualified persons in a twofold way: Persons with advanced vocational qualifications [e.g. *Meister,* the authors] may receive a generally higher education entrance qualification. (…) Persons who do not belong to this group but who have completed a dual vocational education and training and have three years of professional experience as well as persons who successfully pass an aptitude assessment procedure based on exam regulations at a HEI may receive a specified higher education entrance qualification (for a specific study programme). Additional regulations can be applied by the Länder themselves." (Cendon et al., 2014, 6)

Quite some progress has been made since the mid-2000 years particularly with a state funded *initiative on the validation of vocational competences on study programs (ANKOM)* that set the tone for a more systematic dealing with this topic and helped to develop different approaches for the validation of non-formal and informal learning at higher education institutions (HEIs). Hence on institutional level, quite some expertise on validation and validation procedures has been developed (Cendon et al., 2014)

In ANKOM, three procedures of validation are distinguished:

(1) "Blanket recognition: Set for homogenous groups of candidates, for certain professions and certain vocational trainings. Blanket recognition could be based on a cooperation between university and institution of vocational education. The procedure is based on the decision of the examination board, exam regulations and recognition regulations.

(2) Individual recognition: Set for heterogeneous candidates or persons with an individual education profile. The procedure is based on individual procedures.

(3) Combined recognition: A combination of individual procedures and blanket procedures. The procedure is based on recognition regulations or recognition principles, implementation with guidelines for filling out forms, information material, advise offers." (Cendon et al., 2014, 8)

A guideline for validation defines quality standards for the following five subject areas (Cendon et al., 2014, 8): (1) Description of learning outcomes, (2) Equivalence check, (3) Formal establishment of the recognition regulation, (4) Information and guidance, (5) Evaluation.

4 Austria

In Austria the term *validation (Validierung)* is in line with the European definition "a process, during which an authorized body gives proof that a person has reached certain learning outcomes, measured along relevant standards. As such, validation covers a process of four steps: identification of special experiences of a person, done during an interview, documentation to make these experiences visible, formal evaluation of these experiences and certification of the results from evaluation, leading to either parts or full qualifications." (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015, 6) However, in terms of usage in Austria, "'Validierung' puts the focus on the technical process [...]'Anerkennung' ('recognition') seems to be used at a more general level." (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015, 6)

With regard *to formal, non-formal and informal learning* Austrian universities comply with the definitions of the European Commission (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015, 7). The definition *of learning outcomes* and *competences* is in line with ECTS User´s Guide from 2005: "Learning outcomes are sets of competences, expressing what the student will know, understand or be able to do after completion of a process of learning, long or short. [...] Competences represent a dynamic combination of attributes, abilities and attitudes. They can be subject specific or generic." (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015, 14)

For the validation of non-formal and informal learning in general, two frame conditions are important: The *Austrian Strategy for Lifelong Learning* includes all sectors of education and training and has as one main aim the development of a validation strategy. The *National Qualifications Framework (NQR)* including all sectors of education and training focuses on learning outcomes and includes the three corridors of learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning. Following these two frame conditions an overall strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning shall be developed until 2015 and is underway (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015).

Up to now no legal regulation regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning binds Austrian universities to implement validation strategies and procedures. The *University Act 2002 (UG 2002)* offers universities the possibility to recognise forms of prior learning as " a) credits from prior learning at other institutions, not necessarily HEIs - for example, higher vocational schools, but from the formal educational system, and b) learning from 'activities' from prior work (German: 'Tätigkeiten') (...). These results of prior learning, being it considered nonformal or informal, can be recognized if it is matching parts of the master programme for which they are brought in for recognition." (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015, 11) The discussion in Austria is to a lesser extent about the *recognition of prior learning* as credit for shortening programs. An aspect of greater relevance is the *admission to study programs*. One form is the "' University entrance qualification examination', relevant for public universities for admission to degree programmes ('regular studies'). Here, a candidate without university entrance qualification can apply under the condition that he/she is at least 20 years old and 'can submit proof of the completion of professional or non-professional prior education that clearly goes beyond compulsory education for the studies aimed for.' (...)The examination itself has to cover five exams: an essay on a general topic, two or three exams during which the prior knowledge of skills necessary for the study programme in question need to be demonstrated and one to two exams upon the candidates choice from the area of the study programme in question. (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015, 12)

Within continuing higher education programmes (which are distinct from so called *regular* higher education programmes BA/MA/Ph.D.) admission for persons with professional background and experience but without first academic degree is possible. Procedures include *equivalence evaluation*.

The equivalence procedures are specific to the different study programs and institutions. At Danube University Krems which is the biggest provider of continuing higher education studies in Austria the procedure of validation as equivalence evaluation consists of the following steps (Reif/Baumgartner, 2015): (1) pre-check, (2) application, (3) evaluation, (4) interview, (5) request for admission to rectorate, (6) decision.

5 Russian Federation

Within Russian Federation the " general definition of validation that is equivalent to the Russian term 'признание' is most commonly used in legal acts pertaining to validation of education abroad and subsequent recognition of the relevant documents (high school transcripts and other documents proving successful completion of the secondary school)" (Ponomareva, 2014, 4). Following the Russian federal program *The Development of Education in 2013-2020* established by the decree of the Russian Government on 15 May 2013 "validation of non-formal/informal education is given in the as the process of formalizing the results of any educational experience gained in the course of a specially organized or spontaneous educational activity which leads to the development of a specific skill or a competence." (Ponomareva, 2014, 4) Validation is conducted as (a) academic validation as recognition of education abroad and (b) professional validation as allowance to work in Russian Federation.

In Russia, all definitions formal/non-formal and informal learning, of competences, learning outcomes and qualification are very much in line with definitions at European level: Following the federal program, *informal learning* is defined as "learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random)" (Ponomareva, 2014, 4).

Non-formal learning is defined as "learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective" (Ponomareva, 2014, 4).

The term *competence* is defined following the ECTS User's guide (2005): "Competences represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. Competences are developed and acquired by the students during the educational process. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any study programme). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a study programme." (Ponomareva, 2014, 4) As *qualification* is understood "[a]ny degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognized programme of study" (Ponomareva, 2014, 5)

Learning outcomes are defined as "statements – made by the academic staff – of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes have to be expressed in terms of the level of competence (knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) to be obtained by the learner." (Ponomareva, 2014, 5)

In Russia the frame conditions and regulation show a quite young involvement with VNIL. Some frame conditions have been set but the design of the whole system is still open. Article 17 of the *Russian Federal Law* from December 2013 states that education can take place – self-directed – outside the formal educational system and that higher educational institutions can shorten programs based on recognition (Ponomareva, 2014, 5). Existing initiatives for VNIL are focused on the professional context: as migrant trainings by NGOs (mainly for Russian language) and procedure of workers qualifications evaluation. (Ponomareva, 2014, 6) First developments on recognition at universities draw on language.

The understanding of validation is very much focused on recognition of professional education - up to date not linked to HEs. As the country report shows the focus in learning is put on already certified non-formal learning.

Further insights on the situation in Russia brought the discussion within the workshop in Berlin, complemented by the Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) group that participated and provided their views on the challenges for validation of NIL within the Russian context. The following challenges were spotted (VALERU, 2014, 14-20):

- ▶ current legislation in Russia
- ▶ the Qualifications Framework

- ▶ educational standards
- ▶ the weakness of professional standards system
- ▶ the issue of terminology

On institutional level, the partners detected following challenges that have to be met (VALERU, 2014, 14-20):

- ▶ lack of experience in VNIL validation
- ▶ mismatch between curriculum and educational program
- ▶ issue of credits vs. grading system
- ▶ no standardised procedure in place
- ▶ lack of clarity for responsibility within the university
- ▶ little awareness and reluctance to reach such students
- ▶ vagueness of experts competences

D) CONCLUSIONS

The European settings and the depictions of the different European approaches to the validation of NIL (mainly based on the country reports of the involved partners) have shown that validation and all its closely connected terms as learning outcomes, formal/non-formal/informal learning, competences, qualifications have found their way in the different national contexts. However, practices show that there still exist some gaps between words and actions. What can be drawn from the different perspectives?

The following table tries to show features that shall provide in a nutshell some central conclusions to the analysis. This chart has been composed in conjunction with last available *2010 Update of the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning* (EC/CEDEFOP, 2010):

Country	State of develop- ment	Approach	Frame work conditions	HEI	Formalization
France	high	top down, including all sectors and fields of education and training	strong centrally regulated, legal framework	Implementing role	through legally established VAE procedure
United Kingdom	medium-high	bottom up driven by institutions	loose framework, devolved responsibilities	strong role – universities are autonomous	through standards (QAA), procedures depends on institutions
Germany	medium-high	different sectorial approaches supported by public funds	medium, decentralized approaches caused by complex allocation of responsibilities	strong role	through development of good practice in projects often below political level
Austria	medium-low	sectorial and target-group specific approaches	loose framework conditions, shall change with NQF and validation strategy (in process)	strong role (public universities)	through development of good practice in target oriented approaches

Table 2: Validation in a nutshell: four European approaches

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ACRONYMS

ANKOM	Initiative on the validation of vocational competences on study programs
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
APCL	Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
DQR	German Qualifications Framework
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HERE	Higher Education Reform Experts
NELA	Negotiated Experiential Learning Agreement
NIL	Non-formal and Informal Learning
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VAE	Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (Validation of prior experience)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning
WBIS	Work Based and Integrative Studies
WBL	Work Based Learning

LIST OF TABLES