



Work Package 4
Definizione dei referenziali delle competenze acquisite in
contesti formali ed informali di apprendimento

Research Report
Italia (Brescia, Campobasso, Pisa)
Romania, Paesi Bassi, Regno Unito

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INDICE

Introduction: I CARE project and Research Report on Italian, Romanian, Dutch and English contexts

- 1. Methodology**
- 2. Standards of competence, validation and certification procedures for personal care workers in Lombardy, Tuscany, and Molise**
- 3. Care workers in the Romanian context: occupational standards and the system for evaluating non formal and informal competencies**
- 4. Dutch qualifications, education and recognition**
- 5. Care workers training and accreditation issues: UK context**
- 6. Comparative tables of the validation and certification systems considered**
- 7. Recommendations**

Introduction

I CARE project (Informal Competences Assessment and Recognition for Employment) is aiming at promoting procedures for the recognition and certification of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings and for the transparency of qualifications with specific reference to the “white jobs” (baby sitters, caregivers, carers to disabled people etc.).

The project, promoted by TECLA Association, includes other Italian, English and Dutch scientific institutions (such as La Sapienza University of Rome DPSS, Institute of Education, University of London and Cofora Bv The Netherlands), territorial partners in Italy and in Romania such as the Province of Brescia, Campobasso and Pisa and the Employment Agency of the County of Bistrita-Nasaud.

In Italy and Romania, in fact, in a labour market based characterized by high selective criteria and in a context characterized by a progressive aging of the population, the need of qualified and competent workforce is compounded by:

- ✓ a lack of adequate and effective qualification systems
- ✓ the widespread difficulty to create the necessary conditions to bring out people working “on the black” in specific professional fields such as those related to caregivers
- ✓ the need for specific training offer and procedures for the recognition of the competences of people employed in white jobs: such people are often not qualified at a formal level but nonetheless they possess significant competences, acquired in informal/non formal settings, which unfortunately tend to remain unrecognized because of the inadequateness of the present certification systems.

Based on the results of the project “TIPEIL – Transfer of an Innovative e-Portfolio to Evaluate Informal Learning”, I CARE project intends to transfer to the Employment Services Staff of the partner territories an innovative procedure for the recognition of informal and non formal competences based on the methodology of the electronic portfolio, that, through different types of proofs (e.g. text, photos, video clips), can show the competences owned by each person, highlighting the variety of experiences and skills acquired in different contexts of his life.

In particular, I CARE project promotes the development of this methodology in a model for the assessment and certification of informal/non formal competences with reference to the selected white jobs, integrated with the tools and methods currently used in the Employment Centers in Italy and Romania, in line with the regional and national classificatory systems and with EQF.

For this procedure to become an asset of the departments and structures responsible for validation of competences and employment intermediation, it is necessary to involve all stakeholders working

in the field of training, employment and guidance, such as Regions, social partners and professional associations that will be invited to join the Steering Committee, together with Italian partners. The Steering Committee has the function to address the choices of partners with respect to issues of assessment and certification of competences and to systematize the project results in the Italian context.

In order to promote the transfer of procedures for recognition and validation of informal competences acquired with regard to white jobs, and bring transparency of qualifications in the European countries involved in the project, during the WP3 and WP4, project partners have implemented activities for sharing practices of evaluation and certification of informal knowledge developed in the countries they represent and analyze the competences related to white jobs identified by the Steering Committee.

During the first meeting of the Steering Committee, which was held in Rome on 22nd November 2010, the Committee members agreed to 'focus' on a specific figure of 'white jobs', the caregiver, since it is a professional highly required in the labour market, but that has not yet been standardized by all Italian Regions. In fact, this profession is mainly covered by people who use their own competences acquired in informal learning contexts, in particular during the implementation of activities to assist the elderly, sick or/and disabled people, without having acquired formal learning and competences by attending specific training course.

To support institutions in the development of common procedures for the validation of the caregiver's competences, members of the Steering Committee decided to compare the information on how Italian Regions defined those competences and the procedures adopted by some Regions and Provinces to validate informal and non-formal competences.

This Report collects all information gathered by the working groups of the University of Rome La Sapienza - scientific partner of the I CARE Project - and of the Italian Provinces and the Agency for the Employment of Romanian county of Bistrita –Nasaud; these information will be used by the Technical and Scientific Committee and by the Steering Committee to develop the process of validation of the caregiver's competences.

The research report analyzes how the competences of caregiver are defined and validated in different European countries: in Italy and Romania, where certification systems have been developed only recently, and in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (represented in the project by the Institute of Education of the University of London and by Cofora BV) that already have a long experience in the development of methods of validation of informal and non-formal competences. The information gathered for the Italian context involve the procedures developed by Lombardia, Molise and Toscana Regions.

Then, these procedures have been compared so to provide the Technical and Scientific Committee

and the Steering Committee with information and directions about the referentials of the caregiver's competences and the features of the validation methodology that will be developed in the subsequent project work package (WP5).

1. Methodology

In order to analyze and define the competences related to the profession of the caregiver, chosen by the Steering Committee of the project, and the levels and possible referencing with respect to the system of professional qualifications, two surveys were carried out, the first one as desk analysis and the second as field analysis in Italy and Romania.

During the field survey 26 semi-structured interviews in Italy were carried out and 30 in Romania, addressed to the representatives of institutions involved in the assessment competences of caregivers and that in some cases have set up registers to allow caregivers to register prior a specific interview and representatives of the different types of structures where caregivers usually work: cooperatives of social services, homes for the elderly, families.

Table N. 1 illustrates the different types of interviews.

Table n.1

INTERVIEW REALIZED BY THE PARTNERS OF THE PROJECT					
INTERVIEWED	DPPSS	ROMANIA	Province of Brescia	Province of Campobasso	Province of Pisa
Caregiver's employer	-Le fate turchine Association -Libera cittadinanza onlus -Cooperative Cent'anni -Cooperative Anziani e non solo - Project Talenti di cura (Federico Boccaletti)			-Social Cooperative SIRIO -Home for the elderly	
Family	5 families	15 families	5 families	4 families	
Institutions	Municipality of Rome Dott.ssa Alessandra Casagrande	-Employment Service of the County of Bistrita Nasaud -Regional Centre of Vocational Training for adults in Cluj-Napoca (CRFPA) - Municipality	•CFP Zanardelli •IAL Lombardia •Scuola Bottega	Molise Region (Dr. Feleppa) Agenzia Molise Lavoro (Dr. Ruggiero)	

		of Bistrita – Department of Social Services- Municipality of Sieu – Department of Social Assistance			
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The interviews allowed to analyze deeply the different activities that the caregiver is asked to perform during his working day and his main responsibilities. In addition, during the interview was shown the table num.2 and the interviewee had to indicate for each competence, which of them were necessary for the profession of the caregivers and which one was important but not necessary, and so additional.

The outcome of the interviews allowed to identify all the competences and knowledge listed in the table as crucial for the profession of caregivers, except for the competence related with the assistance to people affected by ALS at various stages of the disease, which was considered by all respondents an additional competence.

Table n.2

COMPETENCE	CENTRAL	ADDITIONAL
Knowledge of the person to assist (stage of development, disease, difficulties, etc..)	x	
Orientation in social and institutional context , linked to the private home care and to the principles of professional ethics (social, health, cultural and recreational context).	x	
Assisting clients in mobility tasks	x	
Assisting clients in personal hygiene	x	
Assisting clients with preparing and consuming food and drink	x	
Supporting in cleaning and tidying up rooms and furniture in the house	x	
Assistance to people in different stages of Alzheimer's disease and dementia	x	
Assistance to people in different stages of ALS		x
Accompanying clients in social life and relationships	x	
Communicate and interact (with the assisted person, his social network, the medical/nursing staff)	x	
Cooperate with health care activities and perform the requirements of health workers	x	

As far as the desk analysis of documents related to the competences of Caregivers and the certification of competences is concerned, there were analysed the following: the repertoires of regional professions of Lombardy and Tuscany Regions, the repertoire of social and medical professions of Molise Region which is under approval, the Thesaurus Italia-Lavoro, classificatory systems ATECO NUP 07 and 06 and 08 AEP, the methodologies of validation developed in the partner countries (UK, Netherlands and Romania) and those developed during projects already financed by the LLP (project 'Care Talents').

The project Care Talents (www.caretalents.it) was considered by ISFOL a good practice of development both of standard competences of the caregiver and of system of assessment of the competences of the Caregiver. For this reason, it has been decided to deepen activities and results of that project that has been the 'case study' of the Italian context.

The published documents of the project and the details of the interview to the President of the Consortium "Anziani e non solo" - Lead Partner of the Care Talents Project – allowed: a) to verify the richness that characterizes the descriptions of the competences included in the standard of the competences developed in Care Talents Project, b) to understand the relevance of standards achieved by comparing the Caregiver's standard of competences adopted in France and in two Italian Regions who are not in the partnership of I CARE project such as Lazio and Emilia Romagna Regions.

In the next chapters are described the competences required for the caregivers in the repertoires of professions and procedures for certification of informal competences of Molise, Tuscany and Lombardy Regions, Romania, the Netherlands and United Kingdom.

2 Standards of competence, validation and certification procedures for personal care workers in Lombardy, Tuscany, and Molise

2.1 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF LOMBARDY AND BRESCIA

2.1.1. The PCW profession in the Lombardy Region

Before the Lombardy Regional Government regulated the profession of Personal Care Workers (PCWs) for the elderly, the Brescia Provincial Government had established some guidelines (Directions for managing the classification of Personal Care Workers for the elderly) with a view to the certification of the PCW profession, by establishing such requirements as the holding of a diploma and work experience to be eligible for a competence **certification exam**.

Eligibility for the competence certification procedure was subject to the following requirements adopted by the Employment Services in the Brescia province:

1. being 18 years of age;
2. having completed compulsory education;
3. having some basic knowledge of Italian;
4. having a valid residence and work permit or proof of having applied for renewal/extension of the residence permit within the legal deadline;
5. having no criminal record or pending criminal proceedings;
6. having attended vocational training courses on personal care and/or having acquired a vocational qualification in the area of social and health-care services;
7. having acquired the competences described in the guidelines by attending training modules and by gaining work experience in the area of social and health-care services;
8. having worked in the field of elderly care for at least 6 months.

After ascertaining that aspiring PCWs met the requirements above, the Employment Service staff provided the list of applicants to the personnel of the vocational training centre where the examination was to be taken. At the end of the examination, after an interview and a test or practical, a **certificate of competence** was issued. The examination aimed to check that applicants had gained the competences pertaining to the PCW profession on the job. If an applicant was not eligible to be entered into the **professional register**, the Employment Service staff advised him/her to attend some training courses in order to acquire the competences described in the above-mentioned guidelines.

Few PCWs followed the competence certification procedure established by the Brescia Provincial

Government, in that the Lombardy Regional Government formally regulated the PCW profession in its D.D.U.O. (Organisational Unit Managerial Decree) No. 15243 of 17th December 2008, published in the B.U.R. (Official Bulletin of the Region) No. 53 of 29th December 2008, and the relevant guidelines to practise the profession in the Lombardy region were disseminated therewith.

As laid down in the aforesaid Decree, those who intend to work as Personal Care Workers need to attend specific vocational training courses, with the twofold aim of *“protecting the people who decide to avail themselves of PCWs while promoting social inclusion through the recognition of the learning credits gained by professional personal support workers (social care workers / social and health-care assistants), thus encouraging their educational progress and increased job opportunities”* (p. 3882). Article 7 of the above-mentioned Decree establishes that *“the goal of vocational training is to enable learners to acquire specific skills that can be used in the labour market, although it does not qualify them to practise, because the profession is not regulated, hence access to it is free and does not require any particular qualification”* (p. 3883).

Vocational courses for Personal Care Workers are of two types: a **basic course** of 160 hours to obtain the qualification of Personal Care Worker, and a **2nd level course** of 100 hours to provide in-home support services to patients with nervous diseases. Upon completion these two courses, learners obtain a **certificate of competence** and the **learning credits** that make them eligible for vocational training programmes resulting in the vocational qualifications of social and health-care assistants or social care workers. Learning credits are assessed and converted into the number of hours that PCWs will not need to follow out of the total amount of hours required to obtain the social and health-care assistant and social care worker qualifications.

The number of learning credits that each PCW is assigned will be assessed by a vocational training organisation approved by the Lombardy Regional Government. This organisation will have to design individualised curricula taking into account each applicant’s competences and knowledge in relation to the learning objectives of the social and health-care assistant or social care worker qualifications.

Annex A to the Decree describes the profile and **occupational standards** of a Personal Care Worker (PCW) and emphasises that *“a Personal Care Worker nurses and looks after individuals with different levels of physical and mental self-sufficiency (old, sick, and disabled people), supports their families, and helps clients preserve their self-care skills and well-being depending on their individual needs and reference contexts”* (p. 3883).

These are the competences – each one comprising skills/abilities and knowledge – that a PCW should have:

1. Placing yourself in the organisational, social, and institutional context of reference
2. Helping in the preparation of meals and housekeeping

3. Providing care and support to non self-sufficient individuals, by recognising their needs as well as their mental and physical health condition
4. Establishing communication/relations with the individuals you assist, their families, and the care team
5. Assisting patients during the progression of Alzheimer's disease and senile dementia
6. Assisting patients during the progression of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

At present, it should be emphasised that the Lombardy Regional Government considers that a PCW needs to also have competences related to the care of patients with such diseases as ALS, Alzheimer's disease and senile dementia.

Annex B to the D.D.U.O. No. 15243 of 17th December 2008 establishes that basic vocational training for the qualification of care workers are available for Italian and foreign nationals legally residing in Italy, who meet the following requirements:

1. being 18 years of age;
2. having had a guidance and aptitude interview with an officially approved training organisation.

Foreigners should also have:

3. basic knowledge of Italian;
4. a valid residence permit or application for renewal of said permit.

To be eligible for 2nd level courses, instead, applicants must have obtained a certificate of competence upon completion of the basic course and their personal motivation should be "*adequate for the type of care work required*" (p. 3885). Along with 50 hours of theoretical classes, trainees must take 20 hours of practical lessons and 30 hours of practice either in private households or with specific care providers.

As explained above, the number of **learning credits** that each PCW is assigned upon completion of the aforesaid training courses is assessed by a vocational training organisation approved by the Lombardy Regional Government. Taking into account each applicant's competences and knowledge in relation to the learning objectives of the social and health-care assistant or social care worker vocational qualifications, this organisation will design **individualised curricula** and will establish the number of hours that each PCW will not need to follow out of the total amount of hours required to obtain the above-mentioned vocational qualifications. As laid down in Decree No. 15243, trainees who have completed the basic course can benefit from a reduction of no more than 120 hours if they wish to attend a course for social care workers and 100 hours if they wish to attend a course for social and health-care assistants, whereas learners who have also completed their 2nd level training can benefit from a reduction of no more than 160 hours if they are interested

in a course for social care workers and 150 hours if they are interested in a course for social and health-care assistants.

In order to establish the number of learning credits and design individualised curricula, approved vocational training organisations can refer to the provisions of D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 8/6563 of 13th February 2008 (p.16). The Resolution also contains some guidelines on the certification of non-formal and informal learning (ib.). This topic will be analysed in the paragraph below, for PWCs can ask vocational training organisations that are licensed as Employment Services to certify their informal learning if they have not attended a basic training course and have not, consequently, obtained the certificate of competence issued by an approved vocational training organisation.

2.1.2 Recognition and certification of informal learning in the Lombardy Region

By Decree No. 13503 of 22nd December 2010, the Lombardy Regional Government began implementing the “Model for the certification of non-formally and informally acquired competences”. The task of coordinating and monitoring the process was entrusted to Fondazione Politecnico of Milan. Vocational training organisations licensed as Employment Services (below “licensed awarding bodies”) that wish to start the guided implementation of the certification model are required to submit their application to the Reform Implementation and Controls Operating Unit of the Education, Training, and Employment Head Office, stating the occupational area and professional profiles under the Regional Framework of Occupational Standards (*QRSP - Quadro Regionale degli Standard Professionali*) for which they wish to implement the process of certification of non-formal and informal learning.

This Decree was enacted after an experimental period during which the certification process was tested on two professional profiles with radically different competences (trainers and gardeners). The Decree aims to provide the necessary guidelines to extend the certification process to a wider range of professional profiles. These guidelines – meant for licensed awarding bodies – are included in the following attachments to the Decree:

Attachment 1: “Process for the certification of non-formal and informal learning”

Attachment 2 : “Guidelines for the certification of non-formal and informal learning”

Attachment 3 “Application form for licensed awarding bodies offering the certification of non-formal and informal learning”

Template 1: Application form for the certification of competences

Template 2: CV Template_it_EUROPASS

Template 3: Description Grid

Templates 4.1 to 4.8: Assessment Indicators

Template 5: Guide to Preparing an Evidence Portfolio

Template 6: Evidence Assessment Grid

Template 7: Face-to-Face Assessment Grid

Before detailing the various steps of the certification process designed by the Lombardy Regional Government, it is useful to introduce some key concepts referred to in the aforesaid Decree and D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 6563.

The first key concept is *competence*, which is the capability of accomplishing one or several tasks pertaining to a professional profile. The competence description standards adopted by the Lombardy Regional Government refer to the agreements signed during the Conference of the State and Regions of 15th January 2004 and 5th October 2006 as well as to the Record of Personal Achievement approved by Interministerial Decree of 10th October 2005. As a result, in order to describe a competence, it is necessary (under Regional Council Resolution No. 6563, p. 7): to describe it with an average degree of analytical accuracy – without breaking it down into further “competences” or micro-activities –, to divide it into knowledge and skills/abilities, to describe it using uniform syntax, i.e. an action (expressed by a verb) followed by an object and detail and/or reference context, completed (if necessary) by the level of autonomy and responsibility. Here are two sample descriptions:

- using (ACTION) technological tools (OBJECT) to consult records and manage information (DETAIL/CONTEXT);
- handling (ACTION) administrative and accounting tasks (OBJECT) autonomously in a small-sized business (DETAIL/CONTEXT).

Attachment 2 to D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 13503/2010 clearly states that “a competence can be certified if it can be recognised through discernible behaviours”. In accordance with this principle, the core concepts of the system are evidence and competence indicators” (p.2). *Competence indicators* identify the minimum requirements or criteria to be fulfilled in order to determine that a given competence has been acquired. These indicators highlight the types of evidence that are useful to prove that a competence has been acquired. The evidence provided must meet the corresponding competence indicators. Indicators are used to identify the abilities related to the competence being measured and the actual level of competence in relation to the complexity of the context, degree of autonomy, and type of tasks. *Evidence* is the tool or product that an applicant can use in order to demonstrate that he/she has acquired a given competence in compliance with the indicators connected to that competence. As examples of evidence, Attachment 2 suggests a few tools in support of reputation, such as pictures, footage, audio recording, products, on-the-job observation. However, these are just samples and applicants can choose to produce other types of evidence than those suggested. By way of example (p. 3), in order to demonstrate a trainer’s competence named “providing training” – divided into the abilities and knowledge described in the Regional Framework of Occupational Standards (D.D.U.O No. 8486 of 30th July 2008 and subsequent amendments and additions) –, the indicators used may be:

interaction with the class as a group, use of PPT slides, videos and/or other tools, ways to test learning, others. The evidence brought by the applicant may be: footage of a (real or simulated) classroom lesson, teaching aids, testing tools, others.

The paragraphs below describe the different phases of the certification process designed by the Lombardy Regional Government:

1. *Submission of the application*

Following a *guidance interview* with the reception and information staff at the licensed awarding body, each applicant will prepare his/her application for certification – listing the specific competences for which certification is requested –, a Europass CV, and a Description Grid listing his/her experience linked to the competence(s) to be certified. Each applicant can ask for the support of a tutor in preparing the documents above.

2. *Preliminary assessment of the application based on the examination of the documents submitted and their consistency with the competence(s) to be certified*

Certifiers will use templates from 4.1 to 4.8 – which describe the indicators corresponding to the level established in the EQF (European Qualifications Framework) for each competence – to express their “yes” or “no” judgment on whether or not each of the applicant’s competences meets those indicators. If all the indicators are met and the application is accepted, the result of the preliminary assessment is posted or e-mailed to the applicant, who is convened for an interview to start the certification process.

If the application is rejected, the applicant will be convened for a *guidance interview* during which the interviewer will check whether the indicators may be met by producing more accurate documentation.

If the indicators cannot be met, *“the interviewer will advise the applicant on whether to submit the same application after a further period of work or will recommend a more effective choice that is consistent with the applicant’s background of experience”* (p. 6).

3. *Preparation and submission of the Evidence Portfolio*

During phase 3, the applicant will fill in a grid included in the Guide to Preparing an Evidence Portfolio and will attach the evidence he/she could gather. The evidence and the Description Grid make up the applicant’s portfolio. Each applicant can ask for the support of a tutor in preparing the portfolio.

4. *Assessment aimed at checking whether the applicant has really acquired the competence to be certified*

After a formal check of the conformity of the documentation produced by the applicant, the Certifier

will appoint an Assessor and fix a date for the assessment.

The documentation will be examined by the Assessor by using, in the first place, the Evidence Assessment Grid (Template 6) in order to check whether the applicant's evidence meets the competence indicators required. Using this grid, the Assessor will assign a score to each of the indicators referring to the evidence produced, on a 1 to 4 scale, as follows: 1 = the competence is not evident or is not demonstrated; 2 = the competence is not very evident; 3 = the competence is sufficiently evident; 4 = the competence is fully evident. The indicator will be met if the score equals or exceeds 3.

In the second place, Assessment Indicators (Templates 4.1 to 4.8) will be used to check that the evidence produced really corresponds to the EQF level defined for the competence to be certified. If some indicators are not met, a closer examination will have to be performed at the final assessment stage.

On the basis of the applicant's documentation examined, the Assessor will choose how to perform the final assessment or face-to-face test, by particularly defining the assessment method (*interview, practical, test, other types of examination*) and the areas that need a closer look. In this phase, the Assessor will use the Face-to-Face Assessment Grid (Template 7) and will check that both competence indicators and EQF level indicators are met. The assessment is performed on a 1 to 4 scale (1 = the indicator is not evident or is not demonstrated; 2 = the indicator is not very evident; 3 = the indicator is sufficiently evident; 4 = the indicator is fully evident). As laid down in Attachment 2: *"only if, at the end of the certification process, all indicators have scored 3 to 4, the Assessor will be able to recognise the competence and state that it can be certified. In the event that even just one indicator has not scored 3 to 4, the competence cannot be recognised and, as a consequence, cannot be certified"* (p.8). If the certification fails, the applicant will have an interview with the Certifier, who will analyse the assessment results with him/her and advise on any possible ways to bridge the applicant's gaps and how long this will take.

5. *Issuing of a written statement or certificate of competence*

If the Assessor forwards to the Employment Service his/her judgment in favour of awarding the certification, the applicant will be issued a certificate of competence. If an entire professional profile is to be certified, all the competences linked to that profile will need to meet the criteria. If this is not the case, only the competences that meet the criteria will be certified and the applicant will need to repeat the certification process for the remaining competences.

2.2 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF MOLISE AND CAMPOBASSO

2.2.1 The PCW profession in the Molise Region

In the Regional Standard Classification of social and health-care professions, currently being approved by the Molise Regional Government, personal care workers are described as follows (Code 2.01 LICY or LIFECYCLE): *Personal Care Workers* (PCWs) support, complement and/or replace family caregivers and are capable of assisting frail old people or, more in general, individuals who are temporarily/permanently non self-sufficient in their daily life activities. In particular, PCWs help care recipients and their families. They work by the hour or as live-ins, in the private homes of their clients and their tasks consist in helping/replacing individuals in cleaning and sanitising rooms, assisting them with personal cleanliness and hygiene, preparing and eating meals, administering prescribed drugs, looking after them and keeping them company. PCWs should be able to face a wide range of need by availing themselves of the community resources and should be familiar with the social and health-care services locally available that may be helpful for their clients.

In order to qualify as a Personal Care Worker, you need to complete: a training course of 200 hours, comprising 120 hours of theoretical classes and 80 hours of practical training in specific nursing homes or in private homes with the support of a tutor identified by the vocational training institution. Foreign workers who lack basic knowledge of Italian can follow an introductory course of Italian for foreigners, which lasts 50 hours.

To be eligible for the above-mentioned training programme, you must:

- be unemployed/employed
- be 18 years of age at enrolment
- have completed compulsory education (16 years of age – upper secondary education)

Foreigners must also:

- have completed compulsory education in their countries of origin and produce a true copy and sworn translation of their school certificates
- be able to understand spoken and written Italian
- have a residence permit

Certification and learning credits

- Course-leaving certificate: vocational qualification certificate of *Personal Care Worker*, issued in conformity with Law No. 845/78
- Intermediate certificates: a certificate of competence for each Unit of Competence completed
- Provision of a Record of Personal Achievement
- Recognition of learning credits:
 - a) – people with previous work experience of at least 6 (six) months as Personal Care Workers in

Italy – duly certified and documented by job contracts and/or references – will not need to attend practical training and the corresponding hours will be recognised as prior learning credits;

b) – the competences gained by PCWs – who work and live with aged patients – are recognised as learning credits to be eligible for training as a “social and health-care assistant” (in residential and semi-residential care homes).

The following 4 learning units are recognised as transfer credits for the social and health-care assistant qualification:

- 1) assisting individuals with mobility (partial credit);
- 2) assisting individuals with personal hygiene (total credit);
- 3) assisting individuals to prepare and eat their meals (total credit);
- 4) cleaning and sanitising rooms (total credit).

The competences gained are recognised as learning credits – covering no more than 120 hours to be assigned in conformity with existing regional regulations – in order to be eligible for “social and health-care assistant” training programmes.

These are the units of competence for Personal Care Workers:

1. Home cleanliness and safety
2. Nursing and supporting individuals
3. Physiological fitness and recovery
4. Relationships, communication, and organisation

Table 3. Criteria for assessing Units of Competence

Units of competence	Elements of competence	Indicators	Expected results	Assessment mode
Home cleanliness and safety	Care and cleanliness of individuals’ rooms and living environments	Rules and techniques to maintain a clean and safe living environment	Daily maintenance of clean rooms and living environments	Situational test
Nursing and supporting individuals	Client support processes	Rules and techniques to support clients	Management of residual abilities	
Physiological fitness and recovery	Medical prescriptions and positioning techniques	Positioning/posture techniques	Management of residual abilities	
Relationships and communication	Ability to build relationships with formal/informal environments and networks	Using proper tools to establish contacts and relationships between individuals	Management of communication and interpersonal dynamics	

2.2.2 Recognition and certification of competences in the Molise Region

The regional system of Employment Services and education and training institutions is in charge of

formal and informal learning certification. The Molise Regional Government has planned to adopt procedures for the assessment and certification of Personal Care Workers' competences, although no resolution has been passed yet. As a consequence, the Employment Services in the Molise Region mainly perform job matching by collecting job seekers' CVs and educational credentials.

Pending the approval of the Regional Standard Classification of social and health-care professions and the description of competences for the PCW professional profile, the Molise Regional Government has designed the training programme required to be eligible for the PCW regional qualification. The programme will last 200 hours and the first courses will be held in the Provinces of Campobasso and Isernia. Upon completion of the programme, each trainee will receive a Portfolio of Competence and certificate of qualification entitling him/her to be enrolled on the Regional Professional Register of PCWs.

The Molise Regional Government is finalising the Regional and Provincial Professional Registers of Personal Care Workers and the qualifying criteria to be used by providers (including Employment Services) in charge of selecting and enrolling PCWs.

The European Employment Services (EURES) of the Molise Employment Agency (*Agenzia Molise Lavoro*) have recently launched a project called "*Progetto badanti*" (Carer Project), which enables applicants to be entered into the EURES database of PCWs after a selection procedure run by regional councillors, a cultural mediator and a physician.

2.3 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF TUSCANY AND PISA

2.3.1 The PCW profession in the Tuscany Region

The Tuscany Regional Government is redefining the occupational standards of PCWs. Up until the drafting of this report, the areas of work of PCWs were typically those of care workers, i.e.:

1. Supporting individuals with their personal care needs
2. Looking after individuals and keeping them company
3. Promoting individuals' relationships and socialisation
4. Handling and supporting the preparation of meals and feeding
5. Helping with housekeeping
6. Residential and home-based primary nursing

2.3.2 Recognition and certification of competences in the Tuscany Region

Following D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 532/2009, the Provincial Council of Pisa passed the "Provincial Operational Plan", enforcing the Regional Rules for the implementation of the regional system for the recognition and certification of competences, in March 2012. The

“Provincial Operational Plan” defined how to manage the processes leading to the certification of competences. The procedures for the implementation of the aforesaid operational plan are being refined – with particular regard to its validation phase –, while the procedures for competence identification are already in force. The latter enable each individual to describe and highlight the skills acquired and to assemble his/her “Record of Personal Achievement”, which is a tool to record the certificates obtained as well as the learning experience gained in non-formal and informal contexts. The “Statement of Learning Outcomes” will be issued by education and training institutions upon completion of “formal” training programmes.

As for the Lombardy Region, in order to properly describe the process developed in the Tuscany Region, the following key concepts need to be introduced: branch of work, area of work, performance, and unit of competence. These concepts are defined below and their definitions are included in the Glossary of Terms of the regional system of standards for the recognition and certification of competences.

A *Branch of Work* comprises a set of actions and activities performed by several professional profiles who work at different levels and with different responsibilities and skills in order to reach the same goal. Branches of Work result from a breakdown of economic sectors based on functional rather than product-related criteria. Each economic sector has been broken down into 6 branches of work: 1. administration and management; 2. marketing, communication, and sales; 3. design, research and development; 4. production, procurement, and logistics planning; 5. maintenance and repair; 6. production of goods and services.

An *Area of Work* is a range of homogeneous tasks grouped by type of processes or products. Based on Areas of Work, a professional profile can be broken down into its key professional dimensions and its typical vocational skills can be then identified. This is the definition provided by ISFOL (the Italian institute for the development of vocational education and training): “An Area of Work is a significant set of specific, homogeneous, and integrated tasks aimed at attaining a result, which can be identified within a specific process. The tasks that globally comprise an Area of Work have homogeneous features in terms of both the procedures to be implemented, the results to be achieved and the complexity of the competences to be used” (ISFOL 1998).

A *Unit of Competence* is comprised of the knowledge and skills required to adequately perform one’s professional duties. Knowledge is divided into two main groups: “general knowledge” – which is normally not specialised and owned by a wide range of professional profiles – and “vocational/technical knowledge” – which is highly specialised and owned by specific professional profiles. Skills are divided into the following broad types: vocational/technical, organisational, interpersonal, and analytical/cognitive skills.

The different phases that comprise the process of recognition and certification of competences followed by the Tuscany Regional Government will be detailed below. To use more proper terminology, rather than in phases, the wider recognition and certification process is organised in

processes and services. As a matter of fact, the Regional Rules for the implementation of the regional system for the recognition and certification of competences provided for in the Regulation implementing Regional Law No. 32/2002 stress that in order to “ensure that systems are suitable for the real and specific needs of citizens and workers” (p. 13), several recognition and certification processes and services have been developed:

- ✓ description of competences;
- ✓ statement of learning outcomes;
- ✓ validation of competences;
- ✓ certification of competences.

As laid down on page 14: “the description of competences is the first step towards determining their value in use with a view to their later recognition and certification (...). The description process consists of the following main components: a) definition – by the applicant and a qualified organisation belonging to the network of Employment Services – of the ways in which the documentation referred to in paragraphs b) and c) is to be prepared; b) guided CV writing, according to the national standard format; c) identification, description and/or drafting of the documentation demonstrating the educational and professional background described (including relevant evidence), according to a standard format”.

The **statement of learning outcomes** is the result of “formal” education and training completed in accordance with regional standards, namely: upon completion of programmes not aimed at obtaining vocational qualifications or certificates of competence; in case of dropout from courses leading to vocational qualifications or certificates of competence without meeting the minimum attendance requirements, at the applicant’s request; upon completion of programmes aimed at obtaining vocational qualifications or certificates of competence in case of failing the final exam, at the applicant’s request. Upon successful completion of one or several learning units, the statement of learning outcomes makes it possible to check and certify that the expected learning outcomes have been really achieved, in case no certification process is envisaged or required. The statement of learning outcomes can be used within the framework of the education and vocational training system in order to enter further programmes. The “statement of learning outcomes” is issued by vocational training organisations approved by the Tuscany Regional Government as well as by companies that supply training courses for their employees, provided that they meet the requirements laid down in the Regional Rules. The responsibility for the statement of learning process must be assigned to an **in-house assessment process manager** who works in the vocational training institution or company in charge of the statement of learning outcomes and must be on the **regional register of experts in learning and competence assessment**.

Another process implemented by the Tuscany Regional Government is the **validation** of the

competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts that are in compliance with the occupational standards included in the regional Standard Classification of Occupations in terms of individual Units of Competence related to individual Areas of Work or entire professional profiles. In the regional Standard Classification of Occupations, for each professional profile, there are several **Areas of Work**. For each area of work, there is a description of performance and **Units of Competence**, which are broken down into **Knowledge and Skills**. Each Unit of Competence is comprised of the Knowledge and Skills that make it possible to attain the performance required by a given Area of Work in the regional Standard Classification of Occupations.

The **validation of competences** is performed at the request of the applicant and consists of two different phases:

a) **review** of the experience gained in non-formal and informal contexts and the competences linked to this experience;

b) **validation** of the elements resulting from the review.

The review of non-formally and informally acquired experience is aimed at helping individuals work out their CVs and the documentation that demonstrates this experience, including any supporting evidence. After examining the documentation submitted and having an interview with the applicant (when needed), the Provincial Government will provide him/her with a Personal Validation Record listing the key features of the experience being validated and the Units of Competence related to the experience that has been reviewed and validated, as well as any supplementary documentation requested during the examination of the evidence produced (the process is similar to the *submission of the application and examination of the documents submitted* described for the Lombardy Region). If the process results in the validation of experience demonstrating that the applicant owns all the Knowledge and Skills related to one or several Units of Competence among those listed in the regional Standard Classification of Occupations, the applicant can apply for admission to the certification exam by submitting a formal application to the local government. If the process results in the validation of experience demonstrating separate pieces of Knowledge and/or Skills that are not enough to complete at least one Unit of Competence among those listed in the regional Standard Classification of Occupations, the applicant will be entitled to the recognition of one learning credit to be used in formal education and training programmes aimed at further developing his/her learning outcomes and obtaining a certificate of competence.

The **certification of competences** concerns the learning outcomes achieved in different contexts – which may have been previously recognised in accordance with the appropriate procedures – or the statement of learning outcomes in case of incomplete learning due to dropout, or the validation of extra-curricular learning (p.18).

The examination for the assessment and certification of competences is administered by an Examining Board appointed and established by the competent local government. The examination

takes place upon completion of a vocational training programme financed and recognised by the Tuscany Regional Government and leading to the awarding of a certificate of qualification or certificate of competence, or following any applications submitted to the local government by individuals who – after the validation of their non-formal/informal learning – have applied for admission to the examination aimed at the certification of competences (certificate of qualification or certificate of competence). In the latter case, the local government will admit “external applicants” if an equivalent examination has already been scheduled within the framework of an existing vocational training programme leading to the same certificate of qualification / competence as the one applied for. If, within six months of receiving the application, no certification tests have been scheduled within the framework of existing formal training programmes in the Areas of Work related to the same economic sectors as those applied for, the local government will set up a special Examining Board in charge of assessing external applicants.

The Board examines the documentation related to the validation process whereby applicants’ prior experience has been recognised, it establishes the competence assessment tests and defines the scoring system for the different tests. If “the examination is aimed at awarding a certificate of qualification, the Examining Board will need to check that all the Units of Competence required for a particular professional profile are achieved. If the aim is awarding a certificate of competence, the Examining Board will need to check that all the Units of Competence required for the specific Areas of Work are achieved” (pp. 25-26). With regard to the certification of informal learning, “examination tests must aim to check that Units of Competence are achieved, i.e. that the applicant is capable of attaining the performance required for the Areas of Work related to the Units of Competence to be certified. As a consequence, Areas of Work must be assessed using *simulation practical tests* (so called “technical/practical tests”) to measure the relevant performance” (p. 26). After the practical tests, the applicant will have an *interview* with the board examiners, focusing on the practical tests and, if necessary, other *objective tests* (multiple choice tests, closed-ended questions, fill-in questionnaires, and so on). If the examination is aimed at awarding a certificate of qualification, the outcome of the certification process may be:

- a) *eligible for qualification*: all the Units of Competence pertaining to a particular professional profile are achieved (a certificate of qualification is awarded);
- b) *eligible for the certification of some specific Units of Competence in the qualification*: only some of the Units of competence pertaining to a particular professional profile are achieved (a certificate of competence is awarded only for the Units of Competence actually achieved by the applicant);
- c) *not eligible*: none of the tests administered has been passed (if the applicant has been admitted to the final exam upon completion of a vocational training programme, he/she can ask the training organisation to issue a statement of learning outcomes related to the programme accomplished, to be used as a learning credit in future education and training programmes).

If the examination is aimed at awarding a certificate of competence, the outcome may be:

a.1) *eligible for the certification of the Units of Competence applied for*: all the Units of Competence measured are achieved (a certificate of competence is awarded for all the Units of Competence applied for);

b.1) *eligible for the certification of some specific Units of Competence among those applied for*: only some of the Units of competence measured are achieved (a certificate of competence is awarded only for the Units of Competence actually achieved by the applicant);

c.1) *not eligible*: none of the tests administered has been passed (if the applicant has been admitted to the final exam upon completion of a vocational training programme, he/she can ask the training organisation to issue a statement of learning outcomes related to the programme accomplished).

The *Record of Personal Achievement* is a tool in which individuals can record the certificates they have obtained and make their non-formal and informal learning visible.

2.3.3 The certification of Personal Care Workers' competences in the Pisa Province

With regard to the **certification of Personal Care Workers' competences**, the Pisa Provincial Government has described the memoranda of understanding in the area of care work signed from 2008 to 2010 by the Provincial Government itself, *Società della Salute* (consortia of healthcare providers) and social services from several provincial areas (Pisa, Valdera, Valdarno, and Valdicecina). Within the framework of those memoranda, a **register of personal care workers** has been established at each local Employment Service in order to simplify job matching and improve service provision for families by defining minimum standards of service quality. All the data from those registers is collected in one database (IDOL) in order to increase the number of potential job seekers that match job offers. So far, more than 1,000 personal care workers have sought the support of provincial Employment Services and about 700 PCWs (of which 41% are Italian nationals) have been selected. More than 300 families in an area where about 41,000 inhabitants are aged over 70 (19.23% of the total local population) have requested care workers from Employment Services and the job placement rate has been about 60%. In order to be listed in the provincial register of PCWs, the following criteria must be met:

1. holding a residence permit (if you are a foreigner),
2. having good knowledge of Italian (if this is not the case, Italian courses delivered by local providers are recommended),
3. previous work experience of 6 consecutive months as a personal assistant with families that can supply references (this is an "optimal" but not essential requirement)
4. holding certificates in the area of care work.

At present, the Employment Service staff are responsible for:

- supporting aspiring Personal Care Workers in giving visibility to the competences they have

acquired throughout their life and work experience (**competence review**);

- writing applicants' **personal records** – which is necessary for the later **validation** process – during a specific interview of about 45 minutes, by specifically assessing each of the competences highlighted during the competence review, and by emphasising the Areas of Work completed by applicants and those for which additional knowledge and skills should be acquired by attending education and training programmes to bridge existing gaps;
- supporting applicants in assembling and/or updating their Records of Personal Achievement;
- entering the outcomes of the competence review into a computerised record, according to the following classification:
 - no experience
 - experience acquired (as)
 - specific education and training (namely).

A special Validation Board is set up in order to:

- validate the competences of aspiring PCWs who have applied for validation and have demonstrated that they meet the requirements, as documented by the evidence provided and recorded.

The last phase of the process that enables aspiring PCWs to obtain certification is assessment, which is performed by a specific **Committee** (whose make-up is regulated by the Tuscany Regional Government) by means of a certification exam. After the setting up of 4 provincial registers of PCWs in Tuscany, however, only few applicants have gone through this phase. In order to obtain certification, examinees must demonstrate that they are capable of attaining the **performance** required for all the Areas of Work pertaining to the PCW profession, including (inter alia) communication, care, housekeeping. Examination **tests** are chosen by the Assessment Committee.

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3. Care workers in the Romanian context: occupational standards and the system for evaluating non formal and informal competencies.

3.1 The “white jobs” and “personal care” sector in Romania

COR – Classification of the Professions from Romania – is a list which appeared in 1995 and was ratified by means of the mutual ordinance of the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Protection and of the president of the National Institute for Statistics nr.138/1949/1995.

Nowadays, this list contains 3852 professions, but this number is continually changing according to the changes of the labour market.

COR represents the identification, ranking and codification system of all professions carried on in economy, regardless of the type and place of their development. COR is applied in all the fields of economic and social activity, at the filling in of official documents, anytime the identification of the profession which is the object of the carried on activities is asked for.

The update and revision of this list is made, at the users’ demand, by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection together with the National Institute for Statistics, the update procedure being ratified by means of the mutual ordinance nr.270/273 of the 12th of June 2002 of the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Protection and of the president of the National Institute for Statistics.

By COR update it is understood:

- a) the identification, ranking, codification and introduction in the COR system of new jobs, positions and occupations, as a result of the changes that occur in the national economy;
- b) the activity of erasing jobs, positions and occupations, which are no longer asked on the labour market;
- c) the activity of renaming jobs, positions and occupations, if this thing is required;

The COR update regards the 4 hierarchical levels of COR classification, namely the major group, major subgroups, minor groups, basic group, depending on:

- a) the level of education required for the practice of the job;
- b) the level of competence and the complexity of the tasks which have to be fulfilled;
- c) the degree of specialization;
- d) the technological processes, the materials used, the machines and gears which are used in the profession.

The COR update is done on the users’ initiative. Within COR, the description of the groups of jobs is done in the tree-like structure, in terms of the necessary professional competences.

Because the project I CARE refers to the target group of the persons who work within the “white

jobs”, below the Major Group 5 is going to be analyzed- “Operative workers from services, commerce and assimilated”, a group which contains the regarded professions, namely the basic groups 513301 - "Home caretaker for the elderly " and 513304 - "Personal assistant for persons with severe disabilities ".

MAJOR GROUP 5 - Operative workers from services, commerce and assimilated

The operative workers from services, commerce and their assimilated organize and offer different services to passengers during journeys, deliver domestic services and assure and look after children at home or in institutions; they prepare and serve baits and drinks, offer personal hygiene services (hair style, cosmetics, manicure, pedicure); organize funerals; protect the persons and their goods against fires and acts of delinquency and supervise the maintenance of the public policy; present new pieces of cloth within specialty exhibitions or goods of long-lasting use within the commercial corporations at wholesale and retail.

Major component subgroups:

51 – Workers in personal and protection services

52 – Sitters, models, shop assistants and marketplace salesmen

MAJOR SUBGROUP 51 – Workers in personal and protection services

The workers from the personal and protection services organize and offer services to passengers during the flight, handle and sell alimentary expendable goods aboard the plane, deliver domestic activities, supervise children and offer unqualified services for the care of sick persons at home or in specialty institutions; offer personal hygiene services (hair style, cosmetics, manicure, pedicure), of embalming, organize funerals; protect the persons and their goods against fires and acts of delinquency and supervise the maintenance of the public policy.

Minor component groups:

511 Flight attendants and touristic activity organizers

512 Administrators and other operative workers in restaurants, canteens, pensions, etc.

513 Care and assimilated staff

514 Other workers in population services

516 Security staff and public policy

MINOR GROUP 513 - Care staff and assimilated

The care staff and their assimilated offer care to children, supervise scholars, deliver services apart from the medical staff from hospital or other specialized institutions, attend the suffering at home, help vet specialists, chemists and other specialists when practicing their profession.

Basic component groups:

5131 Caretaker for the children

5132 Sanitary assistants and caretakers in social protection and sanitary institutions

5133 Specialized staff for care and supervision at home

5139 Workers in the service for the population unclassified in the previous basic subgroups

Description of the basic component group 5132 – SANITARY ASSISTANTS AND CARETAKERS IN SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SANITARY INSTITUTIONS

The sanitary assistants and the caretakers from the social protection and sanitary institutions carry on their activity near doctors, trained nurses, midwives and dentists and in general take care of preparing the patients for examination or medical treatment, changing the bed linen, preparing the hot water bottles, sterilizing the surgical instruments, assisting the dentists, feeding the lying-down patients; carrying-over of the non movable patients by the help of stretchers, preparing and applying the cast; supervising the sanitary condition of balneary and treatment spaces.

Component jobs: 513201 bath attendant, 513202 stretcher-bearer, 513203 solid plasterer, 513204 carer, 513205 caretaker at social protection and sanitary organizations, 513206 desander , 513207 mud gatherer , 513208 nightly caretaker social services

Description of the basic component group 5133 – SPECIALIZED STAFF FOR CARE AND SUPERVISION AT HOME

The home caretaker offers personal care services at the dependent sick persons' home, for those who cannot serve themselves (disabled, elderly).

Component jobs: **513301 home caretaker for the elderly**, 513302 baby sitter, 513303 home caretaker for sick persons, **513304 personal assistant for persons with severe disabilities**, 513305 professional personal assistant, 513306 care personal assistant, 513307 home caretaker .

Personal assistant for the person with a severe disability 513304 - education level 2 (secondary education)

The personal assistant for the person with a severe disability takes care in the main of giving hygienic care, assuring food and feeding, adapting the environment to the beneficiary's needs, supervising the health condition of the patient, assisting the activity and the participation of the person with a severe disability in the family and community, assisting the scholar integration and supervising the observance of the rights of the person with a severe disability, all on the basis of the Individual Plan for the disabled services.

What is a personal assistant?

The personal assistant is the person employed by means of individual employment contract in order to take care of the disabled person who cannot take care of himself/herself. The personal assistant can be a relative of the disabled person or can be a professional personal assistant.

Who can benefit from a personal assistant?

The person with a severe disability has the right, on the basis of the socio-psycho-medical evaluation, to have a personal assistant.

The adult with a severe or pronounced disability who doesn't own a place to live in, doesn't have incomes or has incomes to the level of the national average salary can benefit from the care and protection of a professional personal assistant.

The care and protection of adults with a severe or pronounced disability by the professional personal assistant are made on the basis of the decision of the commissions for the adult persons with disabilities, county, respectively local commissions of the districts of Bucharest.

Who can be a personal assistant?

Can be employed by means of individual employment contract as personal assistant, the person who fulfills the following conditions:

has turned at least 18;

wasn't convicted for a criminal offence which can made him/her incompatible with the practice of the profession of personal assistant;

has full capacity of exercise;

has an appropriate health condition, certified by the family physician or in basis of a specialized medical examination;

has graduated at least the universal compulsory education, excepting the relatives and their related until the fourth rating including of the person with a severe disability, as well as excepting the husband or the wife, as the case may be; in extraordinary situations, at the social assistant's proposition, within the appropriate machinery of the local council in whose territorial jurisdiction the domicile or residence of the person who is going to fulfill the job of personal assistant is, the National Authority for the Disabled can approve the exception from the fulfillment of the study conditions in the case of other persons too.

Cannot be personal assistants the persons who benefit from parental leave for children under 2 years old or in the case of a disabled child, under 7 years old.

Who employs the personal assistant?

The individual employment contract of the personal assistant is concluded with the city hall of the locality of domicile or residence of the person with severe disability, as the case may be with maximum 30 days from the entry of the petition. The individual employment contract is concluded in 3 copies, one for each contracting party, and the third copy is passed on to the general directorates of social assistance and child protection, county, respectively local directorates of the districts of Bucharest, within 5 days from its conclusion.

The employment contract of the personal assistant is concluded by the general directorates of social assistance and child protection, county, respectively local directorates of the districts of Bucharest or by the private social services providers, accredited under the terms of the law.

Which are the rights of the social assistants?

During the care and protection of the person with a severe disability, on the basis of the individual employment contract, the personal assistant has the following rights:

- basic wage determined according to the legal disposals regarding the remuneration of the social assistant with secondary education from the social assistance institutions from the public sector, other than those provided with beds, in addition to service increments and other due increments given under the terms of the law ;
- a working program which doesn't overreach on average of 8 hours per day and 40 hours per week;
- annual leave, according to the legal disposals applicable to staff employed in public institutions;
- free urban transport, under the terms of the law ;
- inter-city transport, under the terms of the law ;

During the care and protection of the adult with a severe or pronounced disability, the personal assistant has the following rights:

- basic wage determined according to the legal disposals regarding the remuneration of the social assistant with secondary education from the social assistance institutions from the public sector, other than those provided with beds, in addition to service increments and other due increments given under the terms of the law ;
- an increment of 15% calculated at the basic wage, for psycho neurological overstrain and distinctive working conditions in which the personal assistant carries on his/hers activity;
- an increment of 15% calculated at the basic wage, during the period in which he/she offers care and protection to at least two adult persons with a severe or pronounced disability;
- an increment of 25% calculated at the basic wage, during the period in which he/she offers care and protection to an adult person with a severe or pronounced disability, infected with immunodeficiency syndrome or afflicted with AIDS;
- counseling and support from specialists from the general social assistance and child protection directorates, county, respectively local directorates of the districts of Bucharest, or from social services providers, for the fulfillment of the obligations he/she has regarding the care and protection of the adult person with a severe or pronounced disability;
- the compensation for the inter-city transport, bed and board, when the travel is made in the interest of the adult with a severe or pronounced disability, under the conditions established for public sector staff;

- free urban transport, under the terms of the law ;

Which are the engagements of the personal assistants?

The personal assistant has the following main engagements:

- to take part, once at 2 years, at the training organized by the employer;
- to sign a commitment, as additional agreement to the individual employment contract, by means of which to undertake the responsibility to realize the whole recovery plan for the child with a severe disability, respectively the services individual plan for the adult person with a severe disability;
- to deliver for the person with a severe disability all the activities and services provided in the individual employment contract, in the job description and in the recovery plan for the child with a severe disability, respectively the services individual plan for the adult person with a severe disability;
- to treat with respect, good faith and understanding the person with a severe disability and not to take advantage of his/hers physical, psychic or moral condition;
- to communicate to the general social assistance and child protection directorates, county, respectively local directorates of the districts of Bucurest, any change that occurred to the physical, psychic or moral condition of the person with severe disability and other situations connected to his/hers condition that can change the grant of the rights provided by law.

Who supervises the activity of the social assistants?

The social assistance public service disposes the accomplishment of periodical checks regarding the activity of the personal assistants and advances half-yearly a report to the local council. The monitoring and the control of the activity of care and protection of adults with a severe and pronounced disability by the professional personal assistant are done by the general social assistance and child protection directorates, county, respectively local directorates of the districts of Bucurest.

Home caretaker for the elderly COR 513301 – education level 2 (secondary education)

The home caretaker for the elderly takes care in the main of assuring the elderly's comfort, assisting his/hers feeding and giving food to the elderly, giving sanitary care, induction and transport, supervising the health condition, observance and applying the medical prescriptions, giving first aid, handling the allocated resources, assuring the sanitary- hygienic conditions, as well as filling in the care record of the assisted person.

What does a caretaker for the elderly have to know?

A caretaker for the elderly above all has to be psychically trained for such a job, to know very well

what a job of this kind involves and how to behave with an elderly who is sick. In order to be a caretaker for the elderly one needs to have the ability to empathize with the patient's suffering, but to be strong enough in order to keep one's wits about one in crisis situations. Here are some of the things that a caretaker for elderly has to know. The patient's schedule: it is essential for a caretaker for the elderly to know the elderly's schedule, what time he has to wake up, when he has to sleep, eat or take his/hers pills. For a caretaker for the elderly this information is essential, so one has to know them in detail.

The elderly's habits: there are persons who have habits, within the bounds of possibility, a caretaker for the elderly has to respect them. If the elderly drinks tea every morning, if the elderly has a favorite show he/she watches, if the elderly wants to read the papers every day etc, the caretaker should take care of all these things, in order to make the patient's life as pleasant and easy as possible.

Ways of socializing: it is very important that a caretaker for the elderly communicates and socializes with the elderly. This socialization will ease the care process, will make a connection between the two persons and will bring numberless benefits to the patient.

The moments of socialization bring happiness to the elderly and make him/her feel good and important. The elderly's psychical condition is very important for his/her general health, so that a caretaker for the elderly has to try as frequent as possible to approach different topics with the patient. Talk about the patient's favorite topics, about family, about education and other topics he/she enjoys.

Giving first aid: The minimal notions of first aid are essential for the patient's health. A caretaker for the elderly has to know how to react in case the patient falls, hurts himself/herself or chokes. Many times, this information can make the difference between life and death.

Keeping cool in crisis situations: A caretaker for the elderly has to be very calm and think sober when there are different crisis situations. Therefore, if the patient gets sick, the caretaker has to immediately call the ambulance and to explain the operator exactly what happened, which is the patient's condition, name and address where the ambulance has to come. In order to study thoroughly the necessary competences to practice this job, we took the below information from the Occupational Standard issued by the Council for Certification and Occupational Standards in 2000. The Occupational Standard contains groups of necessary general and specific competences, respectively the competence elements and the accomplishment criteria of each group of competence. Each group of competence contains a range of variables and an assessment guide where there are listed the knowledge, the abilities, the attitudes, the habits, as well as what is going to be tracked of in the assessment.

Description of the job

The job applies to the home caretaker for the elderly and assumes a large field of competences in order to carry on care activities.

The home caretaker for the elderly and children has to prove his/her competences mainly in the appliance of the sanitary norms both for the assisted person and for himself, at the mobilization and transport of the assisted person, at feeding and giving food and at the permanent supervision of the health condition of the assisted person.

The home caretaker for the elderly needs average medicine knowledge, patience, self-control and the ability to combine the compulsory daily care schedule with leisure activities in order to insure the comfort condition of the assisted elderly. Because the specific activities carry on in permanent interreaction with the assisted person/ family/ medical unit, a good communication at work contributes to a well development of the specific activities.

The groups of competence of the home caretaker for the elderly and children

Basic competences

- Communication at work

General competences

- Applying the Labour Protection Rules and Safety and Fire Extinguishing
- Providing the hygienic-sanitary conditions
- Providing professional retraining
- Filling in of the assisted person's care record
- Handling of the allocated resources
- Planning of the daily activity

Specific competences

- Giving hygienic care for the assisted person
- Giving first aid to the assisted person
- Providing comfort to the assisted elderly
- Assisting feeding and giving food
- Mobilization and transport of the assisted elderly
- Mobilization and transport of the assisted lying-down persons
- Respecting and applying the medical prescriptions
- Supervising the health condition of the assisted person

1. Communication at work

Refers to the competences necessary to the home caretaker to communicate permanently and

efficiently with the assisted person/ family/ medical unit, facilitating the exchange of necessary information for the care. *The accomplishment criteria* of these competences are described in the Occupational Standard for this job.

Elements of competence:

1. Receiving and passing over information
2. Arrangement of information
3. Interactive communication

Necessary knowledge: rules and norms of conduct, the technique of taking care of the adult.

Abilities, attitudes, habits: communication techniques, rapidity in taking decisions, promptitude, honesty, availability, sobriety and patience, respect.

2. Applying the NPM and PSI rules

Elements of competence:

1. Observance of NPM and PSI
2. Appliance of the intervention procedures

Necessary knowledge: general rules regarding the labour protection, giving first aid techniques, the evacuation plan of the building

Abilities, attitudes, habits: promptitude, the capacity of reaction in unanticipated situations, efficiency, keeping cool in critical situations.

3. Providing the hygienic-sanitary conditions

Elements of competence:

1. Cleaning of the room and annexes
2. Cleaning of the objects or of the table-ware belonging to the assisted person
3. Appliance of the personal hygiene measures

Necessary knowledge: disinfection and sterilization techniques, the adult care technique, hygiene rules

Abilities, attitudes, habits: dexterity, promptitude, correctitude, scrupulosity

4. Guaranteeing the professional retraining

Elements of competence:

1. Identification of the retraining demand
2. Professional self-training

Necessary knowledge: doesn't need specific knowledge

Abilities, attitudes, habits: responsibility, wish for knowledge and self-improvement, assiduity, objectivity, scrupulosity

5. Filling in of the assisted person's care record

Elements of competence:

1. Data identification and assessment
2. Taking-down the data in the evidence record

Necessary knowledge: the methodology of filling in the specific records, the adult care technique
Abilities, attitudes, habits: organizatoric skill, concision, objectivity, correctitude, legible writing

5. Handling of the allocated resources

Elements of competence:

1. Handling of the material resources
2. Handling of the financial resources

Necessary knowledge: organizatoric and planning knowledge connected to work, the adult care technique

Abilities, attitudes, habits: correctitude, rapidity in taking decisions, promptitude, fairness, scrupulosity.

6. Planning of the daily activity

Elements of competence:

1. Identification of the activities
2. Assigantion and allocation of the resources
3. Assessment and adapting of the schedule

Necessary knowledge: planning, organization

Abilities, attitudes, habits: organizatoric and practical skills, adaptability, correctitude, rapidity in taking decisions, responsibility regarding the changing of the agreed schedule

7. Giving hygienic care for the assisted person

Elements of competence:

1. Giving physical care
2. Assisting/Helping the person to satisfy the physiological needs
3. Providing auxiliary hygiene and comfort conditions

Necessary knowledge: the local / total bath technique, the technique of changing clothes, the technique of dressing/undressing

Abilities, attitudes, habits: dexterity, sobriety, patience, promptitude, respect, correctitude, rapidity, robustness.

8. Giving first aid to the assisted person

Elements of competence:

1. Identification of the emergency case
2. Applying the first aid measures

Necessary knowledge: giving first help techniques

Abilities, attitudes, habits: idem as the above competence

9. Providing comfort to the assisted elderly

Elements of competence:

1. Providing a comfortable environment
2. Organizing leisure activities

Necessary knowledge: mobilization and transport techniques, common culture

Abilities, attitudes, habits: calm, promptitude, distributive attention, availability for communication.

9. Assisting feeding and giving food

Elements of competence:

1. Deciding the menu
2. Preparing the food
3. Giving alimentation

Necessary knowledge: the adult and child alimentation technique, the active/passive alimentation technique, menu making up technique, specific receipt book to the assisted person's particularities.

Abilities, attitudes, habits: imagination, rapidity, idem as the above competence

10. Mobilization and transport of the assisted elderly

Elements of competence:

1. Deciding the mobilization case
2. Mobilization of the assisted elderly
3. Providing transport for the assisted elderly

Necessary knowledge: idem

Abilities, attitudes, habits: idem

11. Respecting and applying the medical prescriptions

Elements of competence:

1. Analyzing the medical prescriptions
2. Giving medicines
3. Assisting the medical staff in doing the therapeutic cures

Necessary knowledge: mobilization and care techniques

Abilities, attitudes, habits: calm, adaptability, promptitude, correctitude.

12. Supervising the assisted person's health condition

The group of competence refers to the competences necessary to the caretaker in order to supervise the assisted person's health condition during the whole activity and to report any change that occurred, to the family and medical unit.

Elements of competence:

1. Follow-up of the vital function data
2. Assessment of the assisted person's behavior
3. Assessment of the appetite

Necessary knowledge: data control techniques (pressure, pulse etc), average level medicine and anatomy

Abilities, attitudes, habits: rapidity in taking decisions, distributive attention.

In short, **the care services of the elderly cover:**

- supervising the assisted person at home or in other places
- giving the prescribed medicine treatment/ feeding the assisted person
- making the assisted person's toilet
- accompanying the assisted person for a walk
- buying small things for the assisted person
- light housekeeping

3.2 The recognition and certification of informal competences

The Law nr. 4543/468 approved 23 Aug 2004 defined the procedures for evaluating professional competencies acquired in other ways than formal.

Following the key concepts specified by Law:

The **professional competence** is the ability of a person to use the theoretical knowledge, the practical skills and the particular abilities in order to realize the activities demanded at the place of work.

The **unit of competence** defines a major activity of a profession and the result associated to it.

The term '**competence**' describes a key-activity, as part of a group of competences and the result associated to it.

The **achievement required** represents the qualitative standard associated to the successful fulfilment of the activity described by the term of competence or the result of this activity.

The **occupational standard** (COR)/ the professional training standard is the official document (namely the qualification) stating the competences and the qualitative level associated to the outcomes of the work activities.

The **assessment method** is the procedure used to gather proofs of the competence. The recommended assessment methods are: self-assessment, direct observation, oral test, written test, project, simulation or structured demonstration, reports made by other people, portfolio containing works made before the date of the assessment; reports from third parties concerning the demonstration of the candidate's competence, previous to the process of assessment.

The **assessment tool is the tool used to assess the candidate, and for each tool it has to be specified** the goals of the assessment, the expected results and the way to evaluate the assessment results.

Evidences of the competence could be the paper-test done the candidate and the evaluation of the test, the observation of the activities made by the candidate during a role playing, a project realized upon request by the assessor, evidences of the activities carried out by the candidate before assessment.

The **competence certificate** is the certificate issued on the basis of the rules of a certification system which indicates the existence of the appropriate confidence that the nominee is competent to make

certain services. The competence certificate has to contain the issuing date and the validity period or the expiring date.

The **candidate** is the person who enrolls wilfully in the process of assessment of the professional competences achieved in a different way than the formal competences;

The **assessor of the professional competences** is an expert who has a recent experience of work and/or co-ordination in the professions/qualifications for which he is assigned by the assessment center in order to make assessments and who is certified by the National Council of Adult Professional Development, on the basis of the occupational standard as 'assessor of professional competences'.

Characteristics of the professional competences assessment process

A. It is voluntary

B. It is related to an occupational / professional training standard: assessment of competences is reported to performance criteria described in occupational / professional training standard

C. It is placed in time and space: for evaluation system based on occupational / professional training standard, collecting evidences of competences is a result of evaluation methods application in different contexts and in different moments of time.

D. It is independent from the professional training process: evaluation based on the occupational / professional training standards, allow recognition of competences acquired in other ways than formal.

E. It is finalized, for each competence unit, with the result / grade "competent" or "not yet competent".

The Awarding body

The National Council of Adult Professional Development manages at national level the assessment and certification activities of the professional competences acquired in a different way than the formal competences.

The Assessment and certification centers within one of the Romanian Regional Centers of Adult Professional Training assess professional competences achieved in a different way than the formal competences and issue competence certificates.

Each organisation, Romanian or foreign, with public or private status, who wants to provide assessment and certification of professional competences acquired in other ways than formal, could ask for a license by CNFPA (National Centre of Adults Professional Training)

There is along process to get the license, and each license is entitled for one of the occupations/jobs/qualifications considered into Romanian occupational/professional training standards. Depending on the performance level of each Centre a license can be entitled for one year (in case of performance level 1), two years (in case of performance level 2), three years (in case of performance level 3).

To get the license each awarding body has to pay CNFPA for each profession/qualification for which the center requests the authorization. The authorization fee is paid differentially, according to the

performance level of the center, as follows:

- 1/3 of the national average gross salary for level 1;
- 2/3 of the national average gross salary for level 2;
- a national average gross salary for level 3.

The validation and certification process

The person who wants to be assessed appeals to one of the Centres authorized for issuing the competence certificate for the specific qualification the person is interested to get and fills in a 'written petition'. Then the candidate is assigned to a professional competence assessor, who is responsible of the implementation of the whole assessment process.

Before starting the actual assessment process, the candidate compares, assisted by the professional competence assessor, his own professional performance to the specific occupational standard/professional training standard (self-assessment). The professional competence assessor explains and details upon request, the content and the provisions of the occupational standard/professional training standard. Depending on the result of the self-assessment, the professional competence assessor advises the candidate to enter the assessment process for the whole standard or for a part of it or not to enter the assessment process. The decision to enter the assessment process belongs to the candidate, who attaches to the deposited petition, the competences for which he wants to be assessed, from the list of the competences of the standard made available for him by the professional competence assessor.

The professional competence assessor describes to the candidate the assessment methods that are going to be used and establishes the development programme of the assessment process together with the candidate. The assessment program is approved by the Assessment centre's board. Each assessment centre sets the assessment methods taking into consideration that the Law established that 'A paper test and a practical demonstration of the competence must be used in the assessment process for each candidate'. The minimum level of an assessment is that of the group of competence. As a rule, the assessment is done for a group of competence or for the whole qualification/occupation. The assessment process has to be finalized within 30 days.

The assessment and evaluation process takes place comparing the evidences of competences collected during the assessment process to specific achievement criteria and it is accomplished with the decision "competent" or "not yet competent" for each unit of competence for which the candidate decided to go through the assessment process. In the case the candidate is not pleased with the decision "not yet competent" s/he has the right to put in for a dispute, which s/he deposits at the assessment centre within 5 days since the decision about his/her competencies was communicated. The centre chooses another professional competence assessor who organizes a new assessment process for the competences which are the object of the dispute.

The certified competences of the candidates are stated in the competence certificate which is

recognised through all Romanian territories.

The **principles** that lie at the basis of the assessment process of the professional competences achieved in a different way than the formal competences are:

- a) validity: the assessment is based on competence proofs which result from the activities described in the occupational standard/ professional training standard;
- b) reliability: the assessment uses methods which lead with consistency to the same result;
- c) fairness: the assessment allows the involvement of all those who are interested, without the predominance of a particular interest;
- d) flexibility: the assessment adapts to the candidates' needs and to the characteristics of the place of work;
- e) privacy: the information concerning the process and its result belong to the beneficiary;
- f) easiness: the assessment process can be easily understood and applied by the persons involved.

CRFPA - Regional Centers of Adult Professional Training

The Regional Centers of Adult Professional Development were established by the National Agency for the employment of the work force in 2000 and developed in relation with the Worldwide Bank, as a result of the economic reform and of the necessities displayed within the labour market. The centers, five in all, develop their activity in **Calarasi, Cluj, Craiova, Ramnicu Valcea** and **Turnu Magurele**, and analyze the labour market together with the partners within the community, in order to determine the training needs regionally, and to come in the help of employees' exigencies. The Association of the Canadian Communitarian Colleges was contacted in order to implement the project on behalf of ANOFM.

As a consequence of this process, ten programs of professional training were regionally identified for each center, specific to the regional needs and to the employers' exigencies. For each program a curriculum was developed, based on competences, so that after the getting over of the whole program, the participants possess the knowledge asked on the labour market. But the work of those who developed the training programs within the regional centers didn't stop at this level. The specialized staff, trained in Romania and abroad, is capable of developing at demand training programs. The final goal: the development of the professional abilities necessary at the place of work or for employment. By getting over the programs developed within the regional centers, the training exigencies at regional level are fulfilled for:

- the young adults, who develop high quality aptitudes and abilities
- the employers, who have the possibility to hire staff with knowledge asked on the labour market and loyalty for work
- the regional community, which can determine a dynamic training project which to attract investors.

The offered services

The Regional Centers of Adult Professional Development offer a large range of services:

- develop professional training programs, for jobs from the computer field to jobs from the building industry and textile garment (within this website are offered information referring to the programs developed by each center)
- offer help to employers interested in the identification of their own needs of training
- offer to participants and to the groups of persons chosen by the employers, general education module
- identify and develop, at the demand of the interested economic agents, training programs for the development of the current employed staff's abilities
- develop training programs in entrepreneurial field for those who started or want to establish a business

The beneficiaries of the offered services

The Regional Centers greet the employers and young adults' training needs. The county Agencies for employment of the work force have the possibility to enroll in the organized courses organized by the regional centers, persons who are looking for a place of work, persons who are in their evidence.

The economic agents have the possibility to employ well trained staff, addressing the services offered by the Professional Counseling and Resettlement department, within the centers. The centers do as well, training at the demand of the economic agents within the community.

After getting over the whole program, the participants will get a graduation certificate which guarantees the quality of the knowledge acquired within the training process.

3.3 A case study: The Regional Center of Adult Professional Training Cluj-Napoca (CRFPA)

The services offered by CRFPA Cluj Napoca are:

1. Adult profesional training for the achievement, maintenance and raise of the professional competitive situation level on the labour market, as well as the assessment and supervising of the profesional training
2. Assessment of the profesional competences acquired in other ways than the formal competences in relation to the occupational standards/ profesional training standards and of quality that exist on the labour market
3. Certification of adult profesional training
4. ECDL assessment
5. Information and counseling regarding the career

CRFPA Cluj is authorized by the National Council of Adult Professional Training to develop a number of 38 programs of professional training (qualification, initiation and improvement courses). The training programs are underlying offered to the persons who are in the evidence of the County Agencies for the employment of the Work force. CRFPA Cluj has assigned to its authority for delivering professional training programs, beside AJOFM Cluj, a number of five more county agencies, respectively those from the counties: Bihor, Bistrița Năsăud, Maramureș, Satu Mare and Sălaj. As well, at demand, CRFPA Cluj can deliver professional training programs for other counties too (e.g. AJOFM Suceava, AJOFM Gorj, AJOFM Alba, AJOFM Mures).

A central part in the implementation of the engagement politics has the recognition and validation of the non-formal and informal learning, the legislative frame being provided in our country by means of the Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000 regarding the Adult Professional Training, ratified by means of the Law nr. 375/2002, respectively the Ordinance nr. 468/4543/2004 regarding the "Assessment and certification procedure of the professional competences acquired in different ways than the formal competences".

On this line, the **Assessment and certification Center** within the Regional Center of Adult Professional Training Cluj responds to the needs of the labour market by offering assessment and certification services of the professional competences acquired in different ways than the formal competences, intensifying the chances to be hired and the mobility of the work force from the country and from the European Economic Space.

In conclusion, we can mention a few arguments in favour of the development of a system for competences assessment, arguments that mainly represent the advantages for the candidate:

1. The candidate saves time and money
2. The assignment of the competence certificate is based on the assessment of what the candidate is able to do in real work conditions;
3. The assessment of the competences help the candidate to have a higher self esteem and intensifies the self-assessment capacity;
4. The professional competence certificate supplements the diploma or the graduation certificate acquired at the end of a professional training program.

Romanian legislation

The Legislation of the National Council of Adult Professional Training

Law 132/1999 republished, regarding the establishing and the activity of the National Council of Adult Professional Training

Law 559/2004 for the amendment and addendum of Law nr. 132/1999

Ordinance Nr. 307/4275/2005 for the acceptance of the Regulation of Organizing and Activity of the National Council of Adult Professional Training

Law Nr. 268 from the 7th of July 2009 which settles the statute of the Sectorial Chambers

Ordinance 1455/5122/2009 for the acceptance of the Regulation of Organizing and Activity of the National Council of Adult Professional Training

Emergency Order nr. 74/2010 for the amendment of some pieces of legislation from the field of education and research

Decision 885/2010 regarding the organization and activity of the Executive Unit of the National Council of Qualifications and of Adult Professional Training

Emergency Order Nr. 132 from the 28th of December 2010 for the amendment and addendum of Law nr. 132/1999 regarding the establishing, organization and the activity of the National Council of Adult Professional Training

Legislation regarding the adult professional training

Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000 regarding the adult professional training, republished

Government Ordinance nr. 76/2004 for the amendment and addendum of Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000

Government Decision nr. 522/2003 for the acceptance of the Methodological Rules of appliance of the provisions of the Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000 regarding the adult professional training

Government Decision nr. 887/2004 for the amendment of the Methodological Rules of appliance of the provisions of the Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000 regarding the adult professional training, ratified by means of the Government Decision nr. 522/2003

Government Decision nr. 1829/2004 for the amendment and addendum of the Methodological Rules of appliance of the provisions of the Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000 regarding the adult professional training, ratified by means of the Government Decision nr. 522/2003

Ordinance of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family and that of the Minister of Education nr. 353/5.202/2003 for the acceptance of the Authorization Methodology of the Adult Professional Training providers

Ordinance of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family and that of the Minister of Education nr. 80/3.328/2005 for the amendment and addendum of the Authorization Methodology of

the Adult Professional Training providers (nr. 353/5.202/2003)

Ordinance of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family and that of the Minister of Education nr. 501/5.253/2003 for the acceptance of the Certification Methodology of adult professional training

Ordinance of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family and that of the Minister of Education nr. 77/3.327/2005 for the amendment and addendum of the Certification Methodology of adult professional training (nr. 501/5.253/2003)

Ordinance nr. 4543/468/2004 for the acceptance of the Assessment and Certification Procedure of professional competences acquired in other ways than the formal competences

Ordinance of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family and that of the Minister of Education nr. 81/3.329/2005 for the amendment and addendum of the Assessment and Certification Procedure of professional competences acquired in other ways than the formal competences

Other pieces of legislation regarding the adult professional training

Romanian labour law - updated text on the 22.12.2005, taking in view the following documents::

Law nr. 480/2003, Law nr. 541/2003, Government Emergency Ordinance nr. 65/2005, Law nr. 371/2005

Law nr. 279/2005 regarding the apprenticeship at the place of work

Government Decision nr. 234/2006 for the amendment and addendum of the Methodological Rules of appliance of the provisions of the Law nr.279/2005 regarding the apprenticeship at the place of work

Government Decision nr. 875/2005 regarding the acceptance of the Strategy on short and medium term for the continuous professional training, 2005-2010

Ordinance nr. 701/2003 for the designation of an institution which recognizes by itself the documents that are a proof for the qualification acquired abroad, beside the education system, by Romanian citizens or citizens of member states of the European Union and of states belonging to the European Economic Space

Ordinance nr. 27/2005 regarding the amendment of anexis nr.1 of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family nr.701/2003

Ordinance nr. 410/2005 regarding the amendment of anexis nr.3 Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family nr.701/2003

4. Dutch qualifications, education and recognition

4.1 National Qualifications System

The Dutch education system combines a unified education system, regulated by central laws, with decentralized administration and management of schools. Overall responsibility for the public-private education system lies with the State, represented by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, and the legislative power of the Dutch Parliament. The Ministry is headed by a Minister. Two State Secretaries (junior ministers) are also appointed for parts of educational and for cultural policy. The central government controls education by means of laws and regulations in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Constitution. The prime responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science relate to the structuring and funding of the system, the management of publicly run institutions, inspection and examination procedures and financial aid to students. Control may be exercised by imposing qualitative or quantitative standards for the educational process in schools and/or for the results they produce, and by means of arrangements for the allocation of financial and other resources, and the imposition of conditions to be met by schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science lays down conditions, especially in primary and secondary education, relating to the types of schools that can exist, the length of courses, compulsory and optional school subjects, the minimum and maximum number of lessons to be given and their length, the norms for class division, the examination syllabus and national examinations, and standards of competence, salaries, status and teaching hours of teaching staff. The Ministry does not set up schools, but does determine norms for their establishment. These conditions apply to both public and private education (Eurydice, Cedefop, ETF, 2003).

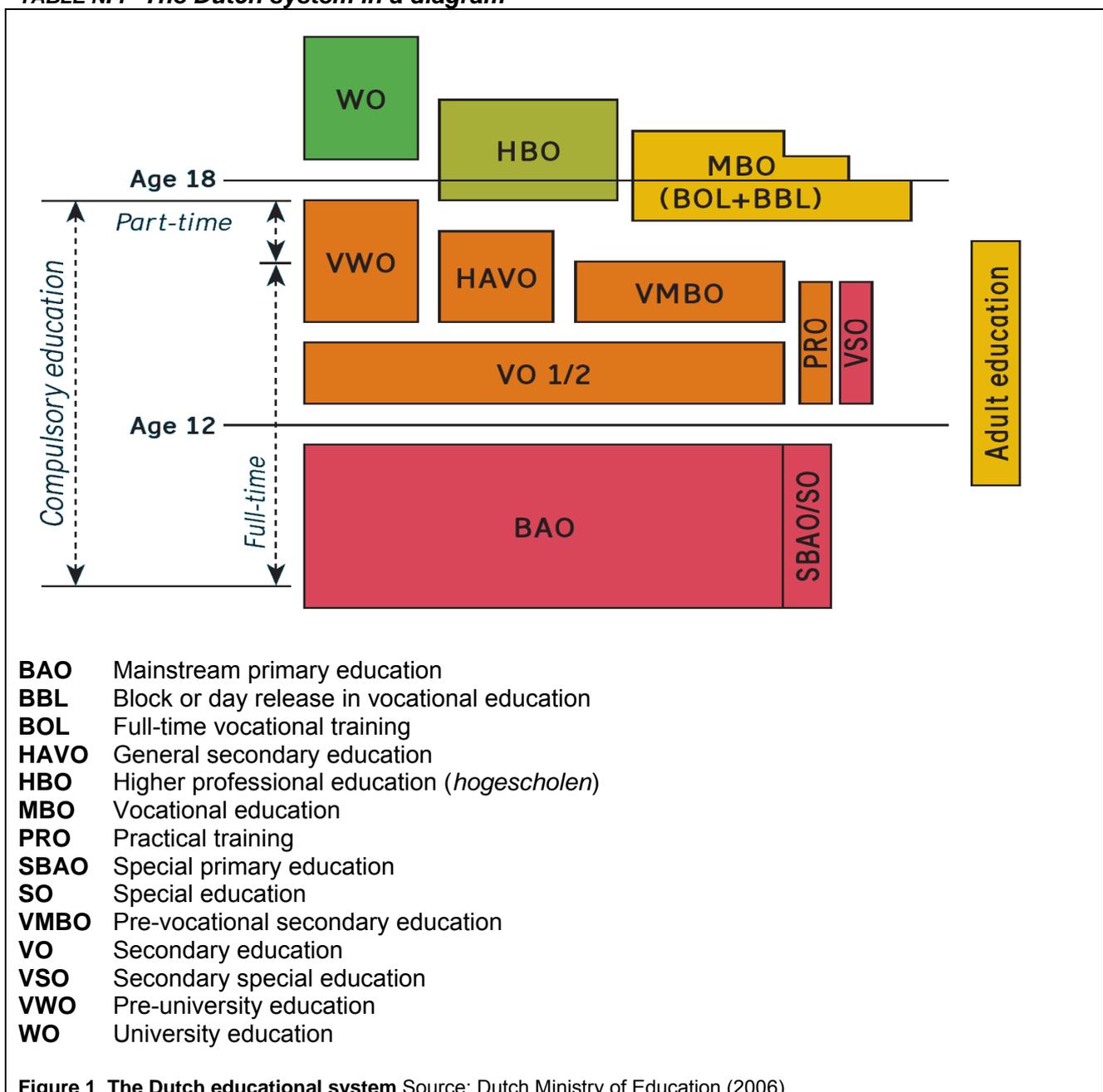
CREBO and CROHO

A guaranteed standard of higher education, and alignment with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, is maintained through a national system of legal regulation and quality assurance, in the form of accreditation. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for legislation pertaining to education and the agriculture and public health ministries play an important role in monitoring the content of study programmes in their respective fields. Quality assurance is carried out through a system of accreditation, administered by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO, Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie) (www.nuffic.nl).

All courses in the vocational secondary education are entered in the Central Register of Vocational Courses (CREBO, Centraal Register Beroepsopleidingen). This register records which institutions provide which courses, what the exit qualifications are, which learning pathway is involved and which of the partial qualifications awarded are subject to external validation. It also indicates which

courses are funded by the government and which bodies are authorised to validate examinations. All accredited programmes in the higher education are listed in the Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO, **Centraal Register Opleidingen Hoger Onderwijs**). Besides the accreditation of degree programmes, the Netherlands has a system by which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science recognizes higher education institutions by conferring on them the status of either 'funded' or 'approved' (Eurydice, Cedefop, ETF, 2003). 'Funded' indicates that the institution is fully financed by the government while 'approved' indicates that the institution does not receive funds from the government and has to rely on its own sources of funding. All programmes must be accredited and registered in CROHO.

TABLE N.4 The Dutch system in a diagram



Learning outcomes & the national qualifications system

One of the essential changes ensuing from the Bologna process is the use of learning outcomes to describe study programmes and their components. With a view to the national and international mobility of students and graduates, it is important to have a clear picture of the knowledge and skills mastered by someone holding a particular diploma. The description of study programmes based on the Dublin descriptors allows for an objective comparison.

VET and HE are based on a learning outcomes approach in theory. This is called the competence-base of VET or HE in which all national standards embedded in VET & HE are formulated in terms of competences. In early 2010 the last step in turning VET into a competence-based learning system has been blocked temporarily by the parliament, due to a certain lack of commitment in VET-schools. Implementation of a competence-based approach of VET has been delayed until August 2011, to gain more time and therewith more commitment from the VET-teachers.

The Netherlands has, like each EU-member state, to be able to link its National Qualifications System by the end of 2011 to the European Qualifications Framework. At the moment there is however not an explicate National Qualifications Framework in the Netherlands. There is a working group installed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences to work on setting up a National Coordination Point for translating Dutch qualifications to the EQF. This means that the 14 Dutch levels (4 VMBO; 2 HAVO-VWO; 4 MBO; 4 Higher education) are measured against the eight EQF-levels to give more transparency to the Dutch qualifications in the European learning-arena.

4.2 Lifelong Learning policy & legislation on recognition of prior learning

With the publication of *De Fles is Half Vol!* ("The glass is half full!") in 2000, a first step towards lifelong learning using Accreditation of Prior Learning (VPL; EVC or *Erkenning van Verworven Competenties* in Dutch) was taken in the Netherlands. A national VPL working group formulated a broad vision on VPL and the implementation process. VPL had to bridge the gap between the education supply and the demand on the labour market side. The challenge was to connect these two worlds via the learner, on the one hand by converting learning experiences into certificates or diplomas, and on the other by allowing for the development of competences in a career context (Werkgroep EVC 2000).

To support this application of VPL and to learn from the existing practice, the government established the Knowledge Centre VPL (*Kenniscentrum EVC*) in 2001. The Knowledge Centre's goal is to, on the basis of collecting practical examples, promote the use of VPL in the labour market and take VPL to a higher qualitative level. It became clear that there were many situations in which VPL could be used, but did not automatically lead to the desired effects (Duvekot, 2002; Verhaar, 2002; Van den Dungen, et al., 2003). Factors and circumstances that could have a

negative impact include more restrictive legislation or regulations, fear of change, system failures, general conservatism or a too short-sighted view of the return on investment. On the other hand, the positive effects of VPL were seen mainly at the sector level.

Over the years 2005-2007, the Dutch government invested nearly EUR 40 million in VPL at upper secondary and higher vocational education levels, in developing a regional infrastructure and in promoting VPL. This policy was put forward in the working plan for 2005-2007, *Strengthening Learning and Working*. The ministries of Education, Culture and Science, of Social Affairs and Employment, of Agriculture and Nature Management, of Economic Affairs, of Integration and of Finances were all involved.

In the implementation strategy, management and practice come together. At management level educational institutions were encouraged to implement VPL institution-wide. They signed agreements with the government to carry out a certain number of VPL procedures within one or two years and to guarantee a minimum quality standard of these procedures. Practices already in use for some years were disseminated and the quality-issue of the procedures was addressed by developing a national quality-code on VPL.

Legal Framework

There are no specific laws regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Netherlands. Validation is more embedded in existing laws in the education-sector.

There is however an informal right for citizens without a formal starting-qualification (equivalent of EQF-level 2) to obtain this level of qualification. He/she can enter any VET-school and start a learning programme for this goal, with or without a formal VPL-procedure.

Concerning the Vocational Education and Training-sector, the Law on Adult & Vocational Education (WEB, 1996) was the basis for developing a national standard for the recognition and certification of acquired skills in the VET-sector. In the classification scheme for developing the standards in the qualification structure of Dutch VET it was explicitly stated on the purpose of the qualification: "to facilitate recognition from elsewhere or previously acquired skills" (informal or non-formal learning). This qualification structure as a basis for assessing prior learning is therefore so important because it allows certificates to be provided from which social rights can be derived. It also prevents that a distinction can be made in quality of skills acquired on the basis of a formal learning and skills acquired on the basis of a learning pathway independent assessment (informal or non-formal learning). Both the results of formal and informal/non-formal prior learning are assessed through a system of independent assessment of learning pathways.

For Higher Education, the law "Wet of het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek" (WHW - law on higher education and scientific research) regulates the admission and exemption policy in higher education and stipulates the possibilities for EVC in higher education. Higher education institutes are left free to translate this regulation per study in the "Onderwijs en

examenreglementen” (OERs - rules on education and exams). The WHW stipulates that a student can only enter academic higher education if (s)he possesses an academic upper secondary education degree (VWO) and can only enter vocational higher education if (s)he possesses an academic upper secondary education degree (HAVO or VWO) or a post-secondary vocational degree (MBO). However, students who do not fulfill these requirements and are older than 21 years old can be admitted to higher education via the colloquium doctum (admittance research). Each higher education institute is left free to set their own requirements for the colloquium doctum per faculty.

While initiatives regarding VPL are primarily placed in the hands of interest bodies, social partners and sector organisations, the Dutch government has chosen a bottom-up method for the stimulation and implementation of VPL (SER, 2002).

An exception to these decentralised policies of VPL in The Netherlands is “*De Wet Beroepen in het Onderwijs (BIO)*” (the Law of Professions in Education). The law was approved by the Parliament in January 2004 and obliges workers in the educational sector to work on their employability after they have graduated and started working. On a national level, standards are formulated to ensure that teachers have the necessary qualifications to practice. These standards comply with the official required qualifications for primary and secondary education. Teachers get the opportunity to build up professional dossiers in which they can prove their competences are up-to-date. These dossiers are being used in the integral personell policy of the schools (the ‘human resource management cycles’). (<http://www.lerarenweb.nl/lerarenweb-bekwaamheid.html?sbl&artikelen&13>)

The main reason for setting up this law was the continued shortage of teachers in the educational sector, which needed to be addressed. By stipulating the competences teachers need to possess, they enable noncertified individuals to start employment in the educational sector (so-called sidestreamers). Qualifications gained outside of the formal pathways are recognised through an assessment procedure. This procedure is arranged by specific centres which assess candidates for various teacher education institutes in a district. If a person’s competences meet the competence requirements, he or she can receive recognition and start as a teacher. For those who fail to meet certain competences, an individualized study programme may be offered either before they start with their employment as a teacher or during their employment as a teacher.

National system

A national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Dutch society was until 2006 focused on strengthening bottom-up usage of VPL. Government and social partners focused on creating favourable circumstances for developing and implementing VPL in as many contexts as possible: in work, in voluntary work, in reintegration and job-seeking, in education and training. This approach of ‘role modelling by offering good practices’ was managed by the *Kenniscentrum EVC* and focused on the change of the learning culture in general. (Duvekot 2005). From 2006 this

approach changed into a focus on quality-assurance in the belief that this would speed up the process of implementing VPL.

November 2006 a covenant based on the “European Common Principles for Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Competences” was signed by various parties who are involved in developing and executing VPL-procedures. These national actors, including VPL providers, employers and accreditation bodies, have collaborated to develop a quality code for VPL.

The covenant is a contributing factor to three objectives linked to VPL:

- Increasing the accessibility of VPL: Clarifying what VPL is and how VPL must be offered.
- Providing transparency: Allowing better comparison of different VPL procedures.
- Guaranteeing summative effects by means of certification or qualification.

The covenant resulted in five principles which were agreed upon through a consultation process among all stakeholders:

- The use of the code is voluntary, but the signatory parties are dedicating themselves to promoting the use of the Quality code for VPL. Making its use mandatory would detract from the motivation to work with the VPL-code.
- Everyone who starts with an VPL-procedure should agree on the reasons for doing so. VPL is not a standard process but an individualised series of arrangements customised to the goal and use of VPL. Custom work is the standard.
- Every VPL-procedure ends with an VPL-report. This report states that the individual has documentation of the competences possessed. This makes VPL something independent of the educational provider.
- Accredited VPL providers are listed in an VPL database. This database contains information about all the VPL procedures that are available for potential VPL candidates.
- The competences of the people supervising these procedures and performing the assessment are documented. Only professionals can be supervisors and assessors.

National policy

With the change of focus to the quality-assurance of VPL in 2006, the Dutch government started to stimulate and subsidize the development of a national infrastructure for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (EVC in Dutch; VPL in English). For this reason the Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working (PLW) was set up to support and strengthen the work of the existing Knowledge centre on VPL. The aim was to boost adult learning in combination with work, without focusing specifically on one or more key skills, but rather on programmes combining work and study that lead to a qualification and better opportunities in the job market. EVC is used to assess and recognise prior learning competences.

The key element of the PLW approach is the development of regional partnerships (government, schools and the business community) to build a sustainable infrastructure for lifelong learning in the region. The parties to these partnerships recognize that it is in their own interests to work together to ensure that at a regional level the working population develops competences to meet the needs of the labour market. There are currently 47 such partnerships.

A grants scheme has been set up to increase the intake of adults in HBO by promoting prior learning assessment and recognition (EVC), and made-to-measure programmes for working and learning. In the past few years agreements have also been made in many parts of the Netherlands between the government, the business community and educational institutions (HBO institutions and regional training centres (ROCs)) on the numbers of employees undergoing training. These agreements concern programmes combining work and study at MBO and HBO levels and EVC schemes. The government has provided funding for these regional agreements through the Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning & Working.

Key to the approach of stimulating Recognition of Prior Learning is to achieve a sustainable regional infrastructure for lifelong learning (regional partnerships, training and employment helpdesks, training databases) and to put in place a total of 125 000 EVC schemes and programmes combining work and study. The development of key competences is not a separate area of activity but forms part of the work-study programmes to be implemented as part of the PLW approach.

4.3 Recognition practices – routes from learning to certification

‘Validation of prior learning’ has two main paths, a summative and a formative one (Duvekot, et al. 2005). In the Netherlands the official EU-definition of learning outcomes is used: “learning outcomes are the 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” (CEDEFOP 2008).

The summative approach aims at an overview of competences, recognition and valuation. Its goal is certification, where individuals seek this goal. When ‘valuing learning’ goes one step further and includes practical learning and/or personal competence-development, we call this the formative approach. This approach is pro-active and aims at development by designing a personal career and development path.

At this moment the commonly used term is Accreditation of Prior Learning (VPL). In Dutch this is *‘de Erkenning van Verworven Competenties (EVC)’*. The authorities, as well as the social partners and the schools prefer this term because this approach mainly focuses on the summative effects of recognizing and assessing prior learning. The most important element in an VPL-strategy is the assessment of the competences that are collected in a portfolio with the goal of getting exemptions or a diploma, referring to a specific standard. The portfolio is in this context mainly a

showcase of only the competences that matter for the standard itself; all the other personal competences are irrelevant. The choice for a specific standard is in practice more steered by the availability of an actual standard than by a free, personal choice. This is because most of the times a school - as the keeper of the standard(s) – tends to look more to the best chance of success when measured against any given standard than to the best match of a standard and personal ambitions. So, in effect, VPL is more standard-steered, and as most standards are kept by schools (upper secondary and higher vocational levels) also strongly school-steered.

With Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) the primary focus lies on the identification and recognition of the competences that someone might have obtained in any period in his/her life and in any kind of learning environment. In Dutch this is '*de Herkenning van Verworven Competenties* (Stienstra 2008). In this context the portfolio consists of all personal learning experiences. Only after collecting all the relevant, personal competences together with their proof, a choice is made by the person. In this way the personal ambitions are better articulated and depending on the personal goal a specific choice for the kind of accreditation or validation is made. RPL, therefore is more personal steered and might involve not only summative but also formative goals.

It is interesting to see that, in analogy with the Anglo-Saxon learning culture, in the Netherlands also a shift occurs in the focus of lifelong learning strategies towards the Recognition of Prior Learning. This is due to the growing awareness on the real societal problematic, namely how to make people invest in themselves if the necessary infrastructure is available (funds, methods, instruments and functions). With RPL 'the job might be done' in a bottom-up way. RPL is more and more seen as the real matchmaker with the more top-down strategy of VPL.

When looking at both terms – RPL and VPL - VPL stands for the process of Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL). VPL embodies the necessity to make top-down processes such as VPL meet the bottom-up process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). If combined VPL and RPL are constituting the integral or even holistic process of Valuation of Prior Learning. So, VPL is the real designation of developing, implementing and embedding lifelong learning in society, in the Learning Society so to say; VPL is for the sake of citizens as well as providers and organisations (profit, non-profit, voluntary work, labour-agencies, communities, etc). VPL is able to manage in a flexible way the diversity of goals all these parties and partners have in making use of lifelong learning strategies.

Role of the formal education and training sector, including providers

Dutch educational institutions are being encouraged to develop and implement VPL. The Knowledge Centre VPL is researching assessment methods and quality tools and is helping institutions to implement these. For the VET-sector, nearly every Regional Training Centre (ROC) now has an VPL-service and is striving to improve the quality of this service. For HE, HBO institutions also implement VPL. Both private and public-sector institutions can offer VPL. If they

are registered as an VPL-provider with the Knowledge Centre and adhere to the quality code the costs can be tax deductible for an employer and the VPL results have to be acknowledged by other actors. In higher education, the autonomous institutions decide for themselves how to use the results of VPL-procedures. The government plays no part in this, but does ensure that the procedures meet quality assurance standards.

Role of existing information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

Based on experience to date, a number of recommendations can be made in relation to raising awareness of the usefulness of VPL and the marketing of VPL. An efficient approach focussed on the marketing of 'the VPL product' is an essential prerequisite for building up the relationship between VPL-providers and VPL-candidates effectively. It is wise to invest in marketing and in the preparation of information campaigns. Good use can be made of the contacts that are already present in the educational institutions and on sectoral levels with other stakeholders like training funds.

As an on-line service VPL is more developed in portals. In these portals VPL is marketed in an effective way by showing the broad potential of people's learning outcomes so far. This is done through selfscans on the level of professional standards. Outcomes of these selfscans give clues to people on which cognitive and which professional level they might function if they would organise the accreditation of their prior learning. (<http://www.lerenenwerken.nl/check-ervaringscertificaat-en-ervaringsprofiel>).

At macro level, the motivational role of the government and social partners has been far from exhausted. More space and stimulus should be created than is now the case in legislation and regulations, which not only remove bottlenecks in the utilisation of VPL but also help to create favourable preconditions.

Validation in the private sector and the role of private sector actors

Thanks to VPL, in sectors such as care and education, recruitment and selection of personnel is increasingly taking place among target groups without the formal requirements. VPL is also used to address formative issues such as retention of personnel or outplacement (from 'work to work').

The construction sector offers a good example of a broad VPL function geared for both summative and formative effects. Since 2006, the Construction Industry Collective Labour Agreement (CAO *Bouwnijverheid*) has provided in career tracks for employers and employees. In this Construction & Infra career track, the employees are informed of their career opportunities within the sector. The most important goal is getting the right employee into the right place, and in so doing, to keep ambitious employees in the sector, prevent attrition due to disability and promote reintegration. Each track is individual, custom work, and requires effort on the part of all parties involved. A collective determination is made of what focus on other work is required, what tests are called for

and what education/training is the most appropriate. A consensus is also obtained on the arrangements on the time commitment and financing of the process (Duvekot 2006).

Outflow and outplacement of personnel also a benefit of validation. For instance in the military there is a high proportion of employees with fixed-term appointments. To be more successful at placing these employees on the labour market, VPL can offer both development and qualification. Likewise, in mergers and reorganisations, VPL offers development and qualifications to find the right place for personnel, whether internally or externally.

Validation in the third sector and the role of third sector actors

The voluntary sector plays an active and vital role in the Dutch economy. Without all the volunteers the civil society wouldn't function properly, let alone the public and private sectors that constitute.

The government provides recognition for volunteering by financing various volunteer organisations, establishing a temporary fund for local and provincial governments and including measures formulated in governmental policy papers (Duvekot et al 2009).

The Dutch government sponsors also the National Compliment, an annual prize for the best volunteer project. Local-level recognitions involve a variety of programmes that are implemented by local volunteer centres and local governments. Examples of these programmes include local prizes recognising individual volunteers, volunteer organisations, volunteer projects, active citizen participation in policy making processes.

According to a recent report on Volunteering in the EU, the Dutch procedures for the certification of skills and competences are rarely used in the field of volunteering due to the associated high costs and simply a lack of information on the existing possibilities. However, some organisations award certificates to their volunteers, while there have also been experiments involving portfolios. Cofora did some analysis on the effects of these certification (in consignment of MOVISIE (knowledge centre for the volunteering sector) currently received funding to develop a system of VPL for volunteers) (Cofora 2010b).

4.4 Non-formal education and training environment - methodological experiences

The main process-steps of VPL (especially in the *Ervaringscertificaat*) and the different tasks and responsibilities are described and reviewed in the following sections of this report. The diversity of the application and implementation of VPL in practice in partnerships between organisations/companies and training or educational institutions (VET/HE) is directly linked to the tasks and responsibilities of individual users.

There is a number of basic principles underlying VPL:

- VPL recognises the fact that learning on the job or via other non-formal learning situations (learning through practical experience) can in principle deliver the same (professional) competences as learning within formal (classroom-based) situations.

- Recognition means awarding certificates or diplomas on the basis of a generally recognised standard, such as the qualification structure for professional education. Obviously there are also other standards relating to the labour market, which employers and employees regard as relevant. External legitimacy is the key requirement for recognition.
- But recognition also means valuing competences acquired elsewhere than in a working environment and/or used in other environments (such as voluntary work, private life).
- VPL is not a goal in itself. It contributes to the desire to develop individuals and to strengthen human capital management within companies. It is an important means for realising permanent labour market suitability and deployment potential.
- For people already employed, skills can be developed which these individuals do not yet have, but which both they and their employers regard as necessary. In such cases, VPL acts as a reliable yardstick for determining which skills and qualifications the individual employee already has. Based on this inventory, a tailor-made training or development path is formulated.
- Rational investment in training by companies and by society as a whole assumes an understanding of existing skills and qualifications, or the stock of skills and qualifications in the company, respectively. VPL procedures enable identifying existing skills and qualifications in order to be able to come to determine the investments needed in training.
- VPL procedures enable the visualisation the profitability of training by expressing the results of training efforts in terms of a general standard. As when calculating the value of other economic production factors, the identification of the value of skills and qualifications assumes a common and reliable standard in which this value is expressed.
- The provision of flexible or customised training courses assumes that we can gauge a person's existing skills level. VPL can also improve the match between education and the labour market. This particularly applies in the case of skills-related training.
- The VPL assessment is designed to assess professional and/or societal activities. The assessment results provide valuable feedback on the content and methods of the formal learning paths. The training courses are given direct information about the degree to which they succeed in adequately preparing their students for professional practice. This effect is strengthened by the fact that a distinction is made between training and assessment.

Awareness-raising and recruitment

Raising awareness of the necessity and opportunities of lifelong learning for individuals in any given context is the heart of the process of Valuing Learning. Without this learning will remain school- or company-steered and cannot effectively be based on individual motivation and ambition. Regional one-stop-offices were set up to actively promote the use of VPL in the Netherlands. It is a big step forward that all local partners in education and the labour market are working together

more and attuning their procedures. The aim is that any individual can enter these local one-stop-offices to gain guidance on their own development process. Companies are offered tailor-made solutions to human resource issues and all regional partners play a part in implementation.

Provision of guidance and support

After learning targets have been set, the portfolio is designed and filled; its content is assessed and an advice is added on possible qualification- and career-opportunities; it is subsequently enriched by learning-made-to-measure and finally, the starting point of a new process in which new learning targets can be formulated. The portfolio, so to say, is on the one hand both the starting as well as the end point of the individual learning process. On the other hand any end point is again the starting point of a new learning process. This is called the portfolio-loop. In Phase III Self-assessment is the crucial element because without this a person can only partially become co-maker of his/her personal development.

There are different instruments available for this kind of self-assessment, for instance the Swiss CH-Q instrument. (CH-Q = Schweizer Qualificationsbuch; Schuur, et al, 2003). It is an integral system for Valuation of Prior Learning. It consists of a broad package of services: portfolio, (self-) assessment, career-planning, action-planning, quality-control and accompanying training programmes. In general tools like CH-Q aim at personal development or career-planning and/or creating flexibility and mobility of the individual learner to and on the labour-market. They create added value by revitalising individual responsibility or co-makship by:

- providing the basis for a goal-oriented development and career-planning,
- the stimulation of personal development,
- the support of self-managed learning and acting,
- stimulating young and adults to document continuously their professional- and personal development.

For further support in the process the role of the assessor is vital for starting up personal development in any kind of form. Reliable assessment is the matchmaker between a portfolio, including a personal action plan, and the specific development steps advised by the assessor. In any given model for Valuing Learning an assessment-policy has three functions: (1) raising levels of achievement, (2) measuring this achievement reliably and (3) organising the assessment cost-effectively.

Assessment in this broad context is the judgement of evidence submitted for a specific purpose; it is therefore an act of measurement. It requires two things: evidence and a standard scale (Ecclestone, 1994). Evidence is provided with the portfolio (or showcase) of the candidate. The standard that will be met, depends on the specific objective of the candidate. This means that the role of the assessor is all the more crucial because this professional has to be flexible with regard

to the many objectives in order to be able to provide a custom-oriented validation and/or valuation. On top of that the professional should be able to use dialogue-based assessment forms. On the basis of the advice of such an assessor further steps for personal development will be set in motion.

The choice of a certain assessor role therefore largely depends on the objective of the assessment, which can vary greatly. Assessments for formal recognition of competences with certificates or exemptions for accredited training programmes demand the involvement of an assessor from an institution offering competence-based accreditation and adequate measures to guarantee the quality of the assessor. Assessments for accrediting competences at the company or institution level or merely to acquire insight into someone's competences do not require the involvement of an institution offering competence-based certification. In these cases, the assessor is also often a colleague, supervisor or the individual himself.

In order to guarantee good 'quality' of the assessor on the one hand and prevent a new quality control-bureaucracy on the other hand, it is recommended to formulate a 'quality-light' procedure for Validation-procedures. A further advantage of a 'quality-light' procedure is that it is highly cost-effective and therefore very accessible to candidates. Possibilities for organising 'quality-light' are:

- any assessor should first design and fill in his/her own portfolio and personal action plan; only then they can be given entrance to assessor-trainings,
- a professional register for assessors should guarantee their competences and professionalism,
- every two years a new assessor accreditation should guarantee professionalism by ensuring assessor quality. Assessor quality can be maintained by means of refresher and updating courses. This new accreditation could be carried out by an official national agency, and tripartite governing (authorities and social partners),
- quality of assessors implies being able to refer to a standard for assessors: this standard is developed in many EU-projects and already available; it only needs a European frame and national application.

Costs to individuals

VPL is financed in different ways by different stakeholders. Training Funds often finance agreements on EVC. Both employees and employers pay a small amount of their incomes to these sector funds, which were originally set up to support educational initiatives for employees (Duvekot et al, 2005). It can be mentioned that the individual user, when VPL isn't funded by the government or the social partners, can fiscally extract the costs for VPL. VPL is fiscally considered as costs for learning. All costs above EUR 500 are tax-deductible. In general one can say that prices for an VPL-procedure vary between € 500,-- up to € 3.000,--.

Initiatives focused on specific target groups

The government is concentrating its efforts on adult workers and jobseekers with no higher education qualifications. There is particular potential for growth in the number of people with secondary vocational (MBO) qualifications who, after working for a few years, decide to take a higher professional (HBO) course. Some of these people will attend approved institutions, which have a long history of training large numbers of workers, but there is also an important role here for government-funded institutions. The aim is that by 2011, 10 000 more people between the ages of 27 and 40 should be taking HBO courses (in either government-funded or nongovernment-funded institutions) than in 2007. In the past year agreements have been made in nearly all regions of the Netherlands between the government, the business community and educational institutions on the numbers of employees undergoing training. These agreements concern programmes combining work and study (MBO and HBO) and EVC schemes.

Following the economic crisis, both the government and social partners joined forces to strengthen the use of VPL for workers that are in danger of losing their job. It is possible for these workers to benefit from subsidised VPL through local offices. Local authorities, social partners, job-agencies and relevant education-institutes are all located at local offices. In a sense this is an approach of creating a local community that is capable of finding integral solutions of personal labour-problems by using the instrumentation of VPL.

VPL in the Netherlands consists of two specific instruments, both of which are subsidised if someone is in danger of losing a job:

1. The '*Ervaringscertificaat*'. This is the formal procedure in which a candidate can get accreditation of his/her learning outcomes. It is a summative approach; the portfolio is referred to a specific standard and the accreditation consists of a number of credits that can be cashed in at a qualifying institute or school. The portfolio therefore is only a dossier-portfolio or a showcase of the relevant learning outcomes to be referred to the specific standard. This form can be called *Accreditation of Prior Learning* (VPL).
2. The '*Ervaringsprofiel*'. This is a set-up for a generic, personal portfolio. It is formative oriented and aims at a validation of all the generic competences of a candidate. It advises on the possible opportunities for accreditation or development steps. It also points out what to do when a specific qualification or diploma is at stake. This form can be called *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL).

4.5 Valuing learning, recognition in relation to same standards and references as the formal education and training system?

Just as in most European educational systems, the study workload in the Netherlands is measured in ECTS (European Credit Transfer and accumulation System) credits:

- Student workload is the notional time an average student needs to achieve the objectives of a program. This includes lectures, seminars, assignments, laboratory work, independent study and

exams.

- A student's workload (both contact hours, and hours spent studying and preparing assignments) is measured in ECTS credits, whereby under Dutch law one credit represents 28 hours of work.
- 60 credits represent the workload of a full-time study year. Consequently, to complete the required learning outcomes of a full cycle (full-time, one-year program) a student is expected to spend 1.680 hours of work yearly.
- Every student has to complete 30 ECTS per semester.
- The ECTS credit system is useful to compare / evaluate different universities, programs, courses, modules, dissertations or even students' qualifications.
- Credits are awarded only after the completion of the course/program.

The governing principles of describing, documenting and crediting prior learning is in general rather supply/dominated. This means that qualifications in VET and HE (only bachelors of professional universities-HBO) are translated into competences and for each qualification put into an VPL-procedure. A candidate who wants to reflect with his/her prior learning outcomes on a qualification, has to fill in a portfolio (showcase) in which he can demonstrate how his learning experiences match with the competences in the qualification he has chosen. In an assessment he is judged and he gets a report stating which exemptions he can get if he turns to the awarding body (the exam committee) of the school or university.

Transfer of the credits obtained in one qualification-programme is not officially possible since every qualification has its own commission that constitutes the content of the qualification. Only restricted sectoral-level or domains competences from different qualifications can be transferred, for instance in the domain of teacher-training where the general competences can be transferred from a programme to become a teacher in English language and culture to one in French or German language and culture. The same goes for other strongly related sectors or domains such as in economics and social work.

Qualifications requirements

In general there is no standard or qualification for assessors in the Netherlands.

There are ideas to create a standard for assessors which entails a system with standards and quality-assurance. An accreditation scheme for assessors should also be applied:

Standards: the quality of assessors should be evaluated on the basis of a national standard for assessors, including a training course for assessors. This national standard (for internal company and external assessors) still has to be formulated.

Quality assurance for assessment centres: in order to qualify for their accreditation, assessors must work at assessment centres which apply a quality care system and are thus covered by the necessary quality assurance for VPL procedures. The internal quality care system is regularly

inspected by external auditors. Relevant activities could include forms of quality care which can also be applied in the context of ISO or EFQM. They must also agree to be subjected to external quality controls. External quality controls include:

- National quality monitoring by independent researchers.
- Checks by the education inspectorate in the case of state-funded assessment centres.

Accreditation scheme for assessors: the application and enforcement of the quality assurance and accreditation of assessors is monitored on a tripartite basis which allows for an evaluation that is independent of sectoral or departmental interests, or the interests of professional groups or training institutes. It is important to study how this shared responsibility can be most efficiently organised and implemented. The enforcement of the following is of key importance:

- The quality of the assessment standards used. The national qualification structure for professional education is a standard that is already recognised. The quality of other standards will primarily be measured against the civil effect of a certificate that is issued on the basis of such a standard
- the quality of the assessment procedures
- the quality of the assessors
- the quality of the organisation and the allocation of responsibilities if an organisation is also pursuing goals which could affect the quality of the VPL procedures

The accreditation of assessors is extended following a new quality assessment as described above. The intensity and costs of the accreditation procedure should be proportional to the aims of the procedure and the benefits that can be obtained through VPL procedures.

4.6 Health care

In 2010 over 30.000 people are employed as care assistant (level 1). Of those 23% is working at the private living place of the client, 3% in nursing and caretaking homes. The others work scattered in various branches and sectors. Only a part of these functions are held by workers carrying a diploma. In the coming years, a shortage of 300 people in care taking is foreseen. However, in practice the trained people can hardly find a job. At this stage this discrepancy cannot be explained yet.

In 2009 / 2010, 1300 people were in education for level 1 Care assistant. However, the actual group of students is much bigger, due to in-service education of employers or some private education. For the official group, working places where training can be combined are necessary. At the end of 2010 the number was over 2.500, so more than enough places for practical work are at hand.

4.7 Challenges and discussions

Challenges

The active participation of individuals in decisions about form and content of lifelong learning and the implementation of lifelong learning strategies becomes a clearer perspective and paves the way for supporting personalized (lifelong) learning, including a plan for comprehensive cooperation in the lifelong learning-arena'. The desired effects of VPL in this sense should in the near future focus more strongly on:

- 1 improving opportunities for empowerment and deployment: improved empowerment and deployment of individual talent is the most important motivation underlying VPL. It increases the opportunities for the individual on the labour market by highlighting the competences he or she already has and how these competences can be deployed and strengthened. This can apply both to those already in employment and to job-seekers. For employers, the emphasis lies on improving the employability-policy for deployability of employees within the organisation.
- 2 To create a demand-led labour market: improving the match between the learning system and the labour system is essential for the organisation of VPL. In order to improve deployability, labour market functions must be expressed in terms of competences. These competences must in turn be linked to a demand for learning. The learning system must be receptive, transparent, flexible and demand-led in order to be able to provide the customised approach required.
- 3 To make learning more flexible: the recognition of informally and non-formally acquired competences will boost people's desire to keep on learning, i.e. will promote lifelong learning, since the accreditation of competences can lead directly to an award of or exemptions for qualifications. The recognition approach can also make visible or recognisable existing competences and qualifications within or outside the labour process. This promotes the transparency of the many opportunities for learning. The learning individual will not only want to learn in a customer-oriented fashion but will also know better than now how, what and when to learn, and why he is learning.
- 4 To optimise other forms of learning: other learning environments and forms of learning must be formulated and/or utilised more effectively, since VPL also shows which learning environment and/or form of learning is best for a particular individual. This could include (combinations of) on the job training, mentoring/tutoring, independent learning, distance learning, and so on. The recognition of competences and qualifications will inevitably lead to an adjustment of the existing qualification structure in professional education. The existing description of exit qualifications in the current qualification structure for professional education does not always tie in with the competences required on the labour market.

Of utmost importance is the building-up of an evaluation framework for qualitative and quantitative evaluation of progress and practice of VPL in the Netherlands. Following up on the EU Guidelines

on Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning an evaluation framework has to take account of: *VPL-systems should respect the legitimate interests of stakeholders and seek a balanced participation.* This principle can best be understood by the following statements:

- a) *Validation* reveals the real human potential on the basis of the analysis and valuation of personal competencies;
- b) *Validation* is the process of (a) assessing and validating personal competences within the social-economic context and (b) offering a personal development-strategy;
- c) *Validation* focuses on the individual perspective and makes the (public and private) system customer-driven for the sake of personal development;
- d) Organisations benefit from *Validation* since individuals develop within their context.
- e) a validation-process in general consists of five phases:
 - o commitment and awareness of the value of one's competencies,
 - o recognition of personal competencies,
 - o valuation and/or validation of these competencies,
 - o (advice on the) development of one's competencies and finally
 - o structurally embedding this competence-based development process into a personal or organisation steered and owned policy.

The process of validation must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest:

Impartiality can only be guaranteed if an assessment is carried out by at least two independent assessors. These assessors should not be in positions where they might benefit financially from the development of the candidate's competencies. Neither should assessors be employed from the same organisation as the individual that is being assessed.

In the case of self-assessment and self-diagnostics, instruments should be free of charge with a 'no strings attached' assurance. Every citizen should have access to these instruments.

The professional competences of those who carry out assessments must be assured:

The basis for a programme for professionalization is laid by the two main routes as described in the European Guidelines for the Validation of non-formal and informal learning. These two routes point out the main directions that Valuing Lifelong Learning can show to target groups: summative or formative development. It is even possible to follow a third route in a combination of summative and formative oriented lifelong learning. It's up to the key players in lifelong learning to help make the match between target groups and the learning system: the teachers, guiders and tutors from the field of empowerment.

The professionals in the VPL-process should be not only the assessors but also the guiders and the advisors; moreover they should be recruited from both the business and the education world.

The content of professionalization (on a European scale?) should include:

- a) An integral (international) training-programme for lifelong learning-advisors, assessors and guiders
- b) A professional register for lifelong learning- & VPL-professionals (advisors, assessors and guiders), including maintenance of competence profiles for these professionals
- c) Internationally recognised certification of lifelong learning- & VPL-professionals
- d) International conferences to facilitate European communities of these professionals and to offer yearly update/upgrade programmes for the professionals
- e) National expert groups and/or communities
- f) External evaluation of national or sectoral approaches
- g) An European training programme for 'self management of competencies' incl. EU-portfolio (formats)
- h) Advice on sustainable embedding the programme in initial education and training and in human resource-systems

Discussions

Beside the discussion on the conversion to a competence based qualification structure, the main issue is the Quality Control of VPL. After the start of the agreement by the Knowledge Centre APL at the end of 2009 a change was announced by the Minister of Education, in a letter to Parliament. In early 2010 the Minister of Education took control of the execution of 'the Quality Code VPL'. This followed a critical evaluation by the Inspectorate of Education of the quality of the accredited VPL-providers (PLW 2009, IvO 2010). In this evaluation the quality of the 113 accredited VPL-providers was regarded as insufficient. In general the conclusions of the evaluation were:

1. the Dutch Quality Code functions properly,
2. the quality of the providers differ too much in the implementation of the assessments,
3. the outcomes of the assessments ('*Ervaringscertificaten*') are not easily transferable between the providers.

The minister therefore took control over the VPL-process for a period of three years. It is intended that during this period the bottlenecks in the process should be overcome.

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5. Care workers training and accreditation issues: UK context

5.1 Introduction

Within the UK context, (social) care workers (incl. e.g. home care assistants and support workers) generally help vulnerable people (such as young people in care, people with mental health problems or learning disabilities, people with physical disabilities, older people, etc) and provide support to meet their personal needs (e.g. preparing meals, shopping and other outings, washing etc). Care workers may work in people's own homes or in residential care homes and day care centres. Employers could include local authorities, NHS (National Health Service) trusts, voluntary organisations and private care homes. Many social care workers in the UK work for non-for-profit companies, so they 'float' between the private and public sector companies.

For many jobs, there are no set entry requirements. However, many employers would recognize and look for informal volunteering experience in a care setting. In some cases a health and social care qualification would be a requirement (but it may be possible to enter as an apprentice). Social care workers can further study towards vocational qualifications such as NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications). Within this context, APEL could be used as a method of assessment that would provide learners with the opportunity to have their previous experience assessed and included in their NVQs.

The social care sector is made up of three separate sectors – care for old people, younger adults, and children. The care of old people is by far the largest in terms of service users, employers, and employees; the next largest group are adults with learning disabilities; some way behind in terms of size are adults with physical disabilities; and the smallest group are children in care (Gospel and Thompson, 2004).

Please see the link below to view the UK's national qualification framework http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017

Characteristics and profile of social care workers

Care, as is apparent from the Introduction, is a multi-faceted sector. In order to provide a better insight into the sector, this section of the report summarises the key features of social care workers, specifically focusing on their occupational characteristics as well as gender and age profiles.

Key features of social care workers (Simons et al, 2008) include, as follows:

- This occupational group numbers 732,000 and includes five individual occupations (unit groups): *Social workers; Youth and community workers; Housing and welfare officers; Residential wardens; Care assistants and home carers*. Care assistants and home carers account for two thirds of the overall group.
- Since 1997-99, the number of Social care workers has fallen by three percent (22,000). This fall is due to 'probation workers' being reclassified and no longer included and the number of 'houseparents and residential wardens' more than halving.
- There is a wide spread of qualification, with a third having qualifications above A-level and a quarter having no qualifications; overall levels of qualification have increased since 1997-99. Social workers have the highest levels of qualifications and recent work-related training, care assistants and home carers the lowest
- Gross pay is below that for all female workers. Social workers earn more than twice as much as care assistants and home carers. Pay is considerably higher in the non-private sector.
- Two-fifths work part time, with highest levels among care assistants and home carers, though the proportion has fallen since 1997-99; houseparents and residential wardens work the longest hours.
- Two-fifths work in the for-profit private sector and nearly a third for local government; there has been a fall in the proportion working in the private sector and a rise in the proportion working for local government.
- Social care workers have the second shortest period of continuous employment with the same employer among the six main occupational groups, with care assistants and home carers having a particularly short period of continuous employment. (Simons et al)

For additional information on the profile of social care workers in England, please see [http://www.socialworkconnections.org.uk/features/192/profile of social workers in england](http://www.socialworkconnections.org.uk/features/192/profile_of_social_workers_in_england)

Problems in care sector:

Rainbird et al. (2009) identified the following major problems (see the article for fuller details available at <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c6/03/89/18/FinalReportSkilldevelopmentinthesocialcaresectorAug.pdf>):

- the difficulty of improving services for users where effective management and training of the workforce are absent;
- the difficulty of enforcing statutory requirements for worker competence in a context where exit from the sector is always an option for employers, and indeed workers.
- formal qualifications held by this workforce are low.
- status of the job is perceived as low

- capacity to provide competence assessment, underpinning knowledge and wider/continuing professional development is limited

5.2 Relevant Acts and Regulations

Acts and Legislations

In the last decade, a number of social and demographic factors such as UK's ageing population and the increase in longevity in the society, have emphasised the significance of the social care sector. The increasing demand for social care due to demographic changes has prompted the government to introduce a series of laws and legislations aiming to improve and develop the sector. As is indicated below, the recent government initiatives have focused on aspects of accreditation, training and competence development in the care sector.

The Care Standards Act (2000) introduced statutory requirements for induction and foundation training in April 2002, and targets were set for workers and registered managers to attain National Vocational Qualifications so that employers could demonstrate that they had a competent workforce. Subsequently, the White Paper *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (HM Government/ Department of Health, 2006) set the framework in which policy towards care services is delivered. Health and Social Care Act 2008 established the Care Quality Commission (CQC). On 1 April 2009 the commission began operating as England's independent regulator of health care and adult social care. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2008, anyone who provides care services must be registered by CQC, including NHS trusts. In 2009 the Children's Secretary and the Health Secretary announced the creation of a Social Work Task Force both to help improve both the profession's quality and status and to boost recruitment and retention. The Task Force was asked to look at all of the factors that impact on frontline social work practice and to conduct a survey of workloads and pressures facing social workers. The Social Work Reform Board (SWRB) set out to social workers what working conditions they should expect from their employers, as it published proposals to put social workers on a greater professional footing and reform their education. For additional information please refer to <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a0070480/social-work-reform-board-proposes-standards-for-support-of-social-workers>

Codes of practice

GSCC (General Social Care Council) is the social care workforce regulator and 'guardian of standards' for the social care workforce in England. It is responsible for the codes of practice, Social Care Register and social work education and training, thereby increasing the protection of people who use services, their carers and the general public.

GSCC Code of Practice for Social Care Workers Describe the standards of conduct and practice within which social care workers should work.(for further information, please see <http://www.gsc.org.uk/page/35/Codes+of+practice.html>)

5.3 The origins of the competence movement and NOS formation in British education and training.

The emergence of the 'competence movement' in British education and training in the 80s- 90s, is significant for understating of both the modern concept of competence and the nature of the national occupational standards (NOS) in particular, in care sector. Early developments in defining standards focused on task analysis (not that much on competence). Standard tasks were replaced by competence objectives in 1986, with the 'Review of Vocational Qualifications' (MSC/DES, 1986), when the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) criteria were first published and the term 'competence' was adopted (Stewart and Sambrook, 1995). The review was a significant step, specifically, as it recommended:

- A new qualification framework, and
- Development of the standards

Further developments have led to the adoption of the version of competence which has become dominant in the UK qualification framework. The competence has been defined as the ability to perform work activities to the standards required in employment (NCVQ, 1989).

The main features of the competence include:

- tight pre-specification and
- subsequent measurement of the intended consequences, or 'outcomes,' of learning.

'Functional analysis', which has become an underlying principle of the development of the standards, has been defined as

- (1) the process of deriving competences for particular occupations (Bates, 1995) and
- (2) a central feature of the methodology to implement government policy on National Vocational Qualification (NVQs) and for producing statements of national standards (Stewart and Sambrook, 1995).

The analysis forms the core of official advice to those responsible for and involved in developing such standards (ED, 1989b). It has been emphasised that 'The starting point for the definition of standards is the analysis of occupational functions' (NCVQ, 1991:9). The operational aspect of the functional analysis is conducted by Lead Bodies, representing employers and industry. Lead Bodies are responsible for setting standards (and more precisely determining statements of competence) within a given occupational area.

The stages of the standards' development process (functional analysis) (Stewart and Sambrook, 1995) have been defined, as follows

1. Determine the limits of the occupational area and the details of the occupations covered
2. Define the key purpose of the occupational area as a whole
3. Find out what relevant materials exist, including work that people in other sectors might be doing
4. Use group of expert practitioners to carry out a functional analysis of the area, starting with the key purpose, and working from the top down, using a whole role model of competence
5. Identify units and elements of competence from the analysis
6. Check the nation-wide applicability of the units, elements and their performance criteria
7. Field test the standards in normal assessment situations
8. Provide a mechanism for refining and updating the standards.

These aspects of historical development of the standards are important for a better insight into the nature of the existing National Occupational standards in care sector.

These developments introduced in UK VET the issues of outcomes (i.e. performance outcome based on observation and/or paper-based evidence) in the late 1980s/1990s. As a result of these processes, APEL/APL has also been brought to wider attention and given credibility by the development of NVQs that define and describe vocational competence, which is assessed by outcome. The time, place and context in which the competence has been gained is irrelevant to the assessment of the competence. Thus, gaining credit for past learning and achievements has become a real possibility. In the late 1990s the UK broadened the use of the term *learning outcome* with the Dearing Review of Higher Education (1997) to also cover the outcome of an educational programme (i.e. Subject-based knowledge) and then extended use of APL/APEL to cover assessment of tacit skill for both academic and vocational programmes. These developments have demonstrated a tendency towards a Bologna structure even before it was introduced.

5.4 Mechanisms for Recognition and accreditation of care workers' skills

The development of mechanisms for accreditation and recognition of care workers' skills and competences within the UK context, have been oriented towards the national care standards and knowledge and skills sets for care workers. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) which are based on national occupational standards (NOS) have also played an important role in the process of recognition and accreditation of care workers competences.

In the UK, National Occupation Standards (NOS) establish the benchmark of competence required in the sector and form the basis of qualifications from Apprenticeships and foundation degrees, to vocational qualifications and training programmes. NOS come from an analysis of functions or activities which are performed in order to achieve the basic purpose of the occupation.

National Standards

The notion of standards is important in the context of recognition and accreditation of care workers skills and competences. Within the UK context, the concept of national standards relates to the government's continued drive to modernize a sector, product or service and tackle variations in quality and standards. Generally, standards are used to achieve a level of safety, quality and consistency in products and processes. A standard is defined as a "document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context" (please refer to http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_catalogue/catalogue_tc/catalogue_detail.htm?csnumber=24887).

The National Care Standards Commission was established in England under the Care Standards Act 2000, in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Long Term Care in 1999. The national minimum standards have been brought in progressively since the adoption of the Care Standards Act 2000. They constituted the minimum expectations the state sets for English and Welsh care providers in the services they deliver. Over the last decade, the care standards have been subject to some revision and amendment. that have been introduced with the purpose of improving the quality of the care sector and raising its standards. (for further information on care standards please see http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Legislation/Actsandbills/DH_4001911 http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4067778.pdf)

In April 2004, The National Care Standards Commission was replaced by two organisations, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (CHAI). In 2009, these two bodies were replaced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC - www.cqc.org.uk). The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is a new independent body which from 1 April 2009 became exclusively responsible for the inspection, monitoring and regulation of health and social care in England (for further info please see <http://www.cqc.org.uk/usingcareservices/essentialstandardsqualityandsafety.cfm>).

The care standards include a range of guidelines and criteria that apply to care sector, including standards for care for older people, standards for care for young people, standards for care for adults 18 – 65. The latest reform states that as from April 2010 all providers of health and social care are required by law to be registered with the CQC and to demonstrate compliance with the essential standards of quality and safety. There are similar themes from the Standards for Better Health and the National Minimum Standards in the new guidance Some of the evidence that

providers used to demonstrate they met the old standards can be used for the new.

Common Induction Standards and Knowledge and Skills Sets for care workers

The standards are designed for people entering social care work and those changing roles or employers within adult social care. They set out the areas of knowledge that care workers need to know before they can work unsupervised. They comprise: understanding principles of care; understanding the organisation and role of the worker; maintaining safety at work; communicating effectively; recognising and responding to abuse and neglect; developing as a worker and are designed to be met within a 12-week period. The standards are not set at any particular qualification level, but they readily link to the NVQ level 2 - the minimum qualification used within the sector (Care Training Code). Please see the link below for details about the Standards, samples of a Progress Log for an individual worker, guidance for inducting a new worker etc <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/cis/>

In addition, *Knowledge and Skills Sets* for care workers provide descriptions of specific knowledge and understanding to help social care workers undertake their role and are designed to improve consistency in the learning of the adult social care workforce. They are key learning outcomes for specific areas of work and extend the NOS. Knowledge sets are designed to be used separately or alongside the Common Induction Standards and as part of a worker's continuing professional development. The following knowledge sets are available, with more topics planned: Infection prevention and control, Dementia, Nutrition & well-being, Safeguarding of vulnerable adults, Workers not involved in direct care, and Medication. (for further information please see http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training/N_V_Q/knowledge_sets/knowledge_sets_introduction.aspx)

NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications)

NVQs are work-related, competence-based qualifications. They are based on NOS (National Occupational Standards), which cover all the main aspects of an occupation, including current best practice, the ability to adapt to future requirements, and the knowledge and understanding that underpin competent performance. NVQs were first introduced in 1986, following the publication of the White Paper Working together: education and training, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was set up. NCVQ developed a framework of NVQs that consisted of five levels and 11 occupational areas. In parallel, the government funded the Industry Training Organisations to develop the occupational standards on which NVQs are based, with awarding bodies developing the assessment and quality assurance arrangements to criteria set by NCVQ.

NVQs are modular (consist of self-contained units that can be gradually assembled to make a full qualification at a particular level), work-based and able to recognise prior achievements. They can

be introduced into any organisation as a type of workplace learning. NVQs give people the opportunity to prove their competence in their work and gain official recognition for this. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are characterised by their modular structure: they are formed by a specified number of learning units which correspond closely to the skills and knowledge required for a certain occupation are work-related, competence-based qualifications. They reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively, and show that a candidate is competent in the area of work the NVQ represents.

Please see qualifications by level

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017

NOS (National Occupational Standards)

National Occupational Standards (NOS) define the competences ('can do' statement that relate to specific workplace tasks) which apply to job roles or occupations in the form of statements of performance, knowledge and the evidence required to confirm competence. They cover the key activities undertaken within the occupation in question under all the circumstances the job holder is likely to encounter. NOS describe the skills, knowledge and understanding required by workers for specific functions. They are based on an analysis of functions performed in the workplace and form the basis of NVQs, for which they are commonly known as the 'competencies'. NOS are available for care staff, social workers, managers and some social work post qualifying awards. NOS can be used for defining work roles, for staff recruitment, supervision and appraisal purposes.

The NVQs in Health and Social Care is available at the following levels¹:

- Health and Social Care level 2
- Health and Social Care level 3
- Health and Social Care level 4. At levels 3 and 4 candidates can choose an adults or children and young people route dependent on the work they are doing
- Leadership and management for care services

Skills for Care have a short guide to NVQs in Health and Social Care, please see the link Qualifications and Training, at

http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training/N_V_Q/NVQ_and_knowledge_sets.aspx

¹For explanation of levels of qualifications please refer to

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017

5.5 Entry routes for care workers: Formal and Informal routes

There are two main routes, which could be referred to as formal and informal, leading to becoming a care worker. The first is that the worker already has an NVQ and the second is that they have taken an employer's induction course that complies with National Minimum Standards. Once registered, there is a six-year period for re-registration, with the condition that they will have achieved a relevant NVQ (please see for fuller details Rainbird et al, 2009).

The informal route allows people to start a career in care sector without a formal qualification. What could be important in this context is to demonstrate relevant skills, such as patience, compassion, communication and motivation. The following has been emphasised:

[In order to become a care worker] you must be able to relate to people from many different backgrounds and cultures who may not share the same beliefs as you. You should empathise with people's problems and be able to deal with them in a professional manner. Team working, communication and motivational skills are all important. Self-confidence and the ability to balance a busy and varied workload will also be helpful (Connexions, UK Careers Service, 2006, p.1).

A range of skills acquired from other experiences, either formal or informal, have also been considered as valuable for people starting their career in the care sector. As employees move between jobs and sectors they are able to transfer and recontextualize their skills in different workplace or learning settings. The selected case studies of social care workers exemplify both formal and informal routes leading to various jobs in social care sector (please see <http://education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/0-86110-906-6%20PDF.pdf>).

Skills and Training

The social care sector is highly dependent on the quality and training of the workers who provide services to users. As is noted above, with an ageing population demand for these services is set to increase (Rainbird et al, 2009).

The Care Standards Act (2000) laid out requirements for the workers and managers in the care sector. These included requirements for care service providers to ensure that all workers receive training, supervision and appraisal and opportunities to attain further qualifications. National Minimum Standards require registered providers to publish statements of purpose relating to the aims, objectives and care ethos of the organisation; demonstrate evidence of management systems and record keeping; and specifies the skill mix of staff for different types of organisations and service users. This has consequences both for the training and qualifications of managers and for induction, foundation training to sector standards and attainment of NVQ qualifications for care workers. All staff should have 3 days paid training a year and have a training and development assessment. These requirements have consequences for the resources which service providers allocate to training and development within their organisations, as well as resources which are

available externally to support the attainment of minimum standards. As with any policy intervention, regulatory measures have intended (e.g. developing criteria for guidelines) and unintended (e.g. facilitating innovations within organisational contexts) consequences and outcomes (Rainbird et al, 2009).

Training for care workers include both formal and informal directions

Formal Training and Recognition involve the following:

- Incorporating social care into the secondary curriculum: e.g. the 14-19 Diploma, A Levels, GCSEs and A levels (for info/explanation of A-Levels, 14-19 Diploma and GCSEs, please refer to the link below <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/index.htm>)
- Providing a work-based or higher education qualification, e.g.:
 - NVQs (please see http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039029)
 - Apprenticeships (apprenticeships are a paradox in the UK system. Apprentices study NVQs and Technical Certificates, however, the UK does not make the completion of an apprenticeship an actual qualification. For further details please see the link below http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/educationandlearning/adultlearning/trainingandworkplacelearning/dg_4001327)
 - Foundation degrees (FDs are a relatively new qualification. They are a way for an employer, working in partnership with a university, to design a work-based degree. For fuller details please see the link below http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039022)
 - Other formal courses (e.g. employer designed and delivered)
- Continuing professional development (university or professional institute designed and delivered)
- APEL
- Skills for Life training (for further information of the Skills for Life programme http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039031)

For further information please see 'Keeping Up the Good Work - a *practical guide to implementing continuing professional development in the adult social care workforce*' (Developed by Skills for Care). The document includes examples of good practice (please refer to part C of the document) in CPD in social care. The guide is available at http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/developing_skills/CPD_and_careerpathways/cpd.aspx

Importance of informal learning/tacit (personal skills and competences)

It is first important to recognise that workplace learning does not just involve formal learning, for example, going on a course to a college or training centre, where a formal body of knowledge is

acquired. It also takes place through on-going practice and learning from experienced workers. The following personal skills have been identified as significant in this respect:

- friendliness;
- politeness;
- having a calm manner and confidence;
- honesty and integrity;
- punctuality and reliability;
- good communication skills ;
- ability to listen.

Rianbird et al (2009) research indicated that good communication, which could be gained from prior workplace experience, was understandably seen as essential: this included English language skills; listening skills; willingness to learn; and to adapt to individuals' disabilities. Good communication between workers and the accurate recording of information relating to users were considered to be essential to good care, especially where the person lived alone. Negative experiences included workers who were rude, patronising or made assumptions about people which caused offence. Unacceptable standards of care involved thoughtless behaviour, which caused users and carers distress, and dishonesty, which they did not always feel able to challenge. Poor experiences include workers who made assumptions about users' disabilities, were over familiar, or those providing unacceptable standards of care. Induction into the ethics of care is needed, including the development of self-confidence, and workers' ability to communicate and empathise with the people they care for through understanding of their needs.

For further discussion of communication skills in the care sector please see <http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/files/briefing34.pdf>

Emerging Issues

The literature review has allowed us to identify a set of approaches to skills development in social care that demonstrate how different organisational responses produce different outcomes. For fuller details see (Rainbird et al, 2009):

5.8 Approaches to skill development in social care

1. The compliance approach

Meeting the Standards - These are approaches to training and assessment, which focus only on meeting the formal requirements of NVQ assessment, required by the regulatory framework. Compliance with statutory requirements can be a significant driver for changing training practices

and may result in innovations in an organisation's approach to training and development.

2. The funding driven approach

Value of statutory requirements - One of the consequences of statutory requirements for workforce competence in the social care sector has been that funding has been available for training and for projects.

Funding: benefits and disadvantages - Some of the training organisations reported that the availability of funding, for example, at the end of the financial year, could result in training organisations needing provide a particular type at a specific time. Whilst free training may be attractive to organisations which have limited internal resources for this purpose, such training may not contribute to the organisation's ability to plan for its needs, or to ensure that training is appropriate. Amongst our case studies we found that the availability of external funding for particular training courses had driven the Agency's decision to send ten workers on a free course, which only one had successfully completed. This had not been based on a planned and systematic approach to identifying the organisation's and the individuals' needs. In this instance, the failure of the funding driven approach had forced the Agency to reassess its approach to training and to learn from this mistake. In contrast, the Residential Home planned its statutory training on an annual basis, as part of its wider approach to planning training needs.

Funding and innovation - A second type of funding which may be available for training is what could be called 'seed corn' funding for innovations. Cases where funding of this nature has contributed to innovations, for example, in supporting the development of specialist dementia training for the Dementia Team, are identified in Rainbird et al.

3. The educational route

Initial qualifications - This route is based on learning in educational settings, usually leading to qualifications. Such approaches provide theoretical knowledge and are not dependent on the learners' current job role. Examples of this include the 14-19 diploma (*will need a note of explanation*); the foundation degree; the Not for Profit Providers BTEC induction programme in person-centred care and its leadership and management courses; and the routes into professional social worker qualifications, sponsored by the two councils. Even so, educational routes into care qualifications also need to be based on a strong relationship with the world of practice. For the 14-19 diploma, practice-based knowledge was essential for students' understanding of the ethos of care, and this anchoring of knowledge in the world of practice was brought by the different partners with experience in the sector in further education and service delivery who developed the diploma.

Higher qualifications - The foundation degree (*will need a note of explanation*) was tailored to the needs of managers in nursing homes who had nursing qualifications. The educational qualifications developed by the Not for Profit provider (a company that looks to cover costs rather than make surplus profits) were linked to the perception that a more developmental approach was needed to the design of programmes for equip staff with professional skills for their job roles. These needed to be tailored to the needs of particular categories of staff and brought together teaching, training and practical knowledge. Although the two Councils *will need a note of explanation* used different routes for developing their own staff and linking them in to career structures, degree level educational qualifications were central to this.

4. The whole organisation approach

These approaches involve a systematic approach to business and human resource planning within organisations. This involves the development of organisational competence, for example in management and in the ability to manage and develop human resources. It involves having mechanisms for identifying the learning needs of all the workforce and making provisions for them to acquire the skills and qualifications identified.

5. The training and development approach

As part of a whole organisation approach to skill development, there are different routes for allowing learning, job progression and career development to take place.

workplace learning route – workers enhance their knowledge of their job role and users' needs, becoming expert workers who are self-confident in team work and in their dealings with other professionals. The focus of this kind of learning is on becoming more proficient within an existing job role, which may include expansion into new areas of competence and tasks.

career progression route – learning on and off the job underpins a career development route into more highly qualified work. In this context, skill development is linked to job progression usually within an internal labour market.

learning progression route – learning opportunities are available on and off the job which are independent of, and not restricted by, current job role and location within a career progression pathway. The existence of learning progression routes may allow career progression routes to be established where they did not previously exist.

6. The coordinated regional approach

Stakeholder involvement - Employers, commissioners of services, sector bodies and training organisations work together to provide a coordinated approach to training within a regional or a locality, with a view to creating economies of scale, creating local career structures and sustaining training investment.

Benefits to region - These regional bodies contribute to building capacity and sharing resources within the sector at local level. Cooperation rather than competition between employers on training contributes to capacity building within the sector, creates economies of scale through shared facilities. It benefits smaller organisations, in particular, which do not have in-house resources. Engagement in these networks is a significant source of learning for managers and trainers, and allows them to understand, anticipate and plan for changes in regulatory requirements.

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6. Comparative tables of the validation and certification systems considered

In order to describe the similarities and differences between the various systems for the validation and certification of non-formal and informal learning considered above, the features of each system have been summarised in a specific table.

Each table clarifies the terms used in the official documents of the Regional and National Governments considered as well as the aims, phases, and professionals involved in the different validation and certification processes described.

The UK table describes the competence validation process for social workers in particular, rather than the more general validation and certification processes (APEL and APL) developed in that country.

Table 5 describes the main aspects of the certification process used by the Lombardy Regional Government. The following tables explain the systems used by the Tuscany Regional Government (Table 6) and the Romanian Government (Table 7) respectively. The last two tables describe the certification systems of the Netherlands (Table 8) and the United Kingdom (Table 9). There is no table regarding the process developed by the Molise Regional Government, for this system has not been regulated yet.

Table 5

<i>Validation and certification of experiential learning in Lombardy</i>	
Official name of the process	Model for the certification of non-formally and informally acquired competences
Aims	Empowering individuals and enhancing their experience Awarding an official document Making individuals' learning visible
What the process officially issues	A final certificate of competence under D.D.U.O. (Organisational Unit Managerial Decree) No. 9837 of 12 th August 2008 is issued for one or several competences that the applicant has demonstrated to own for one of the professional profiles under the QRSP (Regional Framework of Occupational Standards).
Who / which organization delivers the process/validation	Awarding bodies approved as Employment Services, which have been licensed by the Reform Implementation and Controls Operating Unit of the Education, Training, and Employment Head Office. The task of coordinating and monitoring the process has been entrusted to Fondazione Politecnico of Milan.
Who can apply for the process	Any individuals who wish to obtain the certification of their non-formally and informally acquired competences.
Which standards of competencies are used	Regional Standard Classifications of Occupations
Definition of formal, non-formal, and informal learning	<p><i>Formal learning:</i> competences acquired in a formal institutional context specifically designed, structured, and organised (in terms of goals, timing, and teaching aids/support) for learning. This formal context comprises the National Education and Vocational Training System, whose institutions and organisations deliver a wide range of educational programmes as well as vocational training courses.</p> <p><i>Non-formal learning:</i> competences acquired in a context designed, structured, and organised for learning, which does not, however, formally belong to the National Education and Vocational Training System.</p> <p><i>Informal learning:</i> competences acquired in a context that is not designed for learning, but leads to the development of competences among the individuals that are involved in it. As a consequence, the development of such competences is not the result of individuals' deliberate efforts (see Attachment 2 to Regional Council Resolution No. 13503/2010, p. 1).</p>

Official definition of “competence”	<p>The official definition is the one agreed upon during the Conference of the State and Regions of 15th January 2004 and 5th October 2006 and referred to in the Record of Personal Achievement approved by Interministerial Decree of 10th October 2005: the capability of accomplishing one or several tasks pertaining to a professional profile, which is comprised of knowledge and abilities; it is described by a verb+object+detail/context, like in the following example: using (ACTION) technological tools (OBJECT) to consult records and manage information (DETAIL/CONTEXT).</p> <p>It can be certified if it can be recognised through “discernible behaviours”.</p>
Official definition of “certification”	<p>Certification is a public acknowledgment and is a prerequisite for the “assurance” of what is certified following the certification process. There are two key and distinctive aspects in the certification process: a) some common minimum standards in terms of phases/sub-processes and relevant mechanisms that ensure its transparency and validity; b) its public nature, which enables the process to be formally used and recognised.</p>
Key concepts	<p><i>Competence indicators:</i> identify the abilities related to the competence being measured and the actual level of competence in relation to the complexity of the context, degree of autonomy, and type of tasks.</p> <p><i>Evidence:</i> the tool or product that an applicant can use in order to demonstrate that he/she has acquired a given competence in compliance with the indicators connected to that competence (for example, pictures, footage, audio recording, products, on-the-job observation)</p>
Professionals involved	<p><i>Reception and information staff of the licensed awarding body:</i> during an interview at the licensed awarding body (Phase 1 of the certification process), they explain to applicants the different steps of the certification process.</p> <p><i>Certifiers:</i> they assess individuals’ applications and coordinate the certification process at the licensed awarding body.</p> <p><i>Tutors:</i> they may be in-house tutors or external consultants of the licensed awarding body and must differ from Assessors.</p> <p><i>Assessors:</i> these are professionals with multi-year background and experience in the specific fields of knowledge and vocational skills for which applicants have applied for certification (managers, businessmen, senior professionals, including people recommended by professional and trade associations). A specific course is supplied “for assessors to learn and comprehend how the certification process works and how assessment and examination support tools are to be used” (Attachment 1, p.3).</p>
Phases of the certification process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submission of the application for certification to the licensed awarding body 2. Preliminary assessment of the application based on the examination of the documents submitted and their

	<p>consistency with the competence(s) to be certified</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Preparation and submission of the Evidence Portfolio 4. Assessment aimed at checking whether the applicant has really acquired the competence to be certified 5. Issuing of a written statement or certificate of competence
Useful official documents	<p>D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 13503/2010 D.D. (Managerial Decree) No. 337/2010 D.G.R (Regional Council Resolution) No. 8/6563/2008 D.D. (Managerial Decree) No. 8486/2008 D.D. (Managerial Decree) No. 9837/2008 European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) (2008/C 111/01)</p>

Table 6

<i>Validation and certification of experiential learning in Tuscany</i>	
Official name of the process	System for the recognition and certification of competences
Aims	Empowering individuals and enhancing their experience Awarding an official document Making individuals' competences visible
What the process officially issues	A certificate of competence is issued for the Units of Competence that the applicant has demonstrated to own for one of the professional profiles under the QRSP (Regional Framework of Occupational Standards).
Who / which organization delivers the process/validation	The Provincial / Regional Government, which appoints a special Examining Board.
Who can apply for the process	Any individuals who, after the validation of their non-formal/informal learning, have applied to the Regional / Provincial Government for admission to the examination leading to a certificate of competence or certificate of qualification.
Which standards of competencies are used	Regional Standard Classifications of Occupations
Definition of formal, non-formal, and informal learning	<p><i>Formal learning</i> Competences are acquired in a formal context specifically structured and organised (in terms of goals, timing, and teaching aids/support) for learning, in which individuals are involved for the express purpose of developing some specific competences and obtaining a certificate of learning. This formal context typically comprises the National Education and Vocational Training System.</p> <p><i>Non-formal learning</i> Competences acquired in a context where, although it is not specifically and/or exclusively designed for learning (in terms of goals, timing, and teaching aids/support), practice leads to the development of competences. Individuals are involved in this non-formal context for the key purpose of learning.</p>

	<p><i>Informal learning</i> Competences acquired in a context that is not organised and designed for learning, but leads to the development of competences among the individuals that are involved in it. As a consequence, the development of such competences is not, generally, the result of individuals' deliberate efforts.</p>
Official definition of "competence"	<p>A <i>Unit of Competence</i> is comprised of the knowledge and skills required to adequately perform one's professional duties.</p>
Official definition of "certification"	<p>With reference to competences, this term stands for the process whereby a public body (or any other entity "licensed" by the latter under specific regulations) awards a formal certificate to individuals, after a test-based examination, to certify that they have acquired specific competences. This certificate can be used within the framework of the formal education and vocational training system in order to obtain learning credits, as well as within the network of Employment Services in order to improve job matching.</p>
Key concepts	<p><i>Branch of Work:</i> a set of actions and activities performed by several professional profiles who work at different levels and with different responsibilities and skills in order to reach the same goal. Each economic sector has been broken down into 6 branches of work: 1. administration and management; 2. marketing, communication, and sales; 3. design, research and development; 4. production, procurement, and logistics planning; 5. maintenance and repair; 6. production of goods and services.</p> <p><i>Area of Work:</i> a range of homogeneous tasks/activities grouped by type of processes or products, aimed at attaining a result. Based on Areas of Work, the key vocational skills of a professional profile can be identified.</p>
Professionals involved	<p><i>Qualified professionals</i> (generally vocational counsellors) <i>belonging to the network of Employment Services</i> They are responsible for receiving and supporting individuals in the description of competences as well as helping them in assembling and updating their Record of Personal Achievement.</p> <p><i>Assessment process managers</i> In-house professionals of companies and training organisations approved by the Tuscany Regional Government, who must be on the regional register of experts in learning and competence assessment.</p> <p><i>Members of the certification Examining Board:</i> President (appointed by the competent local government, responsible for the certification and for checking and controlling that the examination is formally correct). Two field experts, appointed by the competent local government. An examiner appointed by a training organisation (only if the Examining Board is specifically set up to administer an examination upon completion of a vocational training programme).</p>

Phases of the recognition and certification process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Description of competences 2. Statement of learning outcomes 3. Validation of competences 4. Certification of competences
Useful official documents	<p>D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 532/2009. Approval of the Rules for the implementation of the regional system for the recognition and certification of competences provided for in the Regulation implementing Regional Law No. 32/2002</p> <p>D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 532/2009, Attachment A</p> <p>D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 731/2010, Additions and modifications of Attachment A to D.G.R. No. 532/2009</p> <p>D.G.R. (Regional Council Resolution) No. 731/2010, Attachment 1</p> <p>Glossary of Terms of the regional system of standards for the recognition and certification of competences</p> <p>European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF) (2008/C 111/01)</p>

Table 7

<i>Validation and certification of experiential learning in Romania</i>	
Official name of the process	Assessment and certification procedure of the professional competences acquired in different ways than the formal competences
Aims	Offering assessment and certification services of the professional competences acquired in different ways than the formal competences, intensifying the chances to be hired and the mobility of the work force from the country and from the European Economic Space.

What the process officially issues	Certificate of “competent” or “not yet competent” for each unit of competence for which the candidate decided to go through the assessment process. Professional competence certificate in case the candidate is considered to be competent in all assessed competencies.
Who /which organization delivers the process/validation	The National Council of Adult Professional Development manages at national level the assessment and certification activities of the professional competences acquired in a different way than the formal competences. The Assessment and certification centers within one of the Romanian Regional Centers of Adult Professional Training assess professional competences achieved in a different way than the formal competences and issue competence certificates.
Who can apply for the process	The candidate is the person who enrolls wilfully in the process of assessment of the professional competences achieved in a different way than the formal competences
Which standards of references are used	Romanian national occupational standard (COR)/ professional training standard
Official definition of “competence”	The professional competence is the ability of a person to use the theoretical knowledge, the practical skills and the particular abilities in order to realize the activities demanded at the place of work. The word ‘competence’ describes a key-activity, as part of a group of competences and the result associated to it; Each <i>unit of competence</i> defines one of the main activities a person has to be able to carry out in a specific type of job and the expected outcomes.
Key concepts	The <i>assessment method</i> is the procedure used to gather proofs of the competence. The recommended assessment methods are: self-assessment, direct observation, oral test, written test, project, simulation or structured demonstration, reports made by other people, portfolio containing works made before the date of the assessment; reports from third parties concerning the demonstration of the candidate’s competence, previous to the process of assessment. The <i>assessment tool</i> is the tool used to assess the candidate, and for each tool it has to be specified the goals of the assessment, the expected results and the way to evaluate the assessment results. Evidences of the competence could be the paper-test done the candidate and the evaluation of the test, the observation of the activities made by the candidate during a role playing, a project realized upon request by the assessor, evidences of the activities carried out by the candidate before assessment. The <i>competence certificate</i> is the certificate issued on the basis of the rules of a certification system which indicates the existence of the appropriate confidence that the nominee is competent to make certain activities. The competence certificate has to contain the issuing date and the validity period or the expiring date.

	<p>The <i>occupational standard</i> (COR)/ the professional training standard is the official document (namely the qualification) stating the competences and the qualitative level associated to the outcomes of the work activities.</p> <p>The <i>principles</i> that lie at the basis of the assessment process are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) validity: the assessment is based on competence proofs which result from the activities described in the occupational standard/ professional training standard; b) reliability: the assessment uses methods which lead with consistency to the same result; c) fairness: the assessment allows the involvement of all those who are interested, without the predominance of a particular interest; d) flexibility: the assessment adapts to the candidates' needs and to the characteristics of the place of work; e) privacy: the information concerning the process and its result belong to the beneficiary; f) easiness: the assessment process can be easily understood and applied by the persons involved.
Professionals involved	<p>The assessor of the professional competences is an expert who has a recent experience of work and/or coordination in the professions/qualifications for which he is assigned by the assessment center in order to make assessments. The assessor is also certified by the National Council of Adult Professional Development on the basis of the 'assessor of professional competences' occupational standard.</p>
Phases of the certification process	<p><i>Request by the candidate:</i> The person who wants to be assessed appeals to one of the authorized Assessment Centres. Then the candidate is assigned to a professional competence assessor, who is responsible of the implementation of the whole assessment process. The minimum level of an assessment is that of the group of competence. As a rule, the assessment is done for a group of competence or for the whole qualification/occupation.</p> <p><i>Self-assessment:</i> before starting the actual assessment process, the candidate compares, assisted by the professional competence assessor, his own professional performance to the specific occupational standard/professional training standard. Depending on the result of the self-assessment, the professional competence assessor advises the candidate to enter the assessment process for the whole standard or for a part of it or not to enter the assessment process. The decision to enter the assessment process belongs to the candidate, who attaches to the deposited petition, the competences for which he wants to be assessed, from the list of the competences of the standard made available for him by the professional competence assessor.</p> <p><i>Assessment:</i> The professional competences is assessed on the basis of what the candidate can do in real working conditions by analyzing the evidences of competence collected during the assessment process. The latter has to be finalized</p>

	<p>within 30 days.</p> <p>The assessment program is approved by the Assessment centre's board. Each assessment centre sets the assessment methods taking into consideration that the Law established that 'A paper test and a practical demonstration of the competence must be used in the assessment process for each candidate'.</p> <p>The assessment and evaluation process takes place comparing the evidences of competences to specific achievement criteria and it is accomplished with the decision "competent" or "not yet competent" for each unit of competence for which the candidate decided to go through the assessment process.</p> <p>In the case the candidate is not pleased with the decision "not yet competent" s/he has the right to put in for a dispute, which s/he deposes at the assessment centre within 5 days since the decision about his/her competencies was communicated. The centre chooses another professional competence assessor who organizes a new assessment process for the competences which are the object of the dispute.</p> <p><i>Certification:</i> the certified competences of the candidates are stated in the competence certificate.</p>
Useful official documents	<p>Government Ordinance nr. 129/2000 regarding the Adult Professional Training, ratified by means of the Law nr. 375/2002</p> <p>Government Ordinance nr. 468/4543/2004 regarding the "Assessment and certification procedure of the professional competences acquired in different ways than the formal competences".</p>

Table 8

<i>Validation and certification of experiential learning in The Netherlands</i>	
Official name of the process	<p>The terms most commonly used in the Netherlands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EVC (erkennen van verworven competenties like "acknowledging acquired competences) • EVC (ervaringscertificaat like "certificate of experience") • EVP (ervaringsprofiel like "experience profile")
Aims	<p>Several:</p> <p>To recognise and accredit learning regardless the bases (based on prior experience, formal, informal or non formal education) in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "profile" people in order to help them choose further education, career or even "goals in life", especially EVP ○ gain entry to a programme of study offered by an educational institution or training company or to the employer's training programme;

	<p>The fundamental principle underpinning EVC is that learning is worthy and capable of gaining recognition and credit regardless of the time, place and context in which it has been achieved. Because there are no formal rules regarding EVC, any kind of acknowledgment can be used, from “giving self-esteem” to one group to degrees from professional universities. In general, existing standards are used, either from education (mainstream is VET), or company based standards (like Microsoft, Ahold, ING etc.). There is a “quality agreement on EVC” between social partners, the state and many educational partners, but there is no forced obligation to comply. However, when an EVC procedure is complying to the agreement AND is registered in a list of “acknowledged providers”, tax reduction is possible for both individual and employer.</p>
<p>What the process officially issues</p>	<p>That depends on the standard the EVC procedure is using. Whatever is possible in the standard, can be the outcome. For some low-level procedures (where people sometime hardly can read or write in mother tongue, let alone in Dutch), tailor-made certificates are used. In most cases the formal diplomas and / or certificates of regular education are used. Keep in mind that in the Netherlands (like in France) there is absolutely no difference in an diploma “out of school” of because of EVC. Due to this fact the use of EVC is rather limited to the use of existing educational institutions.</p> <p>In the case of the care workers the diploma’s and certificates of the health sector will be used, form aka (arbeidsmarkt gekwalificeerd assistant, which translates roughly as for “labour market qualified assistant”, level 1 up to level 5 professional nurses.</p>
<p>Who /which organization delivers the process/validation</p>	<p>Anybody who likes to carry out a procedure can do so. If the procedure is going to lead to an official diploma, you need final approval of any institution able to give out diploma’s, mostly regular schools, but some private companies have the same possibilities (LOI, NTI, companies for distance learning for example). Furthermore, you need to be registered in the database. For example, for the level 1 nursing diploma, there are 44 procedures registered. Partly by schools, partly by small commercial companies. Many will use e.q. comply to the Calibris procedure. Calibris is a three party organization (employers, employees and government) designing and guarding the part of the VET qualification system for health and welfare. Companies or institutions can directly use the “commercial branche” of Calibris and buy the EVC procedure for their employees.</p> <p>The procedures for professional universities are rather complex and for many people impossible to comply to. Because every single standard more or less needs its own procedure, many hundreds or thousands procedures are in the database of registered procedures.</p>
<p>Who can apply for the process</p>	<p>Strictly anyone who is willing to pay the provider can enter an EVC procedure. Obstacle is not only the price, but also the fact you have to now which standard the procedure should use. In practice EVC is used mainly by three</p>

	<p>groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jobless, accompanied by community or state in their effort to (re)enter the labour market; - companies trying to help people to other jobs before they get fired (for example the Dutch Post is trying to help 7.500 people to new jobs right now); - regulated professions with either shortages or new rules. Teaching, assistant nursing etc., or, a good example for the latter one, taking care of little children. This was traditionally done by “grandparents”, taking care of their relatives and one or two other children. This is illegal now in the Netherlands: you need a certificate for the work and a safety license for your house to be a “babysitter”. These new rules led to an explosion of EVC procedures for this new certificate. In Dutch law you can pay your parents a little for baby-sitting and use tax reduction afterwards, but also only if they are certificated babysitters.
Which standards of competencies are used	Any standard you can think of actually is or has been used. From fresh designed certificates (for example recognizing voluntary work or “home labour” for housewives, up to any part of the Dutch qualification system, including all kind of branch or company based standard.
Official definition of “competence”	<p>The most commonly used (in practice) definition is that of the American company SHL. That is because the VET qualifications in the Netherlands are defined using the 26 base competences introduced by SHL.</p> <p>In practice you see people using “competence” when they are actually referring to ability, skill and experience. Most practical is agreed on the notion that “competence is shown by result”.</p>
Key concepts	<p>Generic criteria for assessing an EVC claim usually include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authenticity: that the learner really did what is claimed in the proposal • Directness: that the focus of learning was sharp rather than diffused • Breadth: that the learning was not isolated from wider consideration • Quality: that the learning had reached an acceptable academic level • Currency: that the learner had kept up to date with recent developments <p>(however they may vary from institution to institutions)</p>
Professionals involved	EVC co-ordinators, tutors, advisors, guidance and support staff who might be in providing EVC support will work with the learner individually, in a group, or both (roles and responsibilities may vary from institution to institution). However in many situations, assessors are so badly needed that anyone can join a short programme (three afternoons) and become an assessor for a specific part of the qualification structure. In practice, many teachers work in EVC, either in their regular job at school, or as a part-time job for commercial providers. Keep in mind that recently this process was reason for the Dutch minister of Education to claim possession of the Dutch register of EVC providers and is now using the Dutch quality system for education to improve the quality of EVC.

Phases of the certification	<p>Any provider is free to design the process and procedure as they feel is necessary, however in practice EVC is essentially about three processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying what a person can do - equating those skills and knowledge with specific standards or requirements and - crediting the learner in an appropriate manner. <p>Main quality points in the mutual agreement on EVC are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The person helping to identify what a person can do and the one accrediting value cannot be the same person (although that is practice in regular education); - The material delivered throughout a procedure are the private possession of the individual.
Useful official documents	<p>Mainly those are the letters from the Dutch minister of Education to parliament. Of course the Dutch register (www.leren-werken.nl) is of some importance.</p>

Table 9

<i>Validation and certification of care workers' experiential learning in UK</i>	
Official name of the process	APEL or APL
Aims	Issuing credits to candidates to get national qualifications Allowing candidates to take part in training paths Intensifying the candidates' chances to be hired
What the process officially issues	Credits or qualifications
Who /which organization delivers the process/validation	<p>Awarding body An awarding body is an organisation that awards qualifications to learners. It is an organisation approved by government to design qualifications and awards. An awarding body endorses candidates' certificates so that an employer can be sure the qualification has gone through a rigorous and effective assessment process. Awarding body is responsible for the following key functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing qualifications • assessing and quality assuring qualifications • awarding qualifications • providing customer service to centres and candidates. <p>Approved centres Organisations approved by awarding bodies to co-ordinate assessment arrangements for NVQs. Manage assessment on a day-to-day basis. Must have effective assessment practices and internal verification procedures. Must meet criteria laid down by awarding bodies and be able to provide sufficiently competent assessors and internal verifiers</p>
Who can apply for the process	There are <i>two main routes</i> , which could be referred to as formal and informal, leading to becoming a care worker. The first is that the worker already has an NVQ and the second is that they have taken an employer's induction course that complies with National Minimum Standards. Once registered, there is a six-year period for re-registration, with the condition that they will have achieved a relevant NVQ
Which standards of competencies are used	<i>National Occupational Standards for Care sector.</i> It is a nationally recognized qualification that reflects best practice based on National Occupational Standards devised by employment lead body representative of a particular area of work. In social care and social work the standards have been identified and agreed by representatives of employment

	<p>through Skills for Care and Development. NOS are characterised by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOS describe best practice by bringing together skills, knowledge and values and they are used as benchmarks for qualifications, defining job roles, staff recruitment, supervision and appraisal. • National Occupational Standards are organised into units of competence. Each 'unit' describes an area of work, with the activities separated out into 'elements' with associated performance criteria' and 'knowledge' listed. The standards also include units that highlight the 'values' required to work in care. <p>Please use the link below for a list of NOS developed by Skills for Care and Development: http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/developing_skills/National_Occupational_Standards/NOS_introduction.aspx</p> <p><i>Qualification Framework and NOS:</i> The newly developed QCF (Credit and Qualification Framework) units/qualifications that make up the new qualifications are based on current best practice in each area and reflect the latest knowledge and skills needed to work in adult social care. They have been developed in consultation with the sector and provide a benchmark for assessing learners' knowledge, understanding and skills. QCF units are units of assessment, based upon National Occupational Standards (NOS). Unlike National Occupational Standards (which are general resources), QCF units are only used for qualification purposes. For a list of units that are currently available, please refer to : http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training/newqualificationsQCF/qualifications_and_units.aspx</p> <p><i>The Common induction standards:</i> they should not be confused with the national occupational standards. The Common Induction Standards are <u>designed for people entering social care, and those changing roles or employers within adult social care. They are designed to be met within a 12 week period</u> to enable care workers to demonstrate providing high quality care and support. It provides recognition for their work, and prepares them for entry into future training and qualifications. Each standard contains a number of areas of knowledge that care workers need to know about before they can work unsupervised. Managers have a duty to ensure new staff know enough to meet the required outcomes in each knowledge area. For further info please see http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/entry_to_social_care/common_induction_standards/common_induction_standards.aspx</p>
Official definition of "competence"	The competence has been defined as the ability to perform work activities to the standards required in employment (NCVQ, 1989).
Professionals involved	<p>A number of individuals and organisations have parts to play in the assessment process</p> <p><i>Assessors</i> An experienced person in the same area of work as the candidate e. g. supervisor.</p>

Judge the evidence of a candidates performance, knowledge and understanding against the national standards.
 Decide whether the candidate has demonstrated competence
 All assessors must:

- be occupationally competent. This means that all assessors must be capable of carrying out the functions covered by the units they are assessing to the standard described within them, according to current sector practice. This experience should be credible and maintained through clearly demonstrable continuing learning and development. In due course, the implementation of regulatory requirements may mean that assessors will need to hold appropriate care/health qualifications. Awarding bodies will be notified of any changes in regulatory requirements for assessors by the appropriate regulatory bodies
- have knowledge of the health and social care settings, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice for the service (where applicable), and the requirements of national standards at the time any assessment is taking place
- hold or be working towards, an appropriate assessor qualification. Achievement of the qualification will need to be within appropriate timescales
- be able to assess holistically the values contained and embedded in the values section of the National Occupational Standards
- take the lead role in the assessment of observed candidate performance. Assessors are expected to take on this role in relation to at least the core units of the award. Where only two of the core units are undertaken, assessors are expected to observe candidate performance in relation to at least two further units. Assessors who are not yet qualified against the appropriate units, but have the necessary occupational competence and experience, can be supported by a qualified assessor who does not necessarily have the occupational expertise or experience, but must have:
 - occupational competence across some units
 - a relevant occupational background
 - an appropriate assessor qualification.

The awarding body forum will develop advice on these issues.

If more than one assessor is required, assessment needs to be coordinated. One of the assessors involved in the process will draw together all assessment decisions made by specialist assessors, and the contributions from expert witnesses across the whole qualification.

Internal verifiers

Individuals appointed by an approved centre to ensure the quality of assessment within the centre. Advise assessors and maintain the quality of assessment in a centre. Systematically sample assessments to confirm the quality and consistency of assessment decisions. The internal verifier is key to the quality assurance and verification of the assessment of performance evidence in the workplace.

Internal verifiers must:

- be occupationally knowledgeable in respect of the units they are going to verify prior to commencing the role. It is crucial that internal verifiers understand the nature and context of the assessors' work and that of their candidates due

	<p>to the critical nature of the work and the legal and other implications of the assessment process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have working knowledge of the health and social care settings, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice for the service (where applicable), and the requirements of national standards at the time any assessment is taking place • occupy a position that gives them authority and resources to coordinate the work of assessors, provide authoritative advice, call meetings as appropriate, visit and observe assessments and carry out all the other internal verification roles as defined by the relevant National Occupational Standard. • hold, or be working towards, the appropriate qualification. Achievement of the qualification must be within appropriate timescales. Internal verifiers who are not yet qualified against the appropriate units, but have the necessary occupational competence and experience, can be supported by a qualified internal verifier who does not necessarily have the particular occupational expertise or experience. <p>However, the supporting internal verifier must have relevant occupational expertise as a practitioner, manager or trainer. This can also be used as a method of supporting the accreditation of trainee internal verifiers.</p> <p><i>External verifier</i></p> <p>Individuals appointed by the awarding body to ensure that standards are being applied uniformly and consistently across all centres offering the NVQ.</p> <p>Check the quality and consistency of assessments, both within and between centres, by systematic sampling.</p> <p>The external verifier is the key link for awarding bodies in the quality assurance and verification of the assessment of candidates' performance in the workplace.</p> <p>External verifiers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be occupationally knowledgeable and have gained their knowledge through working within the sector or appropriate professional/occupational area and demonstrate updating through CPD activities • hold, or be working towards, the appropriate EV qualification. Achievement of the qualification must be within appropriate timescales • have a working knowledge of the health and social care settings, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice (where applicable) for the service, and the requirements of national standards at the time any assessment is taking place. External verifiers who are not yet qualified against the appropriate units but have the necessary occupational competence and experience, can be supported by a qualified external verifier who does not necessarily have the occupational expertise or experience. This can also be used as a method of supporting the qualification of trainee external verifiers. The standard external verification model will apply to the qualifications. Awarding bodies must require external verifiers to monitor centres' performance in accordance with QCA requirements, sampling all aspects of the qualifications' delivery. Awarding bodies will require external verifiers to take part in regular standardisation activities (with a minimum of at least once a year).
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7. Recommendations

This chapter contains a few recommendations with a view to developing common standards of competence for Personal Care Workers (PCWs) and a shared validation and certification model for the Provincial Governments of Pisa, Brescia, and Campobasso and the Employment Agency of the Bistrita-Nassaud County in Romania.

Our research study has highlighted the innumerable differences that exist between the procedures for the certification of PCWs' competences used in the various contexts considered, as well as the differing descriptions of competences to be found in the standards of competence used by those procedures. Such differences are the challenge that the "I CARE" project means to face in developing a common certification system for the local governments of partner countries, thus encouraging the transparency and transferability of qualifications and certification processes, which, in turn, support the mobility, hence the employability of European nationals.

Starting from these considerations, it seems useful to emphasise that:

1) In working out PCWs' standards of competence, it will be necessary to take into consideration the standards developed in Italy by the Regional Governments of Lombardy, Tuscany, and Molise, the Romanian National Occupational Standards (COR), as well as the standards designed within an Italian project called "Talenti di cura". As a matter of fact, the latter have been developed by comparing PCWs' standards of competence used in France and in two Italian Regions – Latium and Emilia Romagna – that are not partners of the "I CARE" Project. This will make it possible to develop a common framework of competence resulting from the standards of five – rather than the three envisaged – Italian Regions, thus strengthening its significance and value.

2) In all the standards and definitions of competence considered, the concept of tasks in which competence must be demonstrated is particularly relevant and should be taken into account in developing PCWs' standards of competence.

3) PCWs' standards of competence will have to include indicators on the performance expected of each competence, thereby enabling them to be also used as standards for the assessment and evaluation of PCWs' non-formal and informal learning.

4) In working out PCWs' standards of competence, the opinions of respondents to the field survey will be considered, namely the competences they have identified as being distinctive to the PCW profession, which have been listed in Table 2 (see Chapter 1. Methodology), with the exception of one - *assisting patients during the progression of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)* – which was

considered as a supplementary skill. It should also be noticed that the latter competence is listed in the Standard Classification of Occupations of the Lombardy Regional Government and is therefore considered as a compulsory skill for any PCW who wishes to obtain the certification of competences and qualification in that region.

5) The phases that will comprise the common model for the validation of competences should be wide ranging and include the phases envisaged in the systems already in place (Lombardy, Tuscany, and Romania). In this respect, it will be useful to refer to the suggestions contained in ISFOL's document Validation of Experiential Learning, presented on 12th December 2011 (www.librettocompetenze.it).

6) In identifying the professionals involved throughout the validation and certification process, it will be important to make a distinction between the person who will receive applicants and support them in collecting evidence (for instance, a vocational counsellor or a professional in charge of the validation process) and the person(s) who will check and assess the evidence (Assessor(s)).

7) Before starting the validation procedure, the person in charge should explain the whole process to applicants and share with them the standards of competence against which they will be assessed.

8) Each applicant's evidence may be collected in a portfolio, for this is a tool envisaged in all the certification systems analysed so far.

9) In producing and selecting the evidence to be collected in their portfolios, applicants – with the help of a vocational counsellor or the professional in charge of the validation process – should take into account the performance indicators listed in PCWs' standards of competence.

10) In order to check and assess applicants' competences, assessors should carefully analyse the evidence contained in their portfolios and should develop individualised tests for each applicant referring to the indicators listed in PCWs' standards of competence.