

## ANALYSIS ABOUT EXISTING STRUCTURE OF FORMAL NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE ACCREDITATION OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN POLAND

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Transferring methods for validation of informal learning to VET institutions in the field of sustainable agriculture

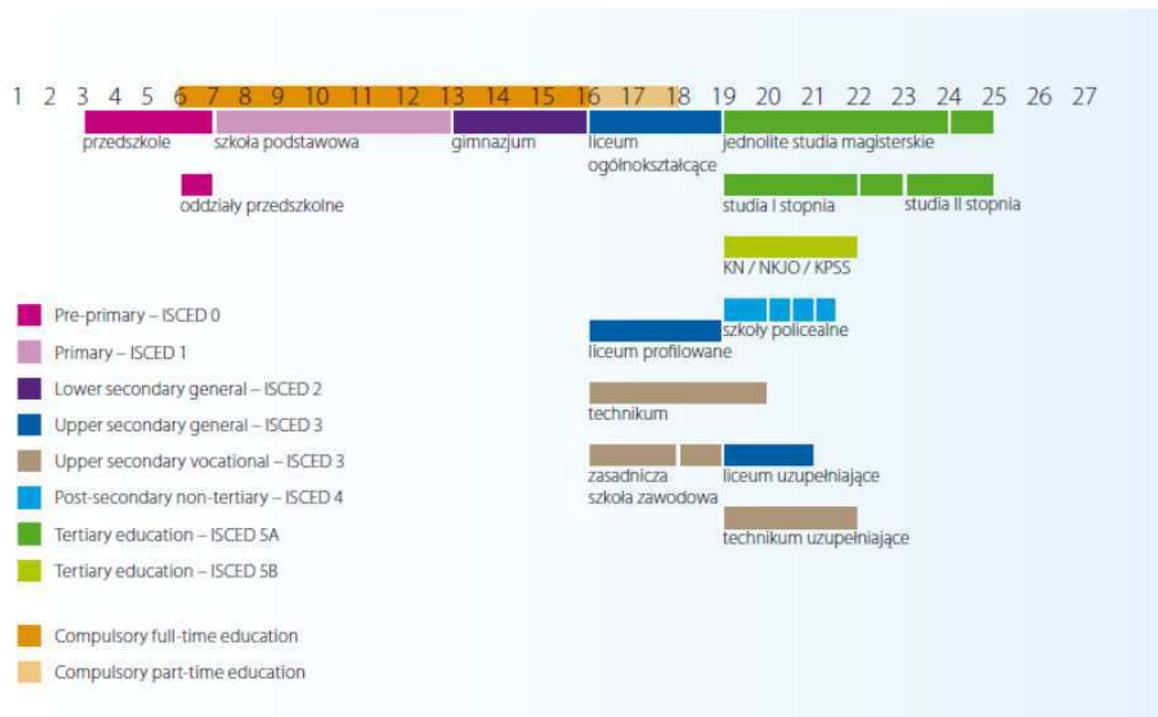
Term/ Acronym/ Abbreviation	Description
<b>Formal learning</b>	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.
<b>Non-formal learning</b>	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.
<b>Informal learning</b>	Learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.
<b>Learning outcome(s)</b>	the set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process.
<b>Competence</b>	ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in a habitual and/or changing work situation.
<b>Prior learning</b>	the knowledge, know-how and/ or competences acquired through previously unrecognised training or experience
<b>Assessment</b>	the sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how and/or competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification.
<b>Certification</b>	the process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies.
<b>Validation (of informal /non-formal learning)</b>	the process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences which people develop throughout their lives in different contexts, for example through education, work and leisure activities.
<b>Validation of learning outcomes:</b>	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 the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. Source: Cedefop, 2008c.
<b>Accreditation of prior learning (APL)</b>	See validation of informal / non-formal learning

Source: CEDEFOP Validation Inventory

# 1. Analysis per country of the current situation of non-formal, informal, and formal learning in agriculture

## 1.1 Formal learning

Structure of the national education system in Poland:



Source: Eurydice.

Since the political transformation (the collapse of the communist regime) in 1989, the Polish education system has undergone profound changes in nearly all of its aspects including the structure, organization, management and the core curriculum. As a result it has developed some specific features which can be described as follows:

- Combination of centralized governance (i.e. laws/ regulations for which the Minister of Education and the Minister of Science and Higher Education are responsible) and decentralization of school administration (for which local authorities are responsible);
- System of external examinations carried out at the end of each educational stage. Pupils of primary and lower secondary school take these exams obligatorily, but for graduates of upper secondary schools they are optional, however all the students willing to continue their education at the tertiary level have to take their upper secondary leaving exam called egzamin maturalny;
- Specific definition of the status of teachers. The teaching profession is regulated by separate legislation (the Teacher's Charter) which defines rules of admission, remuneration and dismissal of teachers and their career path;
- Domination of the public education sector over private. In school education the number of public schools and students attending them greatly outweighs non-public schools and their pupils. In higher education system the majority of students is also enrolled in public institutions.

## Administration and governance

Polish education system is centrally governed by the Minister of National Education, however schools are administered at the local level by the commune authorities (administer nursery schools, primary schools and lower secondary schools), district authorities (administer upper secondary schools), province/voivodeship authorities (administer schools of regional meaning).

**Schools** are supervised by the Minister of National Education and Educational Superintendents (at regional level). **Higher education** institutions constitute a separate higher education system which is governed centrally by the Minister of Science and Higher Education. There are also advisory and consulting bodies. Higher education institutions are autonomous, which means that they regulate academic matters and their internal procedures by themselves.

**Adult education** is not regulated by a separate law. Laws regulating school education system and higher education system refer to adult education if it takes place in school settings or in HEIs.

As regards schools acting within **agriculture** field (level ISCED 3 and ISCED 4) they are administered either by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (45 schools in 2013 year) or by local authorities (414 schools in 2013 year).

## Educational stages

Full-time compulsory education lasts for 10 years and comprises the last year of pre-school education, 6 years of primary school education and 3 years of lower secondary school education.

In the Polish educational system full-time compulsory education and part-time compulsory education were defined. Full-time compulsory education (obligation to attend primary and lower secondary school) applies to pupils aged 6-16 years while part-time compulsory education (obligation to be in education) concerns pupils aged 16-18 and it may take place either in school settings (a student attends upper secondary school) or in non-school settings (e.g. a student follows vocational training offered by employers).

Characteristics of the educational stages: level ISCED 3 and ISCED 4 and, very briefly, higher education (including **agriculture schools** which provide vocational education at those levels):

- **Upper secondary school** (szkolnictwo średnie II stopnia) – the following types of upper secondary schools are open to candidates: 3-year general upper secondary school (liceum), 4-year technical upper secondary school (technikum) and 3-year basic vocational school (zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa). Pupils attend upper secondary schools at the age of 16-19 (16-20 years in case of the technical upper secondary school). Although this stage of education is not compulsory (or in fact compulsory part time up to the age of 18) vast majority of students continues education in upper secondary schools. After lowering the school starting age relevant changes will affect this stage of education (i.e. ages of students will change to 15 – 18/19). Students of vocational schools - basic vocational schools and technical upper secondary schools may take exams confirming vocational qualifications in a given occupation during the course of study or upon completion of school to receive a diploma confirming their vocational qualifications. Graduates of general upper secondary schools and technical upper secondary schools may take the external upper secondary school leaving examination (egzamin maturalny) to obtain the Matura certificate, which opens access to higher education.

- **Post-secondary non-tertiary education** (szkolnictwo policealne) – in the Polish education system post-secondary education is considered to be a part of secondary education. Post-secondary schools (szkoła policealna) are intended for graduates of general upper secondary schools who wish to obtain a diploma confirming their vocational qualifications. The schools offer courses lasting from 1 to 2.5 years. The students of post-secondary schools and students of basic vocational schools and technical upper secondary schools take the same type of vocational exams.
- **Adult education** – this stage of education is open to adults who wish to complete school education on primary and secondary level or acquire new vocational qualifications and skills for professional or personal reasons. It is organised in school- and non-school settings by continuing education institutions, practical training institutions, in-service training centres or as non-degree postgraduate programmes (in HEIs). Training is offered also to the unemployed and to certain categories of people searching for a job.
- **Higher education** (szkolnictwo wyższe) – there are two types of higher education institutions: university-type (uczelnia akademicka) and non-university-type (uczelnia zawodowa). They both offer first- and second-cycle programmes as well as long-cycle Master's degree programmes while only university-type HEIs can offer third-cycle programmes (doctoral studies) and are authorized to award doctoral degrees. Studies are organized in the form of full-time or part-time programmes. First-cycle programmes last for 3-4 years and lead to a Bachelor's degree (licencjat) or for 3,5-4 years and lead to Bachelor's degree (inżynier). Holders of the Bachelor's degree can enter second-cycle programmes, which take 1,5-2 years depending on the specialty. Only several fields of study offer long-cycle Master's degree programmes that last for 4-6 years. First-cycle, second-cycle and long-cycle Master's programmes end with a diploma examination and students who have passed it are granted a degree. The Master's degree entitles its holder to practice a given profession and provides access to third-cycle studies. They are organised in higher education institutions or research and development institutions and last for 3-4 years.

No official definition of **initial vocational education and training** (IVET) is used in Poland and the term is rarely used, restricted to European publications seeking comparison of the systems. In such cases IVET is understood as vocational education carried out in schools, usually before entering working life.

#### 1.1.1. Polish centres that provide Vocational Training related to agriculture (10 centres)

- Zespół Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Rolniczego w Nakle Śląskim
- Zespół Szkół Rolniczych w Międzywiciu
- Zespół Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych w Ornontowicach
- Zespół Szkół Zawodowych w Raciborzu
- Zespół Szkół Rolnicze Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego w Żarnowcu
- Zespół Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych Nr 2 im. gen. Stefana Roweckiego „Grota” w Jędrzejowie
- Zespół Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Praktycznego w Krzelowie
- Zespół Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Rolniczego w Głubczycach
- Zespół Szkół Centrum Kształcenia Rolniczego im. Ks. dr Jana Dzierżona w Bogdańczowicach
- Zespół Szkół im. W. Witosa w Książu Wielkim

## 1.2 Non-formal learning

Non-formal education can take the form of training, workshops, conferences, seminars, correspondence courses or e-learning courses. It is not administered centrally by one single body so it is difficult to indicate its general objectives or priorities. Mostly it responds to current trends, general continuing vocational training policy and labour-market needs. It is also possible that public schools offer non-formal courses as some additional activities (formy pozaszkolne). Exists also, so-called, the qualifying professional courses (within **agriculture education** as well). After completing such a course, someone can pass an exam and receive diploma with confirmation of professional skills.

Non-formal education is usually funded by participants. The two exceptions are training financed by the European Social Fund or training for unemployed people financed by the labour fund. Resources for non-formal continuing education mainly come from the State budget, employers, the labour fund, individual own budgets and structural funds.

## 1.3 Informal learning

Informal learning, in the agricultural field, takes place very often. Mainly, as a transfer of information, good practice and knowledge between different generations of farmers (parents and their childrens), or just between several farmers.

Poland is a country grounded in agriculture and forestry. More than sixty percent of Poland's total area is taken up by farming. Agriculture employs almost one third of the total Polish work force but contributes less than 4% to the gross domestic product (GDP). There are over 2 million private, familybased small farms.

In Poland, 38% of farmers has basic or complete preparation for farming. The research results confirm large proportion of young farmers (the age of 35 and lower) among all the managers of individual farms. The importance of the process of improving the skills and knowledge and validation is very high.

## 2. Accreditation of prior learning and/or previous experience

### 2.1 National perspective on validation

#### 2.1.1 Description of system of validation

In Poland, the first document on the development of Life-Long Learning (LLL) was adopted in 2007.

The government is currently working on a new document on Life-Long Learning which will also set the agenda for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The European Qualification Framework (EQF) has lead to new regulations in Poland. In 2009, the Ministry of Education developed a new education policy. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education is also implementing the Polish Qualification Framework in cooperation with social partners and stakeholders.

Considerable adjustments must be made to introduce a credit system. So far, there are no clear procedures to validate non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) even if there is a large training market. There are also no procedures for measuring and improving the quality of training institutes. In 2008 work started on the Polish Qualification Framework (PQF) covering the whole of the education and training systems. One year later, in 2009, a proposal was submitted by a working group examining the competences and qualifications for the labour market and developing a QF. In 2010 an NQF steering committee adopted proposals as a basis for designing and implementing the PQF. The first consultation

on the Polish Qualification Framework took place in February 2011. The whole consultation phase took one year and was completed in February 2012.

The Polish Qualification Framework will include procedures for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, but the main project at the moment is to formulate over 600 pages for new laws which will include a register of all the professions.

### **2.1.2 Links with existing national qualification framework and standards used for validation**

In a longer perspective, linking formal, informal and non-formal education into one system with the help of national vocational qualifications standards and validation process, is the first step towards development of lifelong learning and supporting by that the personnel of the knowledge based modern economy. Some conditions of the system were laid in the Ministry for National Education's disposition (f.ex.. Ministry for Education Act from 18 September 2007 r. regarding eksternal examinations) as well as assumptions in changing of the model for examination confirming vocational qualification as set in Operational Program Human Capital (PO KL) 2007-2013.

The set of systematically described vocational qualification standards is available on the internet database set on the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy's website address:

<http://www.standardyiszkolenia.praca.gov.pl>

### **2.1.3 Forms of identification and recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

Career counselors and lifelong learning professionals provides identification and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in various forms. The most common is recognition of APL within the counseling process, which lead to elaborate the Individual Action Plan (IAP) by clients with a range of social status as unemployed, seeking for employment, returning to the Labour Market or changing job. In the IAPs there are usually portfolio, structured interview eg. European Biography, and mapping of personal learning needs at play.

Career counselors take into account mainly dossier and structured interviews working with graduates. In schools and other educational settings (including adults education, and non-formal education) the basic are portfolio methods or exams.

To sum up, the process of identification and recognition of non-formal and informal learning usually includes the following phases: counselling, taking of evidence (analyzing the documents submitted by the applicant), examination procedure (exam, adjusted to the type and the scope of the accredited skills and professional qualifications), verification procedure (combining the features of the taking of evidence and the examination procedure).

### **2.1.4 Target groups requiring assessment of the prior learning and/or experience**

The main target group comprise of unemployed people or those looking for better job, mainly workers who did not complete the regular education in the proper time. Another group are workers coming back from abroad, who possess some skills learned in informal or non-formal way. The next relatively big group those are youngsters being dropped out from formal education at different levels. Finally all

others, who not possess a formal certificate. In the agricultural field, the target group for the assessment of prior learning and/or experience are the traditional farmers.

### **2.1.5 The situation with regard to validation of of informal and non-formal learning and/or experience in the field of agriculture**

There is no system for validating and recognising qualifications/skills and competences acquired within non-formal and informal education in Poland. There are separate solutions in different branches: external examinations by territorial examination boards allow adults to receive the certificate. However, external examinations confirming vocational qualifications (including agriculture field) are foreseen only for the graduates of particular vocational (including agriculture) schools. According to the planned new reform of vocational education, connected to the work on the national qualification system, the vocational system examination will be unified regardless of learning forms, school or non-school.

## **2.2 Overview of existing initiatives**

### **2.2.1 Examples of local, regional or national based initiatives**

Pilot programme for validation of professional qualification:

The „National Network of Schools and Educational Institutes Implementing APL Procedure” in Poland (KSAPL – Krajowa Siec Szkol i Placowek Edukacyjnych Wdrazajacych Procedure APL). The network was established in March 2005 in order to carry out pilot testing within Leonardo da Vinci EPANIL project. Currently over then 16 schools from south-west part of Poland are involved. The network provide possibility as regards validation and acreditation professional skills and qualifications.

### **2.2.2 Description of methods used**

The methods used were described above in the section 2.1.3.

Moreover, the methods include:

- New counselling and diagnostic tools adjusted to the needs,
- New education and training solutions preparing to employment in chosen professions with special regards to self-employment and craft,
- New solutions of cooperation among local institution of the labour market, chamber of craft and entrepreneurs concerning monitoring niche, disappearing and less popular professions, and employment promotion in these professions within specific situation on the labour market,
- Modular system of VET education based on the MES (Modular of Employable Skills).

### **2.2.3 Advantages/disadvantages of the methods used**

- New counselling and diagnostic tools and new education and training methods better fit specific needs of beneficiaries (eg. people 50+, disabled, and graduates),
- New education and training methods based on the complex monitoring of the labour market due to the new solutions of cooperation among local institution of the labour market, chamber of craft and entrepreneurs,
- New method of qualifications' validation and examination (contexts and procedures).

### **2.2.4 Benefits for the individuals (target group)**

- Possibility of getting complex information on individual's competences and abilities due to the multifaceted diagnosis.
- Possibility of participating in education and training specific to the needs of an individual.
- Possibility of getting complex information on the local labour market.
- Opportunity to validate informal and non-formal competences.
- Opportunity to pass exams and chance to get certificate.

## **2.3 Condition on implementation of the APL in the country in the context of organization, individuals and VET teachers, counsellors**

### **2.3.1 Relevant organisations, stakeholders helping in the implementation process of new tools**

Public entities:

- Ministry of of National Education
- Centre for Education Development
- The National Centre for Supporting Vocational and Continuing Education
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Krajowe Centrum Edukacji Rolniczej
- Schools and school providers' organizations

Agricultural organizations and/or networks and associations:

- Association "Ekoland"
- The „National Network of Schools and Educational Institutes Implementing APL Procedure” in Poland
- Career Centres

### **2.3.2 Awareness of VET teachers, counselors, advisers on the importance of the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

There is a relatively high awareness of VET teachers, counsellors, advisers on the importance of the validation of non-formal and informal learning for all schools including VET are under pressure of implementing the Learning Outcomes approach to their curricula and study programmes.

In a few regions of the country there are some practices developed in independent way, often in frames of some international projects. Some of them pretend to be good practices but they involve usually a small number of VET schools.

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