



Benchmarking Report of RPL System in Participating Countries

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Internet Based Business Coach for SME Managers

BENCHMARKING OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Austria – Bulgaria – Germany - Ireland - Portugal



Programa de Aprendizagem ao
Longo da Vida

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Introduction

This report was made to present the Benchmarking of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in five countries, Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland and Portugal, in order to identify best practice and opportunities for improvement of the e-learning programmes developed for NETCOACH.

The contents explored concerning to RPL are the follow:

- 1) Prior learning and formal, non-formal and informal education
- 2) Recognition of prior learning
- 3) Recognition of entrepreneurial competences
- 4) Vocational training
- 5) Certification of training institutions
- 6) Approval of training courses
- 7) Accredited trainers
- 8) E-Learning Courses
- 9) European Qualifications Framework (EFQ) for Lifelong Learning
- 10) ECVET System

In each point it is compared the position of each country, emphasizing similarities and differences between them. The information reported from Germany concerns mostly to the Federal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, especially when it comes to specific processes of recognition, because it varies from state to state.

1. Prior Learning and Formal, Non-formal and Informal Education

1.1. National Definitions of formal education, non-formal education and informal education

1.1.1. Formal Education

The concept of formal education seems to be very similar in the five countries. In all of the definitions it is included a graduated education system in educational institutions which guarantee a recognised diploma or certificate (Table 1). It usual begins in pre-scholar (ISCED¹ 0) or primary school (ISCED 1) and could end in University with a graduation (ISCED 5) or post-graduation program (ISCED 6).

Table 1

Definition of Formal Education

Austria	Formal education in Austria comprises ISCED 0 to ISCED 6 (child care facilities to doctorate) of the Austrian educational system.
Bulgaria	Formal education is delivered in structured environment (educational institution, school, VET centre) and is identified as learning activities, concerning goals, time and resources. There are set a number of unified national standards for formal education. The formal learning results in delivering diploma or certificate.
Germany	Formal education takes place in educational institutions and it leads to formally recognised Diplomas and other qualifications.
Ireland	Formal education is the process of training and developing people in knowledge, skills, mind, and character in a structured and certified program. Formal education is the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training.
Portugal	The concept of formal education is associated to the education offered by schools and universities, as institutions for teaching in the "traditional way", focused on figures of teacher and student. The formal education system integrates various stages of development (academic years), properly graded and evaluated quantitatively, these years are organised by academic disciplines and each of them are associated with general curriculum approved and recognised by relevant agencies. Up to a certain level, formal education (teaching) is required.

¹ International Standard Classification of Education

1.1.2. Non-formal Education

Non-formal Education is presented by these five countries as organised learning activities outside the formal education, usually seen as complementary (Table 2). Despite the unofficial character of the non-formal education, Bulgaria and Germany state that the learning results provided by this education can be validated or certified.

Table 2

Definition of Non-Formal Education

Austria	Non-formal education activities are learning activities outside formal education. It means organised and sustained learning activities that do not lead to a broader officially recognised education as is the rule with educational achievements in the formal education system. It can take place both within and outside educational institutions and is aimed at people of all age groups.
Bulgaria	Non-formal education is accomplished as activity organised within or outside educational institutions. It can cover programs for Lifelong Learning (LLL), skills development, work competences development, culture etc. Non-formal education is expected from the learner but is not certified with official document. Learning results can be validated and certified.
Germany	Non-formal Education takes place outside the “Mainstream System” and does usually not lead to formally recognised qualifications. In Germany, the recognition of non-formal qualifications is controlled partially by federal or state specific regulations (recognition of professional qualifications like “Master Craftsman”).
Ireland	Non-formal education is learning and training which takes place outside recognised educational institutions. Non-formal education is any organised educational activity outside the established formal system that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives.
Portugal	In recent decades, “Non-Formal Education” became a concept summary for what in the past was meant by “education outside of school”. Today we assume that the non-formal education is distinguished from formal education (or from traditional school) in terms of structure, the way it is organised and the type of recognition and qualifications, which gives this type of learning. While formal education takes place in schools, colleges and institutions of higher education have a curriculum and clearly defined rules for certification, the non-formal education is above all a social learning process, focused on the learner / student, through activities that take place outside the formal education system, usually seen as complementary. This is the approach shared by the Council of Europe, which works actively, since 30 years, to promote wider recognition and non-formal education through educational programs, seminars, research and policy.

1.1.3 Informal Education

The concept of informal education is centred on every kind of daily life experiences where it is possible to learn even spontaneously. Thus, this non-organised learning is provided by the environment and the experiences of each human being (Table 3). As the non-formal education, Bulgaria and Germany refer that the learning results can be validated or recognised.

Table 3

Informal Education

Austria	Informal education activities are learning activities outside formal education. They refer to all less structured and organised learning activities, which may take place almost anywhere, e.g. within the family, with friends or at the workplace.
Bulgaria	Informal education - self-learning is form of goal-oriented learning, that is less organised and structured and can include learning activities in family, in work environment or in the everyday activities. Learning results from the self-learning can be validated and certified.
Germany	Informal Education takes place permanently during day-to-day life, and it is – contrary to the formal and non-formal Education – not necessarily intended. It happens that the learner is not aware of himself acquiring new competences. The responsibility for recognition, however, is mostly left to the respective universities.
Ireland	Informal education can be defined as the learning that goes on in daily life. Informal education is the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment - from family and <i>neighbours</i> , from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media.
Portugal	Informal education, instead, can be defined as everything we've learned more or less spontaneously from the environment we live: the people with whom we interact informally, the books we read or the television we see, the multiplicity of experiences we live every day, with more or less learning intentions. Informal education is not necessarily organised or even oriented. Somehow, informal education is intertwined with the process of socialization of individuals.

1.2. Common Understanding of Prior Learning in each Country

Prior Learning is described as the individual skills and knowledge acquired in formal, non-formal or informal education, i.e., in daily life experiences, as job experience, for example, or organised learning activities (Table 4). This concept is recognised for its

potential in promoting Lifelong Learning's and, so, we could say that Prior Learning and Lifelong Learning are deeply related. The Commission of the European Communities, in "the proposal for a decision of the European parliament and of the council establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning" defined this concept as "all general education, vocational education and training, non-formal education and informal learning undertaken throughout life, resulting in an improvement in knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective"². Although, in the context of the principle of lifelong learning, identification and validation of non-formal and informal aim to make visible and appreciate the full range of knowledge and skills held by a person, regardless of where or how were acquired. The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning take place inside and outside the formal education and training, in the workplace and in civil society³.

Table 4

Prior Learning definition

Austria	Prior Learning is defined by an individual's skills and knowledge within the context of a specific qualification, irrespective of how and when they have been acquired. Skills and knowledge can be acquired by means of various informal learning opportunities, for example informal training, on-the-job experience, life experience or short courses. In Austria prior learning is mainly referred to concerning access to institutions of higher education.
Bulgaria	There is not provided any official definition of prior learning, but it is considered as form of non-formal learning and informal (self-learning). In the strategy of LLL development, it is noticed that one of the future activities will include actions for identifying models validating learning outcomes for in-formal learning.
Germany	Prior Learning is regarded as a generic expression that provides for credit points if there is proof that learning has taken place "anytime" in the past. The competences may have been acquired by self-studying, by experiences made at the workplace or during ones leisure time, that is, by any form of learning (formal, non-formal or informal learning).
Ireland	Recognition of Prior learning refers to the process of recognition of the knowledge, skills and competence an individual learner already has howsoever acquired. It is a relatively new concept in education and training in Ireland and is recognised as essential to the promotion of lifelong learning.

² COM (2004) 474 final, 2004, pp. 19

³ Conselho da União Europeia [Council of the European Union], 2004: 9600/04, pp. 2

The common understanding of Prior Learning is knowledge which one already has, and that can serve as a beginning step for learning something new. However In Portugal we do not use the words "Prior Learning". To designate the learning acquired throughout life we use the terms non-formal education or informal education or, sometimes, talents, abilities. More recently to designate this "Prior Learning" the term "skills" became widespread in the official discourse and in the media, and is used to express the knowledge that people have, coupled with the ability to implement this knowledge, these skills can be acquired through schools (formal education) or through life (non-formal and informal education).

2. Recognition of Prior Learning

The recognition of Prior Learning is something relatively recent in the most of the countries. When the five countries presented in this report were asked for the existence of "a well-structured process of recognition of Prior Learning", two of them answered no (Figure 1).

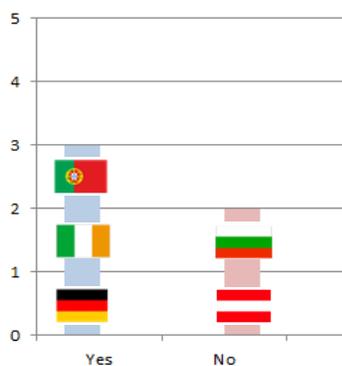


Figure 1

Existence of a well-structured process of RPL

However, it does not mean that the recognition of Prior Learning does not exist. In fact, Bulgaria did not mention a previous process, but recently the Ministry of Education for 2011 has the priority to develop models for validation of competences, acquired through informal education and self-learning. Austria does not have a unified guideline for the recognition of prior learning and it depends of the Institution which is recognising and in Germany the recognition varies from state to state but it is legally established. In Ireland and Portugal, there is a formal institution responsible for the recognition and certification (Appendix 1).

In table 5, data concerning to process of recognition of Prior Learning are compiled.

Table 5

Process of recognition of Prior Learning

	Austria	Bulgaria	Germany	Ireland	Portugal
Recognition	✓		✓	✓	✓
Well-structured process			✓	✓	✓
Standardised process				✓	✓
Institution responsible	Vary		Vary	FETAC	ANQ
Legislation starting	2007	2011*	2005	1999	2001
Recognition starting	2007		2009	2005	2001

* In Bulgaria there is the priority to develop models of recognition in 2011

3. Recognition of Entrepreneurial Competences

The recognition of entrepreneurial competences does not exist in four of the countries covered in this report (Figure 2). Only Germany has a specific procedure related to the recognition of prior learning for entrepreneurs or businessmen. In this country, as stated above about general process of recognition, there is no unified guideline for the recognition of professional performance. The evaluation of these competences and skills in order to get admitted by a university is done on a purely formal basis: the recognition of the times of relevant professional employment and the recognition of mandatory professional degrees. The switch from the test study to the regular study depends on the subjective evaluation of the university representatives.

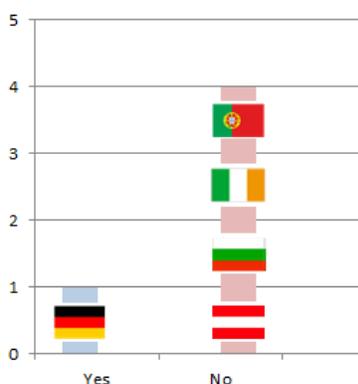


Figure 2

4. Vocational Training

Vocational Training is being a priority for Europe since the beginning of this century. The discussion about this issue started formally in 2000 and in 2002 the Copenhagen declaration set up as goal “to develop a common reference framework of quality criteria and descriptors in VET supported by the establishment of a network on quality assurance in VET”⁴.

Accordingly, it is expected that the five countries analysed present compatible conditions to provide certification of training, supporting the efforts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). In table 6 it is possible to see that all the countries in this report have a certified training institution, school or university and training courses previously approved as conditions to provide certification for training. Only in Austria the trainers does not have to be accredited.

In Germany there are specific requirements concerning to Chambers’ role in the process of certification. The only certificates that are recognised are issued by chambers and the vocational qualifications certified by any Chamber of Industry and Commerce are recognised nationwide. Educational institutions may run their own courses, but the final exams are always given by a chamber and the rules are set by them. After passing the exam, a certificate is issued.

Table 6

Conditions to provide certification for training

	Austria	Bulgaria	Germany	Ireland	Portugal
To be a School, University or a Certified Training Institution	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓*
To offer training courses previously approved	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

⁴ Cedefop - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2011). *Vocational education and training is good for you: The social benefits of VET for individuals*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. In http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5517_en.pdf

	Universities	Institutions			Universities
	Institutions				Institutions
Teachers certification		✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality Monitoring System	ISO 9001	NAVET	Government	NFQ	DGERT
Infrastructures		✓	✓		✓
Learning Environment		✓	✓		✓
Approved Learning Programmes		✓	✓	✓	✓
Management Structure		✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessible by everyone			✓		
Learners assessment and protection				✓	✓

In Bulgaria the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is the body responsible to assure and maintain the quality of training institutions. To be certified by this body, the institution need to have teachers with its diplomas, appropriate educational infrastructures and approved learning programmes.

In Germany the educational institutions need governmental approval and the institutions should guarantee the skills and competences of the staff; the existence of a quality management system; a system for labour market analysis; the commitment with the labour market policy and the economic development; the highest possible integration of the participants; and the cooperation with external specialist. In this country, schools and universities need an official certification with different criteria that are fully described in Appendix 2. The criteria concerns to quality of the University, Courses and Teachers.

Like Germany, Ireland also has two different kinds of certification, one concerning to further education and vocational training (FETAC – Further Education and Training Awards Council), and other to higher education (HETAC - The Higher Education and Training Awards Council) which correspond to a different criteria needed to gain certification. To the lower levels of education and training, FETAC establish a well-documented criteria (Table 19) concerning to the communication processes between staff and learners, equality, staff characteristics, learning recognition, programmes and assessment. To be a certified training institution by HETAC, a several requirements are

needed, namely the location of the institution, financial standing, legal status, learning promotion and programmes assessment.⁵

In Portugal, the training institutions provide a certification to the trainees that attended the course, it can have a quantitative or qualitative classification but it does not confer an academic degree. The training institution must obtain certification by the DGERT (Directorate General for Employment and Labour Relations) if it is not a school or university. The institutions should submit an application with evidences of their actions and practices of organization development and training. They are evaluated concerning to the quality of the staff, programmes, internal and external assessment, financial capacity and internal organization⁶.

5.2. Costs of certification process

The certification process presented some costs in the different countries. In Table 8 it is possible to analyse the costs for each process.

⁵ Policy on Registration of Providers (2008). *In* <http://www.hetac.ie/docs/Policy%20regarding%20New%20Providers%20of%20HETAC%20Awards.pdf>

⁶ Portaria nº 851/2010 *in* <http://www.iapmei.pt/iapmei-leg-03.php?lei=7859>

Table 8

Costs of certification process

Austria	?
Bulgaria	About €2500
Germany	May be different from state to state: €450 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern State Registration Process in FETAC: do not have fee for registration
Ireland	Registration Process in HETAC: €3500 Validation of individual programmes: €7500 each programme. Certification up to 3 areas of education and training: €500 For each area of education and training beyond 3: €150
Portugal	Requests for extension to other areas of education and training: €150 per area Requests for transfer of certification: €200 Maintenance Audits: €750

5.3. Institution responsible for certifying awards offered through the NETCOACH course

The institutions responsible for the certification of the awards offered through the NETCOACH course are presented in table 9.

Table 9

Institutions responsible for certifying awards offered through the NETCOACH course

Austria	There is no such organization.
Bulgaria	VET Centres or Centres for additional qualification and certification within universities, like the Centre for Educational Services within Sofia University.
Germany	Chambers of Industry and commerce and certain professional associations.
Ireland	FETAC (award 1-6) and HETAC (award 6-10).
Portugal	New Opportunities Centre (award 1-5) and University, namely the University of the Algarve through the ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (> 5)

In Bulgaria, Ireland and Portugal the process is well-structured and it facilitates the certification process of the NETCOACH courses.

In Bulgaria the Centre for Educational Services (CES) contemplates parallel and continuing education, specialization and new qualification of learners.

In Ireland and Portugal the proceeds depends of the kind of certification. In Ireland, the levels below the higher education can be certificated by a FETAC's registered provider, while higher education certification should be made by a HETAC registered provider.

In Portugal there are two options: 1) the course is offered by a training institution or by the University as a course that will not confer an academic degree; 2) the course can be included in an existent course in the University and being considered a module, credited with ECTS. In this case the NETCOACH platform must have a process of qualifying the acquired competencies. After that, the certificate obtained (if the trainee/student fulfilled the minimum classification required), can be examined by the Scientific Council of the University, which will transform this qualification in ECTS.

There are certain requirements to be observed that the training made through the site may be valid and certified. It is not enough to offer content, even if very relevant and useful, well prepared and easily accessible. The content must be accompanied by on-line mentoring and the platform must have also a mechanism to make a classified assessment of competencies (evaluation tests). One makes the evaluation tests (provided on line) and will obtain a given classification, which can be quantitative or qualitative.

In Germany, only the chambers of industry and commerce, and also certain professional associations are responsible for the courses certification. The process is quite long and is achieved by embedding in recognised formal training which may difficult the process.

In Austria, there is not an official institution to provide the certification. The complete description of each institution and process could be found in appendix 2.

6. Approval of training courses

In the countries analysed, only Austria does not have a specific regulation to approve training courses. In the other four countries, there is a well-established documentation for issue of licence (Appendix 3). In Ireland there is a General Programme Validation

Template that should be used for the approval of training courses, accompanied by a proposed programme schedule with the contents identified on table 10. In Portugal, for a NQF award 1-8 any certified training provider can offer courses in the areas in which they obtained certification without submitting it to a superior approval. For High Education courses, it is necessary a specific application where the course is described and analysed.

The process of certification may have some costs in the case of Germany (between €10 000 and €15 000), Ireland (varies) and Portugal(€2300).

Table 10

Contents that must to be attached to get the approval of training courses (when it is necessary).

	Bulgaria	Germany	Ireland	Portugal
Target Group Description of course clients and its needs	✓	✓	✓	
Teaching Hours Lectures and practical exercises	✓	✓		✓
Courses Aims and Objectives Educational objectives	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prerequisites Preliminary learning (knowledge and skills)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Curriculum	✓	✓		✓
Course Schedule	✓	✓	✓	✓

Comentário [L1]: Germany:
All mentioned contents is required when applying for a course approval
Please tick all boxes in the table!

Comentário [L2]: I checked the boxes. Although I still can't write anything about it because I have no data.

Topics and Problems of any of the lections	✓	✓	✓
Literature References for literature issues	✓	✓	✓
Programme assessment strategy		✓	✓
Module Assessment strategies		✓	✓
Teachers Competences		✓	✓
Infrastructures		✓	✓
Critical Self-Assessment		✓	✓

7. Accredited Trainers

Accredited trainers are needed in Austria, Bulgaria and Portugal (Figure 3).

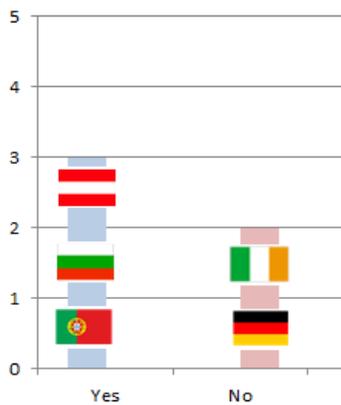


Figure 3

To need accredited trainers

In Ireland and Germany, trainers could be teachers or other professional with a recognised experience in the field they are teaching. In Germany, the certification of a provider of training courses is not unified by a law or by regulations. There are possibilities to gain a certificate as a qualified training in certain fields through certification courses offered by the chamber of industry and commerce, thus.

In Austria, Bulgaria and Portugal the trainers have to attend a training course and other particular specifications (Table 11).

Accordingly, in Austria, the accreditation of trainers obeys the OENORM EN ISO/IEC 17024 and they have to attend a training course, prepare a thesis and to take a final exam. In Bulgaria, the teacher qualification is acquired after following certain requirements for theory training (methodology, psychology, ICT and others) and teaching practice in school (about 30 hours of effective learning). After acquiring tertiary level education, interested persons can acquire teaching qualification as special qualification. In Portugal, to be an accredited trainer a person need to have a certificate of professional aptitude (CAP), obtained through the frequency of a course in Pedagogical Training of Trainers (lasting at least 90h and approved by the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training); or through having an academic degree in Pedagogics or Educational Sciences that entitles them to exercise the role of trainer.

Table 11

Criteria to accredit trainers

	Austria	Bulgaria	Germany	Ireland	Portugal
Attend a training course	✓	✓			✓
Prepare a thesis	✓				
Take a final exam	✓				
Teaching Practice		✓			
Academic Degree in Pedagogy / Educational Sciences					✓
Costs	€2000				Around €400 (not referent to the Academic Degree)

8. E-learning courses

The specificity of e-learning courses make some countries have particular procedures in them recognition. In the five countries analysed, only Germany has a specific procedure for that kind of courses (Figure 4).

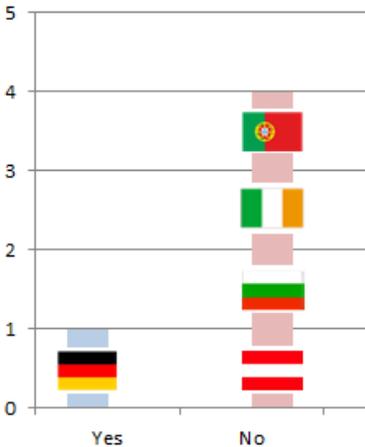


Figure 4

To have a specific procedure for e-learning courses

The “Staatliche Zentralstelle für Fernunterricht” (ZFU) [Governmental Central Body for Distance Learning] was established the 16th of February, 1978 on the basis of a state treaty which was modified the 4th December, 1991. It is valid for all states of the Federal Republic of Germany. The ZFU is responsible for the protection of distance learning students according to the “Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz” (FernUSG) (Protectional Law about Distance Learning). The ZFU responsibilities are described in table 12. Specific legislation about this issue could be consulted in <http://bundesrecht.juris.de/fernusg/index.html> (Protectional law about distance - 1976).

Table 12

The ZFU responsibilities concerning e-learning

1. decides about permission or non-permission of all distance learning courses which need to be approved according to the law. Without such approval no distance learning course, as defined in the law, may be sold or even advertised;
2. usually evaluates every three years the continuity of the prerequisites that are necessary for keeping the permission to offer distance learning courses;
3. decides about the permission of significant changes of approved distance learning courses;
4. publishes in cooperation with the BIBB the yearly “Advisor for Distance learning” which contains general information and an indexed directory of all approved distance learning courses.
5. publishes a yearly official bulletin that contains a list of all distance learning courses that

have been approved according to §12 of the FernUSG, lists of hobby- and additional courses and a list of all distance learning providers together with additional information;

6. offers information and compiles short descriptions of all distance learning courses that are under the jurisdiction of the law;
 7. observes and promotes the development of distance learning in Germany;
 8. advises the states about topics that affect distance learning.
-

The cost of this process can vary. The range is between 30 and 200 percent of the course sales price. There is also a minimum charge for the recognition of each course from 200 euro up to 950 Euro. Example: LiNK has developed an e-Learning course and wants to launch it on the training market. One license costs 590 Euro. The recognition according to the law (200% from the license fee) is 1180 Euro. Another course license costs 120 Euro. For this LiNK has to pay the minimum charge of 950 Euro.

9. European Qualifications Framework (EFQ) for Lifelong Learning

The European Qualifications Framework (EFQ) aims to compare the qualification system between European countries. With the EFQ it is possible to compare and relate formal, non-formal and informal learning through a system of recognition of knowledge, skills and competences in eight different levels of qualification. The EFQ is a voluntary process and it cannot award qualification, but it can be done by each European country independently.⁷

This comparison between formal/non-formal systems and the standardization of qualification will benefit Lifelong Learning and mobility in Europe, ensuring that knowledge, skills, and competences will be understandable and consequentially there should be a better integration of foreigners' workers.

Concerning to the countries analysed in this report, just Bulgaria does not had already adopted the European recommendation on the establishment of the EFQ for lifelong learning (Figure 5).

⁷ European Parliament Council (2008). Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning. *In* <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>

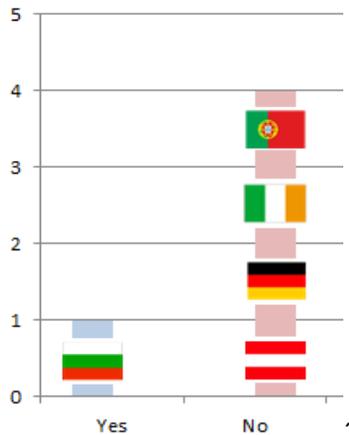


Figure 5

Adoption of the European Qualifications Framework

The other four countries adopted the EQF but the implementation differs between them. In Austria and Portugal the works started in 2007 and the political paper was accepted in 2009. The Austrian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) decides to award both formal and non-formal education, but the processes are conducted separately. In Portugal, the Quadro Nacional de Qualificações (QNQ) [National Qualifications Framework] is being implemented with some initiatives like the Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades [New Opportunities Initiative] where those already in the labour market without a full upper-secondary education can get their informal education recognised through complement it with training courses (National System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences – RVCC) (Table 13).

In Germany, it was adopted the Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen (DQR) [Qualification framework for lifelong learning] in 2010 that award eight different levels referring to professional and personal competences. The pilot experiment of one year was not evaluated yet but this country hopes to covers all fields of education (Table 13). The complete information about the process of the EQF adoption is in Appendix 4.

Table 13

Process of adoption of European Qualifications Framework

	Austria	Germany	Ireland	Portugal
Body responsible	NQF	DRQ		QNQ
Implementation year	2009	2010		2009
To have 8 levels of qualification	✓	✓		✓
Award non-formal/informal education	✓	✓		✓

10. ECVET System

Commission outlines European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) as a methodological framework used to describe qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes with associated credit points. ECVET is a system of accumulation and transfer of units, designed for education and training in Europe. Allows you to validate and recognize the results of learning made in different contexts, whether acquired in other countries either through informal or non-formal tracks.

Learning outcomes can be transferred to the context of the person with a view to its accumulation and to obtain a qualification.

The diversity of national systems that define the contents and levels of qualification does not provide the transnational mobility of trainees. ECVET will remedy this situation, facilitating student mobility throughout Europe.

Member States are free to adopt this recommendation and implement this system. They are invited, in a voluntary way, gradually to adopt measures for the use of ECVET from 2012.

ECVET is one of many initiatives to promote European mobility of students within the European Union (EU) as well as, for example, the Europass and the European Quality Charter for Mobility.

ECVET is also a supplement to the European Credit Transfer System and Accumulation of Credits (ECTS) by linking education and training and higher education. Created in 1989, the ECTS has facilitated transparency and recognition of study periods abroad.

The purpose of ECVET is to facilitate credit transfer learning from one system to another qualification. It differs from the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which is a common frame of reference. ECVET should lead to the compatibility of systems and not to their harmonization an interface between the existing national provisions for the accumulation, recognition and transfer of credit units.

ECVET does not apply to mutual recognition of professional qualifications, regulated by a directive that imposes binding obligations on Member States.

Due to importance that mobility had assumed in European Union, the ECVET is a measure which aims to have great impact to compare and recognize people knowledge. However the complexity of the non-formal system, like training courses, and the specificity of each country turn the implementation of ECVET more difficult and challenging.

Accordingly, the countries analysed, even those who have the process running (Figure 6), did not have the ECVET included in the educational system.

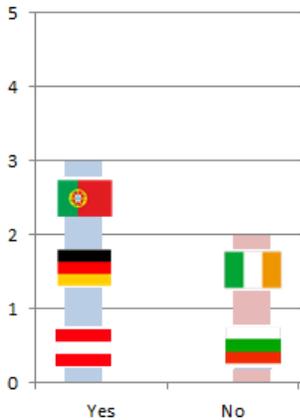


Figure 6
Adoption of the ECVET system

Austria and Germany seems to be the countries with a better progression concerning this issue. These countries are conducting pilot programs in order to adjust ECVET to their own educational system. In Portugal there was a national public consultation between October 2006 and March 2007, bringing as conclusion the benefits of the implementation of the ECVET system. However, since then there are no further developments (Table 14). Further information about the ECVET system in each country could be read on Appendix 5.

Table 14
ECVET system Implementation

	Austria	Bulgaria	Germany	Ireland	Portugal
Consultation Process	2006		2008		2006
National Legislation					
Pilot Initiatives	✓		✓		
Implementation					

Conclusion

This report intended to compare the certification opportunities for the e-learning courses developed for NETCOACH through the exploration of the particular framework present in five countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland and Portugal.

The conceptualization of the ideas involved in this process, namely the formal, non-formal, informal education and prior learning, is similar between the countries analysed. However concerning to the certification opportunities itself the framework differ and each country has particular specification.

Austria and Bulgaria does not have a well-structured process of prior learning recognition and in Germany the process is not unified between states. So, just Portugal and Ireland have a well-documented process with a legal institution responsible for this issue. This is, for sure, a measure that could facilitate the implementation of RPL policies.

However, only Germany recognises entrepreneurial competences; but even there the process is complex. There is a lake in these five countries in recognition of entrepreneurial competences to certificate it in a consistent way.

Concerning to the conditions needed to provide certification, all the countries must have particular institutions (could be a school or university or even a certified institution) to offer training courses previously approved and to have accredited trainers. Only in Austria there is no necessity of accredited trainers. The process of certification is different, though, and it is extremely connected with a presence of a legal institution responsible for RPL. In Ireland and Portugal the approval of the courses that will certify awards offered through the NETCOACH is easier, especially for those courses under the university level. In Bulgaria, the process is not difficult, but in Germany could be complex, due the situation of variety between States. In Austria there is no particular organization and there isn't also a specific regulation to the approval. The process of trainers' accreditation is easy in the most of the countries, and in Germany and Ireland any person with recognised experience in the field they want to teach could be a trainer. The only problem respecting this issue could be in Austria, since the process seems to be more complex and prolonged.

The e-learning courses do not have a specific regulation, with the exception here for Germany which has a particular legislation that should be attend.

Comentário [L3]: Please confirm

Just Bulgaria did not adopt yet the European Qualification Framework. In the other countries the process is running and Austria and Portugal implemented it with some initiatives to stimulate Lifelong Learning.

Finally, the ECVET system seems to be more difficult to implement and in the three countries that already adopted the system, just Germany and Austria started to implement pilot projects in order to adjust it to the educational system. The projects are being assessed and the conclusions will come out in 2012 in a seminar.

To implement the ECVET system in the NETCOACH courses it is recommended a specification of the learning outcomes and the hours that will be necessary to achieve it. This should be stated in a basis of complexity, scope and volume of knowledge concerning to the skills and competences necessary to get the entire qualification.⁸

⁸ Be-Twin (2010). ECVET-ECTS: Building bridges and overcoming differences. *In* <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/>

Appendix 1

Process of Recognition of Prior Learning

Austria

In Austria prior learning is handled differently at different levels of higher education. There have been some efforts to make the system more flexible, particularly with some evening schools trying to develop more flexible programmes and some efforts to recognise foreign occupational certificates and experience (Source: Grubb, W.N.: Lifelong Learning In Austria: The View from OECD, Bad Ischl, 2007)

Austria, where formal programmes like apprenticeship training have a strong tradition and where the focus has always been on curricula rather than on learning outcomes, still lacks established schemes for the recognition of prior learning.

For example, graduates of a vocational school or apprenticeship training can complete a special VET diploma (Berufsreifeprüfung) to gain access to all fields of higher education. They can also complete a higher education entrance examination (Studienberechtigungsprüfung) that provides access restricted to specific subjects or subject areas at the university. Parallel to the apprenticeship, apprentices can also attend preparation courses for the special VET diploma and take the exams within a short time period. These parallel courses will be offered free of charge to all apprentices having started in 2008.

Access to universities of applied sciences is possible for persons with “relevant professional experiences”, even if they do not hold an upper secondary school leaving exam. The corresponding law (Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz) uses the phrase “relevant professional experience”. In practice the phrase mostly applies to graduates of vocational schools or apprenticeships with a certain amount of professional experience.

Quotas determine how many persons with or without a Reifeprüfung gain access to universities of applied sciences. Even though this should improve the situation for persons without the exam, in some cases this can be a disadvantage: this group has relatively more applicants, but they can only be accepted according to the quotas.

Several universities of applied sciences offer preparation programmes for apprentices or persons in forepersons courses specifically designed to provide access to these institutions.

As mentioned previously, VET college graduates can start in relevant study programmes in their second or third semester at universities of applied sciences. At universities they can, on an individual basis, have their certificates accredited for exemption for examination. In some cases, cooperating VET colleges and universities offer both blanket exemptions for graduates of certain VET colleges as well as individual exemptions. The extent of exemptions varies depending on the institutions.

According to the relevant law (Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz § 12 Abs. 2 Z6), accreditation of prior learning should be possible at universities of applied sciences. However, these legal regulations are rather general, so different programmes accredit different amounts of subjects of semesters. Graduates from vocational colleges can, for example, start in the second semester in one university of applied sciences but another university of applied sciences starts them in the third semester. Accreditation is also handled differently in various courses of study. Even at the same institution, some courses of study have precise definitions of what can be accredited; in others accreditations are based on individual agreements.

Information on accreditation and access is insufficient. For example, there is no overview on what subjects or how many semesters are accredited for graduates of certain schools. Information can only be obtained from the individual degree programmes and accreditation is often handled for the individual cases (Source: Tutschner, R., Wittig, W. and Rami, J.: Accreditation of Vocational Learning Outcomes: Perspectives for a European Transfer, ITB-Forschungsberichte 43/2009, May 2009). In table 15 it is possible to analyze the national legislation for RPL in Austria.

Table 15

National Legislation for prior learning recognition process in Austria

Legislative Act and year	Government bodies, Subject and URL
§ 4 Fachhochschul-Studiengesetz (Fachhochschul Studies Act) (2007)	Regulation of access to universities of applied sciences http://www.bmwf.gv.at/startseite/hochschulen/universitaeten/gesetze/organisationsrecht/fhstg/

§ 12 (2) of the
Fachhochschul Studies
Act (2007)

Requirements for accrediting courses of study and exemptions permitted from particular classes because of knowledge, skills and competences acquired in VET

<http://www.bmwf.gv.at/startseite/hochschulen/universitaeten/gesetze/organisationsrecht/fhstg/>

Bulgaria

It is mentioned in the strategy for LLL that further activities are foreseen to investigate how to validate non-formal education and self-learning. Moreover, as one of the goals of Ministry of Education for 2011 is the priority to develop models for validation of competences, acquired through informal education and self-learning. It is approved that in 2011 there should be further developed legislation framework and clear system for validation and certification of the outcomes and learning results – knowledge, skills and competences from informal and self-learning.

Germany

The formal possibilities of having learning results recognised in Germany that have been acquired outside the universities vary from State to State (*“Bundesland”*).

Usually, this means the recognition of further training courses, that are not part of the degree programs of universities. They might nevertheless be offered at universities.

The Federal Department of Education and Research, the Conference of the Secretaries of Educations and Arts (*Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK)*) and the Conference of the University Rectors have advised the universities in September 2003, that up to 50% of the contents of any course of study that might have been acquired outside of universities should be recognised, if the necessary conditions are met.

Unfortunately, there is no further explanation of these conditions; it is only mentioned that the recognition should be processed by taking credit points into account.

According to the latest documentation of the Conference of the Secretaries of Educations and Arts (KMK) there are about 30 different regulations in the 16 States. By

recognising prior learning and informal learning, access to the universities or access to the entrance tests of the universities is granted. At some universities the recognition even grants the right to immediately progress into a higher semester.

There are also procedures for the recognition of lower levels of qualifications. These procedures vary from federal state to federal state. So a lot of legislation exists. One additional point to consider is the situation before the reunion in 1989. Qualifications received in the former state GDR had to be checked. Both German states had different school and educational training systems and followed by these different systems of degrees as well as different qualifications for a profession existed. The unification of both systems is finished.

The recognition of qualification is also in the hand of federal state legislation. Each ministry of education legislates rules that apply for this federal state. But in general it is verified that a training qualification for a certain profession (e.g. for a skilled worker) is accepted in all federal states.

For example, in the Federal State Mecklenburg-Vorpommern there are three ways of recognition:

1. Recognition of (higher) school graduation based on a completed vocational education (example: secondary school level 1 certificate exist, a vocational education finished; in order to start a study at a university the higher education entrance qualification is needed – this can be recognised on application);
2. Recognition of foreign school graduations;
3. Recognition of foreign vocational education certificates.

The recognition of a training qualification is only possible by the professional education system. For example, gaining recognition by collecting practical skills and experiences is not possible. Attending a vocational school and passing an exam is mandatory for the skilled worker level.

Ireland

FETAC promotes the recognition of prior learning through quality assured providers in relation to a) entry to programmes, b) exemptions from programme requirements, and c) eligibility for a full award within the framework of qualifications.

As part of their quality assurance agreements all providers are required to have arrangements in place with regard to entry/access and credit/exemptions in relation to all programmes. However, FETAC acknowledges that not all providers are in a position to facilitate learners to achieve an award through RPL.

Following the publication of its policy FETAC devised a set of guidelines to support providers in the facilitation of recognition of prior learning and undertook a pilot project to assess and evaluate the implementation of RPL. During the pilot some 50 learners achieved FETAC awards and a small number of providers now have policies and procedures in place to facilitate learners achieve awards through the recognition of prior learning. An evaluation of the pilot project was completed in 2007. The findings indicated that offering RPL for awards was very resource intensive and would require providers and their respective funding agencies to build capacity to offer RPL to learners with regard to awards.

Recognition of Prior Learning for the purposes of achieving an award requires providers (training institutions, agencies, etc.) to put in place a rigorous quality process to ensure the achievement of standards and maintain the credibility of FETAC awards (Figure 7). Not all providers will have the capacity or the resources to do so.

Provider Registration & Programme Quality Assurance

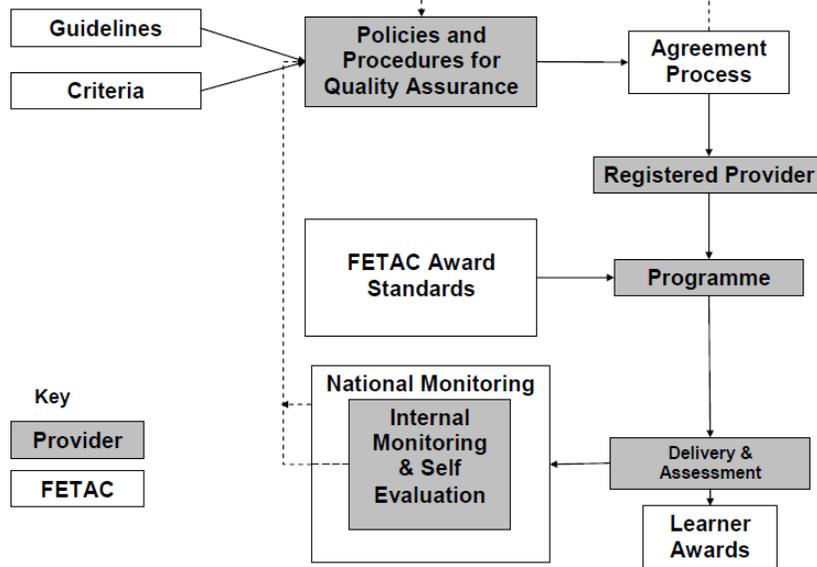


Figure 7

Provider Registration and Programme Quality Assurance Process in Ireland

In this context FETAC's role is to put in place the appropriate quality assured arrangements and procedures to ensure that providers who have the competence, capability and resources to do so, can enable learners to achieve awards through the recognition of prior learning. The arrangements will include an approval process and criteria for approval. Registered providers who wish to offer RPL for the purposes of achieving a FETAC award will be required to submit and agree an additional sub strand of quality assurance for their RPL process. This new sub-strand will relate specifically to the Recognition of Prior Learning for the purpose of achieving an award.

In table 16 it is possible to analyse the national legislation for prior learning recognition process in Ireland⁹.

Table 16

National Legislation for prior learning recognition process in Ireland

Legislative Act and year	Government bodies, Subject and URL
FETAC RPL Policy and Guidelines V2 30/09/09. (2009)	Update of policies related to recognition of prior learning and guidelines for providers (version 2) http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/documents/RPL_Policy_and_Guidelines.pdf
FETAC RPL Policy and Guidelines V1 04/05. (2005)	Development of guidelines for providers to support the implementation of the policy concerning recognition of prior learning (version 1). http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/documents/RPL_Policy_and_Guidelines.pdf
Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 (1999)	Set out the functions of FETAC and two of them are specifically related to recognition of prior learning. http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/documents/RPL_Policy_and_Guidelines.pdf

Portugal

The National Association for Qualifications (ANQ) is the statutory body for coordinating the implementation of policies on education and vocational training for youth and adults and ensures the development and management of the System of Recognition, Validation and Certification, assuming a leading role in the fulfilment of goals set by the New Opportunities Initiative.

⁹ The Information reported on table 16 was added based on information collected in the website www.fetac.ie

The New Opportunities Centres Network and the National Catalogue of Qualifications are instruments of this strategy.

The process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) increases the level of academic qualification (RVCC School) and vocational qualification (RVCC Pro) of the adult population, through the enhancement of the learning achieved outside the system of education or training.

The processes of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) are always developed in the New Opportunities Centres and are based on a set of methodological assumptions [ie Balance Skills, Approach (Auto) biography] that allow the disclosure of previously acquired skills by candidates throughout life in formal, informal and non-formal ways, and in which they developed the construction of a Learning's Portfolio guided by a Reference to Key Competencies (see www.catalogo.anq.gov.pt). The certification obtained through this process allows personal, social and professional valuing and also makes possible further study / training.). In table 17 it is possible to analyze the national legislation for prior learning recognition process in Portugal.

Table 17

National Legislation for prior learning recognition process in Portugal

Legislative Act and year	Government bodies, Subject and URL
Ordinance No. 978/2011, Official Gazette 8, Series II, 12 th January. (2011)	Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education Characterisation of the skill levels of the National Qualification Framework (NQF). http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ordinance No. 612/2010, Official Gazette 149, Series I, 3 rd August. (2010)	Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Family Education Adopting the standard certificates and diplomas obtained in connection with the qualification of adults and provides that the issuance of those certificates and diplomas must be done through the Information System and Management of Supply and Education (SIGO). http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ordinance No. 537/2010, Official Gazette 138, Series I,	Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education Creates the Seal of qualifying firm, designed to recognize companies and other private-sector employers who invest in the qualification of

19 th July. (2010)	their employees. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	
Ordinance No. 475/2010, Official Gazette 131, Series I, 8 th July (2010)	Adopting the model for the book personal skills and regulates the content and process of registration in the legal regime of the National Qualifications System, approved by Decree-Law No. 396/2007 of 31 st December. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity	
Ordinance No. 474/2010, Official Gazette 131, Series I, 8 th July. (2010)	Establishes the model certificate of vocational training within the National Qualifications System is intended to ensure the successful completion of a certified training program not included in the Catalogue of National Qualifications. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	
Ordinance No. 851/2010, Official Gazette 173, Series I, 9 th June. (2010)	Regulates the system of certification of training providers under paragraph 2 of Article 16. Decree-Law No. 396/2007 of 31 December http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	
Ordinance n ^o 73/2010, Official Gazette 24, Série I, 4th February. (2008)	Creates the Commission for Monitoring the New Opportunities Initiative and the National Qualifications System and defines its composition, powers and general operating rules.
Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity, Education and Science, Technology and Higher Education	
Ordinance No. 781/2009, Official Gazette 141, Series I, 23 rd July (2009)	Establishes the structure and organization of the National Qualifications Catalogue. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	
Ordinance No. 370/2008, Official Gazette 98, Series I, 21 st May (2008)	Regulates the establishment and operation of the New Opportunities Centres. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	
Order No. 1356/2008, Official Gazette 93, Series II, 14 th May (2008)	Adopts the initial version of the National Qualifications Catalogue. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1

Decree-Law 396/2007, 31st December. (2007)	Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	This decree-law establishes the legal regime of the National Qualifications System and defines the structures that ensure the operation of the system.	http://dre.pt/pdf1sdip/2007/12/25100/0916509173.pdf
Decree-Law No. 276-C/2007, 31 st July. (2007)	Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education	Defines the mission and tasks of the National Agency for Qualifications.	http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ordinance No. 256/2005, Official Gazette 53, Series IB, 16 th March. (2005)	Ministry of Economic Activities and Labour	Approves the update of the National Classification of Fields of Education and Training. Repealing Ordinance No. 316/2001, of April 2.	http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1
Ordinance No. 1 082-A/2001, Official Gazette 206, Series IB, 5 th September. (2001)	Ministries of Education and Labour and Social Solidarity	Create a National Network for Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies (RVCC), from which it promotes the System of Recognition, Validation and Certification. Regulates the accreditation process of the promoters of the Centres.	http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx?access=1

Appendix 2

Process of Training Institutions' Certification

Austria

Schools: Schulorganisationsgesetz [school organisation law]

Universities: Universitätsorganisationsgesetz [University organisation law]

Training organisations might be ISO 9001 certified [ISO 9001 - further education]

The Netcoach Course – certification of awards

Concerning to Netcoach course, there is no organisation to be responsible for certifying awards in Austria.

Bulgaria

There is a complex legislation for inauguration and accreditation of educational institutions on the territory of republic of Bulgaria. There are admitted both public and private educational institutions for any of the educational levels – primary, secondary and tertiary education. Usually to gain official status for delivering national recognised diploma for formal learning, any educational institution has to respond on different criteria, including management structure, quality monitoring system, appropriate infrastructure, appropriate learning environment, approved learning programs and specific number of employed qualified teachers/lecturers. In order to be accredited, the institution has to present for approval learning plans and learning content and courses.

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is specialised body to the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria established with the Law for the Vocational Education and Training in 2000. Its missions are to assure and maintain quality in the vocational education and training of young people and adults according to the labour market needs and the development of the Bulgarian economy competitiveness.

The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training provide licences for 2 types of VET centres:

- Centre for vocational training – CVT: The licence entitles the centre to provide and certify vocational training of unemployed and the employed over the age of 16 with acquiring a vocational qualification degree or qualification in a part of a profession.

- Centre for information and vocational guidance – CIVG: The licence entitles the centre to provide and certify vocational information, consultations and guidance to young people and adults belonging to different target groups.

The Licence is issued on demand from legal or natural persons by the concept of the Commercial Law. The application form is submitted together with all the documents required by the Code of regulations for the activities of NAVET.

In order to acquire a VET licence, any educational institution need to certify its management structure, appropriate learning infrastructure, learning plans, corresponding to national requirements for any profession, teaching staff (certifications), internal management procedures.

So in order to have licence for any profession category, a VET centre must provide documentation for approval for any course according to national standards and professional requirements, a list with its trainers and teaching staff (with its diploma), evidences for appropriate educational infrastructure.

The Netcoach Course – certification of awards

The Netcoach course can be offered and delivered by VET centres or Centres for additional qualification and certification within universities, like the Centre for Educational Services within Sofia University.

Centre for Educational Services (CES) is a service oriented unit of Sofia University, according to Article 25, Paragraph 3 of the Law of Higher Education and according to Article 8, Paragraph 1 of Sofia University Statutes. Its organization and management are in compliance with the Centre of Educational Services Statutes.

The main goal of the CES is to ensure the necessary organizational and methodological conditions for parallel and continuing education, specialization and new qualification of learners from various spheres of social practice.

The CES has maintained its reputation for nearly thirty years through its open and flexible system in both learning formats and curriculum contents. Taking courses aimed at further specialization and qualification gives the trainees greatly improved compatibility at the labour market and increases their chances for better employment.

The characteristic feature of the instructional process at the CES is our guiding principle: "Wide entrance–Free choice–Narrow exit!". Instruction is organised into modules in several qualification defined in the Centre's legal documents. More than 20 lecture cycles are open to the learners each year: one-term, two-term and four-term programmes for further qualification are organised in several modules (Computer Technologies, Information Technologies, Communication, Management, and International Relations).

Learners who take successfully their courses at the Centre receive a certificate which complies with the established state requirements. The Centre also offers enrollment for taking the exam for receiving

Germany

The following conditions for the recognition as an institution for further education must be met:

1. Nature, scope and duration of the further education event, the composition of the curriculum and the teaching methods, the staff, equipment and facilities have to be in a suitable condition to secure the success of the educational work. Successful further education events must already have taken place.

2. The institution has to be managed by a person whose education and/or professional experience qualifies her or him for the job which usually has to be a full time position.

3. The further education events have principally to be accessible by everyone.

4. The participation of the pedagogic staff in planning and execution of the further education events has to be secured.

5. There must be a sufficient number of professionally and pedagogically qualified teachers and their own professional further education has to be secured.

6. Existing laws have to be abided by.

7. Nature, scope and content of the events must not collide with the Basic Law (*Constitution*) of the Federal Republic of Germany and the value system defined in the Constitution of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

In Germany, the educational institutions need governmental approval. In the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, this approval is granted by the Department of Education, Science and Culture of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. It is a requirement for courses, according to the Law about the Exemption for Education, it assists with the issue of education vouchers and it helps with applications for projects and public money. This is the case for all training bodies that offer courses for vocational training.

The certification is not mandatory but it is mostly aspired among the training bodies because very often such a certificate is the required for courses funded by labour offices and public bodies. Training institutions which want to get certified have to fulfil criteria according to the law of accreditation and approval published in 2004 (last modification 2007). This law describes the requirements which have to be fulfilled by a training provider. After the procedure of successful recognition the training provider is allowed carrying the name affix "State-approved institution of further training". The list of criteria each have to be reached by the training provider is long and the duration of the whole process takes up to one year. Responsible for the procedure are the ministries of education in the federal states.

The applicant has to provide a documentation which describes the competence and ability and which shows a process of quality assurance in the organisation. All these information is summarised in a quality *handbook* which is the official application form. The training provider has to provide documentation about:

- Proof of skills and competencies of the whole staff;
- Proof of efficiency (management and operating figures, financial data);
- Proof of an existing quality management system and how this system is constantly used and developed further;
- Proof of a system for labour market analysis;
- Show how labour market policy and the economic development are considered in training offers;
- Show how training offers secure the highest possible integration of the participants in the labour market;

- Show the attendance working to cooperate with external specialists. Training institutions, network partners;

- Describe goals and mission of the company;

State-approved institutions of further training are able to provide courses for labour offices and can apply for public funds. Schools and universities need an official certification. The criteria for universities are explained underneath.

Officially recognised awards one can only gain at universities, chambers of industry and commerce, chambers of craftsmen and associations of certain professions (e.g. chamber of tax consultants). Certificates offered by training providers do not have the significance like certificates gained at chambers and the other above mentioned organisations. It can be seen as a confirmation of participation in a course.

The criteria for the recognition of universities are set in the diverse state regulations. The criteria for the recognition of universities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are set out in Part 13 of the State Law about Universities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The following conditions have to be met:

1. The institution has to carry out functions according to § 3;

2. A majority of courses of studies that can be completed either parallel or successively has to exist or has to be planned either at the institution itself or as part of a network with other educational institutions. This prerequisite can be waived, if the establishment of multiple courses of studies is not suggested by the scientific development or the professional field of activity;

3. The study has to be oriented according to the objectives mentioned in §§ 5 and 28;

4. The study and the degrees based on the regulations for studies and examination and the real existing courses have to be equal to the studies and degrees of state operated universities;

5. The applicants for a university place have to fulfil the prerequisites for admittance at a corresponding state operated university;

6. The full time teaching staff has to fulfil the same prerequisites as established at state operated universities for the same job;

7. The members of the university have to participate in the design of the study in a way that supports the implementation of the principles of this law;

8. Measures have to be undertaken that secure the enduring existence of the institution and the economic and legal position of the university staff. To achieve this, a bank guarantee or a comparable security has to be produced in order to make sure that the matriculated students can finish their studies;

9. The courses of studies have to be accredited by independent, science-oriented Institutions and these accreditations have to be renewed on a regular basis. The concept for the foundation of the university has to have been audited by an independent, science-oriented Institution.

Legislative act could be consulted on table 18

Table 18

National Legislation for certification of Training Institutions in Germany

Legislative Act and year	Government bodies, Subject and URL
Landeshochschulgesetz - LHG M-V [State University Law of M-V] (2002)	http://mv.juris.de/mv/gesamt/HSchulG_MV_2002.htm#HSchulG_MV_2002_G25

The Netcoach Course – certification of awards

In Germany, only the chambers of industry and commerce and certain professional associations are responsible for the certification of courses, the certification of which is recognised nationwide as well as in Europe. Certificates of educational institutions are only formal and cannot substitute for the state-recognised degrees of the chambers and associations unless the educational measure ends with an exam given by the chambers.

The process of certification is quite long and is achieved by embedding in recognised formal training

Ireland

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) provides a way to compare qualifications, and to ensure that they are quality assured and recognised at home and abroad.

The NFQ is underpinned by legislation. This legislation established three new bodies: The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has responsibility for leading the development and implementation of the NFQ; FETAC (The Further Education and Training Awards Council) makes awards at NFQ Levels 1 to 6; and HETAC (The Higher Education and Training Awards Council) makes awards at NFQ Levels 6 to 10. Awards (qualifications) made within schools, universities and Dublin Institute of Technology are included in the NFQ (Figure 8).

Vocational Qualifications are also included in the NFQ and Level 6 qualification 'Advanced Certificate is usually vocationally specific, e.g. Advance Certificate – Electrical'.

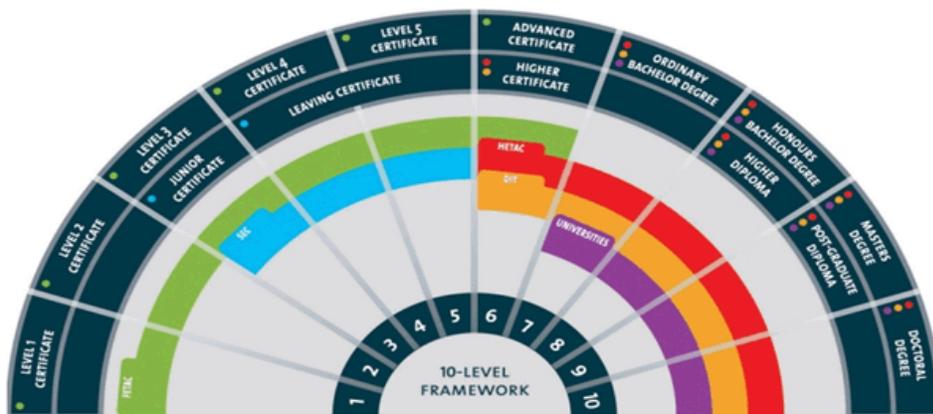


Figure 8

Process of certification at different framework levels' (1-10)

FETAC is an awarding body, one of whose functions is to make and promote awards. FETAC creates awards and makes them available to providers, who then develop programmes leading to these awards. The first step towards offering a programme accredited by FETAC is to become a registered provider (table 19). This

will then give you access to the suite of awards already being made by FETAC. In time, FETAC will develop standards for awards in new areas.

Table 19

Policies and procedures to be established by a provider applying for registration with FETAC

Policy Title	Processes to address
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication with learners - Communication with staff - Communication with other stakeholders
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equality training - Equality planning
Staff Recruitment and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff recruitment and allocation - Staff induction - Staff development
Access, Transfer and Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information provision - Learner entry arrangements - Recognition of prior learning - Facilitating diversity
Programme Development, Delivery and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need identification - Programme design - Programme approval - Programme planning - Programme delivery - Learners records - Provision and maintenance of resources - Health & Safety - Review Cycle of existing programmes
Fair and Consistent Assessment of Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated planning - Information to learners - Security - Reasonable accommodation - Consistency between assessors - Assessment performed by external parties - Consistency with national standards - Feedback to learners - Learner Appeals
Protection for Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cessation of Programme
Sub-contracting/ Procuring Programme Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selection of second provider - Contract arrangements - Reporting arrangements - Monitoring arrangements
Self Evaluation of Programmes and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assignment of responsibility - Frequency - Range - Learner involvement - Selection of external evaluator - Methodology

The Qualifications Act, 1999 provides the legislative imperative for the establishment of provider quality assurance. It assigns specific roles to FETAC and to the provider as follows: A provider shall *'establish procedures for quality assurance for the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training provided, organised or procured by that provider... and shall agree those procedures with the Council'* [S 18 (1)]. FETAC shall *'monitor and evaluate the quality of programmes of education and training in respect of which awards are made or recognised'* [S 14 (1) d].

In practical terms this means:

- It is the responsibility of the provider to establish procedures to quality assure its programmes.
- It is the responsibility of FETAC to agree the procedures with the provider as being fit for purpose and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation.

The Act, with the exception of the procedure for self-evaluation of programmes, does not specify what procedures a provider should establish. Informed by national and international best practice and a comprehensive consultation process, FETAC has developed a common framework for quality assurance which sets out all the procedures which a provider should establish in order to achieve FETAC agreement.

FETAC will use the information supplied in the application to evaluate the provider's quality assurance policies for the purpose of arriving at agreement. In carrying out the evaluation the following criteria will be applied:

1. Descriptor

The descriptor must show that the provider has:

- developed and documented each of the policies listed above which are relevant to the provider;
- developed and documented procedure(s) to implement each policy;
- Identified the method(s) of internal monitoring for all relevant procedures;
- identified the form(s) of evidence which should be available to show that the procedures have been implemented effectively;

- identified any procedures not relevant to its context and explained why this is so;

2. Supporting Documentation

In addition to the descriptor, the following documents are to be included in the application for agreement:

- An Organisation Chart showing the structures of the provider.
- A list of the separately managed centre(s) which comprise the provider.
- The provider's Policy and Procedures on Assessment of Learners and Protection for Learners
- Self-evaluation of Programmes and Services
- A signed checklist verifying that the application is complete and accurate.

The registration through quality assurance agreement process will take a minimum of 12 weeks, from receipt by FETAC of a provider's application.

On December 8th, 2008 the Council of HETAC approved a new policy on Registration of Providers and a new Registration Procedure establishing principles and processes in respect of Provider Registration. In summary Registration as a HETAC Registered Provider is the successful outcome of a six stage process, the last four steps of which are managed by HETAC:

- Institution makes enquiry and subsequently meets with HETAC staff for information and general guidance.
- Institution submits an Application Form (Word Format), Application Form (PDF Format) with application fees.
- Determination of basic eligibility, via documentary assessment and associated site visit.
- General Application Evaluation for Institutional Approval following the submission of a self-evaluation report and a quality assurance policy & procedure manual. A site visit will occur. A Guideline on the creation of a Quality Assurance Manual is available here. In the completion of your Quality Assurance Manual, you may

find this checklist helpful in assessing if you have covered all required areas. The European Standards and Guidelines is also a very important document in this context.

- Accreditation (to be interpreted to mean validation) of a programme of education or training. The guidelines and templates used for the submission associated with this part of the process are the same as the guidelines and templates used by a registered HETAC provider seeking accreditation of a new programme. A very useful document with excellent guidance on the concepts underpinning the preparation of programmes is HETAC's Assessment and Standards document.

- Decision by Council.

As a registered provider of HETAC awards the organisation can then apply to validate additional programmes.

The Netcoach Course – certification of awards

For any NQF award 1-6 the award is by FETAC, and the process for certification is easier.

If the award is above a Higher Certificate the award will have to be made by a HETAC registered provider. A number of relevant bodies are registered who could be approached with the proposition.

Portugal

It is not mandatory to be a certified training provider but it is strongly recommended. In Portugal nearly all training units try to become certified. The approval as an officially recognised training provider is important to take part in public tenders as well as to get funds from public bodies for training activities.

Any organization that wants to make certified training (if not a school or university) must obtain certification by the DGERT (Directorate General for Employment and Labour Relations).

The certification process has two stages, involving the training entity and DGERT: initial certification and maintenance of certification.

For the 'initial certification', the organization submits an application for certification by organizing a body of evidence of their actions and practices of organization development and training, demonstrating compliance with the benchmark of quality concerning several aspects: human resources (management structure, certified teaches and coordinator), infrastructures, learning programmes, learning strategies and goals and learners assessment.

This request is subject to a technical evaluation, which can only be basic or supplemented by documentary audit, which focuses on the skills and capabilities demonstrated by the organization to develop training in the areas of education and training required.

After the decision, DGERT ensures dissemination of the approved organization through the database of accredited / certified.

For the 'maintenance of certification' the approved organization shall, at any time, keep the conditions that sustained the award of certification, as well as the duties associated with this recognition.

Once the certification has no expiration date associated with the maintenance implies that the practices and resources of the training are subject to regular review.

This evaluation will be done by DGERT by conducting audits of the training institute, which focus on the verification of compliance with the requirements and obligations of certification and provide an opportunity to encourage continuous improvement of their practices. After the audit, the DGERT issues a technical report on the maintenance of certification or the possibility of their withdrawal and ensures dissemination of the various situations.

Schools and universities can provide training without having to make the certification process. The legislation about this issue could be consulted on table 20.

Legislative Act and year	Government bodies, Subject and URL
Order No. 1196/2010 of 24 th November (2010)	This law establishes the amount, timing and method of payment of fees payable for the initial certification of training providers, certification of that extension to other areas
Ordinance No. 851/2010, of 6 th September (2010)	Regulates the system of certification of training providers http://www.iapmei.pt/iapmei-leg-03.php?lei=7859

The Netcoach Course – certification of awards

For any NQF award 1-5, any New Opportunities Centre can certify awards offered through NETCOACH course.

If the award is above a Higher Certificate the award will have to be offered by a University or other High Education provider. The University of Algarve can certify the course through the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (**ECTS**). In this case the NETCOACH course has to be submitted to the Scientific Council for approval.

1. One of the concerns of the University in the next two years will be to *certify and to credit the competencies acquired in diversified ways* (no matter how: through e-learning, non formal education, daily life,...). This is an ambitious challenge that should be done in a correct way and demands rigour and quality in order to maintain the Higher Education Standards. This will mean that all the documents certifying competencies should be examined.
2. Given this precondition it is not enough to say that we made the module x; we must have a process of qualifying the acquired competencies. After that, the certificate obtained (if the person fulfilled the minimum classification required), can be examined by the Scientific Council of the University, which will transform this qualification in ECTS.
3. There are certain requirements to be observed that the training made through the site may be valid and certified. It is not enough to offer content, even if very relevant and useful, well prepared and easily accessible. The content must be accompanied by on-line mentoring and the platform must have also a mechanism to make a classified assessment of competencies (evaluation tests).

4. One makes the evaluation tests (provided on line) and will obtain a given classification, which can be quantitative or qualitative. This classification can be expressed in ECVETs. From January 2012 will be implemented, in the EU, the ECVET system. Will there be a way to transfer ECTS to ECVETs and vice versa. - *In the framework of the project – WP5 - We should study the European Framework of Qualifications and the European legislation on ECVETS to build a scale based on the European ECVETs model.*
5. Having performed the evaluation tests and obtained a given classification, the person will receive a certificate of competence, with the classification expressed in ECVETS. Then, if he/she wishes, may request the Scientific Council of the University to examine the certificate and make the equivalence of ECVETs in ECTS.
6. Ideally, this whole process should be done online through the platform. The certification would thus be made by the platform, in parallel, because it is a specific accreditation. And so the process would be faster.
7. This implies that the Platform Development (WP2) should include a mechanism that allows the student to ask, via online, certification and accreditation of skills to the Scientific Council of the University.

Appendix 3

Process of Training Institutions' Certification

Austria

No information

Bulgaria

In order to approve a course or educational program in any VET center, it needs to present specific documentation for issue of licence. This documentation include learning plans, learning documentation and learning program.

For example for **Center for Educational Services within Sofia University**, it has to be presented and approved according to educational institution procedures. It should be presented on department level and on faculty academic council level, along with its documentation for reference.

As part of the documentation, there should be identified the following requisites:

- Target group – description of course clients, its needs
- Teaching hours – lectures and practical exercises
- Course aims and objectives
- Prerequisites – preliminary learning
- Curriculum
- Course schedule
- Topics and problems of any of the lectures
- Literature – references for literature issues;

These requirements will be in force to approve Netcoach course/s for University Centres for specialised training.

Germany

For Universities:

In Germany, the Accreditation Advisory Council was established the 8th of December, 1998. Its task is to evaluate and accredit agencies that themselves accredit courses of studies leading to the degrees of Bachelor and Master. These degrees are extensively introduced in the frame of the so called Bologna-process. Those agencies and the accredited courses of studies carry the quality seal of the Accreditation Advisory Council after they have been successfully evaluated.

For education providers:

Recognition of courses according to the Federal Law of Exemptions for Educational Purposes.

An application has to be submitted to the State Office for Health and Social Affairs (Body for the administration of financial means coming from the European Social Funds). This recognition is only valid for courses of common and political education. Professional education is not recognised.

Institutions of professional further education conduct measures, the recognition of which can only be done in the framework of the chambers. At the end of a course the participants take part in an exam according to the regulations of the chambers and they receive their certificates.

Professional associations (those of educators or tax advisors, for example) issue state recognised degrees as well.

Ireland

The General Programme Validation Process with HETAC is as follows:

1. Preparing, describing and presenting the new programme:

An application for validation must supply a detailed description of the programme, its context, its educational objectives and its target learners and their characteristics. The General Programme Validation Template should be used for this

purpose. The description should be accompanied by a Proposed Programme Schedule. The programme assessment strategy and module assessment strategies must also be provided.

The proposed programme's target learners should be identified. The prerequisite learning (knowledge, skill and competence) should be specified along with any other assumptions concerning the target learners (e.g. adult learners, part-time learners, international students, learners who are preparing for entry into a particular profession). The minimum intended programme learning outcomes must be clear, unambiguous and consistent with the relevant Awards Standards.

If the proposed programme is transnational HETAC should be consulted at an early stage in planning.

In summary the following shall be provided:

- Proposed Programme Schedule
- Programme Information supplied using the General Programme Validation

Template this includes:

- Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes
- Profile of the Proposed Programme's Target Learners
- Programme Assessment Strategy
- Module Assessment Strategies

- (Critical) Self-assessment Report

- Consortium Agreement(s) (when applicable)
- Any additional/specific quality assurance procedures required for the programme

2. Submission of an application

Six printed copies of the application together with an electronic version should be sent to the Director of Academic Affairs at HETAC. Applications must be accompanied by the appropriate fee. The current schedule of fees is available on the HETAC website.

3. Processing of applications

Applications will be processed in accordance with the seven-step process set out in HETAC's Core Validation Policy and Criteria.

Timeline: The targeted timescale for completion of the validation process is twenty weeks from the date of acknowledgement of the submission document.

Portugal

For a NQF award 1-8, any certified training provider can offer courses, in the areas in which they obtained certification, without submitting it to a superior approval.

For High Education courses, the procedure is the following:

The accreditation procedure is initiated upon request signed by the leader of the Higher Education institution concerned. After submitting the request is communicated to the institution of higher education concerned the identification number of the process.

If the request does not meet the requirements, the Higher Education Institution is invited to address the deficiencies within 10 days.

The formulation of an application for accreditation involves the automatic opening of an assessment procedure, having as its object the course of study to which the accreditation procedure. The decision on accreditation is based on the evaluation report.

A favorable decision authorizes the entry into operation of the accredited course of study and recognition of the degree to which it leads. Accreditation lasts for a period of five years.

Each procedure for accreditation, review, revision and renewal of accreditation has fees.

If the higher education institution concerned intends to keep running the courses of study accredited, must apply for renewal of accreditation by the end of the academic year preceding that in which there is a lapse in accreditation.

However, are not yet legally defined criteria for evaluating the quality of higher education in distance learning modality. Therefore, A3es (Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education) will not at this stage, accredit such specific courses.

The legislative act concerning this issue could be consulted on table 21

Table 21

National Legislation for approval of training courses

Legislative Act and year	Government bodies, Subject and URL
Regulation No. 504/2009 - Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education (2009)	This regulation governs the procedures for evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions and their courses of study. http://www.a3es.pt/sites/default/files/Regulamento_n_504_2009.pdf
Decree-Law No 74/2006 of 24 March (2006)	This legislation approves the legal regime degrees and diplomas of higher education. http://www.a3es.pt/

Appendix 4

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for Lifelong Learning

Austria

Work on the Austrian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) began in 2007 with a series of scientific analyses of the Austrian qualification. The work led to the compilation of an NQF background paper which was subject to an Austrian-wide consultation in the first half of 2008. This paper addressed the most important questions regarding the implementation of an NQF. The response of more than 270 stakeholder institutions showed the variety of opinions on this subject matter. Towards the end of 2009 a political paper was accepted by the Austrian Ministerial Council that laid down the following NQF structure and basic characteristics:

- The Austrian NQF will comprise eight levels, with levels 6 to 8 being divided into a “Bologna-strand” and into a “non-Bologna-strand”. Bachelor-, Master and PhD-degrees will be classified on the basis of the Dublin descriptors, while qualifications outside the Bologna architecture will follow the NQF descriptors.
- The EQF descriptors will form the basis for the classification of qualifications to the Austrian NQF. Austria will not develop its own descriptors but rather provide explanations/details/specifications to the EQF descriptors from the perspective of the Austrian qualification landscape. These explanations should make the EQF descriptors more “tangible” and should facilitate the classification.
- The Austrian NQF will focus on transparency (of the qualification system) and orientation and will not be an instrument of regulation. That means that there will be no entitlements linked with a level of classification of a qualification – neither in terms of access to qualifications placed on higher levels, nor in terms of salary classification.
- All qualifications – irrespective of the focus and the learning context – will be classified to the NQF. Due to the complexity of the NQF development process and the fact that different ministries, departments and stakeholders need to be involved it was decided to work on the “formal qualification area” (comprising qualifications that are based on legal regulations, i.e. laws, directives, etc.) and the “non-formal qualification area” separately. Although, for qualifications from both areas, the same classifications

principles will apply in the end, the starting situation, regarding stakeholders in charge and governance principles, differs.

- Classification in the NQF is voluntary. For a qualification to be placed on the NQF it is necessary that the authority that governs this qualification applies for it.

The acceptance of the political paper marked the “official” beginning of the NQF development process. Key actors in this process are the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (BMUKK) and the Ministry of Science and Research. These ministries head the so-called NQF Steering Group, in which members of all ministries, the social partners and the Laender are represented. This 23-person committee decides on all important aspects of the NQF such as the Austrian specification to the EQF descriptors, the NQF governance structure, the classification process, etc.

Source: EQF Newsletter, October 2010.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria didn't start the process yet.

Germany

The German “Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen (DQR)” (*qualification framework for lifelong learning*) was adopted the 10th November 2010 by the “Arbeitskreis Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen” (*Working Circle of German Qualification Frameworks*).

The framework describes 8 different levels referring to:

- Professional competences
 - Knowledge
 - Skills
- Personal competences
 - Social competences
 - Independence

The DQR is an Instrument for the classification of qualifications according to their value, as they are described in the regulations for professional education, for example. The classification is achieved by ranking the qualifications according to eight

different levels, whereas level 1 is the lowest and level eight is the highest. This way, the DQR is oriented according to the structure of the European Qualification framework, that is, the eight levels of the DQR correspond to the eight levels of the EQF. The DQF was evaluated during a pilot experiment of one year. Now the objective is to create a DQR that covers all fields and that is suitable in practice. The process has apparently not yet been accomplished.

Ireland

HETAC is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and is currently included on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

Three purposes of RPL are set out in the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland's Policies, Actions and Procedures for Access, Transfer and Progression (October 2003) as being:

- 1 - entry to a programme leading to an award
- 2 - credit towards an award or exemption from some programme requirements
- 3 - eligibility for a full award

Much of the focus of RPL at institutional level in Higher Education and Training is on the accreditation of prior certificated learning.

While RPL for access, credit/exemptions is generally practiced, the concept of giving full awards on the basis of RPL is a relatively new one for Ireland. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 states that learners may seek awards directly from HETAC or FETAC without having participated in specific programmes.

Providers who offer programmes leading to HETAC awards have a responsibility to facilitate RPL for learners. The providers include the Institutes of Technology, private colleges and others including the Garda College and Military College. Most Institutes of Technology have adopted or are operating RPL based on HETAC policy and the national RPL policy and guidelines.

Following consultation with stakeholders, FETAC agreed its policy on RPL in 2005. The policy aims to support the implementation of RPL by registered providers by ensuring that learners with prior learning can gain access and/or exemptions within programmes and full awards as appropriate.

In relation to learners directly accessing FETAC awards on the basis of RPL, FETAC policy states that providers have responsibility for this but that they must be specifically quality assured to offer RPL for awards. Where an individual makes a direct application to FETAC for an award on the basis of prior learning FETAC plans to refer the individual to an appropriate provider for assessment and support where appropriate.

Providers offering programmes leading to FETAC awards are responsible for the facilitation of learners through RPL for access to programmes and exemptions from/credit for programme requirements.

The individual universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology, which are autonomous awarding bodies as well as providers, are each responsible for RPL in their respective areas. In drafting the national principles and guidelines on RPL above, the Authority requested that each University or Institute would consider these principles and guidelines in developing their own procedures. In this context and that of facilitating access, transfer and progression in general, DIT has put in place a framework for RPL. In the universities, the purpose of RPL is limited to entry to programmes, credit towards/exemptions from programme requirements. To the extent that RPL occurs, it is generally not regarded as a core activity for institutions. That activity tends to be localised in particular centres or Departments.

Note: Some professional bodies apply RPL. For example, Engineers Ireland uses RPL as a regular instrument, to assess applicants for membership. In 2007 109 persons asked to be assessed, of which 78 were admitted to the procedure and 36 were awarded the title they were pursuing, after completion of the RPL procedure.

Portugal

There have been a number of policies and initiatives developed for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Comprehensive national systems for validation are in place and have engaged many people, especially since the introduction of the *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades* (New Opportunities Initiative) This initiative gives a new opportunity to all those already in the labour market without full upper-secondary education. It operates through adult education and training courses, and the national system of recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC).

A comprehensive national framework of qualifications (NFQ) (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações*, QNQ) is being implemented in Portugal.

The development work started in 2007, when the Decree Law No 396/2007 was adopted as a legal basis for the development of the Portuguese qualifications framework.

In March 2007, an agreement was signed between the Government and the social partners on the following key elements to support development and the implementation of the NQF:

a) a National Agency for Qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Education was established in 2007;

b) a national qualifications catalogue was created in 2007. Based on learning outcomes, this is a central reference tool for VET provisions. The catalogue currently lists 254 qualifications for 40 areas. It defines for each qualification an occupational profile, a training referential (that awards double certification of education level and vocational qualification level) and a recognition, validation and certification of competences referential;

c) further development of a system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning (taking forward the existing national system of recognition, validation and certification of competences) will incorporate it into NQF. The validation system will refer to the qualification standards in the national catalogue, both to 'educational' competences (nine or twelve years of school) and 'occupational' competences.

The Ordinance No. 782/2009 of 23 July law regulates the National Qualifications Framework and defines the descriptors for the characterization of national qualification levels.

Are equally valued skills obtained through formal, non-formal and informal channels and the National Qualifications Framework enables comparison of these skills, regardless of how they were acquired.

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) provides a way to compare qualifications, and to ensure that they are quality assureds and recognised at home and abroad.

The National Qualifications Framework covers the teaching primary, secondary and higher education, vocational training and the processes of recognition, validation and certification skills obtained by non-formal and informal education developed within the National Qualifications System.

Appendix 5

ECVET System

Austria

A consultation process among Austrian ministries, the social partners, training institutions, the Austrian Rectors` Conference and the FH Council has taken place in 2006. Austria wants to create a European ECVET, not an Austrian ECVET.

The state of the art is the following:

- Recognition of parts of education abroad to a large extent
- With a school visit between five months and one year abroad (in a country with foreign language) the next grade can be attended.
- Recognition of internships in Austria and abroad.

A systematic application of ECVET is restricted to transnational mobility. Pilot initiatives to promote the permeability of the Austrian system are ongoing.

The distribution of tasks is as follows:

1) Ministries and other central bodies:

- Review of legal framework
- Total score for various forms of education (on the basis of 60 points per year)
- Information and consulting
- Support of pilot projects

2) Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture:

- Promotion of descriptions oriented towards learning results (NQF, standards, new curricula)
- Promotion of long-term mobility in vocational training
- ECVET and Europass

- Provision of a guide and of accompanying instruments (learners agreement, transcript of records) together with the European Commission

3) Schools and training institutions:

- Partnership agreements and memoranda of understanding
- Definition of units and allocation of points expressing the relative importance of a unit
- Mobility measures
- Recognition of credit points gained abroad (mutual trust)

Bulgaria

Bulgaria didn't start yet the implementation process of the ECVET system.

Germany

Even though there is no real implementation of ECVET so far, some initial pilot measures are taking place.

The pilot initiative DECVET (duration: still until June 2012)

DECVET is perfectly tailored for the German education system. At the moment it is testing models for the recognition of competences at the interfaces of the German vocational education system. During the process, core elements of the ECVET like results-oriented learning units and credit points are examined and the particularities of the national vocational system are considered.

The model-like evaluation of a credit point system is being carried out at the interfaces of the dual system (2008-2012):

1. Professional preparation – professional education
2. Fulltime at school – dual professional education
3. Among professions in a group of professions
4. First education – further education

Objectives:

- Description and separation of the learning units
- Validation/Certification of learning results/partial qualifications (who gives the exams? Auditing workload?)
- Development of a system of credit points

The pilot initiative of the Federal Department for Education and Research contributes in different ways to the reformation of vocational education in Germany. It considers European guidelines and suggestions and is actively involved in the discussion about educational politics and scientific discussion about the reform. The current debate's objective is the creation of more permeability and transparency with the help of a credit point system for the recognition of learning efforts. It is meant to cover the vertically-situated parts and the horizontally-arranged partial fields of education. This prerequisite is being implemented by the DECVET-Initiative and its system of credit points.

Ireland

Ireland didn't start yet the implementation process of the ECVET system.

Portugal

In Portugal, between October 2006 and March 2007, there was a National Public Consultation process for the creation of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training System (ECVET).

The results of the consultation process focused on the benefits of the implementation of the ECVET system in Portugal.

It was concluded that in view of the transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning acquired throughout life, from a perspective of cooperation and mutual trust between Member States, the system favors the recognition of learning outcomes (independent of having been obtained in formal settings, no formal or informal) and established itself as an engine of mobility, in that it can boost the active search for education and training.

Equally important is the relationship between ECVET and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and actual needs of the labor market, as well as its promotion and ownership by all stakeholders of education and training.

The report embodying the results of the National Consultation was sent on March 30, 2007 for the European Commission.

There are no further developments.