Kunsill Malti għall-Kwalifiki
Malta Qualifications Council

VOLUME
4

VALUING ALL LEARNING

Frameworks for the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta

A Working Document
prepared by the
Malta Qualifications Council

April 2008

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The Malta Qualifications Council is composed of Charles Mizzi as Chairman, Felix Borg, Anthony DeGiovanni, Vince Farrugia, Veronica Grech, Grace Grima, John Jones, Charmaine Portelli and Emmanuel Zahra as Members.

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Lifelong learning Programme

EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES AGENCY
AĠENZIJA PROGRAMMI TA' L-UNJONI EWROPEA

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Executive Summary

Malta's greatest resource is its own people. The 2007 progress report of the National Reform Programme identifies the priority of promoting 'flexible pathways and certification of formal and non-formal qualifications/skills aimed primarily at adult learners and at motivating lifelong learning so as to ensure a flexible, adaptive and employable workforce'[1]. This document is in response to this assertion and in recognition of informal and non-formal learning experiences that characterise the profile of the Maltese workforce but which remains invisible to official validation, accreditation and Malta's National Qualifications Framework.

Literature about formal, informal and non-formal education stems from different branches of study and a review is provided by Colley et al[2]. The Cedefop glossary[3] defines the core concepts of formal, informal and non-formal education as follows:

Formal learning consists of learning that occurs within an organised and structured context and may lead to formal recognition (diploma, certificate); Non-formal learning consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designed as learning, but which contain an important learning element; Informal learning is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure, often referred to as experiential learning, and can to a degree, be understood as accidental learning.

This document proposes the term **Validation** as the core concept covering activities spanning from identification via assessment to recognition of learning outcomes in informal and non-formal contexts. Three dimensions[4] of validation are highlighted: reference to learning outcomes; standards against which assessment take place; and the process of how learning outcomes are validated. Assessment in validation is presented as having two distinct perspectives and fulfils two important requirements: summative and formative assessment. Recognition plays an important part of the whole validation process: formal recognition through the award of certificates or the grant of equivalence, credit units, validation of gained competences; and/or social recognition by economic and social stakeholders.

The Lisbon strategy is the driving force for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning across Europe and at national level. The European process involves mainly the work done by the high level expert group on informal and non-formal learning within the Education and Training programme 2010. The major outcomes included a set of Common European principles in 2004 and draft guidelines for the validation process in 2007. This document also reviews a number of systems across Europe. Also included is a review of the range of invisible learning that exists in Maltese society. Invisible learning is identified within the following contexts: the family; the socio-cultural, religious and political; youth-related organisations; as well as direct work experiences. What transpires is that Malta is indeed a learning society and therefore in expecting Malta's labour workforce to be competitive in a global economy, it is necessary that such learning no longer remains invisible (with little or no recognized value) but is made visible (it is given recognized added-value).

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1 Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, (2007), Malta's National Reform: Annual Progress report 2007 pg. 59.
2 Colley H, HodkinsonP. &Malcolm J. (2002) Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain. A consultation report http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm
3 Cedefop, Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe, Tissot, P., 2004.
4 Colardyn, D. & Bjornavold J., (2005) The Learning Continuity: European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning: National Policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP Panorama series: 117, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

It is thus one of the country's major challenges to make invisible learning visible. Learning can only be made visible through the process of validation which provides learners with certification of the learning that they have acquired in different ways: informal and non-formal. Validation of invisible learning should enable learners to enter the National Qualifications Framework and subsequently to continue their lifelong-learning path. The validation process should have clear and specific objectives which need to be made clear to all key players from the start.

There is so far no legislation which regulates the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta.

The first step towards implementing a framework is therefore legislation. Legislation needs to specify the role that the Malta Qualifications Council is to take up as regulator in the validation process. It is also important to identify where such 'other' learning takes place. The main purposes of the validation process are: to gain access to education and training institutions; to obtain exemption from units of education and training courses; and to gain full certification. It is important to highlight that the processes being put forward are to have two main assessment aims: formative and summative assessment.

Validation of invisible learning should be based on various forms of assessment including portfolio; interviews; simulations, EUROPASS cv etc. The Malta Qualifications Council intends to develop a system through which it can ensure that standards and guidelines are respected through internal and external verifiers. Citizens must be empowered to realize the benefits of such a process of validation; authorities must ensure that structures are legitimate, credible, transparent and in a learning process in themselves.

The credibility and the legitimacy that such process provides to learners can help Malta maintain, develop and improve its competitive edge as a country where all workers are officially recognized as learners within a framework of qualifications for lifelong learning.

Preface

The Hon Dolores Cristina
Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

A country's workforce is a nations' economic backbone

Before education was institutionalised as it is today, learning occurred through informal and non-formal experiences. But even when societies created formal structures of learning such as schools, universities, colleges and other educational institutions, informal and non-formal learning continued, particularly in skills which were transmitted from one generation to another through family businesses. The industrial revolution created a new economic relationship: that between the tradesman and the apprentice – the teacher (who practised what he or she knows and can do) and the learner (who acquired the skills by doing the tasks assigned to him or to her). This relationship was built on the premise that the apprentice works for another in order to learn a trade.

As industry progressed, economic growth and development were seen as the two pillars upon which societies could build their quality of life. In order to attain this goal, the entire workforce was called upon to meet new challenges and to sustain growth through a more professional approach. Special attention was given to workmanship. In this context, all skills were recognised and validated as tangible contributions to a nation's development. Stability and security were seen as important targets that employees fought for as part of their work package in return for their skills.

In contrast, today, the labour market is in a constant state of flux. Workers, like employers, are constantly being challenged by innovation and change. This is imposing a new demand on workers, that of keeping themselves abreast with their professional development. Employers, on the other hand, must have the additional role of being visionary in order to survive in fast changing economic environments. These continuous shifts are rendering knowledge, skills and competences important assets for the labour market. Every added knowledge, skill or competence is seen as an added value to one's own chance of prospering in a competitive workplace.

In 1996, OECD Ministers agreed to develop strategies for lifelong learning for all, and informal and non-formal learning was seen as an important means of making this agenda a reality and a means to re-shape education so that it better matches the challenges of the 21st century knowledge economies and open societies. The Copenhagen Declaration (2002) of Ministers of Education and Training also considered the validation of informal and non-formal learning as an added value to ongoing work at local, regional and national level.

Malta's workforce is far stronger than is formally recognised by current educational structures. Beyond formal education lies a wealth of skills and competences that our nation must recognise, validate and officially certify. Learning within our families, at places of work and in socio-cultural or political organisations is a common feature in our educational history. Thousands of Maltese manifest these skills and competences on local and national occasions such as in exhibitions, manifestations, town or village feasts. Many citizens possess other specialised skills related to carpentry, metal work, stone craft, technical and IT related skills and handicraft which are also significant for our economic growth.

The document prepared by the Malta Qualifications Council is a first step towards establishing, at a national level, the recognition of those skills and competences, learnt as a result of daily work-related, family or leisure activities or programmes of learning which are not normally certified. It aims to provide visibility for so-called "invisible" learning so that we can design a high-quality, cost-effective validation structure that adds value to such experience.

I am confident that this document will raise fruitful discussion between all stakeholders, particularly the private sector, which will contribute to the setting up of professional mechanisms within MQC, so that informal and non-formal learning experiences may also be given a place in the Malta Qualifications framework.

Introduction

Charles Mizzi, Chairman
James Calleja, Chief Executive Malta Qualifications Council

Most learning does not occur during formal learning programmes. It happens from unstructured processes within the family, at places of work and during leisure time. This document is about this kind of learning which is very often invisible to the formal structures of recognition, assessment and certification.

This draft policy is designed to provide an in-depth analysis of the themes related to the validation of informal and non-formal learning. For the purpose of this proposed policy document, informal and non-formal learning have been described as "invisible" learning. The process for the recognition, assessment and certification of informal and non-formal learning has been integrated under the term validation of informal and non-formal learning.

We hope that this document will serve as a base for discussion so that the necessary political and legislative structures to validate informal and non-formal learning are built within MQC.

The task is to propose formal structures that recognise the visible evidence of invisible learning. Researchers studying informal learning often discover that people find it so natural when doing work or communicating with others for a purpose that they themselves do not acknowledge informal learning as "learning". However, since such learning is learner-driven, it can often be more powerful than formal learning. (Lilia Efimova).

The term "invisible learning" used in this policy document, is also borrowed from the report Making Learning Visible published by CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) which claims that the recognition of non-formal learning requires political legitimacy, and acceptance as well as strong involvement of relevant political actors, not least employers and employees. Non-formal learning is an "indispensable but very often invisible part of modern societies" and as such it has a far more active role to play in the workplace than it currently does.

A number of issues have been explored in this document from the role of government to the important aspect of governance; the link to the National Qualifications Framework and to the qualifications system of Malta; the connection with credit accumulation and transfer as well as that with the labour market; the assessment methods for specific learning outcomes for non-formal and informal learning and the aspects of personal and professional development.

The document has also taken stock of existing institutional arrangements, of trades and crafts, of ongoing activities and projects for all generations. There is an overview of best practices in the validation of informal and non-formal learning across a number of European countries as well as an overview of the policies being proposed at European Union level. Finally the text also develops a number of indicators to measure the validity of informal and non-formal learning and how this best fits into Malta's national qualifications framework in order to gain parity of esteem with formal forms of learning. In doing so, the document focuses on aspects of skills shortage, mismatch and economic development as well as demographic change and new ICT developments. It forges a strategy through which skills and competences are given a profile which is then recognised by the labour market.

The Frameworks presented in this document must be read within the wider context of Malta's Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. This is the fifth policy document being published by MQC. Its focus on informal and non-formal learning completes the whole spectrum of learning structures which MQC dealt within the context of Malta's Qualifications Framework. The contents of this policy will serve to initiate a debate on the value of the forms of informal and non-formal

learning in Malta and how such forms could be systematically organised so that a high-quality process of their validation will yield benefits to our economy, fairness to the capability of our learners and the knowledge that existing and emerging skills are officially validated.

Research has shown that formal learning accounts for only 10% to 20% of what people learn at work. The rest is acquired through informal and non-formal experiences which may be organised within work environments or taken through initiatives for personal and professional development. In a country in which the greatest asset is human capital, the validation of informal and non-formal learning comes at a time when nationally agreed economic targets are centred around a knowledge economy based on information technology and lifelong learning.

Such a process carries with it political challenges. More people will be handed the opportunity to be recognised for their validated skills and competences and the Nation will be wiser on who owns which skills and which competences.

It is in this spirit of exploration and added value to our economy that this document has been drafted. Every opportunity must now be taken to put such a vision into practice.

Message from EUPA

Mauro Pace Parascandolo
National Coordinator – EUPA

The EUPA – European Union Programmes Agency, set up initially as a Unit within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, aims at supporting Maltese individuals and entities in availing themselves of funding under the various educational programmes provided by the European Commission. Yet the aim of the Agency is deeper than simply a financial contribution through which projects may be realised.

The general objective is to contribute towards a holistic development of the community as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, while ensuring good protection of the environment for future generations. These aspects can be achieved through the various programmes within the Agency, namely Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Euroguidance, Cedefop, Eurodesk and Euromed Platform. These programmes are a key instrument in providing a range of people, from different age groups and backgrounds, with opportunities for non-formal and informal learning within a European dimension.

The Lifelong Learning Programme, besides the general objective of the Lisbon Agenda, aims to foster interchange, co-operation and mobility between education and training systems within the community so that they become a world quality reference. Complimenting Lifelong Learning, Euroguidance Malta, , is an integral part of adult education, co-operating with existing vocational guidance services both in employment and educational fields. This assistance serves as a platform, focusing its attention mainly on experts and practitioners, as well as the public, in their career pathways.

The Youth in Action Programme makes an important contribution to the acquisition of competences, targeting young people and youth leaders, encouraging the involvement of disadvantaged youth. Complementing Youth in Action, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, which aims at creating a network of all those involved in the youth sector in Europe and the Mediterranean, striving towards bringing young people from the region together in an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding, facilitating networking between them, assisting in the capacity building of their organisations, increasing their participation, sharing relevant information with one another, and exchanging good practice.

The Agency, through all its programmes and funding, provided by the EC, aims to foster interchange, integration, co-operation and mobility between individuals and groups within the community so that they become a world quality reference, promoting and celebrating Best Practices, cultural integration and European citizenship.

For this purpose, the Agency is supporting this publication as part of its commitment to promote the recognition of informal and non-formal learning across Europe and at national level. This publication, prepared by experts in the field, will address one of Malta's new challenges to compliment other initiatives which are intended to further address the endorsement of the Lisbon Agenda. Non formal and informal learning can only be given its due value through the process of validation which provides learners with certification of the learning that they have acquired in different ways.

This publication by the Malta Qualifications Council is another step towards implementing a framework enabling the validation of invisible learning, which should enable learners to enter the Malta Qualifications Framework and subsequently to continue their lifelong-learning path. EUPA is committed to support such initiatives that promote these opportunities, by providing support in the quest for successful implementation of such projects, maximising the use of the EU funds available.

Critical Review

Margaret Cameron
Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Manager

The pace of change today is unprecedented and labour markets throughout the world are changing rapidly. Technological changes and international competition has led to the need for higher level skills in the workforce. There is the potential that those with little or no skills will be left behind both economically and socially as the pace of change is most likely to have an adverse effect on those who are least equipped to cope with it.

For many years the value of non-formal and informal learning to the individual and its contribution to the workplace had not been appreciated. However, there is growing recognition that the acquisition of skills, knowledge and expertise not only takes place within the formal education and training systems but that much of this learning is gained within informal and non-formal environments and is in fact a lifelong process. Individuals of all ages learn from a wide variety of sources and it is estimated that around 80% of what adults learn is through non-formal and informal means.

The Government of Malta recognises the value of informal and non-formal learning and the importance of making the most of the talents and skills of its entire workforce for economic growth and to maintain and develop its competitive edge. The government considers a major contributing factor for this growth will be through the validation of informal and non-formal learning, giving it parity of esteem with formal learning, and it has assigned the responsibility to the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) to take this challenging and important work forward.

The document, *Valuing All Learning: Frameworks for the Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning in Malta* provides a clear distinction between the three learning types: formal; non-formal; and informal, and identifies many of the environments where informal and non-formal learning take place. It appropriately describes non-formal and informal learning as "invisible" as unrecognised learning often prevents individuals reaching their potential both in terms of personal development and benefiting economically in the workplace.

Drawing on the experience of other European countries where such systems have been established, the development of a flexible and accessible system for validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta is identified as one of the measures that will contribute to the sustainable economic growth and further develop its competitive edge by making the most of the skills of its people. By setting up Sector Skills Units responsible for setting the standards it is the vision that "invisible" learning will be recognised and valued for the benefit of learners, educational authorities, training providers and employers.

Two distinct paths for validating informal and non-formal learning have emerged:

1. For **organisations** a large number of which offer a wide range of informal and non-formal learning provision. The MQC plans to invite these organisations, which include enterprises that provide on-the-job training, to become `accredited institutions'. They can then decide to formalise their provision and place it on the Malta Qualifications Framework.
2. **Individuals** who wish to have their invisible learning validated to gain entry to or exemption from education and training courses or for the award of a full qualification will be able to apply directly to the provider or to an external assessment body and have their skills validated

Quality Assurance processes are essential to maintain consistency and MQC will have a vital role in developing the guidelines for this purpose. A number of methodologies can be used to carry out the assessment of informal and non-formal learning. Learners, unfamiliar with assessment processes, may need considerable help to identify and present evidence of their learning for validation. Trained guidance advisors are needed to provide support to learners for the validation process. This support may be helping learners identify and gather appropriate evidence and they may need to probe learners to encourage reflection on the learning they have gained. A network of accredited institutions will be established to conduct the validation process.

For learners, transparency and fairness are paramount and should address whether the process will help them reach their educational or employment goals. It should also clearly set out the steps involved, the documentation to be completed, the evidence required, the support available, the validation method to use, and the costs involved.

The importance of trained assessors cannot be overlooked. Assessors make the judgement as to whether the individual has met the required standards. These must be clearly defined and the assessment process and evidence required must be clear. The quality of prior learning assessment outcomes relies on the ability of the assessors to select or develop appropriate assessment tools and to make reasonable judgements on submitted evidence.

The success of the implementation of the validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning and engagement of learners will be dependent on developing partnerships between the MQC and organisations providing informal and non-formal education, training and employers and other stakeholders. Legislation provides the general direction but it will be up to providers how they carry out the recognition and MQC to validate such recognition within the context of Malta's National Qualifications Framework. Building mutual trust and confidence will be essential. Raising awareness will be important to encourage learners to have their learning recognised so that they can successfully engage in the levels of learning that will contribute to meeting their educational and employment goals and to the economic growth of Malta.

CHAPTER 1

The Conceptual Framework or the Learning Triangle

Malta's greatest resource is its own people. Government has been in the forefront in recognising the importance of people's skills and competence and has worked to promote creativity and excellence in the strong belief that the resourcefulness of the people will help the country grasp opportunities being presented by an increased open and globalised world economy[1]. The Lisbon Agenda, launched in March 2000, aims for Europe to become by 2010 'the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and better social cohesion and respect for the environment'[2]. In working towards the Lisbon goals, as well as investing in the country and its people, government launched its National Reform Programme (NRP), in 2005[3]. The NRP aims to set out a comprehensive strategy to deliver economic growth and jobs as highlighted in the Lisbon Agenda.

Education and training, as well as valuing all other forms of learning, has always been the focus of government initiatives. While committing funds and working to ensure quality education at compulsory level as well as strengthening post-compulsory vocational and tertiary education, government has also recognised that other forms of learning also occur and that these forms of learning need to be validated and accredited within the perspective of lifelong learning. In fact, the first edition of the National Reform Programme specifies that as one of its targets, formal, informal and non-formal learning qualifications and skills should be certified[4]. This target was listed within the context of lifelong learning and in making vocational education more attractive.

The 2007 progress report of the National Reform Programme[5] delves into the importance to capitalise on the country's human resources in order to offer a more competitive environment based on a more skilled and qualified workforce. It is thus in the country's interest to have continued investment in human capital and education. The NRP subscribes itself to education and training aimed at further shaping a highly skilled workforce through lifelong education for all. In order to achieve this aspiration, it identifies as one of the two medium-term measures that of promoting 'flexible pathways and certification of formal and non-formal qualifications/skills aimed primarily at adult learners and at motivating lifelong learning so as to ensure a flexible, adaptive and employable workforce'[6]. This same document, in fact, identifies how the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) has been entrusted with the responsibility to work towards the certification of formal, informal and non-formal learning and how a national policy is to be published by the second quarter of 2008[7]. MQC's responsibility was again included in the 2008 government pre-budget document.

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1 Government of Malta, Securing our future: Pre-budget document 2007, forward by Prime Minister.
2 Reference Lisbon Agenda.
3 Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, (2005), National Reform Programme: Malta's Strategy for growth and jobs.
4 Target M04.5, Pg.25 Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, (2005), National Reform Programme: Malta's Strategy for growth and jobs.
5 Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, (2007), Malta's National Reform: Annual Progress report 2007.
6 Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications, (2007), Malta's National Reform: Annual Progress report 2007, pg. 59.
7 This target is also included in the government's 2008 pre-budget document.

This document is in response to the targets set by government. The need for the accreditation of informal and non-formal learning has been acknowledged as a contributing factor to Malta's human capital and potential for economic growth. Recognising such learning does not only open doors to a wider system of recognition, qualifications and opportunities for further study for individuals but it also helps the country keep its competitive edge within a European and global economy.

1.1 The value of informal and non-formal learning

In discussing issues relating to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, it is important to reflect on the meaning and value of such learning, not only in relation to each other, but also alongside formal education. A comprehensive review of these issues has been carried out by Coley, Hodksinson & Malcolm (2002)[8], who highlight that one needs to consider informal and non-formal learning in comparison to formal learning from a historical perspective. The attention up to the 80s was mainly on formal education, reflecting the assumption that formal learning was somewhat of a higher level and status to informal and non-formal learning. Such belief stems from the historical situation where formal education developed as theories about learning in industrial societies sought better ways and methods of learning in order to improve on supposedly more primitive and everyday ways of learning.

Most of the learning in primitive societies is carried out mainly within the family and/or the group where the more experienced and knowledgeable show the young how things are done and made. However, as societies became more and more complex, learning moved from an informal setting to a more organised and formal one. This move was assumed to bring with it a number of advantages: it opened up wisdom and knowledge to a wider audience; developed accumulated, recorded and propositional knowledge; and allowed each generation to be more knowledgeable than the one before it[9]. In addition, in trying to understand how the world works, formal knowledge tended to be of a generic style, making it possible to apply to a variety of contexts.

With this development, everyday knowledge was considered of different value and responding to basic need and aspirations. Everyday knowledge tends to be context specific, and is limited in its application, consequently considered of a lesser value in society. In contrast, formal learning equated with education in schools and Universities belonged to a higher status than other forms of learning such as apprenticeships which were considered as informal learning.

The gained status of formal learning was questioned and debated towards the end of the twentieth century. Coley & et al discuss how formal education and its status came under fire from different perspectives. One major critique was directed at the higher status and superiority of formal learning over informal. The argument was that learning takes place within communities and even some sophisticated learning can take place without formal provision e.g. learning a foreign language. The implication is that learning is not context or cultural free and so it was difficult to achieve within the formal learning setting where these two aspects are removed. Another major critique was directed at the generalisation of knowledge taught within formal settings. Many learners experience difficulty in transferring generalised knowledge to different settings, and very often find it difficult to contextualise such knowledge. In addition, formal learning has focused more on acquisition of: skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, understanding and patterned behaviour rather than innate talents, spontaneity, creativity and personal inclinations towards specific skills. Such approach, it is argued[10], still reflects its roots in behavioural psychology. This perspective contrasts with the approach that considers learning as participatory and belonging to a community of practice[11]. Another strong critique is linked to formal knowledge as knowledge of the strong middle class, which rather than acting as empowering disadvantaged groups through acquisition to such knowledge, acts as a way to preserve and reproduce the privileges of this group[12].

8 Helen Colley, Phil Hodkinson & Janice Malcolm (2002) *Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain. A Consultation Report,* Leeds: University of Leeds Lifelong Learning Institute. Also available in the informal education archives: http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm

9 Ibid. Who cited work by Scribner S. & Cole M., (1973), Cognitive Consequences of Formal and Informal Education, Science, 182,553-559.

10 Sfard A., (1998), On two Metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one, *Educational Researcher,* 27 (2) 4-13.

11 Colley et al citing Lave, J. & Wenger E., Situated learning: legitimate Peripheral Participation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

12 Sfard A., (1998), On two Metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one, *Educational Researcher,* 27 (2) 4-13.

The value of informal and non-formal learning and the recognition of such learning have gained importance and has been, during these last years, the focus of discussion in education circles with respect to the Lisbon Agenda and the recognition for the need of promoting lifelong learning. In working to be a knowledge based society, Europe has recognised that it needs to work on two main fronts: that of giving value to learning that falls outside formal learning and that learning is a continuous lifelong process where individuals are continually learning through their experiences at work, their personal life, hobbies, interests as well as through formal learning. Consequently, the European Union has developed policies for lifelong learning which focus strongly on the need to identify, assess and certificate informal learning, particularly that occurring within the workplace[13]. The European Union Ministers of Education and Training agreed on a resolution on lifelong learning reaffirming the importance of 'valuing learning' in May 2002[14] and which consequently led to the development of an agreed common set of European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning in 2004[15].

Recognition of informal and non-formal learning thus gains importance because if not officially recognised, this learning is not validated and remains invisible. In working towards a knowledge base society, it is economically counterproductive not to recognise all the different learning which occurs. Validation of informal and non-formal learning serves to make visible learning which is gained outside formal learning institutions. This is an untapped resource of invisible knowledge and skills that can lead to significant economic and social benefit to individuals, communities, countries as well as Europe[16].This is what makes the issue of recognition of informal and non-formal learning alongside formal learning a high priority in Europe at both national and European level.

1.2 Defining the learning triangle: formal, informal and non-formal learning

Literature about formal, informal and non-formal education stems from different branches of study, and consequently focuses on different aspects of learning. A review of the issues on these different forms of learning are researched and highlighted by Colley et al[17]. The work highlights how different authors write from different schools of thought: discourses located in the workplace learning and mentoring, from a lifelong learning perspective; work within adult and continuing education[18].

Colley et al identify 20 distinguishing criteria that need to be considered when examining the different types of learning. The criteria are:

- Teacher/learner relations;
- Location or where learning takes place: e.g. educational or community premises;
- Learner/teacher intentionality/activity;
- Extent of planning or intentional structuring included;
- Nature and extent of assessment and accreditation;
- External determination or not;
- Purposes and interest to meet needs of dominant or marginalised groups;
- The nature of knowledge taught;
- Whether learning is seen as embodied or just 'head stuff': the issue of contextual against generalised knowledge;
- The status of the knowledge and learning that is taking place;

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13 Bjonavord, J., (2001), Making learning visible: identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning, *Vocational Training: European Journal*, (22) 24-32.

14 Permanent Representatives Committee, (2002), Draft Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning, Council of the European Union: 14440/01 EDUC 148 SOC 485 - COM(2001) 678 final.

15 Commission of the European Communities (2004), Conclusions of the Council of Representatives of the Government of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, 9600/04 EDUC 118SOC253, 18 May.

16 CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) European Guidelines for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning first draft 1.0, Document prepared for the Conference 'Valuing learning: European Experience in validating non-formal and informal learning' Lisbon, 26-27 November 2007.

17 Colley H, HodkinsonP. &Malcolm J. (2002) Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain. A consultation report http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm

18 It is not the scope of this document to review the different writings about formal, informal and non-formal learning. Those who would like to do further reading can consult the Colley et al document which can be accessed on the following website: httpp://www.infed.org/archives/e-text/colley_informal_learning.htm

- Education and non-education distinction;
- Whether learning is part of a course or not;
- Whether outcomes achieved can be measured;
- Whether learning is collaborative/collective or individual;
- The purpose for which learning takes place;
- The pedagogical approaches used;
- By whom and how is mediation of learning organised;
- The time-frames within which learning takes place;
- The extent to which learning is tacit or explicit; and
- The extent to which learning is context-specific or generalisable/transferable.

It can be noted that some of these aspects, although more evident in the different forms of learning, are not exclusive to any and consequently cannot be used as indicators to classify learning activities into the three different categories. In struggling with this problem, Colley et al. attempt to use these criteria to highlight differences between formal and informal education. In their case, they do not include the third aspect: non-formal education, which they observe the European Union is interested in. Therefore, the list of specific features refers to the different characteristics between formal and informal education.

It can be noted that there are some of the aspects mentioned, particularly those related to pedagogies used (e.g. transmission against student-centred approach) which cannot be considered to take place exclusively in one of the types of learning and thus cannot be used as indicators to identify the different forms of learning taking place. The list, however, helps the reader to understand better the implications of the definitions used for the different forms of learning taking place, particularly informal and non-formal learning which are the focus of this document.

Table 1: Possible ideal types of formal and informal learning	
Teacher considered as authority	There is no teacher involvement
Carried out on educational premises	Informal learning is carried out on non-educational premises
Teacher has control over learning	The learner has control over learning
It is planned and structured learning	Learning is organic and evolving
Assessment is summative and accredited	There is usually no assessment
There are often externally determined objectives and outcomes	There are internally determined objectives
There is the interest of powerful and dominant groups on what is learnt	There is usually the interest of oppressed groups
Learning is open to all groups according to published criteria	Preserves inequality and sponsorship
Involves learning of propositional knowledge	Learning involves practical and process knowledge
Knowledge and skills learnt have high status	Knowledge and skills learnt have low status
Learning taking place is considered as education	Learning taking place is not considered educational
There are measured outcomes of the learning process	Outcomes tend to be imprecise and often non-measurable
Learning is predominantly individual	Learning is predominantly communal
Learning occurs to preserve the status quo	Learning takes place for resistance and empowerment
Learning involves pedagogy of transmission and control	Pedagogy is learner-centred and can be negotiated
Learning tends to be mediated through agents of authority	Learning is mediated through learner democracy
There are usually fixed and limited time-frames	Learning takes place through open-ended engagement
Learning is the main explicit purpose of the activity	Learning is either of secondary significance or is implicit
Learning is applicable in a range of contexts	Learning is context-specific

In view of the objective of this policy document and the European framework within which the validation of informal and non-formal learning is to be developed in Malta, the definitions used by the European Commission are of particular interest as they can be adopted as the guiding operational tools in identifying what type of invisible learning is to be validated and accredited.

The Cedefop glossary[19] defines the core concepts of formal, informal and non-formal education as follows:

- **Formal learning** consists of learning that occurs within an organised and structured context (formal education, in-company training), and that is designed as learning. It may lead to formal recognition (diploma, certificate).

- **Non-formal learning** consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designed as learning, but which contain an important learning element;

- **Informal learning** is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning, and can to a degree, be understood as accidental learning.

A slightly different perspective of these three concepts is given in the definition by the European Commission within the Communication on Lifelong Learning[20]. The three core concepts in this instance are defined as follows:

- **Formal learning** is typically provided by education or training institutions, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective;

- **Non-formal learning** is not provided by educational or training institutions and typically it does not lead to certification. However it is structured, in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view;

- **Informal learning** results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support. Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional.

These two sets of definitions highlight the context within which learning takes place as well as the intentionality of the learner as the main indicators to distinguish between the different forms of learning. The learner is considered at the core of the learning process within the perspective of lifelong learning. The two dimensions identified are used to distinguish between formal, informal and non-formal learning. The different perspective in these three types of learning are summarised in the table which follows.

Table 2: Nature of Learning: intention and structure[21]

Structure of the context	Learning is intentional		Learning is not intentional
Planned learning activities	Formal Learning		
Planned activities		Non-formal learning	
No planning			Informal Learning

19 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P., 2004.

20 Communication from the European Commission, 2001, Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a reality, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs.

21 Colardyn D. & Bjonavold J, (2004), Validation of Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Learning: policy and practices in EU Member States, *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 70-81.

The publication by Cedefop[22] highlights how a number of European member states accept these definitions, namely: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Spain. It also shows that other countries (France, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) do not use the terms non-formal or informal learning. This is particularly the case in Ireland and the United Kingdom which use the terms prior learning and prior experiential learning instead[23].

The use of these definitions does not come without problems. It has been pointed out that assessment and validation is done on the outcome of the different learning types and not the process by which learning took place. Another critique put forward was that learning is a process which can take place in the different settings of formal, informal and non-formal. From such a perspective, it is the setting and not learning which is thus formal, informal and non-formal. There is also the understanding over how many different settings exist: two – formal and informal; or three – formal, informal and non-formal. The clearer aspect in the whole debate is that formal learning is that concept which can be best defined and described. The other two concepts, rather than being defined as what they represent, are defined as an exclusion from the categories for formal learning. In view of this Straka's[24] emphasises the use of educational settings within which learning takes place considered as a plausible method of distinguishing these learning typologies.

1.3 Understanding core concepts related to validation

It is often the case that in the process of making all forms of learning visible, a number of key concepts related to the whole process are used. The most commonly used terms include: validation, accreditation, recognition, assessment as well as certification. So far, the issues related to formal, informal and non-formal learning have been tackled. Likewise, these other concepts also need to be defined and discussed. This is essential as at times they have been used interchangeably[25]. The core concept of validation is proposed as a common term which covers a number of activities, spanning identification via assessment to recognition of learning outcomes[26].

1.3.1 Validation

Validation is the tool through which invisible learning is made visible. It is the tool through which, within a lifelong learning perspective, what is learnt, in whatever way, can be assigned a recognised value for personal use, social recognition, and employment. For individuals, validation means giving value to all the range of skills and competences one has; for employers it makes human resource management easier as it is possible to identify what a person is able to do; and for society where all the skills and competences available can be mapped[27]. Validation is used as a common term to cover a whole process involving first the identification of learning outcomes, undergoing assessment and/or testing processes, to recognition, certification or accreditation at the end of the process.

A formal definition of validation used in the Cedefop glossary[28] and the Communication on Lifelong Learning[29] includes identification, assessment and recognition of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts, through work, education and leisure. The importance of validation has been highlighted in trying to value all types

22 Colardyn D., & Bjonavold J., (2005), The Learning Continuity: European inventory on the validating informal and non-formal learning: National policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning, Luxembourg: Cedefop Panorama Series, 117.

23 Colardyn D., & Bjonavold J., (2005), The Learning Continuity: European inventory on the validating informal and non-formal learning: National policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning, Luxembourg: Cedefop Panorama Series, 117.

24 Straka, G.A. Valuing learning outcomes acquired in non-formal settings. In Nijhof, W.J. et al. (eds). *Shaping flexibility in vocational education and training: Institutional, Curricular and Professional Conditions*. Dordrecht: Kluver Academic Publishers, 2002, p. 149-165.

25 Colardyn, D. & Bjornavold J., (2005) The Learning Continuity: European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning : National Policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP Panorama series: 117, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

26 Ibid.

27 Colardyn D., & Bjornavold J., (2004), Validation of Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning: policy and practices in EU member states, *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 39, No 1, 2004.

28 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P.,2004.

29 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P., 2004.

of learning, whenever and wherever it takes place and with a view that it makes visible learning what has so far still remained invisible. This is particularly relevant in the case of lifelong learning. Colardyn and Bjornavold[30] highlight the existence of three dimensions usually included in definitions of validation. These three dimensions refer to:

1. Reference to Learning Outcomes: Whichever way learning takes places, there is always reference to learning outcomes. The advantage of using such an approach is that focus is on what a person knows and/or is able to do rather than the process through which knowledge, skills and attitudes were acquired;

2. Standards against which assessment takes place: There are various ways through which standards can be set. They can be set by the educational institutions themselves, by accrediting bodies, and even by practitioners within the sector themselves. Whatever way standards are set, validation involves at one point measuring an individual's capabilities against some standard set of outcomes. Standards act as the yardstick against which individuals are assessed;

3. The process of how learning outcomes are validated: It is not enough to identify learning outcomes and to have standards against which to compare these learning outcomes. The process by which this 'measurement' or assessment is done, plays a very important role as it ensures that the process is fair and transparent and that every individual receives a deserved judgment of his or her learning.

Validation takes place in the case of formal, informal and non-formal learning situations. In the case of formal education involving education and/or training programmes, validation leads to a certificate or diploma. This certification is usually placed within a national qualifications framework. This type of validation includes assessment of prior learning (APL). Validation in this area is usually recognised nationally and possibly also internationally, and has value within the labour market. Validation of formal education is quite advanced.

One also finds the validation of competences. Competences are usually linked to official standards, norms or references. The use of standards ignores the way in which competences have been achieved but are used to establish whether the person has actually achieved them. The certificate of competence achieved may be related to formal education. This type of validation usually validates non-formal learning which takes place mostly on the workplace. This validation can be self-contained or else carried out by an autonomous institution. The different types of validation processes have been summarised in the following table:

Table 3: **Types of Validation and nature of learning**[31]

	Formal Learning	Non-formal Learning	Informal Learning
Types of Validation	• Formal diploma • Certificate (including APL, Vae)	• Self contained validation • Autonomous validation • Link to formally recognised validation	• Self- contained validation • Learning should not be validated

A lot of work has been undertaken on validation within the European Union as an action promoting lifelong learning. This will be discussed in further detail in the second chapter which focuses on developments at a European level.

30 Colardyn, D. & Bjornavold J., (2005) The Learning Continuity: European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning: National Policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP Panorama series: 117, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

31 Source: Colardyn, D. & Bjornavold J., (2005) The Learning Continuity: European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning: National Policies and practices in validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP Panorama series: 117, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

1.3.2 Assessment

Validation involves at some point of the process, an assessment of the skills, knowledge and competences that the individual has acquired. Assessment means 'the sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how and/or competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification'[32] Assessment in validation has two perspectives and fulfils two important requirements. The two forms of validation include: summative and formative assessment.

A summative assessment considers the end product and officially recognises those skills and competences that an individual already possesses. In the case of formative assessment, the process goes further as it provides feedback to the individual with respect to what other skills and competences need to be learnt.

The main purpose of summative assessment is to provide a statement of the learning that has been achieved including the date of the assessment and specifically certifying and formalising it such that it can be integrated within the official qualifications system. There are a number of issues related to assessment of knowledge, skills and competences learnt in an informal and non-formal environment. One of the major issues relates to the quality of the methods used to assess learning outcomes. Issues of reliability and validity become important and need to be taken into account. Validation of informal and non-formal learning should also endorse and apply quality assurance standards similar to those for formal educational systems (vocational and tertiary education). This brings to play also the issue of how much summative validation is integrated with qualifications systems and standards that are applied within the country. Standards thus play a crucial role in giving validation of informal and non-formal learning value within the whole education and qualification system of a country as well as value and recognition within the labour market.

Formative assessment of informal and non-formal learning has a different role and serves a different purpose. Formative assessment provides the learner with feedback in order to guide the learning process, career progression of an individual. This is achieved by highlighting strengths and weaknesses as well as provides guidance for further learning and development to individuals, and to human resource development in the case of enterprises. Formative approaches often are decentralised systems which have been set up and developed on a local, regional, and sectoral level.

In both forms of assessment, central to the process is the credibility of the standards used. One finds the existence of both occupational and education-training standards which are utilised both for qualifications as well as for validation of informal and non-formal skills. Occupational standards are usually related to jobs that people do and consequently describe the competences and skills required to perform a particular job. These standards usually vary across countries. Occupational standards often act as the bridge between the labour market and education. Education-training standards focus on what people need to learn and include the syllabus, teaching methods, processes and assessments. The recent change of writing occupational standards in terms of learning outcomes is bringing about a change in the way that education-training standards are being drawn up[33].

Assessment involves taking stock of how much of the standards set have been acquired. This requires assessors who are capable of doing this job in a professional, impartial and transparent way. The guidelines being drafted by Cedefop[34] highlight how assessors should be drawn from:

- acknowledged professionals in their sector. This give credibility to the assessment given;
- professionals familiar with the validation process. This ensures that the assessment made is reliable;
- professionals who have no 'personal' interest in the validation outcomes. This ensures that there is no conflict of interest and thus ensures impartiality in the assessment given;

32 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P., 2004.

33 Cedefop (2007), *European Guidelines for the Validation on Non-formal and Informal learning* (first draft), prepared for the conference 'Valuing Learning: European experiences in validating non-formal and informal learning, Lisbon, 26-27 November 2007.

34 Cedefop (2007), *European Guidelines for the Validation on Non-formal and Informal learning* (first draft), prepared for the conference 'Valuing Learning: European experiences in validating non-formal and informal learning, Lisbon, 26-27 November 2007.

- professional who are able to inspire trust and to create a proper psychological setting for the candidates. This ensures that the assessment process is there to show what an individual knows and not what she/he does not know;

- committed professionals able to provide continuous feedback on the match between the learning outcomes and validation standards/references. The assessor is to provide inform and/or support the individual and to guide the further development of the individual;

- professionals who have received initial and continuing training about the validation and about the quality assurance (mechanisms, tools etc.) which are to be used according to established standards. Assessors should thus be certified such that it can be ensured that they are aware and capable of following the standard procedures for assessment.

1.3.3 Certification

Validation leads to certification. Certification is defined in the European glossary to involve, in the case of Certification of competences, the process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure. This process leads to the issue of Certificates or diplomas by accredited awarding bodies. Certification validates the outcome of either formal learning (training actions) or informal/non-formal learning[35]. Certification bodies verify individual competence conformity in terms of Knowledge, skills and competences. Certification and examination arrangements can be defined as all norms or procedures used by Member States to control the evaluation of learning processes and outcomes, as well as the validity and reliability of personal learning efforts according to fixed standards for educational and training goals[36]. Certification is used to denote the awarding of credits, a qualification or part of a qualification on the basis of non-formal or informal learning following a form of assessment.

Traditionally, certificates are granted after examination. Certificates are not an alternative to examinations but examination procedures are part of certification. Some qualifications can be certified without having to pass traditional examinations. Certification may be similar to that used for language knowledge. The workplace learner has to have a document describing the competences acquired. One solution could be to define job profiles to which the learning refers, linked to required competences.

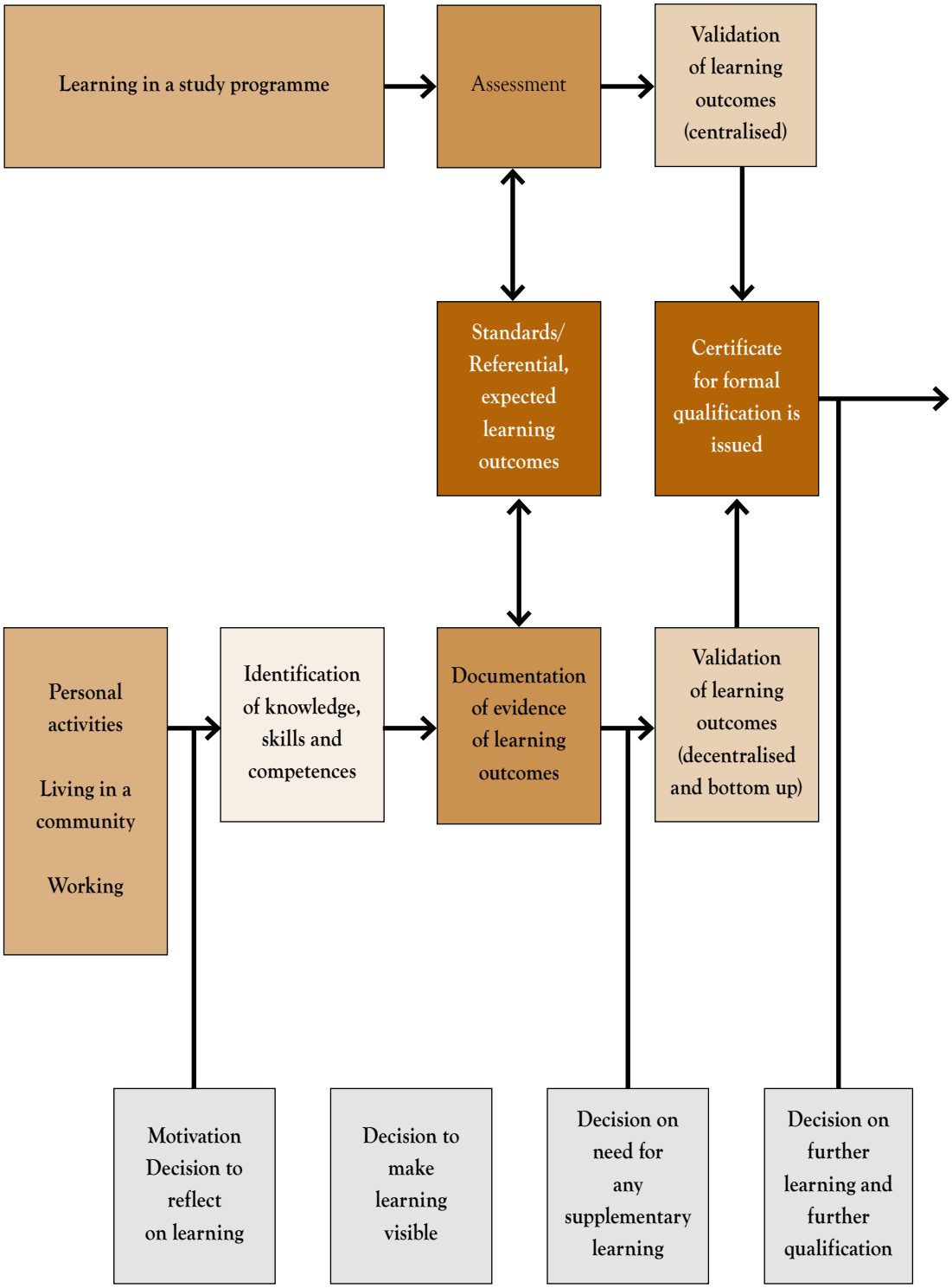
The road from learning to certification can be described by the flow diagram developed by Cedefop[37]. In the case of formal education, one follows a formal study programme. Once this is completed the person is assessed according to established standards and procedures. Once these learning outcomes assessed are validated, then a certificate showing a qualification is issued. In the case of informal and non-formal learning, an individual learns in different contexts: at work, in leisure, as personal interest or through social interaction. In such circumstances at one point the learner reflects on how much she/he has learnt and the skills and competences that she/he has consequently developed. The individual can decide on whether to make this invisible learning visible. Should the decision to make this learning visible be taken, evidence of the learning taking place is compiled and presented for assessment. The assessment determines if there is any need for supplementary learning or if not, to proceed to validate learning, after which certification is issued. All certification from formal, informal and non-formal learning should allow all learners to proceed with further learning leading to higher qualifications.

35 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P., 2004.

36 De Rosario, Pascale (2002). *Types of examination and certification arrangements: draft report*. European Forum on Quality in VET.

37 CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) European Guidelines for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning first draft 1.0, Document prepared for the Conference 'Valuing learning: European Experience in validating non-formal and informal learning' Lisbon, 26-27 November 2007.

Figure 1: Mapping learning through to certification[38]



38 Source: CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) European Guidelines for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning first draft 1.0, Document prepared for the Conference 'Valuing learning: European Experience in validating non-formal and informal learning' Lisboa, 26-27 November 2007.

1.3.4 Recognition

Recognition plays an important part of the whole validation process. Many are those people who have followed courses and obtained certification only to realise that it has no recognition within educational institutions or the labour market. The same circumstances may occur to the validation of informal and non-formal skills where the certification provided will not have the recognition in education and the labour market. It is in keeping this situation in mind that recognition forms part of the validation process. If there is no recognition, then the whole exercise would have been futile.

Tissot[39] provides two perspectives of recognition in providing a definition for the term. Recognition of competences includes:

a. **Formal recognition:** This refers to the process of granting official status to competences. This takes places either
   - through the award of certificates or
   - through the grant of equivalence, credit units, validation of gained competences;

and/or

b. **Social recognition:** through acknowledgment of the value of competences by economic and social stakeholders.

Both aspects of recognition are important to the process of validation. To summarise, recognition plays a vital role in education and lifelong learning (including career guidance), a labour market and an economic or commercial environment, and within a trust building process for learners. Recognition often concerns assessing a foreign qualification with a view to finding a correct place and path in another country's education or employment system.

Central to recognition is the issue of mutual trust. 'A zone of mutual trust is an agreement between individuals, enterprises and other organisations concerning the delivery, recognition and evaluation of vocational learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences)[40]. Zones of mutual trust offer practical help with decisions about the value of qualification and certification, further learning and recruitment into employment. They can also play an important role in the recognition for the different validation systems across Europe. These zones may be dynamic in nature and may become more or less formal in scope and form according to the mutual confidence and needs of the stakeholders involved.

Hager[41], writing with respect of recognition within vocational education identifies four aspects of recognition. He highlights how recognition can be considered:

- in terms of informal learning as credit towards formal qualifications;
- by the educational establishment that other knowledge is valuable;
- by the learner that learning that has occurred, i.e. self-recognition of the tacit knowledge; and
- in terms of the role of the many relevant contextual factors.

Recognition is thus not as easy a concept to understand as recognition by different players come into play. What is relevant to this document is that validation of informal and non-formal learning is to be considered in terms of recognition by qualification frameworks and consequently educational establishments, but more importantly also by employers who give recognition within the labour market.

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39 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P., 2004.

40 Le Moulinner, (2005), European approaches to credit (transfer) systems in VET: An assessment of the applicability of existing credit systems to a European credit (transfer) system for vocational education and training (ECVET), Cedefop series 12: Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

41 P. Hager (2001) 'Lifelong Learning and the Contribution of Informal Learning', in D. Aspin, J. Chapman, M. Hatton & Y. Sawano (eds.) *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 79-92.

1.3.5 Accreditation

A final concept to consider within the validation process is accreditation. Cedefop defines accreditation (of programmes, institutions)[42] as that process of accrediting an institution of education or training, a programme of study, or a service, showing it has been approved by the relevant legislative and professional authorities by having met predetermined standards. This requires that the whole process of validation of informal and non-formal system follows the standards that the authorities design and legislate and which regulate the process of validation.

Recognition of informal and non-formal learning has similar problems to traditional qualifications in terms of job mobility as well as mobility of workers. In accrediting, bodies do not possess recognition. If such a claim is made, then the value of their awards would be of little value.

Accreditation of certification for an individual's informal and formal learning means that the certificate will have a greater chance of having recognition within formal educational systems, allowing learners to proceed to further studies, as well as have value within the labour market in terms of more and better job opportunities.

Accreditation also gives certification greater value and ensures fair assessment following standards set, in a transparent and impartial way. It is thus essential to have developed accreditation bodies at a national level for credible recognition of informal and non-formal learning on a national as well as European Level.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted government's commitment to the recognition and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning. Central to the whole process is validation. The major concepts concerned have been discussed and their implications to the process reviewed. The next part takes a closer look at developments that have taken place across Europe as well as systems for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in a number of countries. Further issues relating to validating informal and non-formal learning will also be taken into consideration.

42 Cedefop, *Terminology of vocational training policy – A multilingual Glossary for an enlarged Europe*, Tissot, P., 2004.

CHAPTER 2

The International Framework: Developments in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning

As a result of the Lisbon strategy, the recognition of informal and non-formal learning has gained more interest across Europe. At its core is the goal to make Europe the most competitive knowledge based society. The need to tap into all the potential resources available has led the European Commission to focus on making invisible learning visible and consequently to find ways of finding ways of recognising informal and non-formal learning which allows individuals to develop within a lifelong learning perspective as well as promote further mobility of workers within the European member states.

Developments and work done at the European Commission ran parallel to the development of systems at national level. In fact, some systems such as those in France and Finland were established before 2000 and the Lisbon strategy, but which continued to evolve as work was done and promoted at Commission level.

This section first reviews the main development at European level. It will then move on to review a number of good examples of systems which have been developed at national level. It is important to understand the common European principles being promoted at European level as well as consider what aspects have been included in the different national systems for the validation of informal and non-formal skills.

2.1 Developments at European level

The focus on the validation of informal and non-formal learning started from various actions and initiatives as a result of the Lisbon strategy. Following this Lisbon Spring Summit[1], The Heads of State and Government of the European Union identified a number of areas where Education and Training could be improved in view of the targets set by the Lisbon Agenda.

1 Presidency Conclisions. Lisbon European Council, 23,24th March 2000, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

2.1.1 Education and Training 2010

In March 2000, the Lisbon European Council called on education ministers "to undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity (...) and presenting a broader report to the European Council in the spring of 2001"[2].

On February 12, 2001 the Council adopted the Report on the Concrete Future Objectives of Education Systems[3]. In setting objectives, objective 2 focused on facilitating the access of all to education and training. It is highlighted that in view of lifelong learning education systems need to be inclusive and coherent and involves among other aspects, that of overcoming barriers between formal education and training and informal and non-formal learning. It also urges the recognition of informal and non-formal learning within a lifelong learning perspective.

This report was approved in March 2001 by the Stockholm European Council, which asked that a detailed Work Programme be drawn up. A year later, the Education Council and the Commission endorsed a 10-year work programme[4] to be implemented through the open method of coordination. Ministers of Education agreed on three major goals to be achieved by 2010:

- to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems;
- to ensure that they are accessible to all; and
- to open up education and training to the wider world.

Thirteen specific objectives were identified, covering the various types and levels of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) aimed at making a reality of lifelong learning. Validation of informal and non-formal learning featured a number of times in the work-programme. Under Objective 2.2, making education more attractive, developing ways for the official validation of non-formal learning experiences was identified as one of the key issues. There is also reference in objective 3.4 increasing mobility and exchange, where, facilitating validation and recognition of competencies acquired during mobility was also identified as a key issue. Accreditation of prior learning was chosen as a theme for exchange of experience and best practices.

Expert Working Groups were set up, gathering experts from 31 European countries as well as stakeholders and interested EU and international organisations. One of the groups focused on recognising informal and non-formal education.

2.1.2 Communication on Lifelong Learning

The Communication on lifelong learning[5] published by the European Commission in 2001 also tackled extensively the issue of validating informal and non-formal learning. It argues that lifelong learning should encompass formal, informal and non-formal learning and highlights the need for formal education to recognise and value the contribution of informal and non-formal education. It identifies as priorities the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as the transfer and mutual recognition of formal certificates and diplomas. An argument in favour of investing in adequate resources such that they are re-channeled across the spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning is made. It promotes facilitating access to learning opportunities within the formal sector, adapting entry, progression and recognition requirements to take account of non-formal and informal learning. In creating a learning culture, the need to value and reward learning, especially non-formal and informal learning in all sectors is encouraged. It was acknowledged that all contributions to the consultation stressed that progress in relation to non-formal and informal learning would be a crucial step towards a European area of lifelong learning. It sets the need to build a European Inventory of methodologies, systems and standards for the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning[6].

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2 Quoting from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/pol/policy_en.html#methode_

3 Council of the European Union, v680/01 EDUC 18, Report from the Education Council to the European Council "The concrete future objectives of education and training systems" 14 February 2001.

4 Official Journal of the European Communities, (2002), *Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and training systems in Europe* (2002/C 142/01).

5 European Commission, (2001), Communication from the Commission 'Making a European Area of lifelong learning a reality, Directorate General for Education and Culture, Directorate General for Employment and social affairs.

6 So far two inventories have been published in 2004 and in 2007.

Members States were encouraged to provide the legal framework to implement more widely the identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Member States were also asked to consider an individual right to assessment. Universities, education/training institutions and other relevant organisations (e.g. research institutions) were urged to systematically implement measures aimed at the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The social partners were invited to negotiate and implement agreements at all appropriate levels to modernise the organisation of work and to invest in lifelong learning by working towards the recognition of all learning activities, including non-formal and informal learning, and integrate this into all aspects of human resource policies and practices at enterprise level. Youth organisations were encouraged to make visible and publicise the outcomes of non-formal and informal education that result from their activities. The communication highlighted the importance of gaining insight into the learning needs of SMEs, where learning typically takes place in a non-formal or informal context.

2.1.3 Copenhagen Process

The Copenhagen deceleration[7] targeting the development of Vocational Education and Training across Europe also focused on the need to give value to informal and non-formal education in working towards reaching the Lisbon targets. In highlighting the main priorities to be pursued through enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training, within the priority of recognition of competences and qualifications, a target set was that of developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between approaches in different countries and at different levels.

The target to develop these common principles was taken up by the High Commission Expert Group within the Education and Training 2010 programme. The progress report of 2003[8] agreed that the discussion on these principles reflects three main purposes for validation:

- validation in relation to formal education and training;
- validation in relation to the labour market (enterprises, branches and sectors);
- validation in relation to voluntary work.

The need to develop a set of common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning was considered as a way of bringing added value to ongoing work at local, regional and national level. The expert group stated that in defining these common principles, they also wanted to highlight what these principles and criteria should not do but rather what they wanted to achieve across Europe[9]. The common principles were considered essential for the long-term development of high quality, cost efficient approaches to identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

It was proposed that these principles aimed to promote quality in the validation methodologies for actors at local, regional and national level. Individual rights of individuals also were to be addressed. These common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning were proposed from working group H in 2004[10].

7 Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training, "The Copenhagen Declaration" http://ec.europa.eu/education/copenhagen/copenahagen_declaration_en.pdf

8 European Commission, Directorate for Education and Culture, (2003), Implementation of 'Education and Training 2010 work programme: validation of non-formal and informal learning contribution of the Commission Expert Group.

9 Ibid.

10 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, (2004), Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning: Final proposal from 'working group H (making learning attractive and strengthening the links between education, work and society) of the objectives process.

2.1.4 Common European Principles

The common principles were organised according to six themes: purpose of validation, individual entitlements, responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders, confidences and trust, impartiality and credibility and legitimacy. These European principles were developed to act as a guide and a common reference point in the development and implementation of methods for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. They were not designed to be prescriptive but rather to serve as a basis for further developments.

The purpose of validation

The overall aim of validation is stated to be that of making visible all the competences that a person has developed, irrespective of the ways and methods through which these were acquired. The purpose is for both formative and summative forms of assessment. The European principles specify the purpose of validation to refer to:

- Validation of learning outcomes, whether acquired in a formal, informal and non-formal setting, aims to make visible all forms of learning by an individual;
- Validation of learning outcomes supports lifelong learning, employability and active citizenship as it facilitates progression in education and training, integration in the labour market as well as organisational and personal development;
- Validation of learning outcomes which can serve both summative assessment, that is, leading to certification; and
- Validation of learning outcomes for formative assessment but still leading to formal recognition[11].

Individual Entitlements

Since the validation of informal and non-formal learning must primarily serve the individual citizens, then individual issues in protecting citizens' personal rights need to be taken into consideration. The European principles thus state that:

- Validation by principle should be a voluntary process and it is the individual who decides whether to have his/her learning validated;
- If validation is compulsory, then the system should ensure transparency, fairness and privacy;
- In private and public organisations where the validation processes are implemented, these should be based on social dialogue;
- In the case of summative validation, individuals should have the right of appeal for a validation result, and that this right is made public at the start of the validation process;
- There should be special provision for individuals with special needs in order to ensure equal access;
- The results of the validation process are the property of the individual and their privacy must be ensured;
- In the case of validation involving human resource management, the privacy of the individual has to be ensured[12].

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11 Ibid.

12 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, (2004), Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning: Final proposal from 'working group H (making learning attractive and strengthening the links between education, work and society) of the objectives process.

Responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is closely linked to the issue of career guidance. As the competences vary across the different sectors as well as the purposes for which validation is done, it is essential for the validation process to be accompanied by career guidance service which would help individuals to make the best use of their validation exercise in the different spheres of work, personal life and education. The European principles advise that:

- Results of validation must be present in a way that is understood at European and international level, where possible using common European instruments and formats such as the Europass which help ensure transparency;
- The privacy of the individual should be respected;
- Validation should be supported by information, guidance and counseling services;
- Education and training institutions should have a legal and practical basis which enable individuals to validate their learning;
- Validation should be an integral part of human resource development in enterprises and public organisations and should be based on social dialogue; and
- Non-formal learning organisations, including NGOs should provide support to enable individuals to have their learning validated[13].

Confidence and Trust

The value of the validation process depends on the confidence and trust that it enjoys by the different key stakeholders involved. In order to instill confidence and trust, the validation process must be based on clear standards; provide clear understanding on how assessment is conducted, give information on the purpose of the process, provide guidance and support provided, etc. The European principles focus on the transparency of procedures, transparency of criteria and availability of and access to information. They highlight that:

Transparency of procedures

- The validation process must instill confidence to all concerned and that the candidate actually has the knowledge and competences certified. This means that the process must have validity;
- Validation schemes must be designed in such a way that potential users are able to observe and judge the whole validation process;
- The basic for validation should be stated clearly, whatever method or combination of methods is used; and
- Clear information on time and cost should be made available.

Transparency of criteria

- There needs to be clear criteria that need to be met by individuals in order to ensure reliability. It also ensures that different institutions follow the same criteria and reach the same conclusions;
- The criteria used by assessors need to be as clear as possible to ensure reliability.

Availability of, and access to, information

- The purpose of criteria and requirements for validation as well as the use of results must be presented in a way that is transparent to all involved, including the individual being validated.

13 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, (2004), Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning: Final proposal from 'working group H (making learning attractive and strengthening the links between education, work and society) of the objectives process.

Impartiality

Impartiality is crucial for the professionals in the role of assessors in the validation process. The European guidelines highlight that impartiality can be strengthened through training and systematic networking and that this needs to be provided by validation providers. The principles thus stress that:

- Assessors should, particularly in the case of summative validation, follow a code of conduct and avoid incompatible roles which may compromise confidentiality and impartiality;

- Assessors must be professionally competent and have access to systematic initial and continuous training. Where possible, a network of local, regional and national networks of assessors should be set up to assure the professional development as well as coherent practices[14].

Credibility and legitimacy

Credibility and legitimacy can be fostered through the inclusion of different stake holders at all the different levels. The social and professional credibility of validation is reflected in the inclusion and commitment of the key stakeholders. The guidelines link achieving credibility to the issues of impartiality and confidence. The issues which the European principles raise are the following:

- The development, implementation and financing of a mechanism for validation must involve all relevant stakeholders;

- Validation bodies need to be impartial and shall involve all stakeholders significantly concerned without any predominating interest. The system of validation at all levels of operation should be organised to safeguard impartiality and enable participation from all parties involved.

The final note of the principles goes to promote further uptake and use of the Europass as a framework for transparency of qualifications and competences and how it can support developments in the field of validation.

Developments have taken place since the publication of these principles in 2004. The Education and Training 2010 report of 2007[15] highlighted how systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are also coming into place, even if at a slow rate. The challenge identified involved the move from experiment to full application of the validation process in national qualifications systems, including also the provision of access to higher education. The document also reviews the developments made by the different European countries. The table drawn up is that shown opposite.

14 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, (2004), Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning: Final proposal from 'working group H (making learning attractive and strengthening the links between education, work and society) of the objectives process.

15 Commission of the European Communities, (2007), Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions, *Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*, Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme" {SEC(2007) 1484}.

Table 4:
Review of Country developments as reported by the Education and Training 2010 2008 joint draft progress report[16]

Countries	Explicit National Lifelong Learning Strategies	National Qualification Framework	System for validation of non-formal and informal learning	National targets set in all or some EU benchmark areas
AT	Y	D	D	N
Be fr	Y	D	D	Y
Be nl	Y	D	Y	Y
BG	D	D	N	N
CY	D	N	N	N
CZ	Y	D	D	N
DE	Y	D	N	N
DK	Y	D	Y	Y
EE	Y	D	N	Y
EL	Y	N	N	Y
ES	Y	D	D	Y
FI	Y	D	Y	Y
FR	P	Y	Y	Y
HR	Y	D	N	Y
HU	Y	D	N	Y
IE	D	Y	Y	Y
IS	P	N	D	N
IT	P	D	D	N
LI	P	N	N	N
LT	Y	D	D	Y
LU	P	D	D	N
LV	Y	D	N	Y
MT	D	Y	N	Y
NL	P	D	Y	Y
NO	Y	N	Y	N
PL	D	N	D	Y
PT	P	D	Y	Y
RO	D	N	D	Y
SE	Y	N	D	N
SI	D	D	Y	Y
SK	Y	D	D	Y
TR	D	D	N	N
UK	Y	Y	D	Y

Countries' situation in relation to adoption of explicit lifelong learning strategy, qualifications framework, validation of non-formal/informal learning and national targets in benchmark areas.

Y Country has strategy, framework, validation system or national targets in place

N Country does not have framework, validation system or national targets

D Country is developing strategy, framework, validation system

P Country has LLL policies in place but not explicit strategy

16 Commission of the European Communities, (2007), Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions, *Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*, Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme" {SEC(2007) 1484}, Annex 1.

2.1.5 The draft European Guidelines

Following the use of the key European principles critical to the development of validation methods of informal and non-formal learning, a need for more detailed guidelines was felt. Following the establishment of the cluster within the Education and Training 2010 programme on 'Recognition of learning outcomes' and the conclusions drawn from the peer review learning activities organised in Brussels (January 2007) and Paris (July 2007) the first draft of the European guidelines[17] for the validation of non-formal and informal learning was discussed in the conference 'Valuing all learning: European experiences in validating non-formal and informal learning' held in Lisbon 26-27 November 2007. Although still in its first draft version and incomplete, the document already provides what direction is to be taken in the validation process.

The draft document[18] highlights the four fundamental principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning that were published in 2004, consolidating the belief that:

- validation is the process of making visible the full range of knowledge, skills and experiences held by an individual and that the process must remain voluntary and the results remain the property of the individual;
- that stakeholders should establish systems and approaches with the appropriate quality assurance mechanisms as well as the provision of guidance and counseling;
- the roots of trust in the process of validation will depend on fairness, transparency, and quality assurance;
- the need for credibility and legitimacy based on participation of the relevant stakeholders, avoidance of conflict of interest, and clear professional standards of those carrying out the validation.

There is the realisation that validating informal and non-formal learning begins with making visible learning that is gained outside formal learning institutions. This has been so far an untapped resource which leads to significant economic and social benefits to individuals, communities and countries. The guidelines also stress the dual formative and summative role that validation of informal and non-formal learning may take. The meaning of validation is revisited and an integrated view is presented. Five distinctive but interrelated levels, all engaged in validation are identified:

- individual learners,
- organisations (business and voluntary),
- educational sector,
- national policy makers on lifelong learning and
- European policy makers.

This integrated view is needed in order to broaden the understanding about the challenges that validation of informal and non-formal learning brings to each player. A table of this integrated view is drawn up (reproduced overleaf).

Two main reasons are put forward for developing the guidelines. The first is that of supporting improvement in the quality of the validation process. The second is to enhance the compatibility and comparability of these validation processes across institutional, regional and national borders. The guidelines are to be considered as an evaluative tool and have been structured in a way that facilitates their use as a checklist when developing validation processes.

17 Cedefop, (2007), European Guidelines for the Validation of non formal and informal learning, first draft 1.0, prepared for the conference 'Valuing all learning: European experience in validating non-formal and informal learning, Lisbon, 26,27 November 2007.

18 Commission of the European Communities, (2007), Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions, *Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*, Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme" {SEC(2007) 1484}.

Table 5: An integrated view of validation[19]				
	Who is involved ?	What are the results?	Why are they doing it?	How is this done?
European Level	• EU Commission and Council • Social Partners organisations • Ministers of Education and Training • Employment Ministers	• EQF • EUROPASS • Common European Principles for validation • Draft European guidelines for validation	• Comparability and Transparency • Increased mobility • Competitiveness • Life Long Learning	• Open communication
National Level	• Ministries • Qualifications Authorities • Social Partners • NGOs	• Qualifications	• Knowledge Society • Mobility • Innovation • Skills supply	• Projects • Networks • Financing • Legalisation
Educational Sector	• Local Government • Assessment Centres • Vocational Schools • Specialist recognition centres	• National Curricula • National Standards • Certificates recognising participation • Diplomas	• Education for all • Tailored learning • Shortened study period • Increased admission	• Defining assessment and validation methods
Business Sector	• Business managers • Human resource managers • Trade Union representatives	• Competence profile or work standard • Work description	• Competitive advantage • Resourcing • Career planning • Training • Summative and formative assessment	• Mapping • Counselling • Assessment • Validation
Voluntary Sector	• Communities • NGOs • Projects	• Skills profile	• Social and personal reasons • Employability	• Mapping • YOUTHPASS • EUROPASS CV
ndividual	• Candidate • Employee	• Motivation to learn • Self esteem • Proof of knowledge and skills	• Employability • Career advancement • Entrance to education • Internal training	• Supplementary learning • Making a portfolio

The guidelines emphasise the critical role played by standards on the credibility and impact of the validation process. Two types of standards: occupational and education-training standards are identified. Occupational standards usually involve classifications and divisions of the main jobs in employment and are usually written in terms of competences and formulated in terms of outcomes. On the other hand, education-training standards focus on what people need to learn, how and the quality and content to be assessed. Occupational standards that are being written in terms of learning outcomes are forcing the way that education-training standards are being written. An argument in favour of validation is that it is directly linked to the ongoing developments of National Qualification Frameworks. This will enable validation of informal and non-formal learning as a complement to the formal educational system.

The individual is placed at the centre of the validation process. It is the individual's decision on whether to make invisible learning visible, and on going through the validation process, the results of the process remain the property of the individual. Should the individual disagree with the results, she should have the right to appeal. Consequently, validation presents the

19 Reproduced from: Commission of the European Communities, (2007), Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions, *Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*, Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme" {SEC(2007) 1484}.

individual with a number of opportunities and choices. The guidelines highlight these choices to include a number of steps. These steps are best illustrated in figure 2 which was adapted from the guidelines.

Following the individual, the next most important groups of stakeholders are employers. Enterprises, even small companies, need to provide a framework that can help the validation process. It is essential to be able to strike the right balance between the interests of the individual and that of the company as a business. The peer learning activity in Paris helped to identify the process of validation operating within a company and which has immediate and tangible benefits to workers. This process is illustrated in figure 3.

The involvement of employers is crucial to the validation process as it brings advantages to human resource management and capacity building. This makes the validation process a worthwhile opportunity. Nonetheless, the great challenge that the validation process brings to small and medium sized companies is recognized and presents challenges in terms of resources and capacity.

Other fields of interest to the validation of informal and non-formal skills include the voluntary and youth sector where there has been a great interest in and demand for concrete statements of outcomes. Different groups of competences were identified, particularly in the youth sector, involving: individual; social; tool; and intercultural competences.

Choice of individual learners

Figure 2: Choices for individual learners[20]

Pre-initiation: The individual has the choice of thinking about his/her prior learning. Whether based on raising one's own self-esteem or for increasing one's employability by considering the option of validating the prior learning that has already taken place;

Initiation: The first step is to identify the knowledge and skills that have been learnt in an informal and non-formal way. This can be done by comparing one's own capabilities to existing standards related to jobs or formal qualifications;

Pre-documentation: The next step is to find out what type of documentation is necessary and what documentation one actually has. This step needs guidance and support to enable individuals to identify the right type of documents to collect and present, as well as to decide what additional learning they still need to undertake in order to obtain complete validation;

Documentation: This part involves the actual collection of documents. The individual needs to decide what type of documentation and in what format to present. This is a crucial step in the validation process and needs extensive support from expert councilors;

Submission for validation: This involves the individual preparing for the process of validation by preparing how to answer questions and involves independent advice on sufficiency and ways of supporting the existing evidence;

Validation: This involves deciding how to obtain a positive outcome, and leads to the award of credits, partial or full qualifications;

Certification: This refers to the decision on whether the individual seeks certification and advice on the options and possibilities needs to be provided;

20 Adapted from: Commission of the European Communities, (2007), Communication from the Commission to the Council, The European Parliament, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions, *Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation*, Draft 2008 joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the "Education & Training 2010 work programme" {SEC(2007) 1484}.

Validation in Industry

Figure 3: Process of validation in companies adapted from the model presented in the Guidelines

1. Building compliment within the company
The company becomes aware of opportunities and criticalities, understanding the methodology to be followed, the costs and possible outcomes. Commitment has to be shared across decision-making levels.

2. Making the company transparent
A detailed description of the company's structure, organisation and development plan is drawn up for informing all stakeholders.

3. Produce company professional profile
All types of worker activity within the company are described with reference to a standard professional profile.

4. Produce competency indicators
The basis of the company's functional profile is drawn up together with competency indicators that show what is expected from each worker doing the job.

5. Identify and involve the main beneficiaries
The final goal should be to include the whole company personnel but focus can be on particular sectors first. Beneficiaries are provided with information about the action, objectives, opportunities as well as possible criticisms that they may face.

6. Portfolio completion
The workers, possibly with the help of a tutor, complete their portfolio reporting all educational, training and work experiences and inserting evidence of documented and non-documented competences. A self-evaluation questionnaire may be used for identification of behavioural competences.

7. Carry out assessment
An assessment group can start to evaluate which competences required in the company's professional profile are possessed by the individuals. Other forms of assessment supplement the portfolio through interviews and practical tests. Assessment information is reported on an assessment form.

8. Make a personal development plan
The results are discussed with each worker and within the company and a personal development plan is drawn up for each, supported by the external assessor and the process supervisor if required.

9. Tailor-made vocational training
Based on the professional development plan, tailor-made training is defined and planned.

10. Competencies validation and/or certification
The first level of validation responds to the initial needs. Competences validated within the company can be recognized by other companies and VET systems TO provide credit for a new job or to have access into a vocational route.

The draft guidelines go on to provide an architecture of the validation procedures which are proposed in general terms of methodological and generalisable approach. Ideas underpinning these approaches were identified to include: reliability; validity; safety, security and confidentiality; standards and references; sustainability; visibility and transparency; fitness of purpose; and cost efficiency.

Three distinct phases of validation are put forward. These include:

- **Orientation:** this covers all areas concerning producing and distributing information, interaction of advisers with learners, counselors, and other significant actors such as employers. This phase is more or less over when the focus turns to the assessment process;

- **Assessment:** This covers all the process of assessment from understanding requirements and standards, identification of learning, searching of evidence to following assessment and validation procedures. It ends with validation;

- **Audit:** This represents the post validation process and involves an independent and external review of orientation and assessment.

This section of the Guidelines still needs to be expanded even though a list of aspects for each phase is included. The last section of the Guidelines is dedicated to the validation practitioners as they are crucial to the implementation of successful validation processes. Five different roles are identified:

1. counsellors who support and guide learners in the validation process;
2. assessors who carry out the assessment of competences;
3. external observers who ensure quality assurance;
4. process managers who organise the validation process; and
5. interested stake holders involved in the validation process.

All these different players need to work professionally and together towards one common goal to benefit individuals validating their own learning as well as the companies where these individuals work.

2.2 A review of some National Systems

Systems for the validation of informal and non-formal learning already exist in a number of countries. In some countries, the system was established before the holistic process at European level was initiated. In other countries, the systems were developed parallel to developments to the European initiative. One finds that there exist a diverse system across countries which serve to show how the process can be conducted for different purposes and in different socio-cultural and political contexts. Among the interesting countries to review one finds: France; Finland; Portugal, Ireland; Scotland; England; and the work undertaken by UNESCO. Each of these systems is reviewed in the next section in order to highlight the main issues involved in the implementation of a validation system.

2.2.1 France

France is one the EU countries at the forefront of the development of the validation of informal and non-formal learning[21]. As way back as 1934 a law was introduced to enable individuals to obtain an engineering diploma on the basis of professional experience. Further progress in the 1950's facilitated the recognition of an individual's competences rather than qualifications in order to obtain a promotion at the workplace. In the 1970s France moved towards the modularisation of training and allowed individuals to be exempted from parts of courses. This system was known as *ECAP-evaluation des competences et aptitudes professionelles* and permitted many workers to valorize those learning outcomes they obtained through work experience.

During the 80s, in promoting more people at tertiary education a decree was passed in 1985 to allow professional experience to be taken into consideration in determining access to higher education. In 1986, the Ministry of Employment created a network of over 100 publicly-run skills assessment centres (*Centres Interinstitutionnels de Bilans de Competences, CBIC*). This network has run since its set up about 70,000 skills audits or *Bilans de Competences*. These centres work in close collaboration with social partners, showing a strong commitment among key stakeholders involved in the validation process.

21 Details on the French system are obtained from the Cedefop, European Inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning – France, (2007), by ECOTEC research and consulting Ltd.

A law passed in 1991 allowed workers with a minimum of five years work experience the legal right to obtain a *Bilan de Competences*. The same law allowed workers 24 hours of leave to undertake the process at an accredited centre. The unemployed are also entitled to undergo the *Bilan be Competences*.

In 1992, further legislation allowed the *VAP – Validation des Acquis Professionnels* to be used for exemption from qualifications awarded by the Ministries of Education and Agriculture. This was done mainly through submitting a portfolio of activities undertaken and skills gained through these experiences which was then examined by a jury who awarded credits towards elements of courses.

In 2002 the Social Modernisation Act extended the validation model to include all the main types of qualifications in France and also allowed complete qualifications to be awarded on the basis of knowledge gained through experience. The broadened concept of VAP became *VAE –Validation de l'Expérience*.

The VAE – *Validation de l'Expérience*

VAE can be considered to be a summative approach to validation. It can be used to either take into account professional experience alongside more traditional means of assessment in the award of formal qualifications, but also as a basis to award full qualifications. This is a right for everyone with at least three years of paid voluntary experience. All possible qualifications recorded in the national vocational certifications directory (RNCP) can be awarded. This registry includes both government and private qualifications. In the case of private qualifications, these are valid for 5 years and need to be re-registered after this period. There are currently around 41,000 entries in the database.

The 2002 Law outlines the basic principles for the procedure of VAE, which is divided in five steps:

1. information about the VAE process;
2. decision on the validity of the application (in terms of duration of experience related to the content of the qualification);
3. development of a portfolio or dossier by the candidate, describing his/her experience. Candidates may be mentored and financing may be available at this stage;
4. interview/dialogue with a 'jury' – at the request of the jury or the candidate;
5. Deliberation and decision from the jury based on the documents produced and their own observations.

Of interest is that since France is based on one single system of qualifications, those qualified through VAE and through formal education are the same and education institutes do not specify whether the qualification has been obtained through VAE or the formal route.

Assessment takes place at accredited centres, where a jury or board evaluates the individual's skills. Two main methods are used to assess skills through experience; examinations which often involve practical methods; and the assessment of portfolios.

French law also specifies the composition of the jury to include; one quarter are qualified representatives of the occupational sector and half of these must be employer representatives, a half are employee representatives. There must also be equal representation across gender. Employees in the same workplace and members involved in helping the individual compile the portfolio (except in higher education) cannot be on the jury. The jury's decision can be either to award the complete or part of the qualification. In the case of a part qualification, the jury has to indicate which knowledge and skills need to be assessed later in order to award the full qualification. This system has changed the role of the jury to a positive one which helps the candidate to develop further. The modularisation of education in France has made it easier for the validation process as individuals can obtain qualifications progressively.

VAE allows candidates also to obtain full higher education qualifications based on the analysis of individual's portfolios. Candidates are also entitled to tailored support and advice to enable individuals to understand better the VAE approach, determine more precisely how the degree corresponds to their own path and to identify the strongest features of their experience before presenting themselves to the jury.

The VAE has grown significantly since it was set up and continues to grow. It has also gained value in terms of public opinion. Currently VAE is concentrated in certain sectors and for a small number of qualifications, these being mainly in healthcare and social care. Candidates are also predominantly women, amounting to two thirds of applicants.

The VAE, like any other system is not without its problems and an evaluation carried out in 2005 called for a simplification of the existing VAE framework and for measures to improve the coherence and transparency of the systems in place.

Formative approaches – the *Bilan de Competences*

France has the *Bilan de Competences* which works alongside the VAE system. The *Bilan de Competences* permits the identification and valorisation of the professional and personal competences, abilities and potential as well as interests and motivation. The objective is to draw up a career strategy and support internal and external mobility, develop competences within a profession, design training paths and prepare a validation of experience. The result is a synthesis document drawn up by the professional counsellor employed by the accredited centre. This document summarises the rationale for assessment, the competencies and aptitudes and how these relate to the candidates' objectives. This type of assessment is formative and is an instrument which often leads to VAE assessment.

In order for these systems to work and function effectively, France has a co-ordination centre in each region for VAE and a network of information points exists.

Valorisation of learning was also developed within the private sector where the national network for the Chambers of Commerce and Industry have the *Association pour la certification des competences professionnelles* to validate informal and non-formal learning and have obtained the European Standard EN 45013 for the certification of individuals and have the system of *Certification de Competences en Enterprise*. Certificates are awarded in the fields of secretarial and personal assistant skills; sales; remote sales; customer services; management; office IT skills; Maintenance; Hotel reception; and Communication. The introduction of VAE has made the process more transparent and improved the recognition of their training through certification.

2.2.2 Finland[22]

Since the mid-90s Finland has a comprehensive structure to validate informal and non-formal learning in the context of adult education and training. This took place with the establishment of the competence based qualification system for initial, further and specialist VET system. Additional laws passed allow access to formal studies at different entry levels on the basis of candidates' prior experience. The Computer Driving License which was originally created in Finland as well as the National Certificate of Language Proficiency are two examples of this approach.

The competence-based qualification system

This system allows the awarding of qualifications, regardless of how and where the competencies and knowledge have been acquired. They can be demonstrated and accredited in officially approved practical skill demonstrations/tests. If not complete, individuals only need to study those areas which as yet they have not mastered.

22 Information in this section was obtained from the Cedefop, (2007), European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning; Finland, ECOTEC research and consulting Ltd.

This system came into force in 1994 with the Vocational Qualifications Act 306/1994 and are now included in the Act on Vocational Adult Education of 1998. Today it provides the national framework for VET in Finland. There are three levels of competence-based vocational qualifications:

- **Initial:** which correspond with the vocational upper secondary qualifications;
- **Further:** which are at UNESCO, ISCED 3 level ; and
- **Higher:** which are ISCED level 4 qualification for specialist qualifications.

Further and higher qualifications are intended for adults with three to five years experiences of work and who wish to validate their practical competences and vocational skills.

Assessment can take different forms but most commonly involves practical skills demonstrations, observation, interviews, questionnaires, portfolio work and/or project work. It is also possible to obtain a qualification through portfolio work which includes work samples, description of work tasks etc.

One negative aspect of the system is that many of the candidates prepare themselves by undertaking some form of formal learning. The main reason is that many times the individual does not possess the whole variety of skills and competences required for a qualification due to the restricted nature of some jobs. However, where young people without prior learning take three years to complete VET qualifications, adults with prior learning, on average, obtain their VET qualification within 12 months.

There is no national quality assurance body regulating the system. This implies that the system is highly decentralized and individual providers are given great freedom when applying the legislative framework. However the need for co-operation with key market players is considered essential. The responsibility for the organisation and supervision of the competence-tests rests with Qualification Committees who write up certificates and are required to have trade union, employer and teacher representatives. In addition, an organisation ALVAR has recently been established to ensure quality, reliability and parity across qualifications and country.

There are currently around 300 further vocational and specialist vocational qualifications on offer and just under 365,000 individuals took part in the system between 1997 and 2006. Some 199,000 obtained full qualification and nearly 82,000 were partially qualified. The system has become significantly popular with women in recent years and who have a higher completion rate. Most qualifications have been obtained in social sciences, business and administration, followed by technology, communications and transport, and then social services, health and sports. Low numbers of completed qualifications were obtained in National science, natural resources and environment, culture and education.

Accreditation of informal and non-formal learning outside VET

The Act on Vocational Education (30/1998) also makes provision for access to upper-secondary schools and /or exemptions even if candidates do not meet the standard entry requirements. The Act on Matriculation Examination 1000/1994 allows school principals to admit people directly to the final examination of the upper secondary school system. However, only a handful have taken up this opportunity.

The legislation also allows persons to apply for secondary education schools even if they do not have entry requirements. Participation in upper secondary schools of academic orientation, however, has also been low.

Similar initiatives, but in the area of polytechnics, through the Act on Polytechnic Studies 225/1995 allow both access to and exemptions in polytechnic studies. However, this has had limited impact as adult students in polytechnic education is usually only slightly shorter than usual study periods.

There is separate legislation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in universities which permits people to apply for university courses even if they do not meet the standard entry criteria but who demonstrate that through their prior learning they can successfully compete studies leading to qualifications. The number of such students, however, remains low. Universities have been free to determine to what extent they utilize the opportunities that this law provides them with and

methods have varied across institutions. The latest decree (794/200) has given a real impetus for more coherent and reliable validation methods for the sector. The committee set up recommended a more consistent, reliable and transparent system which is accessible to students, academic staff and stakeholders.

National Certificate of Language Proficiency and Computer Driving License

These are two other major initiatives in Finland for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. The National Certificate of Language Proficiency is aimed at adults who have developed language skills through direct experience. The tests measure language skills in practical situations and the adult is expected to speak, listen, write or read a foreign language. Certificates are awarded by the provider organising the test and the person assessing the candidate. Some 22,000 people were granted certification by the end of 2003 and the test can be taken in nine different languages. The National Board of Education developed the National Certificate in Language Proficiency test with help from its language examination committee consisting of nine members and with a three-year mandate.

The Computer Driving License was launched in 1994 by the Technology Development Centre and more than 144,000 people have obtained the license. There are over four hundred educational institutions which have been granted the permit to carry out tests and issue certificates. This tool has developed into the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) which has been introduced in some 130 countries.

The Private Sector

Labour market organisations are involved in the Competence-based qualification scheme at various levels, from planning and design of the system to its implementation. Social partners are thus members on boards such as the Adult Education Council of Finland, the Advisory Board of the Ministry of Education and the Council for Labour and Education Affairs, as well as the education and training committees of the National Board of Education and sector specific education committees.

A number of private companies are taking up and making use of the opportunities available by the competence-based education system. Some examples include; Nicemedia, a social enterprise in Pukkila, ARE OY a real estate/construction company; Finnair, the Finnish airline, and Fortum Gas a company in the Nordic area.

The third sector

Finland has a strong tradition in liberal adult education, mainly in the areas of foreign languages, IT, Physical education, social studies, arts and music. Typical liberal adult education establishments are folk high schools, adult education centres and study centres. Participation in these schools is voluntary and study formats vary from evening classes to full day and weekend courses.

A study carried out in this sector on the validation of informal and non-formal learning found that the issue of identification, recognition and accreditation of non-formal learning is of great importance. This was felt mainly in the case of access to and exemptions provided within formal educational institutions in further and higher education, mainly in the areas of handcrafts, IT, arts, religious studies and languages. An initiative to validate informal and non-formal learning in this sector is the Recreational Activity Study book which consists of a portfolio/CV of learning experiences outside formal schooling visible. The study book gives more emphasis on the development of each young person's personality such as social, communicative etc. rather than of competences that are more related to job requirements The study book is divided into nine categories: regular participation in leisure activities; positions of trust and responsibility within NGOs; activities as a leader, trainer or coach; participation in a project; courses; international activities; competitions; and other activities. The system does not aim for accreditation in formal education in any way. Recently, with the initiative of the Youth Academy, some young people have actually used the book when applying for further education or a job.

2.2.3 The United Kingdom[23]

England, Northern Ireland and Wales have all developed, or are in the process of developing credit and qualification frameworks as well as an overarching structure for recognizing formal, non-formal and informal learning. Scotland has a new qualifications framework – the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) as well as a developed methodology for recognising informal and non-formal learning. Wales has a new qualifications framework in place – the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). They have developed a methodology for recognizing informal and non-formal learning which is to start in 2007. The framework for England and Northern Ireland – the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) has been established but as yet there is no structure for the validation of informal and non-formal learning within this framework. Scotland and Wales are thus at a more advanced stage than England and Northern Ireland.

England and Northern Ireland

The systems that are currently in place to accredit informal and non-formal learning in England and Northern Ireland are the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) which is used in higher and some further education institutions while the methodology known as RARPA is used by public funded Adult and community Learning (ACL) provision.

Interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning was present in the 80s. Emphasis in policy and in operational programmes concerned enabling the access of non-traditional participants in education and training in vocational and higher education and was based on portfolio preparation. Ideas related to the accreditation of non-formal and informal learning was assimilated in the newly formed NCVQ and the existing SCOTVEC. The new qualification frameworks designed became outcomes-based and competence oriented, and assessed through evidence of performance. The accreditation of Prior Achievement (APA) was fully integrated in qualifications. However, the portfolio production was devalued as just another means of collecting evidence as it was quite a tedious process. The NVQ, despite the loss of accreditation of prior experience practices still incorporates 50% of its qualification on the accreditation of prior learning.

The Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

The first mechanism to validate informal and non-formal learning in England originated from Higher Education – the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) in the early 90s. This mechanism was developed by the higher education institutions themselves and was thus a bottom-up approach. Interest in recognizing non-formal learning stemmed as a consequence to providing a route for those with relevant knowledge and experience but no traditional qualifications.

In 2004, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education published a set of guidelines to support Higher Education institutions in accrediting prior learning. The key principles for accrediting APL were highlighted to include:

- Decisions on accreditation of prior learning are academic and the decision-making process should be transparent, rigorous and fair;
- Wherever there are limits in accreditation, these are to be specified and the implications stated clearly;
- Prior experience that has been certified by a provider has to be indicated in the certificate transcript;
- Providers should provide clear and accessible information about policies, procedures etc. to applicants, academic staff, examiners and other stakeholders;
- Any terminology, scope and boundaries used in the accreditation process should be explicitly defined;
- Information and guidance materials should outline the assessment process and should be clear , accurate and easily defined;
- Providers should consider a range of assessment forms for recognition;
- Criteria used in judging should be make explicit to the applicants, academic staff, stakeholders, assessors and examiners;
- The assessment of learning derived from experience should be subject to internal and external quality assurance procedures;

23 Information in this section was obtained from the Cedefop, (2007), European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning; United Kingdom, ECOTEC research and consulting Ltd.

- The locus of authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions should be clearly specified;
- All the different roles involved should be clearly specified and made available to associated staff and applicants;
- Appropriate measurements should be made for the training and support of all the staff involved;
- Clear guidance should be given to applicants when a claim for the accreditation of prior learning is submitted;
- Appropriate measures should be in place to support applicants when submitting claims and to provide feedback on decisions;
- There should be regular monitoring and review of policies and procedures within established institutional frameworks for quality assurance.

This system has led to the development of a number of variants, including;

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- Accreditation of Certificated Learning (APCL)
- Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Accreditation of Prior Certificated and /or Experiential learning (AP[E/C]L)
- Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APL&A).

Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in Non-accredited Learning (RARPA)

Interest in this case stems from within the public sector with the Learning and Skills Council who commissioned in 2001 the former Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) to look at ways of quality assuring non-formal education. This resulted in the development of a model for quality assuring non-formal learning which resulted in the system 'Recognising and recording progress and achievement known as RARPA, and is currently in operation throughout England and gives accreditation to non-formal learning. It has not however included the accreditation of informal learning. RARPA is used only within the Adult and Continuing sector and is used by all training providers to monitor and evaluate training provision.

The RARPA method involves a five-stage process and includes:

- Aims appropriate to an individual learner or groups of learners;
- Initial Assessment to establish the learner's starting point;
- Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives: initial, renegotiated and revised;
- Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during the programme (formative assessment) including tutor feedback to learners, reflections and progress reviews; and
- End of programme learner self-assessment, tutor summative assessment, review of overall progress and achievement.

RARPA has developed into a tool which helps individuals to transfer from non-formal to more formal learning. This implies that a student can use RARPA to proceed to an accredited training course and can choose whether to bank, accumulate or transfer the credits gained. However, it is to be reminded that RARPA applies only to non-formal learning and there is still no provision for informal learning, and so cannot be considered as an overarching single initiative to validate informal and non-formal learning in England.

Wales

In Wales, the key initiative for validating non-formal and informal learning is the Credit and Qualifications framework (CQFW) which also includes the formal sector. The CQFW incorporates higher and further education, the adult and community learning sector, work-based learning, and the 14-19 age group as well as the private and voluntary sectors.

The Department for Children Education, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) works with a number of bodies to ensure compatibility of the CQFW with the rest of the United Kingdom and the EU. There have been a number of recent developments related to the CQFW. The quality assurance framework has been piloted and tested and credit rating has been introduced across the Higher education sector. A marketing plan for the SQFW has also been developed and related to a

national funding scheme. A more flexible Welsh Curriculum has worked in partnership to ensure that quality assurance was in place; accessed ESF funding; and created a lifelong pathway and qualification database to provide learners with an on-going record of achievement.

Following these developments, focus has been set on the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. A document which enables applicant organisations to apply for recognition for their non-formal learning to be assigned and/or awarded credit has been published. There is significant interest in this system by learning and training sectors. Work to develop systems and processes have commenced towards the end of 2007.

Scotland

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was launched in 2001 and incorporated formal, non-formal and informal learning across all learning sectors (public, private and voluntary). Since July 2005, there has been in place a methodology for recognising prior learning. There are two types of recognition; formative for personal/career development and helps individuals make clearer connections between the learning they have already achieved and future learning opportunities; and summative for credit (often described as Accreditation of Experiential Learning – APEL).

Guidelines for both the formative and summative recognition of prior learning have been published. These guidelines provide guidance to learning providers on how to manage to process, identify a core set of principles and key features that give confidence to users on the approaches used and give guidance on the RPL process.

The guidelines define Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as: All prior learning which has not previously been assessed or credit-rated[24] and includes learning achieved through life and work experiences (paid and voluntary), in non-formal contexts through community-based learning; workplace learning and training; continuing professional development; and independent learning.

The key premise of RPL is that[25];

- recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone;
- recognized learning should be transferable and not just context-specific;
- credit awarded as a result of RPL is of the same value as credit gained through formal learning[26].

The Scottish system is based on a number of Core Principles, whatever approach learning providers use in the process of validating prior learning. Approaches promoted are:

- Learner-focused and should be a gateway to learning, promoting the positive aspects of an individual's learning experience (as opposed to its deficiency). RPL should also be voluntary and the learner's needs and reasons for recognition should be paramount.
- Accessible and inclusive process, applicable to all learners at all levels by providing initial information and advice; user friendly systems in terms of time and money; easy to understand and implement and an integral part of institutions providing RPL.
- Flexible – a range of different approaches to RPL in terms of both support and assessment should be available to different sectors to address the diversity of learner needs, goals and experiences.
- Reliability, transparency & consistency to ensure confidence in the outcomes.
- Clarity of role definition of the learner; learning provider; and receiving institution. Staff involved in managing and supporting the RPL process should be provided with appropriate training and support.

24 SCQF, Volume 2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) http://www.scqf.org.uk/downloads/HandbookVol2_2007.pdf
25 The rest of the information in this section has been extracted form SCQF, Volume 2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) http://www.scqf.org.uk/downloads/HandbookVol2_2007.pdf
26 Ibid.

- Quality Assured: Moderation of RPL for personal and career development should focus on ensuring that notional leveling is consistently applied. Moderation for credit should be integrated within existing quality assurance processes and should be available for scrutiny by appropriate external quality assurance, for example by an external auditing body.

Providers of RPL need to consider initial guidance, supporting learners in the reflective process of identifying learning through experience, mechanisms for gathering and presenting evidence of learning; recognition process, monitoring, supporting staff engaged in RPL and integrating the provision within quality assurance systems.

RPL for formative purposes

RPL processes aimed at personal/career development can take place in the context of access programmes leading to higher and further education, programmes offered which are an outcome in themselves such as:

- community-based learning provision offered by colleges, local authorities and the voluntary sector;
- adult literacy and numeracy learning provision;
- workplace learning programmes offered by organisations and trade unions;
- continuing professional development supported by professional and statutory bodies; and
- workplace learning for staff and volunteers in the private and voluntary sector.

The processes involved in the formative RPL include:

a. initial guidance on the RPL process;
b. supporting learners in the reflective process; identifying learning through experience (skills, knowledge and understanding); selecting and presenting evidence of that learning; identifying areas for further learning;
c. mapping learning within the context of the SCQF (notional levelling of learning);
d. identifying learning pathways;
e. RPL to support the transition between non-formal learning contexts and formal learning;
f. monitoring process for RPL procedures;
g. support for staff engaged in the support and assessment of RPL; and
h. integration of provision within quality assurance systems.

Types of evidence used includes: reflective account; project work; structured interview/oral evidence; observation of practice/ simulation, Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV); existing work-based learning practices; profiling; record of volunteer learning and experience; and the portfolio.

RPL for credit (summative recognition)

RPL for credit is the assessment and formal recognition of any non-assessed, non-credit-rated learning achieved by a learner prior to the point of undertaking a particular programme of formal learning to seek entry to a programme of study at a college or Higher institution if she/he does not have the normal entry requirements, or for a unit(s) or module(s) within a programme of study/qualification or for an entire level(s) of a qualification to enable a learner to enter a programme to enter a programme later than the normal starting point.

Key features when developing and operating processes of summative recognition, or RPL for credit include:

a. initial guidance on the RPL process;
b. supporting learners in the reflective process, identifying learning through experience, selecting and presenting evidence of that learning, identifying areas for further learning;
c. gathering and presenting evidence of learning;
d. assessment process for RPL claims;
e. credit limits for RPL within formal programmes of study;
f. fee process for RPL claims;

g. monitoring process for RPL procedures;
h. support for staff engaged in support and assessment of RPL;
i. Integration of provision within quality assurance systems.

Clear mechanisms for making RPL claims must be in place. Evidence of learning can be gathered through a variety of different mechanisms including; reflective account; project work; interview/oral assessment; 'assessment on demand', such as exam or assignment; simulation/observation of practice; mapping of learning outcomes; existing work-based learning practices in evaluation and assessment; profiling; record of volunteer learning and experience; Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV); and portfolio.

Learners should be provided with guidance on the mechanism(s) to be used to evidence their learning and should be supported in the gathering or production of this evidence. Learners should be encouraged to reduce the volume of evidence by being selective in their choice of evidence and to cross-reference evidence to more than one learning outcome or competence so that the process of compiling a portfolio becomes a more manageable exercise.

2.2.4 Republic of Ireland[27]

Ireland was one of the first EU states to implement national legislation relating to the recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning. This is documented in the Qualification (Education and Training) Act of 1999 which in the section under 'access, transfer and progression' gives the right to any person to apply for recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the purpose of gaining an award or qualification in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or in accessing education and training programmes.

Development of validation of RL in Ireland has been slow and the launch of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in 2003 has increased emphasis on RPL. The learning outcomes set out in the Framework provide a common reference or basis for RPL. The National Qualifications Authority Ireland (NQAI) determined that the recognition of prior learning can be used for:

- entry into education and training programmes;
- credit towards an award or exemptions from specific programme requirements; and/or
- eligibility for a full award/qualification.

In 2004, the NQAI set up an advisory board to devise a set of national principles for the recognition of prior learning in further and higher education. In 2005 these 'Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning in Further and Higher Education and Training' were published. These guidelines were to provide a national approach to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning which education providers, awarding bodies and private sector companies can use. The principles included issues related to quality assurance, assessment procedure, documentation and procedures for the review of policy and practice.

These principles have been used to varying degrees by Universities. The main national bodies are Higher Education and Training Awards Council - HETAC, Further Education and Training Awards Council – FETAC and Universities. They are also the main bodies responsible for the awarding of qualifications offered outside formal schooling.

Further Education and Training Awards – FETAC

FETAC is responsible for awards, validating programmes, monitoring and ensuring the quality of programmes as well as determining standards. In its strategic plan 2003-6, FETAC committed itself to publish a policy on the recognition of prior learning from 2006. This policy was finalized in April 2005 and requires providers who register with FETAC to facilitate learners through RPL for access to programmes, exemptions/credit from programmes as well as access to full qualifications.

27 Information in this section has been extracted from the 'European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning: Ireland, ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd.

The policy aims to ensure that learners have the opportunity to have their prior learning recognized through providers who are quality assured.

The guidelines establish a number of processes which need to be followed by providers. These include the need to:

- provide information to learners on opportunities of entry requirements/exemptions through the process of RPL;
- Allow learners to provide evidence of their RPL;
- Assess the evidence through the use of mentors, assessors, external verifiers etc.;
- Make recommendations on whether RPL should be accepted.

RPL can also lead to a FETAC award. The process in this case is to include: first the identification of the award; then matching the learner's experience to the national standards of the award; evidence is gathered to prove the knowledge, skills and competences claimed by the learner; assessment and verification of the individual's knowledge, skills and competences follows; after which a recommendation is made. The recommended outcome is monitored by the provider and FETAC.

In 2006 50 learners achieved major and minor awards in a variety of fields and levels of the qualifications framework in the areas of: bar management; childcare; community development, security etc. The low drop-out rate was mainly due to careful selection of participants as well as full employer support.

Higher Education (excluding Universities and the Dublin Institute of Technology)

HETAC is responsible for qualifications at all levels of Higher Education including Ph.D. level. It makes awards available directly to learners on the basis of RPL. HETAC published its 'Recognition Policy, Criteria and Process for a Direct Application to HETAC for a Named Award' in March 2006. The policies set state that RPL has to be available to everybody, that the process should be underpinned by quality assurance, and that Higher education providers provide information in forming an opinion on each learner application. The procedure for assessment of RPL is to include: guidance to learners on how to submit an application; quality assurance in the assessment process; an appeals process in place for unsuccessful applicants.

The impact has been a larger number of providers offering RPL for entry, credit and/or exemptions and a number have institutions-wide policies in place.

Private Sector

The new National Qualifications Framework provides for recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the workplace. There have been initiatives in the areas of nursing, quarry industry as well as security, childcare, construction and hospitality. The National Skills Strategy (2007) has a target to increase education and training by one level for 500,000 people by 2010 and the Department for Enterprise and Employment and others are interested in the potential role that RPL can have in achieving this target.

2.3 UNESCO[26]

Recognition, validation and certification of informal and non-formal learning have not been an issue considered only within the European context. A wider interest actually can be identified on informal and non-formal learning through the research study commissioned by UNESCO. The synthesis of the findings put together national policies and practices on recognition, validation and certification of non-formal and informal learning. The intention was to obtain data and explore existing programmes. 36 countries out of 190 answered the questionnaires.

It was found that approaches differed largely between those applied in developing countries to those of developed countries. In developing countries, policy implications aim at both basic and primary education and at accelerating access, emphasizing equity and female enrolment. In the case of developed countries, the trend is to reaffirm education and its validity as a basic right and promote lifelong learning within society.

The types of competences learnt informally and non-formally were often implicit and often resulted from learning cultural values and attitudes and help individuals deal with everyday realities. These competences were classified to include: competences learnt in daily life settings; competences learnt in non-formal educational programmes; and vocational and practical competences often acquired at the workplace.

From the range of benefits derived from the validation of informal and non-formal learning (in the range of countries participating in the study), one finds that it has been used for:

- Gaining entrance to formal education and training systems;
- improving learner's employability in the labour market;
- certification by enterprises of prior learning and experience;
- transferring skills across different spheres such as education, work and home; as well as
- enhancing universal basic education.

Of particular interest in this study is the annex which compiles short notes about the different legislation and existing education and work programmes in the responding countries.

2.4 Conclusion

In reviewing developments that have taken place at a European level as well as within National frameworks, the main trend is that of developing systems for the validation of informal and non-formal learning which run parallel to the formal system and enable individuals either to obtain access to further and higher education studies; partial qualification which help individuals work towards full qualification or to immediate full qualification. Such systems give value to all learning in whatever way and wherever it takes place. They help individuals with their personal and career development within the lifelong learning process as well as countries in becoming more competitive as more and more citizens, who would have otherwise never be certified, become certified.

28 Information on the study by UNESCO was extracted from: Singh, M., (2005), Recognition, Validation and Certification of informal and non-formal learning: Synthesis Report.

CHAPTER 3

The Local Framework

In Malta, "compulsory school age" means any age from five years to fifteen years, both inclusive, and accordingly a person shall be deemed to be of compulsory school age if he has attained the age of five years and has not attained the age of sixteen years[1]. Notwithstanding, beyond the formal aspect of learning there are a myriad of non-formal and informal learning activities which are ongoing on both sides of the compulsory school age divide, as well as parallel to formal learning.

In the plight of making all invisible learning visible, it is important to first review and classify the different types and levels of informal and non-formal learning that takes place in the different context areas in Malta. A quick search would provide examples ranging from arts, crafts, music and sports which involve organised learning to more work-oriented and vocational learning which takes place mainly at the workplace. It is not the purpose of this document to identify the different types of learning and to classify it as either informal or non-formal. The main aim of this document is that of providingt a framework for learning which is as yet invisible, or better stated, which does not fall within formal education and consequently certificated.

Invisible learning in Malta occurs in different ways and contexts. We find formal institutions which organise courses of learning without any official certification but just one of attendance. There are also organisations which organise learning courses in areas of interest such as music, sports, crafts etc. which do not lead to any certification. There are also a number of local non-governmental organisations which work in the social and/or environmental field which either through training courses or activities which they organise, provide learning opportunities to their members. The same argument can be made with respect to band clubs, scouts clubs, Local Councils, youth clubs etc. All these instances provide individuals of various ages, from children to youths and adults, opportunities of learning skills and competences which have value and consequently should be valued.

Another type of learning takes place at the workplace, or what is more commonly known as on the job training. As an individual starts work, s/he learns skills and competences from other more experienced colleagues. With additional duties and promotions at work, individuals learn and grow. Their knowledge and skills should be certified. Validation of such learning serves to help the individual to grow personally and for career development which can lead to full qualification. In addition, it would be also of benefit to employers who can invest better in their employees through more directed in-house or commissioned training.

Eurostat indicates 5.5% of Maltese people involved in lifelong learning[2]. Even more are involved in invisible learning. This section will review these types of learning opportunities in more detail. It also attempts to provide some indication of the degree and frequency people are involved in such learning activities. It is to be pointed out that the list and data provided are not comprehensive and will surely not capture all the learning that is taking place. However, it will provide an idea of the extent to which learning is taking place in informal and non-formal settings as well as the context within which they take place.

1 Education Act, Chapter 327, Laws of Malta

2 Eurostat, 2006, Life-long learning (adult participation in education and training) – total, Percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training.

It is difficult to classify the institutions involved strictly according to whether they offer formal or non-formal or informal adult courses or as continuing vocational training for already qualified young people and /or adults. Most institutions given below offer a mix of courses, and/or learning opportunities even where non-government organisations are concerned.

The aim is to capture the various aspects of invisible learning according to the following contexts:

- Family context;
- Socio-cultural, religious and political context;
- Youth-related organisations; and
- Direct work experience.

3.1 Invisible learning within the family context

It is entirely logical to presume that, in most cases family members seek to assist each other with a view towards improving their level of learning. This can be achieved by passing on knowledge and experience that one has achieved through life to another family member. This is what many families have done from one generation to the other. Such learning is usually unstructured and varies across families, cultures, socio-economic background etc.

An interesting definition that characterizes family based learning is that provided by the Essex Family Learning and Parenting Strategy Group which states that Family Learning "encompasses programmes and activities, with clearly measurable outcomes, that enable adult and children in family relationships to: learn about themselves and their communities, help them to acquire new skills and knowledge, enjoy family life, communicate and recognise that learning is a lifelong activity which is fun"[3]. This definition also includes that family learning which falls within the non-formal sector, often associated with early childhood education. Considering these two aspects leads to the identification of the informal and non-formal learning that takes place within the family context.

Adopting a life cycle approach, informal and non-formal learning starts at a very young age. Learning in families covers a broader curriculum than the school curriculum. It involves varying contributions that parents and wider family members such as siblings and grandparents can make to children's wider learning of social skills and knowledge of the world around them. This informal input into children's achievement may sometimes go unrecognised in schools, particularly in areas of significant social and economic disadvantage, where few parents have formal qualifications[4].

The family represents a child's first contact with the potential for cognitive development. Prior to entering into any non-formal or formal forms of education, the child is in close contact with the parents and the extended family. During the initial months and years the child learns a variety of skills which are transmitted by the family as part of the growing up process. This learning may be described as the education of everyday living.

Initial learning usually focuses upon movement and the identification of objects as well as on the ability to have a degree of dexterity that permits the first experiences for handling objects. As the child grows, the onset of distinguishing between various sounds develops. The need to cry out for food eventually leads children to distinguish between the sense of thirst and that of hunger. Informal learning also centres around initial role play, practising the roles that a child becomes accustomed to experiencing whether in the family or on television. This learning process goes on as long as the individual remains within the family, even if the role and significance of such learning decreases with age.

There are a number of informal skills that can be transmitted by the family throughout a child's development and eventually adulthood. The figure illustrated overleaf is an attempt at mapping such aspects of learning. The list presented is not intended to be exhaustive but only illustrative, but clearly indicates the amount of learning that takes place within the family.

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3 Lamb, P, Casey L., & Spacey R., (2007), An Exploratory Study on Links between Family learning and parenting programmes in local Authority Settings, NIACE: Promoting Adult Learning, http://www.niace.org.uk/Research/Family/links%20between%20FL%20%20parenting%20in%20LA%20settings.pdf

4 Heydon L. & Reilly J., (2007), Professional development for family learning programmes: a rationale and outline curriculum, Literacy Volume 41 Number 3 November 2007, 155-160.

Figure 4: Aspects of informal learning taking place within the family context			
	Children	Youth	Adults
Health			
Life skills			
Interpersonal skills			
Respect			
Arts and craft			
Responsibility			
General knowledge			
ICT			
Hygiene			
Language skills			
Mathematical skills			
Empathy			
Assistance with formal schooling tasks			
Religion			
Sports			
Cooking			
Housework			
Bathing			
Driving			
Managing finances			
Time management			
Commitment			
Moral values			
Manners			
Childcare			
Professional/Technical skills			

More structured learning for children mainly starts off within child care centres which take upon themselves the role of a learning institution but which as yet do not form part of compulsory curriculum. In this context, the learning that occurs involves the first steps in preparation for compulsory education. Throughout the past years, considerable effort has gone into early child care – this particular emphasis being reflected in the new regulations that were issued for child care

centres and which aimed at quality childcare deemed to positively contribute towards enhancing social inclusion. Early childhood education does not fall within compulsory education and parents are not obliged to send their offprings to these centres. However, the learning that takes place in such institutions can be considered as invisible learning. Early childhood development and care services provide children with the stimulation that they may not be receiving at home, presenting opportunities for them to develop at a similar rate as their peers. The role of good quality children's services has been proven to actively reduce social inequality by improving the life chances of children[5].

Childcare centres are in themselves learning centres that focus upon the first cognitive developments of a child prior to entering compulsory education. Learning is usually centred around the following:

- promoting physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development as well as to encourage co-operation, responsibility, and consideration of others through different play and daily living experience.
- Addressing specific needs of children such as: emotional (comfort, support, understanding, affection); physical such as health and safety; cultural; and religious.
- Teaching children the basics of how to keep themselves healthy.
- Development of their communication skills by providing opportunities to listen, talk, draw, and write about events that occur in their lives.
- Encouraging the expression of day-to-day feelings (joy, anger, frustration, anxiety, sadness, and amazement).
- Contributing towards helping children socialise with their peers as well as with adults bringing into play the potential variety of backgrounds.
- Allowing initial cognitive developments that may result from manipulating materials as they explore, experiment, problem solve, ask questions, pose problems, and hypothesize about their world.
- Contributing towards developing children's physical and self-help skills through fun and games (running, climbing, completing a puzzle, complete daily routines such as feeding themselves, dressing themselves, and washing their hands).
- Fostering a sense of independence and self-reliance as children become able to accomplish tasks in their own way and at their own pace.
- Promoting language and literacy such as: listening skills; following directions; receptive vocabulary (listening and understanding); expressive vocabulary (speaking and communicating); book knowledge and appreciation; and alphabet awareness.
- Introducing early mathematical concepts: counting; sorting; shapes and time.
- Promoting approaches to learning such as: initiative; curiosity; learning about objects and events; engagement and persistence; goal setting and planning; reasoning and problem-solving.

Pre-primary education is provided for 3 and 4 year olds in both state and non-state institutions. Early childhood education provision for children aged 0-3 is not widespread. However, this provision is expected to expand in view that research has amply demonstrated that the first few years of children's lives are crucial in their development. Children hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds are known to benefit particularly from exposure to activities specifically provided to enhance their development. Expanding the service of early child care is also in line with government's objective to increase the female participation rate in the workforce. In its efforts to encourage more females to join the labour force, the government in 2007 introduced measures to help parents pay fees for childcare[6]. In fact, "National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities" were published in July 2006.

It is known that Malta has a culture of private lessons. These can be classified into:

- those wishing to sit for their Junior Lyceum/Common Entrance Exam (Age 10/11);
- those sitting for their 'O' Levels (Age 15/16); and those sitting for Intermediate/'A' Levels (Age 18).

5 http://www.mfss.gov.mt/services/subpages/content.asp?id=1633&heading=Children%20-%20Archives (March 2006).

6 Eurydice, The Education System in Malta 2006/2007.

Although private lessons are not provided in many cases by formal institutions, yet they are aimed at helping students in compulsory education to prepare better for formal qualification. As such, they are not recognized as learning obtained within formal contexts and many times success in formal examinations is largely attributed to the formal schools. Thus private lessons become visible learning only if students succeed in the formal examinations that they sit for. It becomes invisible learning if these lessons are not validated through the formal examination system.

Linked to the children's education, one also finds a number of schools and other educational institutions offering some form of training to parents. Whether these are one off talks by professional such as nurses, doctors, educators etc. or parent empowerment courses such as those developed and delivered by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), this learning usually does not lead to any form of qualification and consequently within the non-formal sector. The particular training courses and initiatives by the FES are one particular example of training for parents which is as yet invisible.

The availability of knowledge has widely increased in recent years particularly due to the advent of the internet. Moreover, such knowledge has also been customised to the various strata of society be they children or adults, in vocational or professional employment etc. Therefore access to information and hence the enhancement of knowledge can now occur at various ages and across various strata. Corporate entities have included children in their target audience – through a mixture of fun and games, simple concepts are enshrined into the child's learning process. Typical examples include Malta's entry into the Eurozone and the NECC's website (www.euro.gov.mt), as well as others related to environmental matters such as waste separation (www.wasteservmalta.com). At the same time professionals seek to update themselves with the recent developments in their field of expertise whilst technical people seek to improve their understanding of technical matters and to learn on the latest equipment and techniques which are available on the market. Many are those who learn knowledge and competences through the use of the internet and thus constitutes another form of invisible learning which is widely spread within the Maltese community.

It is therefore evident that informal learning is a continuous process and is applicable to children, youths and adults as they grow richer through life's experiences as well as in response to a particular need that may arise in life in general or within the employment context. For example, driving is often first experienced by a youth when s/he takes test drives by one of his parents. This is usually in response to a phase in life where the law permits an 18 year old individual to commence driving.

The onset of adulthood and the move from formal education to the world of work is also a time where an adult may draw upon the knowledge and practical experience of any one, or both, of the parents. An individual following in his parents' footsteps will be informally instructed as to what to expect, how to deal with certain issues as well as having been exposed in such a manner throughout the course of studies.

Adults also need to respond to certain changes. For example, as the environmental agenda is driven forward it is likely that children will come forth to implement the teachings received at school. This may be alien to the parents who may be simply unfamiliar with such concepts and therefore the learning flows from the younger to the older generation.

This scenario fuels further the importance of informal learning within the family where one or both parents play an important role in the learning cycle of the child. This may range from pre-school learning where children are introduced to initial concepts either based on experience or through appropriate media such as toys or television programmes; during compulsory school, where children are assisted in the execution of their homework or school based projects and in basic tasks such as literacy and numerical skills; to the higher forms of the support afforded during compulsory or formal education programmes which involve the imparting of acquired or practised knowledge from the parent to the child. This could include the imparting of professional practice concepts by a parent to a child following a degree course, the apprenticeship of a child with a parent who has his own skill etc.

3.2 Invisible learning within Socio-cultural, Religious and Political Activities

Socio-cultural, religious and political activities form an integral part of the Maltese social fabric. Each of these areas has a significant 'pull' effect on a number of members of society. Hence the contribution of entities falling within these groupings makes a distinct, albeit often invisible, impact on societal learning. There is a lot of invisible learning taking place within these organisations. The areas as well as the type of learning (informal and non-formal) that takes place within these contexts is extensive and it is the contribution that they make to those who participate and follow their training courses that makes the recognition of such learning so valuable.

The range of invisible learning that takes place within the socio-cultural, religious and political organisations will be each considered in turn in order to provide as much as possible an extensive overview (but impossible to be complete) of this invisible learning taking place in Malta.

3.2.1 Invisible learning within socio-cultural organisations

One can identify a number of formal education institutions which provide training courses without certification and consequently falling within non-formal education alongside formal education. These range from courses, often delivered in the evenings by state training institutions such as the Education Division, University and some of the courses by MCAST, private training providers to other forms of training offered by cultural-oriented organisations as well as European funded programmes are examples of much invisible learning that takes place. It is only in the case that students are prepared for external examinations that such learning may become visible.

The State, which can be considered among the leading providers, offers courses through the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education, including its Lifelong Learning Centre within the Education Division in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport; the Foundation for Educational Services; the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology; the Drama, Music, and Art Schools; the Employment and Training Corporation; as well as the Staff Development Organisation in the Office of the Prime Minister. These institutions amount to a large number of training courses which many times do not lead to any certification or qualification, and often do not lead to any external assessment leading to any qualification. The extent of such learning can be highlighted through statistics issued by the National Statistics Office[7].

7 National Statistics Office (NSO), 9 December 2005 No. : 266/2005, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

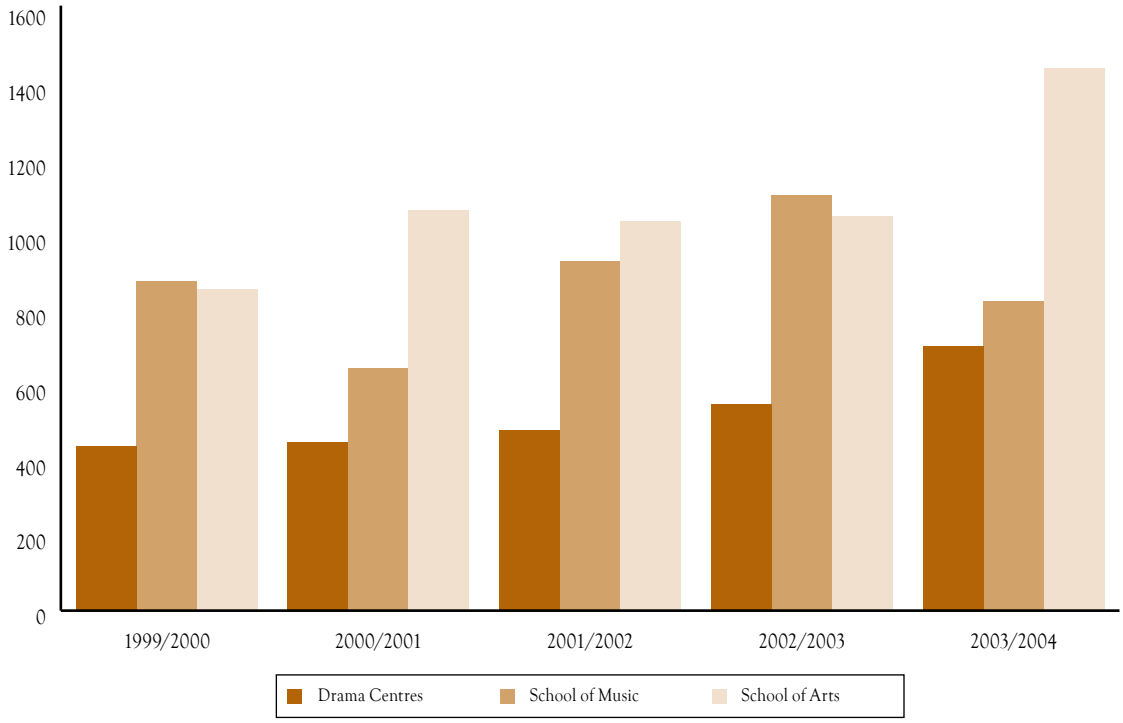
Table 6: **Distribution of students attending Government evening classes centres classified by field of study by age group and sex: 2003/2004**

	0-20		21-30		31-39		40 +		Total		
Field of Study	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	t
Total	*625*	*626*	*864*	*889*	*1303*	*503*	*386*	*1,628*	*3,178*	*3,646*	*6,824*
Business & Administration (Isc 34)	29	44	26	37	8	8	9	12	72	101	173
Mathematics & Statistics (Isc 46)	55	66	16	19	5	5	3	3	79	93	172
Computing (Isc 48)	144	101	210	117	146	58	175	195	675	471	1,146
Life/Physical Science (Isc 42 & Isc 44)	41	39	6	6	3	1	–	4	50	50	100
Arts & Humanities (incl languages) (Isc 21 & Isc 22)	104	231	121	231	149	140	40	93	414	695	1,109
Social & Behavioural Science (Isc 31)	7	9	9	15	7	10	1	4	24	38	62
Environmental Studies (Isc 85)	4	13	1	2	3	–	2	–	10	15	25
Engineering & Engineering Trades (Isc 52)	133	3	171	9	85	1	5	–	394	13	407
Personal Care, Nutrition & Fitness	8	84	22	201	15	72	133	350	178	707	885
Technical/Trade/Craft Courses	6	1	4	–	1	–	–	–	11	1	12
Handicraft	4	26	21	199	9	149	17	958	51	1332	1,383
Building & Construction	37	1	57	2	43	1	–	–	137	4	141
Other	53	8	200	51	829	58	1	9	1,083	126	1,209

During 2004, 15,437 persons had received some form of instruction provided by one of the institutions catering for further education and training. 11,611 persons participated in one of the government's centres, whilst 3,826 were participants in one of the 27 private evening classes or centres that participated in the NSO survey. Substantial increases in participation over the previous year were observed mainly in the Government Evening Classes Centres, where the population increased from 6,600 in 2003 to 6,824 in 2004, an increase of 3.4 per cent. The School of Art and the Drama also registered an increase of 389 or 37.3 per cent and 156 participants or 28.4 per cent respectively. The highest number of participants was aged 40 years & over amounting to 4,346 participants. The next highest number of participants stood at 3,939 within the 0-19 year old age group. Female participation accounted for 52.5 per cent of the total[8].

8 National Statistics Office (NSO), 9 December 2005 No. : 266/2005, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

Figure 5: Student population attending the schools of arts, music and drama:1999/00 - 2003/04[9]



The University of Malta also offers to young people and adults a range of courses at a level of certificate of attendance. There is also the University of the Third Age which organises several courses of general and specific interest to senior citizens. The Malta University Services (MUS) organises short courses generally of a technical, scientific, academic and management nature[10].

One also finds a number of private training institutions which offer training courses in a variety of areas and activities. If one does not include those courses which lead to assessments leading to qualifications (SEC, MATSEC Certificate, ECDL, MBA etc.), one still finds learning in areas involving cultural activities (dancing, music), traditional crafts, languages and sports. The rest of this section provides a review of the main types of provision.

Band Clubs

Band clubs are an important part of Maltese society with every village having one or two band clubs. Apart from their societal contribution, band clubs also provide a service whereby trainee bandsmen are taught music usually in two main sections namely Brass Instruments and Wood Wind Instruments. Such learning is given free of charge as the Band Club seeks to ensure it always has a complement with which it can carry out its activities. At the same time such clubs offer an opportunity for aspiring musicians to come to terms with the music world and to subsequently decide at what level they wish to pursue their talent. It must be said that such learning usually occurs under the supervision of qualified music teachers. The latest statistics[11] show that the total number of bandsmen - both resident and trainee - increased by approximately 6.6 per cent, from 4,116 in 2001 to 4,388 in 2004. Band clubs offer their bandsmen training in music according to the musical instrument of their choice as well as the opportunity to perform in various events. In fact in 2004, a total of 1,287 band programmes were performed throughout Malta and Gozo. Band clubs produced various types of publications in the year 2004. These included books, magazines, audiocassettes and CDs. Eighty-seven books were published in all.

9 National Statistics Office (NSO), 9 December 2005 No. : 266/2005, Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.
10 Eurydice, The Education System in Malta 2006/2007.
11 National Statistics Office (Malta), Cultural Statistics 2004 (2006).

It must also be said that Band Clubs are responsible for organizing the annual festa in many of Malta's towns and villages. Such organisation requires a large amount of learning from that of manufacturing pyrotechnics to art, design, wood and metal work for the construction of street and church decorations as well as the management of financial, human and material resources needed to organize the annual event.

Dancing Schools

Dancing is a skill that is often pursued outside the formal education system. There are a variety of dance typologies ranging from classic to ballet to modern. A number of dance studios are available locally that offer teaching classes in a number of disciplines and children, youths and adults may pursue the line that attracts them most. Such facilities permit the experimentation and potential refinement of skills or the simple enjoyment of acquiring a new skill to be made available to all those wishing to embark upon a new initiative. Usually lessons are on a fee basis. While some training provision prepares learning for qualifications (often foreign boards) and can be considered as formal learning, one also finds a good percentage of other classes which do not lead to formal certification.

During 2004, the amount of time spent in dance lessons averaged 1.2 hours per week for both males and females. Classical ballet, contemporary and Spanish are the types of dance in most demand, with classical ballet involving 1.3 hours for males and 1.8 hours for females, contemporary involving 1.5 hours for males and 1.6 hours for females, and Spanish averaging 1.5 and 1.4 hours a week for males and females respectively. 'Other' types of dance also took up 1.3 hours per week for males and 1.4 hours for females. These 'other' types included hip-hop, character, wheelchair, disco and break dance.

The number of students sitting for dance exams over the years under review has increased - from 842 in 2001 to 1,322 in 2004 - an increase of 57.0 per cent. Of these 1,322, 21 students were males and 1,301 were females. There has been a significant expansion of dance studios over recent years. In the year 2004, the total number of dance students stood at 3,167; an increase of 18.0 per cent over 2003 and 11.5 per cent over 2002. It is also worth noting that in this sector, over 94 per cent of all dance students in 2004 were females. The number of male dance students, which had been on the rise, dropped from 240 in 2003 to 189 in 2004, a decrease of 21.3 per cent. With a 39.4 per cent share of all dance students in 2004, classical ballet was still the most popular genre among local dance students. This was followed by jazz, with a 23.7 per cent share of all dance students. In this year, the majority of male dance students were studying Latin American and ballroom dancing, with 30.9 and 23.7 per cent respectively of all male dance students. A new form of dance – Argentine tango – which was previously not taught in Malta, has begun to be practised.

Sports organisations

There is considerable interest and participation of both children and adults in training in some sport discipline. As individuals attend these classes, they develop particular physical and coordination skills. In 2004, 454 sports organisations were operating in Malta. Football clubs were the most prevalent, making up 19.8 per cent of the total. Martial-art organisations comprised 10.1 per cent of sports organisations, while gyms and boċċi clubs made up 8.4 and 8.2 per cent respectively. Overall, membership of sports organisations has decreased over the four years under review, from 99,236 in 2001 to 94,615 in 2004, a decrease of 4.7 per cent. The age group 5-14 comprised the majority of members, 20.9 per cent of total membership in 2004. Members in the age groups 20-24 and 15-19 were next, with 20.2 and 17.5 per cent respectively. The lowest number of members were aged 50 years and over.

Although not exclusively the domain of men, sports organisations are certainly male-dominated. In 2004, men and boys accounted for 78.0 per cent of all members, with football recorded as the most popular sport among them - 44.2 per cent of total male membership recorded as taking part in this sport. On the other hand, women and girls showed a preference for sports centres, 35.5 per cent, and gyms, 22.3 per cent. The least popular sports were netball for males and billiards & snooker, regatta, and shooting for females.

Social Non-governmental Organisations

The National Statistics office provides some background about the number and range of social non-governmental organisations in Malta.

Out of 149 NGOs surveyed, 38.3 per cent were found to have no members, whilst 49 per cent have more than 30 members. Of these members, 45.6 per cent were coming from NGOs providing human health activities, followed by other organisations with 33.6 per cent. The majority of members for both males and females were aged 65 and over, as 36.4 per cent of the total members fell into this age bracket. Most of the members – 52.7 per cent – were females. Since 2001, the total number of members has decreased by 13.6 per cent. Male membership decreased by 19.8 per cent, whilst that of females decreased by 7.1 per cent. The number of members in organisations providing social work activities with accommodation increased, however a decrease was registered for all other types of organisations[12].

Table 7: Distribution of Non-Governmental Organisations in Malta in 2004[13]

Type of organisation	Main activity				
	Human health activities	Social work activities with accommodation	Social work activities without accommodation	Other organisations	Total organisations
Social	1	1	4	4	10
Religious	–	11	8	6	25
Educational	–	1	6	3	10
Sports	–	–	1	–	1
Philanthropic	2	8	29	7	46
International	–	–	1	–	1
Therapeutic	2	1	5	–	8
Pressure group	–	–	3	5	8
Home	–	33	–	–	33
Support group	–	–	10	8	18
Other	3	–	5	2	10
Total organisations	*8*	*48*	*63*	*30*	*149*

In 2007 the government set up the Commissioner for Non-Governmental organisations as a sign of the importance that such organisations must have within the Maltese community.

Local Councils

Local Councils have become an inherent part of our local government system. In 2004, educational activities were the third most organised activity with 18.8 per cent (178 activities) of the total share and which attracted 7,914 participants. This evidences the role Local Councils have in the non-formal learning component of society. Course content and audience varies and includes languages, crafts & hobbies, art, IT, first aid, sports, trade, drama, parental crafts/skills and management skills amongst others. Although most of the courses do not lead to a formal qualification, Local Councils are proving to be a positive influence on the educational attainment of their residents. This is because they can judge the demands that are likely to exist and tailor learning experiences that educate in areas where the local population can lead a better quality of life with such learning. Thus whether they are courses which supplement children's schooling, or whether they are promoting ICT at all levels in order to foster a more computer literate society or whether they are craft oriented permitting locals to either have a new past time or to delve into entrepreneurial ventures, all these forms of learning are non-formal but leave a determined impact on society.

12 National Statistical Office, 2006, Social Welfare-Oriented-Governmental Organisations 2004: a statistical profile.
13 National Statistical Office, 2006, Social Welfare-Oriented-Governmental Organisations 2004: a statistical profile.

Trade Unions

Unions also play an important role in the non-formal learning process. The two major employee unions, the GWU and the UHM, both have their own training institutions. The Reggie Miller Foundation is the Education Department of the General Workers' Union of Malta. It consists of ten schools, catering for around 5000 students with a compliment of around 100 teachers and lecturers. The Schools cater for the teachings of Languages, Music, Art and Crafts, Theatre and Drama, Information Technology, Health and Safety, Leadership, Academic Subjects, General Courses and Courses held abroad, mainly in the United Kingdom[14].

Within the Union Haddiema Maghqudin, there is the Salvinu Spiteri Foundation, formally set up 2003. The Foundation provides education to members and workers and their families as well as a service to the general public. It also targets the private enterprise, companies and management. All the above seek the help and educational courses and materials of the Reggie Miller Foundation[15]. Most other Unions also focus on their members' education in different manners and according to their specific needs and orientations.

Language learning

A number of institutions, often supported by Embassies also offer forms of learning. Some examples include the Alliance Française de Malte for French, Circolo Dante Alleghieri for Italian and Hispanic studies for Spanish.

The Alliance Française de Malte works to develop an awareness of the French Language and Culture as well as to promote good relations between Malta and France. Every year, the Alliance Française de Malte, admits more than 900 students to its courses and has acquired an excellent reputation in the field of French Language teaching, not only to adolescents but also to adults. A library of books and videotapes are available to members; the Alliance Française also organises social activities on a regular basis. The Alliance Française de Malte plays a major role in culture life in Malta: every Wednesday it shows a French film and regularly organises lectures, exhibitions and concerts[16].

In Spanish, one finds the Circulo Cultural Hispano-Maltes. From 65 students in 1984, the Circulo caters for over 200 students annually spread over 7 classes, including advanced level and conversation[17]. One also finds the Societa' Dante Alleghieri for promoting the Italian language[18]. These are just a few examples of many more if one considers the whole range of English language schools which cater for numerous youngsters and adults who learn English as a foreign language.

The Youth programme managed by the EUPA within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport focuses on non-formal education of young people and youth workers by providing financial support, information, training and a wealth of opportunities to develop new partnerships and mobility across Europe and beyond. Young people are provided with the tools for self-empowerment and become actively involved in society. Up to September 2006, over 500 youths participated in the various Actions of this programme. Participation in this programme provides opportunities for a range of non-formal learning.

EU Programmes: Grundtvig

The Gruntvig programme encompasses all models of learning, whether this takes place in the "formal" or "non formal" system of education for adults, or in more "informal" ways such as autonomous learning, learning by being involved in community organisations or simply through the learning process that goes on in everyday life. The European Union Programmes Agency (EUPU) is responsible for the management and implementation of such programmes.

14 http://www.gwu.org.mt
15 http://www.uhm.org.mt
16 http://site.voila.fr/alliancefr.mt
17 http://www.spanishmaltesecircle.org/
18 http://www.dantemalta.org/SDAMALTAPAGE.htm

3.2.2 Invisible learning within Religious organisations

The Ecclesiastical authorities have long been pioneers in the field of education. The setting up of schools covering formal education was one development. Although regulated under national standards, the Church today still offers the opportunity for other forms of learning, which often remains invisible, in a variety of settings. The provision of such learning by Church organisations is provided to children, youths as well as adults. Here below is a range, but surely non-exhaustive list of informal and non-formal education offered by the Catholic Church.

Christian doctrine teaching to young children

Perhaps the most obvious setting refers to the Christian doctrine classes which are obligatory for children wishing to receive their first Holy Communion (6/7 years) and those wishing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation (11/12 years). These classes, independent of the national religious studies curriculum, are usually held after school hours either by lay catechists or else through the MUSEUM Society. The Society in Malta has 53 Centres for boys [nearly one in every parish] and in some larger parishes sub-branches of the same centre exist. The girl's section has 43 Centres. In the nearby island of Gozo, there are 10 Centres for boys and 7 for girls.

MUSEUM

The main priority of the MUSEUM Society is catechetical work in the parishes. Every evening all the Society's Centres are open for the catechetical formation of children and youths and occasionally adults as well. All members are expected to participate in this activity after their normal day's work. After their catechetical classes, the members participate in a daily one-hour session for their own on-going formation in Church's doctrine and related studies, pedagogical training and communal prayer. Such activities take place on all days of the week including Saturdays and Sundays. Every Wednesday a general meeting of all members of the Society resident in Malta takes place in the Society's Mother House. Additional activities are organised especially for the children to include recreational and related activities. The Society also organises specialised courses for its basis on a national scale[19].

Cana Movement: Similarly, the Church is also involved in providing support through support groups and direct courses to engaged couples, married couples and families. The range of services provided by the CANA movement is wide and includes: compulsory marriage preparation courses; natural family planning; and parental skills courses. Marriage preparation courses are obligatory to all those who want to marry under Catholic faith, while parental skills courses are for parents of children of different ages. The first Parenting Skills Course was organized by Cana in 1989, by a small group of counsellors from Cana Movement. These Courses were received favourably by parents. During the year 2000, 6 courses were organised, with an overall attendance of 90 persons. During the year 2001, another 6 courses were organised, with an attendance of 106 persons[20]. In addition, the Cana movement has a number of support groups which offer counseling to couples in difficulties, and infertile couples.

Initiatives by individual parishes: Moreover, both at a local level (parishes) as well as at a central level (Curia), courses for those persons wishing to involve themselves deeper in the teachings of the Church are organised. Such activities depend upon the individual initiatives of parish priests who are sensitive to interests and needs within the community. One also finds Religious institutions such as the Paolo Friere Institute that cater for the educational needs of the community.

19 http://www.sdcmuseum.org
20 http://www.canamovement.org/

It can be concluded that the Church provides many opportunities for learning within the community, not only in Religious Studies but also in other areas of basic literacy and cultural issues. The contribution that the Church makes often remains invisible as individuals following these course do not get the opportunity to validate their learning in accumulating skills and competences which can lead to certification.

3.3 Invisible learning within youth organisations Youth Programmes

The Youth sector is another sector where one can identify forms of invisible learning taking place in different forms. Youth organisations organise a number of courses that are of interest to their members. They also offer opportunities for youths to participate in activities and in organising activities which in themselves serve as learning opportunities as they expose youths to experiences where they can develop many competences in an informal way.

Table 8: Distribution of Youth Organisations in Malta, 2004[21]

Activity	Number	% total
Social	51	20.1
Religious	57	22.4
Political	9	3.5
Cultural	46	18.1
Educational	43	16.9
Sports	6	2.4
Environment	4	1.6
Philanthropic	20	7.9
International	12	4.7
Therapeutic	1	0.4
Other	5	2.0
*Total **	*254*	*100.0*

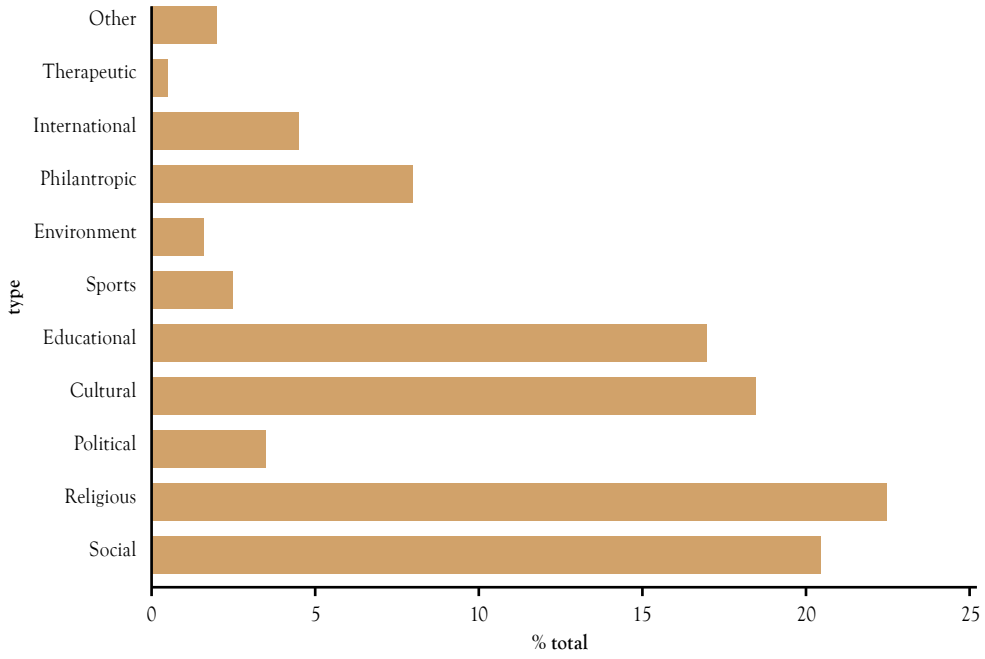
A survey carried out by the National Statistics Office shows that during the period 2001-2004[22], there was an overall increase in the number of young persons who became members of the various registered NGOs. Accordingly, the study noted that membership increased by 12.7 per cent, from 63,476 in 2001 to 71,509 in 2004.

The largest proportion of NGO members in 2004 – 24.9 per cent – were aged 20-24 years, followed by young persons in the 15-19 year age group, 20.3 per cent. Of the total youth population aged 5-29 years in 2004, 45.1 per cent, or 63,122, were engaged in various NGOs, an increase of 13.3 per cent over the preceding year. In 2004, the majority of young NGO members were in the 20-24 and 15-19 year age groups, with 59.2 and 50.8 per cent of total youth membership respectively. The majority of these were male; in fact young men accounted for 61.5 per cent of total membership. However, female participation is on the increase: 38.5 per cent in 2004 compared to 35.0 per cent in 2003 and 34.3 per cent in 2002.

21 National Statistics Office (NSO), 2005, No. : 169/2005, Youth Organisations 2004. http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1248

22 National Statistics Office (NSO), 2005, No. : 169/2005, Youth Organisations 2004. http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1248

Figure 6: Percentage distribution of Youth Organisations by type: 2004



The youth sector thus provides a context within which invisible learning takes place and that validation of informal and non-formal learning can serve to make this learning visible.

Table 9: Distribution of Members in Youth organisations by age and gender[23]

	2002			2003			2004		
Age group	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
5–9	9,141	1,684	10,825	8,963	1,618	10,581	8,264	1,478	9,742
10–14	6,396	2,645	9,041	6,373	3,044	9,417	6,160	2,546	8,706
15–19	5,965	5,029	10,994	6,027	5,108	11,135	6,899	7,584	14,483
20–24	5,651	2,991	8,642	5,834	3,129	8,963	10,109	7,691	17,800
25–29	5,013	1,907	6,920	4,759	2,041	6,800	7,550	4,841	12,391
30 +	5,162	2,049	7,211	5,196	2,123	7,319	5,003	3,384	8,387
Total	*37,328*	*16,305*	*53,633*	*37,152*	*17,063*	*54,215*	*43,985*	*27,524*	*71,509*

Youth initiatives

One also finds that there exist programmes or initiatives such as SCOOPS and Youth Enterprise for compulsory and post-secondary level students respectively. One also finds the President's Award which requires youths to carry out actions and activities. Such initiatives help youths develop particular competences which are not usually valued in terms of assessment within the formal educational curriculum of other qualifications. None the less, many times, youths who have participated in such activities are usually easily identified through their proactive attitude and personality which helps them in their career advancement at a later stage. The benefits obtained through participation in such initiatives should be validation straight away such that employers and further and higher education institutions can make a more knowledgeable decision about employment and other opportunities to offer to youths in their lifelong learning and work life.

23 National Statistics Office (NSO), 2005, No. : 169/2005, Youth Organisations 2004. http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1248

3.4 Invisible learning at the workplace

A lot of learning also takes place at the workplace. Many are those hairdressers who have learnt the trade through direct experience assisting other hairdressers, or mechanics who are able to dismantle and put together again a car's engine with such facility. Likewise, many are those who have learnt maintenance of equipment and tools, customer care, marketing, accounting etc. as a result of experience at the workplace and in being assisted by more experienced colleagues. Enterprises also provide training opportunities to their workers, particularly those who show commitment and are quick learners, as they grow within the company and take on more and more responsibilities. Bigger enterprises have developed their own in-house training departments, others commission training from external providers while others, often the micro-enterprises offer learning opportunities through experience with more able workers.

Whatever way workers learn, it remains that learning takes place during the period of a person's working life. Unfortunately, most of this learning remains invisible or else difficult to identify and quantify as the tools to measure and record such learning are as yet not developed. This places the individual worker at a disadvantage as one cannot show what she/he has learnt during work experience, and may not serve in any way to lead to any type of certification. Any investment in further education by an individual cannot be easily planned to the best of the individual's benefit. Employers also need to become more aware of this invisible learning. It can help them know and map the skills and competences which their workers possess. If they have such mapping, then staff professional development can be better managed to the benefit of both the enterprise and the worker.

Data, coming out of the December 2002 issue of the Labour Force Survey (LFS)[24], sheds light on the extent to which persons in employment engage in training and education courses. Only 6.1 per cent of employed persons were found to be engaged in a training or education programme in the month under review. Male and female employees seem to be taking up opportunities for training and further education on an equal basis.

Table 10: Training or education courses undertaken by persons in employment

	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
No	96,114	94.1	43,273	93.5	139,387	93.9
Yes	6,006	5.9	3,010	6.5	9,016	6.1
Total	*102,120*	*100.0*	*46,283*	*100.0*	*148,403*	*100.0*

The values here may not appear to be great but these may be including formal programmes of learning, even within the workplace and do not include many ad hoc training within small enterprises. This is reflecting in the different modes of learning which are identified, these all referring to specific instruction, which excludes informal learning.

Table 11: Type of training undertaken by persons in employment

	No	%
Classroom Instruction	2,493	27.7
Instruction in a working environment	3,631	40.3
Instruction combining both work experience	1,969	21.8
Other type of instruction	923[U]	10.2
Total	*9,016*	*100.0*

[U] = Under-represented

An indication of the amount of investment in workers' learning can also be obtained from the survey carried out by the National Statistic Office in 2001 with 1683 enterprises[25]. Although this study can be considered to be quite dated, it still serves the purpose to highlight the investment in learning which as yet remains mostly invisible. The survey was undertaken

24 National Statistics Office, (2003), Press Release; Contrasts in Workers' Participation in Training and Further Education, NO, 120/2003, http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=540

25 National Statistics Office, (2001), Continuing Vocational Training Survey, Malta: National Statistics Office.

among 1,683 enterprises with activities in Quarrying, Manufacturing, Electricity, Gas and Water Supply, Construction, Wholesale, Retail and Repairs, Hotels and Restaurants, Transport and Communications, Financial Intermediation, Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities and Other Community and Social and Personal Services Activities.

The greater part of the enterprises participating in the survey which had a training plan/programme stated that continuous vocational training (CVT) was a matter for permanent discussion and agreement between the management and the employees. Another 36.0 per cent of this category felt that CVT provided recognition to the enterprise, while 57.7 per cent maintained that a CVT plan resulted in increased commitment to and improved knowledge of the enterprise's training programme. Such replies provide a strong argument in going a step further and making this learning invested in by enterprises visible by making it certifiable.

Table 12: **Enterprises having a written CVT plan/programme by economic sector**[26]

Economic Sector	Enterprises	CVT programme	% of category
Quarrying	10	0	0.00
Manufacturing	415	59	14.21
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	4	2	50.00
Construction	92	3	3.25
Wholesail & Retail, Repair of Vehicles, Personal & H/hold goods	398	45	11.31
Hotels & Restaurants	310	53	17.10
Transport, Storage & Communication	122	19	15.57
Financial Intermediation	50	21	42.00
Real Estate, Renting & Business Activities	192	30	15.63
Other Community, Social & Personal Service Activities	90	7	7.78
Total	*1,683*	*239*	*14.20*

Of the surveyed firms, 14.1 per cent, possessed an in-house training centre. Almost 991 enterprises – 59.0 per cent - provided CVT to their employees. Another 437 or 26.0 per cent, provided CVT courses. The majority of CVT course providers – 85.4 per cent – had their CVT courses managed externally. However, another 64.1 per cent had other CVT courses managed internally.

Table 13: **Sectoral distribution of enterprises with an internal training centre**[27]

Economic Sector	Enterprises	Enterprises with a training centre	% of enterprise category
Quarrying	10	0	0.00
Manufacturing	415	58	13.97
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	4	4	100.00
Construction	92	4	4.34
Wholesail & Retail, Repair of Vehicles, Personal & H/hold goods	398	46	11.56
Hotels & Restaurants	310	47	15.16
Transport, Storage & Communication	122	15	12.30
Financial Intermediation	50	14	28.00
Real Estate, Renting & Business Activities	*192*	*35*	*18.23*
Other Community, Social & Personal Service Activities	90	14	15.55
Total	*1,683*	*237*	*14.08*

26 Ibid. p.15.

27 National Statistics Office, (2001), Continuing Vocational Training Survey, Malta: National Statistics Office.

Other forms of training were provided by a varying number of enterprises. 734 enterprises had planned periods of learning, instruction or practical experience for their employees. Another 533 practised planned learning through job rotation, while 230 enterprises opted for learning and quality circles. Yet another 274 enterprises encouraged self-learning through open distance learning, while a further 527 listed attendance at conferences as a preferred method of instruction for their employees.

Among the enterprises that did not provide any CVT courses, 65.0 per cent felt that the existing skills of their employees corresponded to the skills required by their enterprise, 52.0 per cent recruited people who already had the required skills, while 21.7 per cent felt that the persons employed were too busy to engage in CVT.

Table 14: Sectoral distribution of enterprises that provided 'Other' forms of training[28]

Economic Sector	Planned periods for learning	Planned learning through job rotation	Attendance at learning quality circles	Self-learning through open distance learning	Instruction at conferences
Quarrying	–	–	–	–	–
Manufacturing	226	189	57	55	119
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	2	0	0	2	4
Construction	40	29	11	5	10
Wholesail & Retail, Repair of Vehicles, Personal & H/hold goods	153	96	46	51	134
Hotels & Restaurants	98	77	30	43	58
Transport, Storage & Communication	59	36	15	36	60
Financial Intermediation	32	23	14	19	34
Real Estate, Renting & Business Activities	90	61	44	51	86
Other Community, Social & Personal Service Activities	34	22	13	12	22
Total	*734*	*533*	*230*	*274*	*527*

From the survey it was deduced that a total of 28,705 employees participated in CVT courses, of which 20,013 were males and 8,692 were females. These employees spent 1,068,232 working hours in CVT courses. Each participant spent a weighted average of 37.2 working hours in CVT courses. The average working time in CVT courses for females stood at 48.3 hours, while that in respect of males stood at 32.2 hours. Enterprises spent an estimated Lm3.2 million on CVT courses. Around 27.0 per cent was invested in CVT courses by the surveyed manufacturing enterprises, while another 23.2 per cent of the total cost was expended by enterprises in the Transport, Storage and Communications economic sector. Yet another significant proportion or 17.7 per cent was spent by the Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities sector.

The cost of CVT courses per participant averaged Lm112.5. Hotels and Restaurants spent an average of Lm42.6 on each CVT course participant. This average moved up to Lm86.8 in Manufacturing, Lm103.2 in Electricity, Gas and Water Supply, Lm173.6 in Transport, Storage and Communications, and Lm272.7 in Construction. Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities expended a high average of Lm396.2 on every person participating in CVT courses.

28 National Statistics Office, (2001), Continuing Vocational Training Survey, Malta: National Statistics Office.

Just over 50.0 per cent of CVT course providers – 437 enterprises – introduced evaluation procedures to measure the effect of CVT courses provided to their employees. 67.4 per cent proceeded with this evaluation process by measuring the satisfaction level of the trained persons after their period of training. Another 54.8 per cent introduced indicators to determine whether the newly-acquired skills were applicable to their work. From the 216 enterprises that did not introduce measures to evaluate the effect of training, 26.4 per cent felt that it was not a priority for the enterprise to measure the impact of CVT courses. Another 17.1 per cent did not have these evaluation procedures because they felt that they were too time-consuming.

The data presented here is eight years old and training has become more prominent and important in Malta's economy today as it becomes more specialized and service oriented. It is in view of giving greater value to the investment in workers that such learning should also be made visible.

3.5 Conclusion

In reviewing all these forms of invisible learning, what transpires is that Malta is a learning society. As a learning society, and in having to be competitive in a global economy, it is imperative that such learning no longer remains invisible, but is made visible. This is necessary in order to empower Maltese citizens as well as to help the Maltese economy keep its competitive edge despite its small scale. Making such learning visible has also become a social responsibility in empowering citizens such that they are able to have more opportunities and live a better quality of life.

CHAPTER 4

The Implementation Framework of invisible learning in Malta

The previous chapter highlighted the great amount of invisible learning already taking place in Malta. Such learning experiences cut across various areas of study: from leisure and crafts to academic and cultural, to more vocational and work-oriented learning. One also finds that many institutions, organize within formal education systems structured learning that still remains invisible. The certificate of attendance which is often handed out at the end of a training course or a programme of studies does not have much value in eyes of our educational authorities and within the labour market. Citizens, thus, so far have no opportunity to valorize their learning and obtain recognition at home, in social circles and/or in the labour market.

There are only few instances in Malta where informal and non-formal learning is validated in a way to give individuals access to education and training courses without having the required official certification. The maturity clause at the University of Malta allows adults aged 23 or more to apply and follow courses even if they do not possess the normal entry requirements based on official certification. In the case of the Institution of International Studies, the APEL – Accreditation of Prior Experiential learning is used where candidates applying to follow courses are given points for their work experience in the tourism industry. The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) have developed their own ways of skills testing, particularly in the case of unemployed seeking work. There are also enterprises which are working to validate their learners' informal and non-formal learning[1]. There is, however, no national framework for the validation of invisible learning, and those which exist do not use common tools of assessment and evaluation. The level of recognition also varies in the labour market.

4.1 Rising up to the Challenge

It is thus one of the country's major challenges to make invisible learning visible. Learning can only be made visible through the process of validation which provides learners with certification of the learning that they have acquired in different ways: informal and non-formal. So far, Malta is able to provide certification only to those learners following formal courses within formal educational institutions.

There are two routes which training institutions can choose to take. Those institutions which provide organised and structured but uncertified education and training can decide to become accredited training institutions. Recognition as a training institution by the Malta Qualifications Council allows these institutions to provide certification (full or partial) for the courses which they organise. In such circumstances, the institutions would join the formal education sector.

1 European Inventory on Validation of informal and non-formal learning: Malta by Cedefop (2007), makes reference to Playmobil and their multi-skilling programme.

Then there is the second option where learning institutions can retain their informal nature of learning, but allow learners to validate their learning. In such circumstances it may be possible either for the institutions itself to be involved in the validation process or else learners can apply for validation to other external bodies. In order to allow learners to validate their learning through this second path, there needs to be a national framework which ensures the quality of the process in order to set and maintain standards as well as give credibility and recognition to the whole process within education and the labour markets.

Validation of invisible learning should enable learners to continue their lifelong-learning path. The validation process should have clear and specific objectives which need to be made clear to all key players from the start. In aiming to give value to what individuals already know and can do and to promote lifelong learning within society, the objectives for the process of validation of invisible learning can be listed to include:

- Validation to allow access to individuals to further and higher education and training leading to a qualification within the National Qualifications Framework. This means that individuals who do not possess the usual required entry qualifications can ask to have their prior learning validated in order to make a case for being accepted into the various training courses;

- Validation to allow partial exemption from education and training courses at further and higher education level leading to a qualification within the National Qualifications Framework. Validation of prior learning can provide individuals with the possibility of being given credits from within a said course. This implies that the individual does not need to complete the whole course but to top up that learning which she still needs to gain in order to achieve full certification;

- Validation for full award of qualifications included within the National Qualifications Framework. Individuals should have the right to present their prior knowledge in view of obtaining full qualification which is recognized within the National Qualifications Framework. This means that an award can be given without the need of any further training. The award should entitle the individual for further studies at a higher level within the National Qualifications Framework;

- Validation of learning of job-related competences for professional recognition and development, providing the potential to promotion at work and better employment opportunities within the labour market. Individuals should have the opportunity to validate their vocational and professional prior learning in view of obtaining certification for a job of profession. In such situation, the award is linked to the National Qualifications Framework but is more work oriented than traditional academic qualifications. In some cases the certification can act as a requirement to practice a profession.

This chapter aims to provide the main aspects of the framework needed to enable Maltese citizens to have their invisible learning validated should they want to do so. Through the proposed framework, all invisible learning within Maltese society can become visible. It will enable Maltese citizens to obtain recognition for what they already know and can do as well as have the opportunity to participate fully in lifelong learning. It also leads to more employment opportunities within the labour market. Validation of learning boosts the local economy as the knowledge, skills and competences of Maltese workers become visible, allowing the economy to be competitive within the global economy.

4.2 What are the benefits of validating invisible learning?

The validation of invisible learning can be of value to different stake holders. One can identify how the process can benefit individuals; education and training institutions, as well as employers themselves. The first question, however, is that of identifying those individuals who can benefit from validating their informal and non formal learning. One can identify a wide range of learners who would benefit from the validation process to help them go back to formal education or as a contribution towards a programme of study within the academic and vocational track. The learners who would benefit can thus be listed to include[2]:

2 This list was adapted from The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Council, 2004, Volume 2, Recognition of Prior Learning

- adults returning to education to complete new or further studies;
- the unemployed seeking recognition for skills gained through informal learning. This applies particularly to those who have few or no formal qualifications;
- people wanting to improve their existing qualifications in order to improve their opportunities of employment within the labour market;
- those wanting to re-train or change careers, and consequently want to have certification in a different area of work;
- students at MCAST, University of Malta and other institutions such that they can be exempted from a number of units within courses of study or training;
- people who have undertaken non-formal learning or training in the workplace or within other non-formal training organisations;
- people who have gained a range of skills and knowledge through volunteering or through activities or projects within their community;
- people who have been out of the education system for a long time and who may lack formal qualifications, as well as self-confidence as learners, but want to return back to the labour market;
- people who have disabilities of some kind, and consequently encountered difficulties in normal formal schooling but who have had informal and non-formal learning experiences;
- school-aged students who have participated in many extra-curricular activities;
- self-taught individuals who have the aptitude, the skills and the competence to do specific jobs which could range form craft level to technical to academic.

This list is not exhaustive but includes a wide range of individuals who would benefit from having their learning validated.

Validation of learning is considered to be of benefit to the different key players. It is a process through which much stands to be gained by individuals validating their learning; education and training institutions; as well as employers encouraging their workers to validate their learning.

Benefits for Learners

Individuals stand to gain directly and indirectly from validating their invisible learning. Validation leads to mainly three major benefits, these include:

- Increased self-confidence as learners: The process of reflection that the individual goes through in recognizing the range and value of their invisible learning often leads individuals to gain self-confidence as learners. This can act as motivation to continue learning.

- The opportunity to plan better one's career: Particularly in the case of formative assessment, the process is coupled with career guidance support which helps individuals not only to recognize and validate what they have learnt, but also helps them to plan their future learning with a career prospect in mind;

- Access to better and more informed career guidance support: The validation process in itself depends on the quality of career guidance and support from tutors. This guidance does not only help individuals with the validation process but in better planning of their career. Validation thus offers individuals the opportunity to think on what direction they would like to give their career;

- Opens up the opportunity for lifelong learning: Validating one's own learning not only provides the real opportunity to be accepted in training courses but initiates individuals in a learning path which they would not have otherwise realized that they had followed so far. Validation thus acts as a means of providing opportunities to more learning.

Benefits for education and training Providers

Education and training institutions also stand to benefit from validating learners' invisible learning. In view of the fact that most of the people seeking validation of invisible learning tend to be adults (who already possess work experience against most of the youths following initial education and training courses) brings with it a number of benefits:

- Increases access and widens participation of non-traditional learners: The validation of invisible learning will make accessible education and training courses to individuals which would have never been eligible following the formal entry qualification requirements. This provides education and training institutions the opportunity to attract a more diverse group of student cohort. Of particular benefit is that the most likely candidates using the validation of invisible learning would be candidates with a number of years of work experience. These learners will bring with them an added value to the learners' cohort as they include a range of knowledge and skills base;

- Allows education and training institutions to develop more transparent systems of validation of invisible learning: The implementation of a fully quality assured system of validation of invisible learning for access and exemption from courses ensures that the process is more transparent, impartial and gives greater value to the individuals who use the system;

- Promotes the development of career guidance provision in education and training institutions: Since the validation process relies on the provision of support by tutors and/or career guidance providers, education and training institutions have the opportunity to invest in the provision of better career guidance which can, with experience, identify learners' needs before entry.

Benefits to Employers

Validation of invisible learning taking place in the workplace can bring a number of benefits to employers. Validation of invisible learning can be considered to:

- Promote better planning and staff development strategies within enterprises: Many enterprises already invest in the training of their personnel, but so far it has rarely been officially validated. Introducing the opportunity to validate learning leads to better directed staff development and investment;

- Serves to increase workers' motivation and interest in workplace practice: When workers' experiences are being valued and certified, learners have an added motivation to be more involved in their work as a learning process and leads to better production;

- Allows enterprises to have more cost effective investment in personnel: Validation of learning in the work place enables individuals to obtain exemptions from education and training courses. This reduces the amount of time needed to complete a qualification, consequently requiring less time away from the workplace.

- Promotes the generation to new ideas and developments: Workers involved in validating their invisible learning are also more likely to generate new ideas and developments in the workplace as a result of reflection on their own practice;

- Better Employee retention: When enterprises invest in their workers, it improves employee retention, reducing recruitment and training costs. This reduces costs within the enterprise.

There are overall many benefits to be gained from implementing the validation of invisible learning in Malta. This, however, also comes with the need for the different players to work together. Education and training institutions need to collaborate with the Malta Qualifications Council as the regulator, in order to share experiences of good practice and find solutions to common problems. Education and Training institutions also need to become closer to working environments as they learn to validate learning taking place on the workplace. Enterprises also need to grow closer to education and training institutions as they become more aware of learning within their workplace.

It is however government, through the designated institution and within a legal framework that must back politically and financially, the initiative to validate the many hidden skills and competences of Malta's labour workforce.

4.3 The need for a legal Framework

There is so far no legislation which regulates the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Malta. The only reference that we find is within Legal Notice 347/2005 (which describes the role of the Malta Qualifications Council) in the description of the qualification levels 1 and 3. Level 1 qualification is stated to fall mainly within compulsory education and allows a person to enter unskilled work. There is also a specific reference to learning which can also be achieved through adult learning programmes and through non-formal and informal learning opportunities. The mention within level 3 qualification recognizes that non formal learning also takes place within the work place, particularly within a level qualification that leads to skilled jobs. The legal notice acknowledges that non-formal learning takes place through work and basic training in an occupational field.

The regulation of the National Qualifications Framework is under the responsibility of the Malta Qualifications Council. Legal Notice 347/2005 which sets up the Malta Qualifications Council states that its overall objective is to steer the development of the National Qualifications Framework and oversee the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework and which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

The MQC has also been given the responsibility to:

(a) establish and maintain a qualifications framework for the development, accreditation and award of professional and vocational qualifications, other than degrees, based on standards of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes to be acquired by learners;
(b) promote and facilitate life-long learning access, transfer and progression;
(c) foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta under these regulations.

Among the functions of the Council related to the validation of informal and non-formal learning one finds the following:

- promoting and maintaining the National Qualifications Framework and establishing policies and criteria on which the Framework is based;
- approving and ensuring the publication of national standards of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes for each development sector;
- endorsing and ensuring the publication of the procedures to be implemented by training agencies offering programmes of education and training for access, transfer and progression;
- ensuring that such standards and procedures as are referred to in these regulations are implemented;
- endorsing certificates awarded by training agencies;
- keeping and issuing official records of certificates awarded.

At the time that the legal notice was published, there was interest in lifelong learning but not as yet on the validation of invisible learning. The legal notice thus makes reference to lifelong learning and promoting access to transfer and progression, but there is no direct reference to the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

On reviewing existing legislation in other countries, one can consider France and Finland as good examples for reference. France has included in its legislation the right for individuals to validate their learning. In the 1970s the *ECAP – Evaluation des competences et aptitudes professionnelles* permitted many workers to valorize their learning and continuing vocational courses. In the 1980s legislation permitted valorisation of learning to be taken into consideration for entry into higher education. The VAP 85' specified that any person aged at least 20 years who had ceased studying for a minimum of 2 years could apply for a place in Higher education through the validation of his/her experience instead of presenting official qualifications.

A similar pattern in legislation can be observed in the case of professional skills where a law passed in 1991 giving all workers with at least five years professional experience the legal right to obtain a *Bilan de Competences*. Further legislation in 1992 enabled the concept of *Validation des Acquis Professionnels VAP 92'* to be used for exemptions for qualifications awarded by

Ministries. This law was extended to other qualifications and in 2002 the Social Modernisation Act extended this model of qualification to allow complete qualifications to be awarded on the basis of knowledge gained through experience.

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is also legislated in Finland. The Vocational Qualifications Act 306/1994 and the Act on Adult Vocational Education of 1998 legislated the existence of competence-based qualifications. The latest decree 794/200 of 2005 governs validation in higher education. This law brought about a positive impact on the development of more coherent and reliable validation methods for the sector.

Why is there need for legislation?

Legislation in Malta for the validation of existing invisible learning is necessary for a number of reasons. Through legislation, government can provide citizens the right to validate their invisible learning as well as set the objectives for which to take place. Legislation is also needed to specify the body which is to carry the role and responsibility of regulating the validation process by undertaking the following tasks:

- set the standards and principles which are to be followed,
- regulate the bodies responsible for validating learning outcomes,
- ensure that quality assurance systems are put in place, that learners obtain a fair judgment,
- monitor the validation process as well as
- act as catalyst to promote validation of as much invisible learning as possible.

It is also essential for legislation to ensure that any validation of invisible learning leads to access to formal education and training courses, exemptions from parts of training courses; as well as full qualification awards. The first step towards implementing a framework for the validation of all invisible learning in Malta is therefore legislation.

4.4 Key principles for Validation of Invisible learning in Malta

Similar to the purposes of the progress report of 2003[3], the framework for validation is being seen in relation to:

- formal education and training; any validation taking place leads to certification within the National Qualifications Framework and allowing individuals to access, obtain exemption as well as full awards;

- the labour market (enterprises, branches and sectors); validation is to give value to learning within the workplace, recognize skills and competences learnt within the working environment, allow sectors to identify the knowledge, skills and competences for the different jobs, and give enterprises the chance to invest in their own workers and plan in-house training with a view of better career development;

- to voluntary work; although not much has been said with respect to invisible learning within voluntary work, it also falls within invisible learning and the contribution that such experiences give to individuals can be validated as these organisations offer both non-formal and informal learning.

In line with the key principles developed at the European level, the national framework for the validation of invisible learning in Malta is based on a similar outlook adapted to the local situation. These key principles form the basis on which this framework is being proposed and include:

3 European Commission, Directorate for Education and Culture, (2003), Implementation of 'Education and Training 2010 work programme: validation of non-formal and informal learning contribution of the Commission Expert Group.

- The purpose of validation, as already highlighted, is to make visible all invisible learning. The purpose is for both formative and summative forms of assessment. Validation of learning outcomes is to support lifelong learning, employability and active citizenship, facilitating progression in education and training, integration in the labour market as well as organisational and personal development.

- Individual Entitlements Validation of learning is be a voluntary process and only on the decision of the individual. Private and public organisations promoting validation should base the process on social dialogue. In both summative and formative assessment, individuals should have the right to appeal a validation result. The result of the validation process is the property of the individual and as such is covered by the Data Protection Act.

- Responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders: Individuals are entitled to career guidance supporting them to prepare for the validation process as well in developing a career path. Where possible, the use of common European instruments and formats such as the EUROPASS, are to be promoted. All organisations providing invisible learning whether they are training institutions, voluntary organisations or enterprises should provide support to individuals wanting to validate their learning.

- Confidence and Trust: The validation process must be based on clear standards, guidelines on how assessment is conducted, following transparent procedures, and availability of and access to information.

- Impartiality: Professionals in the role of assessors in the validation process need to be impartial, follow a code of conduct, and involved in initial and continuous training. They also need to network across different sectors as well as with key players involved in the validation process.

- Credibility and legitimacy: can be fostered through the inclusion of different stake holders at all the different levels in order to ensure impartiality.

These key principles are to be reflected within the whole framework for the validation process in Malta in order to ensure that citizens receive a just and impartial judgment of their invisible learning.

4.5 The structure of the validation framework

The main aspects of the national framework needed for the validation of invisible learning in Malta involves the setting up of legislation as well as different structures adequately supported at the political and financial levels. The need for legislation governing this framework has already been highlighted. Legislation needs to specify the role that the Malta Qualifications Council is to take up as regulator in the validation process.

The main responsibilities of The Malta Qualifications Council as regulator are seen to be the following:

- setting up sector skills units which set standards of knowledge, skills and competences for the different job responsibilities, identify and accredit those institutions which provide invisible learning, draw up guidelines to be followed in the validation process, as well as have its own external verifiers responsible for monitoring the validation process.

- having the appropriate administrative and financial infrastructure for carrying out the validation process, even though it is not to be its exclusive responsibility. These different structures are better described in the figure below.

Figure 7: Main framework for the validation of invisible learning

Government Legislation
Sets framework principles and identifies MQC as the regulator

MQC

- Sets up sector skills units responsible for drawing up standards;
- Identifies and accredits institutions involved in invisible learning;
- Draws up guidelines for the validation process;
- Develops in-house infrastructure for validation process and/or draws up standards for the accreditation of institutions involved in the validation process; and
- Appoints the external verifiers responsible for monitoring the validation process.

4.5.1 Setting up skills sector units to identify National Occupational Standards

The first step in the validation process is to identify the different knowledge, skills and competences required to perform particular jobs and responsibilities at work. This is to be achieved through the sector skills units which need to be set up by the Malta Qualifications Council. The remit of these sector skills units is that of:

- identifying the different jobs involved in their particular sector;
- identifying and describing the knowledge, skills and competences required for individuals to be able to perform the different specific jobs;
- pegging a qualification level on the National Qualifications Framework to the different job levels; and
- ensuring that standards are respected in the validation of invisible learning by validation institutions.

These specific objectives will not only serve to set the standards for validation of learning, but the units will also help reduce skills gaps and shortages, emphasize labour market needs, and act as catalysts to improve productivity, business as well as public service performance. They can also work to boost the skills and competences of everyone in the sector's workforce.

Table 15: List of Sectors proposed by MQC[4]

Agribusiness	Engineering
Art and Design	Hairdressing and Beauty Services
Arts and Social Sciences	Hospitality
Business, Administration and Management	Land and Sea based industries
Care	Manufacturing
Communication and the Media	Performing Arts
Computing and Information Technology	Pyrotechnics
Construction	Retail and Distribution
Education and Training	Science and Mathematics
Emergency and Security services	Sport and Leisure
Entertainment	Transport

The number of possible sectors can be many and can change as the country's economic growth changes direction depending on local and global requirements.

4 *Valuing All Learning*, Volume II Guidelines for a VET System for Malta's NQF, MQC publication, April 2007.

To have an idea of the range of possible sectors, one can look at the Sector Skills Councils set up and networked in the United Kingdom. The different sectors identified included are listed in Annex 1 which also provides further detail on what each council includes within its sector.

In order to ensure social dialogue, it is important for the members of the skill sector units to include representatives of the different key players within each sector. This means that these units need to include representatives of employers and employer associations' representative; workers and professionals within the sector; trade union representatives; representatives of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and/or the Employment and Training Corporation; as well as representatives of training institutions in the sector.

The Malta Qualifications Council has a regulatory role with respect to the Skill Sector Units. As the regulator, the Malta Qualifications Council is to ensure that:

- there is consistent, high-quality standards across the different sectors established;
- skills provision, mainly within the vocational sector, is designed to meet current labour market sector needs;
- minimum cover for sectors without Sector Skills Units is catered for in other ways;
- that European key competences[5] are also covered in the work of the Sector Skills Units; and
- sharing of best practice and bench-marking between the different Sector Skills Units[6].

The Malta Qualifications Council could thus be responsible for ensuring that the skill sector units function well, are networked and share their learning experiences in order to improve their work and service for the benefit of all Maltese citizens.

4.5.2 Validation of institutions, organisation, programmes engaged in invisible learning

In order to allow individuals to validate their learning outside formal education, it is important to identify where such 'other' learning takes place. In order to facilitate the process of identifying where there is invisible learning taking place, the Malta Qualifications Council plans would be prepared to compile a list of accredited institutions which provide these 'other forms of learning'. This list will include all those organisations which provide:

- Structured courses with only a certificate of attendance: These courses can be provided either by formal educational institutions alongside other courses leading to qualifications, or institutions which organise courses which have no certification. In this case these institutions can decide to formalize their learning and obtain accreditation for the courses followed. This would make these courses part of formal education. On the other hand, they can decide to remain within the non-formal sector and form part of the network of institutions which support their learners in presenting themselves for the validation of their invisible learning;

- Organisations which provide other forms of organised learning: As has been highlighted in chapter 2, there are organisations such as NGOs which organise training for their members. This training does not form part of any particular training organisation but promotes learning just the same. These organisations provide many experiences in invisible learning and are thus eligible to be included in the list;

- Organisations which provide informal learning: Membership in organisations, such as NGOs and other organisations provide opportunities and experiences to individuals to acquire knowledge, skills and competences informally as a consequence of their participation in activities; and

- Organisations/enterprises which provide on the job learning while persons are doing their daily job: Many are those enterprises which provide workers with the opportunity to learn. They can either allow their workers to learn by attaching them to more experienced workers who help them acquire new responsibilities. Other enterprises provide in-house training to their personnel. In both cases, invisible learning takes place.

5 The MQC has published the learning objectives for levels 1-3 of the Key Competences: http://www.mqc.gov.mt/files/kc.pdf

6 Adapted from the role of the Sector Skills Development Agency, U.K., http://www.ssda.org.uk/

It is the aim of the Malta Qualifications Council to help institutions become aware of the learning opportunities that they provide to their members and/or employees. MQC is also committed to help these institutions to become aware of the sectors within which they can provide invisible learning. It will thus provide a system through which organisations and enterprises will be able to register with the Malta Qualifications Council and become institutions recognized to provide invisible learning. The Malta Qualifications Council would also be prepared to build a database of such organisations for each of the sectors. Application to be included in the database will be always open and there will be no limit to the number of submissions or organisations included in the database.

4.5.3 Validation of invisible learning

The main purposes of the validation process have already been highlighted as well as the overall steps to be involved in the validation process. This process varies according to the purpose for which it is to take place. The purpose can include validation for gaining access to education and training; validation for exemption from education and training courses; and/or validation for the award of a full qualification. Each of these cases provides the link between invisible learning, work, and the National Qualifications Framework. Although each of the three main purposes is similar, the process involved may vary. Each process will thus be considered separately.

Validation process for gaining access to Education and Training institutions

One of the purposes of validation of invisible learning is to allow individuals who do not possess the entry qualifications for academic and vocational courses, to make the case for acceptance. Candidates need to show that they possess the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to be able to follow the said course of studies successfully.

There are two possible paths that learners can follow in order to use their invisible learning to gain access to education and training courses offered within the formal education system. In both cases it is important for the individual to first become aware of his/her own learning at work, in leisure activities as well as a result of membership and participation in organisations. It is also up to the individual to decide whether to validate his or her own learning. Having taken the decision to validate invisible learning in the process of pursuing further studies, the individual needs the help of a career guidance tutor. Together with this tutor the individual obtains help in his/her decision with respect to which education and training course best suites his/her interests and career path, and in compiling evidence of the knowledge, skills and competences gained as part of prior learning.

Figure 8: Steps in the validation of invisible learning for access to education & training

Step 1: Learner decides to validate own learning and applies for an education and training course;

Step 2: Learner, with the help of career guidance/tutor identifies best course of studies to apply for and to collect evidence for validation;

Step 3: Learner submits application to the education and training institution;

Step 4: Education and Training institutions set up committee/system for the assessment of applications for individual candidates following guidelines for validation drawn up by MQC;

Step 5: Education and Training institution sets up sub-committees for the different sectors of training that it provides;

Step 6: Subcommittee assesses evidence presented, stating the level of learning presented with respect to Malta's Qualifications Framework;

Step 7: Decision of assessment is taken on an acceptance/non-acceptance. In the case of non-acceptance, the institution is to provide certification for learning observed and indicate what additional learning is needed for acceptance in the future.

Alternatively, the individual can have his/her invisible learning assessed by an external institution and presents the validated learning as an entry qualification. Thus the process in this case would involve the following steps:

Step 1: Learner decides to validate own learning and applies for an education and training course;

Step 2: Learner, with the help of career guidance/tutor identifies best course of studies to apply for and to collect evidence for validation;

Step 3: Individual validates his/her learning at MQC/other external assessment institution;

Step 4: Candidate presents certification for admission into education and training course;

Step 5: Subcommittee within institution assesses certification presented, and decision is taken on an acceptance/non-acceptance. In the case of non-acceptance, the institution is to provide certification for learning observed and indicate what additional learning is needed for acceptance in the future.

Having compiled the evidence, the next step is for the individual to present his/her case to the training institution offering the education and training course and to make a submission of one's own invisible learning as a fulfillment of the entry requirements. In such case, the training institution needs to have its own structures to validate this invisible learning and to provide assessment on the evidence presented following the guidelines drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council. The training institution can then take a decision. In the case of acceptance, the candidate can follow the course like other normal students. In the case of non-acceptance, the training institution is obliged to provide details of additional learning necessary to be successful in a future application.

An alternative method is for the candidate to opt to have his/her own invisible learning to be validated by an external assessment body. This may have to be the case in instances where the training institution does not have the structures to validate an individual's invisible learning itself. The individual can decide to opt for such a path even if the training institution has its own structures. The training institution in this case considers the certification provided and makes a decision of acceptance/non-acceptance. As in the other path, in the case of non-acceptance, the training institution is to provide guidance to the candidate of the additional learning needed for acceptance/certification in the future.

Figure 9: Steps involved in the validation of learning for exemption from education & training courses

Step 1: Learner decides to validate own learning and applies for an education and training course;

Step 2: Learner, with the help of career guidance/tutor identifies best course of studies to apply for and to collect evidence for validation;

Step 3: Learner submits application to the education and training institution;

Step 4: Education and Training institutions set up committee/system for the assessment of applications for individual candidates following guidelines for validation drawn up by MQC;

Step 5: Education and Training institution sets up sub-committees for the different sectors of training that it provides;

Step 6: Subcommittee assesses evidence presented;

Step 7: Decision of assessment is taken on the degree of exemption and in which areas the individual is exempted from in his/her course of studies.

Alternatively, the individual can have his/her invisible learning assessed by an external institution and presents the validated learning for exemption from parts of the training course. Thus the process in this case would involve the following:

Step 1: Learner decides to validate own learning applies for exemption from part of learning course;

Step 2: Learner, with the help of career guidance/tutor, identifies best course of studies to apply for and to collect evidence for validation;

Step 3: Individual validates his/her learning at MQC/other external assessment institution to obtain credits;

Step 4: Candidate presents certification for consideration of exemption from specific education and training course;

Step 5: Subcommittee within institution assesses certification presented and decision is taken on the areas the individual is exempted from in completing the training course.

Validation leading to exemption from parts of education and training courses

The processes for validation involved in the case of exemption from parts of education and training courses is very similar to that for acceptance into a training course. In this case, the training institution, following the guidelines drawn up by the Malta Qualifications Council, is free to decide the degree of exemption to be given and the areas in which this is possible.

The validation of invisible learning leading to full certification is based on one main process, but which involves different types of awarding bodies. The awarding body varies according to the type of qualification being sought in terms of level as well as vocational or academic sectors. In the case of full certification, the individual, based on the National Occupational Standards, and knowledge of the requirements for the award of full qualifications, compiles his/her evidence and presents evidence to the awarding body. The awarding body, following the guidelines set by the Malta Qualifications Council, carries out the assessment process.

Validation leading to full certification

Figure 10: Steps involved in the validation of learning for the award of a full qualification

Step 1: Learner decides to validate own learning and applies for a full level of his/her qualification on the National Qualifications Framework;

Step 2: Learner, with the help of career guidance/tutor identifies best course of studies to apply for and to collect evidence for validation;

Step 3: Learner submits application to the Award Issuing Organisation;

Step 4: Award providing organisation sets up system for the assessment of applications for individual candidates following guidelines for validation drawn up by MQC;

Step 5: Education and Training institution sets up sub-committees for the different sectors of qualifications awarded;

Step 6: Subcommittee assesses evidence presented by the candidate;

Step 7: Decision of assessment is taken on the award/non award of the qualification. In the case of non-award, details of additional learning necessary to complete the qualifications are stated to help the individual achieve his/her full certification and progress on the learning and career paths.

The decision based on the assessment outcome will vary, and can range from full to partial award. In the case of full award, the individual receives certification. In the second case, the awarding body will provide credits for the prior learning presented and will identify that learning which still needs to be carried out in order to obtain full certification. In the case of partial certification, the individual will have the chance to top up the "missing" learning at any training institution and return back and re-apply for full certification. The awarding bodies may put a time limit of a number of years during which the candidate will be able to return to claim a full qualification through the top-up approach.

4.5.4 Assessment and certification of invisible learning

It is important to highlight that the processes being put forward are to have two main assessment aims. The same assessment process can provide opportunities for both formative and summative assessment. In the case of formative assessment, it is to provide individuals with guidance on possible learning paths to follow in order to complete summative assessment leading to full certification.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment, as has already been highlighted in previous chapters, is used to help learners become aware of what knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired and, based on this awareness, to make informed choices on what type of learning to invest such that further learning will lead towards full certification.

Formative assessment is best achieved through good career guidance support. Support needs to be given at various stages:

- Initially to help the individual recognize what s/he has learnt in informal and non-formal ways – making the implicit, explicit;
- The tutor has to help the individual to understand what opportunities and career paths are open to him/her based on the knowledge, skills and competences learnt;
- The tutor provides help and guidance in compiling the evidence to reflect the level and quality of learning that the individual had achieved;
- The tutor prepares the individual for the validation process which may also need presentation skills.
- Following the validation process, tutors are to help the learner to make further learning decisions so that formative assessment can lead to summative assessment.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment, to a certain point, can be considered as the final step in formative assessment. Summative assessment should lead the individual to full certification. In many instances, it is difficult for individuals to possess all the required learning for full certification. It will thus be on rare occasions that candidates will possess all the required learning outcomes. This means that summative assessment will in most cases have to be preceded by formative assessment. Summative assessment in the validation process brings great opportunities as individuals who have learnt jobs and professions through direct experience rather than formal education and training, can earn recognition through formal certification.

Modes of Assessment

There has been frequent reference to assessment but much less to what modes and forms this assessment and evidence may take. In validating invisible learning, particularly for formative purposes, it is important to make clear from the outset that traditional modes of assessment such as written examinations which are very frequent in traditional education and training courses should preferably not be used in such context.

Validation of invisible learning should be based on various forms of assessment. In identifying these different forms, one can look at what the range of assessment processes referred to by the Scottish system. In choosing which assessment methodologies to use, it is important to keep methodologies simple and clear. Where possible, tools which have been developed at an International and European level are to be promoted.

Examples of modes of assessment include[7]:

- **Reflective Account:** A reflective account is produced by the learner, who, with appropriate support, demonstrates through his/her own reflections the process and outcomes of his/her learning experiences. This approach enables the learner to show connections between experiences and learning which has resulted. Where possible, the reflective account is to be accompanied by evidence through testimonials, examples of achievements and other outcomes achieved;

- **Project work:** Project work involves an individual taking on a particular activity. This process demonstrates that invisible learning enables the individual to accomplish specific tasks successfully. The task can be work-related, a community-based activity, or a personal initiative. A project will usually need to present other forms of evidence;

- **Structured Interview/oral evidence:** One way of making evident what one has learnt is through oral evidence provided through a structured interview. An interview gives the candidate the opportunity to show knowledge, skills and competences learnt and to provide clarification on the nature and outcomes of the invisible learning claimed. The interview also provides the opportunity to discuss goals in terms of further learning and development. In order to promote transparency of the process it is important that interviews are conducted following standard procedures and where records are kept by the assessors in the case of an appeal at a later stage. Criteria used during interviews are to be established by validation institutions so that candidates will have the opportunity to prepare;

- **Observation of practice/simulation:** One of the ways to ascertain that candidates have learnt what they state that they are able to do is through direct observation. The candidate can be asked to show in practice or a simulation the skills, knowledge and understanding in a particular context such as the workplace;

- **EUROPASS curriculum vitae (CV):** The EUROPASS CV is the major tool used across Europe. Its electronic form can be linked to other EUROPASS documents such as the EUROPASS Language Passport and to the Diploma or Certificate supplement, for higher education and vocational education respectively which are formal qualifications. The subheadings within the EUROPASS CV include categories for the presentation of information on language proficiency, work experience and education and training achievements as well as additional competences with respect to technical, organisational, artistic and social skills. The EUROPASS CV can provide evidence of invisible learning as part of a portfolio or prepared to accompany a structured interview/oral assessment.

- **Existing work-based evaluation and assessment:** It is common practice for employers to carry out regular worker appraisal or evaluation as part of the professional development of employees. These documents can be used to provide evidence of the learner's achievements as part of his/her work experience;

- **Profiling** is a tool used through which an individual is able to highlight the range of knowledge, skills and competences gained within workplace learning and training. The process used is mainly that of a form through which individuals answer questions and include details of experiences, competences and achievements which demonstrate learning.

- **Record of volunteer learning and experience:** A model of this is in wide use in Finland, but similar models can easily be adopted. Individuals taking part in voluntary experiences and similar activities are encouraged to keep a record of their participation in some form of booklet which eventually builds up to become a record of work done. The methodology does not only involve a list of achievements, but also details and information of the processes, difficulties encountered;

- **Portfolio:** The portfolio is maybe the most detailed collation of evidence that learners can produce in providing evidence of processes, reflections, achievements, outcomes as well as testimonials obtained during a period of time. In developed practices, learners are supported to build portfolios as they gain experience and learn. It is a process which accompanies the learning process rather than being compiled afterwards. The process is highly reflective and enables the assessors to get to know the learners better, putting them in a better position to assess their capabilities.

7 This list was adapted from The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Council, 2004, Volume 2, Recognition of Prior Learning.

Whatever mode of providing evidence is used by learners, it is essential that the volume of the evidence used is well chosen. It is useless to provide loads of evidence for the same learning outcomes. Learners need to know how to be selective and how to choose those significant learning opportunities which highlight the range of learning being asked to be validated by assessors.

Role of MQC in the assessment process

The Malta Qualifications Council plays an important role in the assessment process. Due to its regulatory function, it is in the Council's interest to ensure that assessment being done by institutions follow national set standards, is impartial, transparent, reliable and valid. It is through these that validation of invisible learning can gain recognition in the education and labour market. The Malta Qualifications Council intends to develop a system through which it can ensure that standards and guidelines are respected. It aims to achieve this through a system of external verifiers. Two main types of external verifiers are envisaged:

1. those who are experts in the sector being assessed; and
2. those who are experts in quality assurance and assessment processes.

The first type of external verifiers includes experts in the field being assessed. Their role is (as in the case of external examiners) to participate in some of the assessments carried out to ensure that standards within the sector assessed are being respected. The second type of external verifiers will include experts in the field of quality assurance. They will not look at the specific sector assessments, but will review the whole validation system to ensure that institutions validating invisible learning are quality assured and follow the guidelines set by the Malta Qualifications Council.

Figure 11: Diagram indicating possible routes of validation of informal and non-formal learning

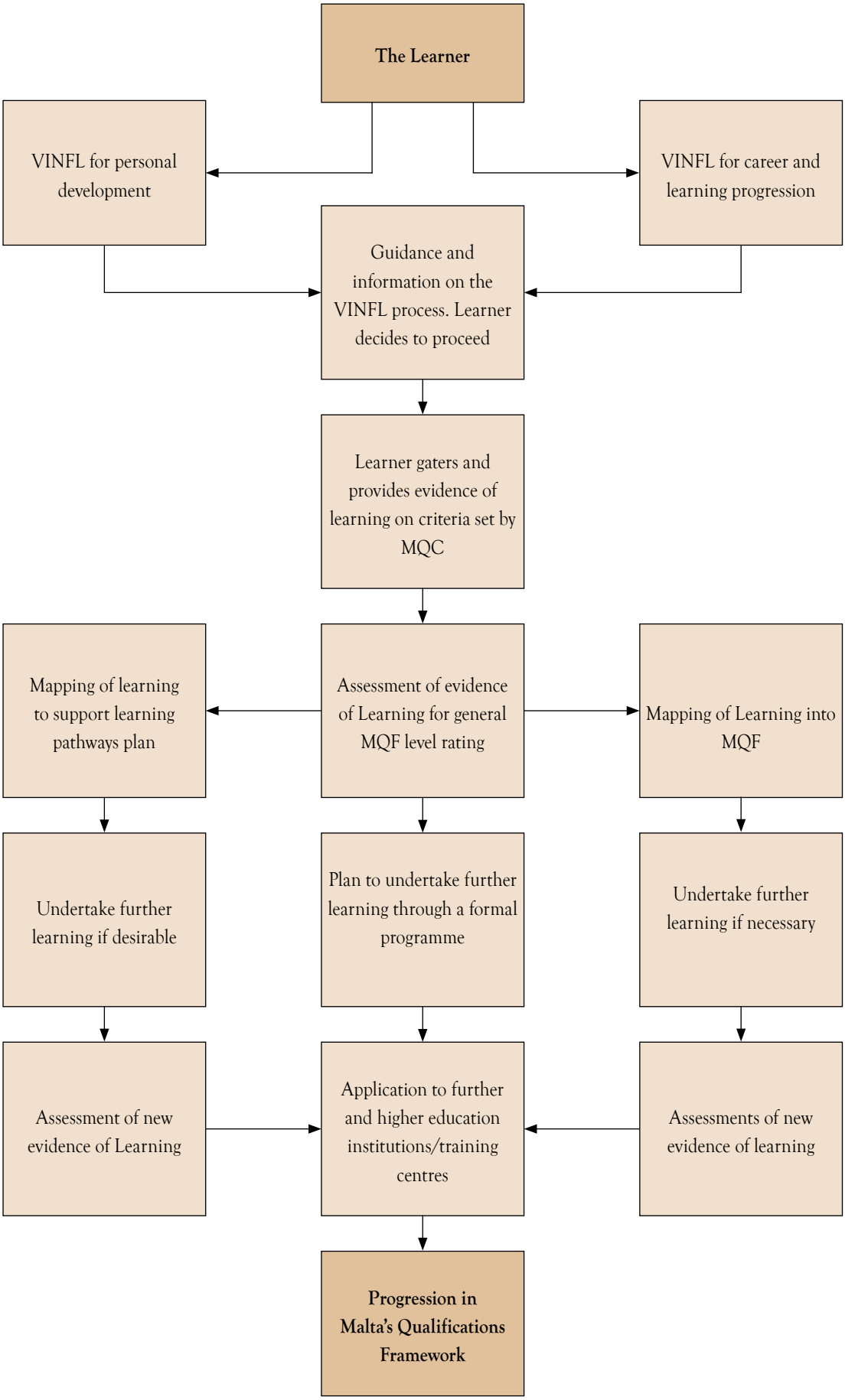
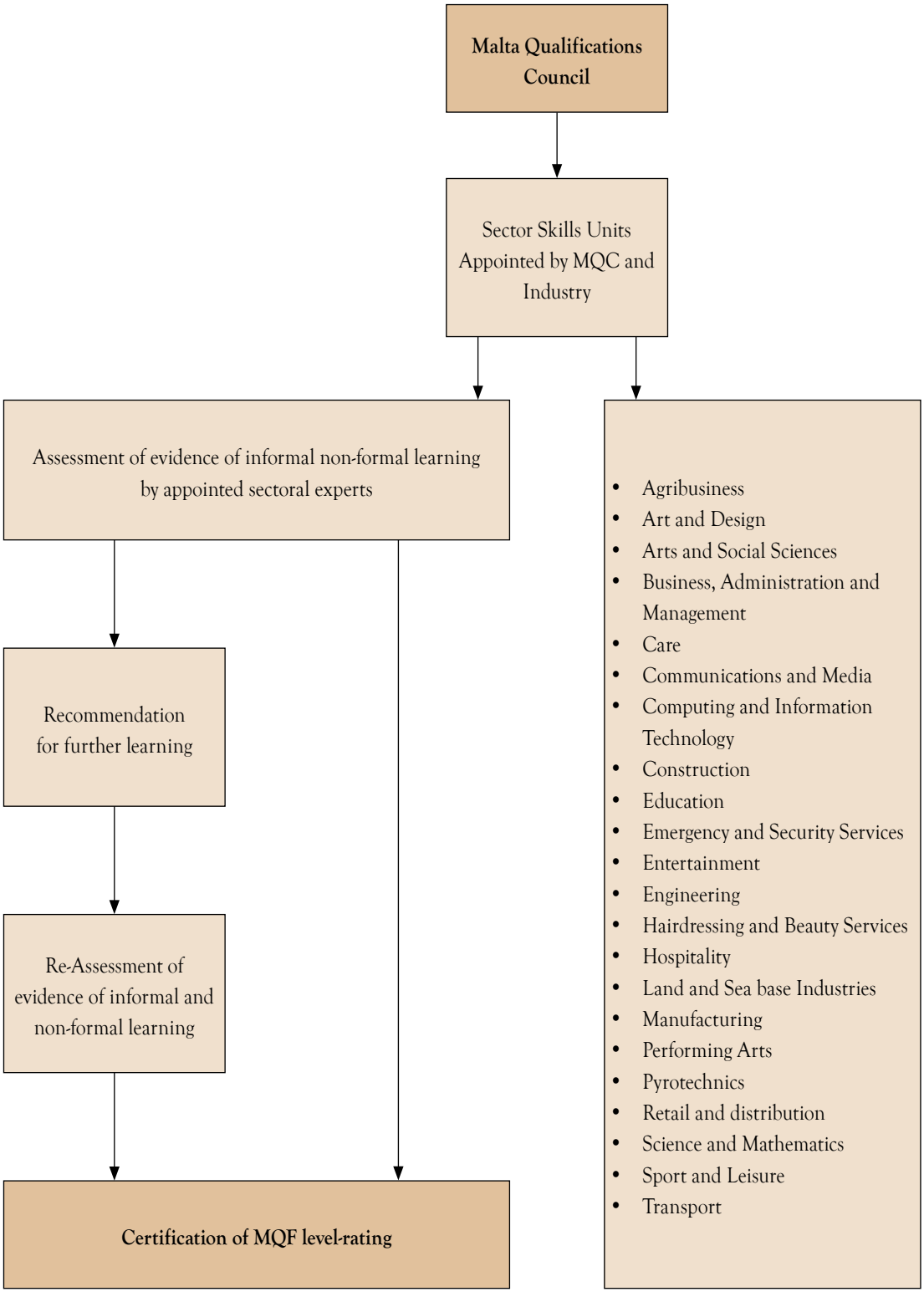


Figure 12: Diagram indicating the proposed structures for the validation of informal and non-formal learning



4.5.5 Valuing invisible learning for the labour market

Validation of invisible learning can also take place within the labour market and directly within enterprises. Depending on the size of an enterprise and the capacity to deal with the validation process, enterprises have the opportunity to decide to carry out the validation process internally and with their own capacity. The Malta Qualifications Council will not limit the validation of invisible learning to specific bodies, but would be open to accredit any validation process which follows the standards and procedures stated in the guidelines that will be drawn up.

The implication is of particular interest to larger enterprises which most probably already possess their in-house training departments. They now have the opportunity to develop their in-house system to validate the learning or their own workers. In the case of smaller enterprises, there is no need to have one's own validation system, as workers can undergo the validation process at an external agency operating in the sector. This relieves micro and small enterprises from the heavy financial burden of developing a training department or unit which is not feasible in companies with as little as 7 employees.

It may be too early to plot an exact strategy for private enterprises. The framework being proposed, however, is taking into consideration the possible options that may emerge in the implementation of the system. In promoting the validation of invisible learning, all measures are being taken to facilitate the process as much as possible.

4.5 Conclusion

This document has been prepared to set in motion the political and legislative framework that will best fit the structures for the validation of invisible learning in Malta.

There is still a lot of work and reflection to be done in order to have the system in place. But the first steps have been taken. The rest will depend, not only on the Malta Qualifications Council which is committed to set up the necessary structures in the earliest possible timeframe but also on all stakeholders, particularly the private sector. The success will depend also on the key players involved:

- Individual learners
- Private and public Training institutions
- Education authorities
- The private sector

Only time will tell on the extent to which individuals will be willing to validate their invisible learning; how much training institutions are willing to have the good will to set up and implement the system for allowing access to and exemption from courses; on employers who will be wiling to invest in the validation of their workers' informal and non-formal learning. All these players are crucial as each one can be a major stumbling block if difficulties are created through the reluctance to adjust and appreciate the value that other forms of learning (besides formal learning) can bring to the economy and to the Maltese people.

The success of the system will also depend on how much enterprises will be willing to invest in their workers and to provide the time to help them validate their learning as a consequence of their working experience within the enterprise. Continuous development and career development can thus become more structured and better benefit for both the individuals and the enterprise.

The opportunities that validation of invisible learning brings to individuals and the country are enormous. Having adequate structures to validate informal and non-formal learning is just part of the whole context. Citizens must be empowered to realize the benefits of such a process of validation; authorities must ensure that structures are legitimate, credible, transparent and in a learning process in themselves.

The credibility and the legitimacy that such process provide to learners can help Malta maintain, develop and improve its competitive edge as a country where all workers are officially recognized as learners within a framework of qualifications for lifelong learning.

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Annex 1

An example taken from the UK of Skill Sectors and Sector Coverage[1]

Property, housing, cleaning services and facilities management	Property managers; residential estate agents; caretakers; facilities management professionals; cleaners; town planners; letting agents and housing managers; chartered surveyors; and social housing professionals.
The retail motor industry	New vehicle sales; Used vehicle sales; Routine maintenance & repair; MOT inspections; Accident/body repair; Restoration/rebuilding; Fast fit (tyres, exhausts, batteries, etc.); Post-factory fitting and adaption (electricals, motability, etc.); Parts and accessories sales; Roadside rescue/recovery; Contract hire/operational leasing; 'Daily' rental (self drive or with driver); and valeting/ preparation.
Chemicals and pharmaceuticals, nuclear, oil and gas, petroleum and polymers	This sector shares a common foundation - science and technology: oil and gas extraction; nuclear and radiological technology; chemicals manufacturing; pharmaceuticals manufacturing; petroleum sector; and polymers.
Construction	Sectors in the development and maintenance of the built environment; house building (public and private); infrastructure (roads, railways and utilities); non-residential building in the private sector (schools and colleges, hospitals, offices); industrial building by the private sector (factories, warehouses); and commercial building by the private sector (offices, shops, entertainment, health and education). Sector also covers maintenance and repair work, renting of construction machinery and professional and design work in consultancies (engineering, architecture and surveying).
Advertising, crafts, cultural heritage, design, music, performing, literary and visual arts	The arts – music, performing arts, visual arts and literary arts; Cultural heritage - museums, galleries and heritage organisations; Craft - including designer makers of contemporary crafts, covering over 50 specialist trades and occupations; and Design-specialist consultancies covering graphic, spatial and domestic products.
Electricity, gas, waste management and water industries	Generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, combined heat and power; production and distribution of gas and water; and removal of waste water and treatment of waste products.
Information technology and telecommunications	The IT and Telecoms workforce; IT and Telecoms professionals working in all industries; IT users working in all industries; and contact centres dedicated to outsourced services, and qualifications and frameworks for contact centres operating within all industries.

1 Adapted from the role of the Sector Skills Development Agency, U.K., http://www.ssda.org.uk/

Financial Services	Banks, building societies and central banking; leasing; credit unions, factoring and other credit granting organisations; investment, unit trusts and venture capital; life insurance, non-life insurance (general insurance) and insurance brokers; administration of financial markets; pension funding; financial advisers; unit trust and investment trust companies; fund managers, asset managers and pension management; and securities and derivatives traders.
Passenger Transport	Aviation (airlines, airports and ground handlers); bus; coach; taxi and private hire; community transport; rail; trams; driver training; and transport planners.
Governmet Skills	Government departments; executive agencies; non-departmental public bodies; and armed forces.
Food and drink manufacturing and processing	Craft bakery; meat and poultry; dairy; and general food and drink.
Environmental and land-based industries	agricultural livestock and crops; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; land-based engineering; landscape; productive horticulture; and trees and timber; veterinary nursing.
Community learning and development, further education, higher education, libraries, archives and information services, work-based learning and development	Community based learning and development; Further education; higher education; library and information services; and work-based learning.
Hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industries.	Hotels; Pubs, bars and nightclubs; membership clubs; gambling; tourist services; youth hostels; self-catering accommodation; restaurants; contract food service providers; events; travel services; visitor attractions; holiday parks; and hospitality services.
Process and manufacturing in the building products, coatings, glass, printing, extractive and mineral processing industries.	Coatings; extractive and mineral processing industries; glass manufacture and glazing; building products and refractory; print and printed packaging.
Science, engineering and manufacturing technologies	Aerospace; electrical engineering; electronics, including semi-conductors; mechanical engineering and metal trades; motor vehicles; shipbuilding; Packaging; pharmacy and parts of the pharmaceutical industry; biotechnology; genetics nanotechnology; mathematics; and forensic science, meteorology.
Fashion and Textiles	Production of raw materials e.g. leather production; manufacture of apparel, footwear, textiles and fibres; servicing of apparel, footwear and textile products e.g. dry cleaning and shoe repair; design activities related to apparel, footwear and textiles; and trading in apparel, footwear and textile products, including specialist wholesale activities and activities of brand-driven holding companies.
Social care, children, early years and young people's workforces in the UK	Children's homes; care homes; domiciliary care and support agencies; day centres and services; social work; fostering agencies and services, and foster carers; nurse agencies; and adoption services.

Health Sector	National Health Services; independent healthcare; and voluntary & community organisations.
Freight logistics and wholesaling industry	Freight transport by road; storage and warehousing; activities of other transport agencies; courier services; airfreight; rail freight; freight inland; and sea and coastal water transport.
Policing & law enforcement, youth justice, custodial care, community justice, courts service, prosecution service and forensic science	Services for victims, survivors and witnesses; Community safety and crime prevention; Prevention of offending and re-offending; Supervision of offenders in the community; Community-based rehabilitation projects; Judiciary and lay judiciary; Court management and administration; Custodial detention; Secure escort services; Electronic monitoring; Maintaining law and order; Prevention and detection of crime; Reassurance and support for communities; Investigation of sudden and suspicious deaths; Production and issue of summonses; Preparation for cases for court; and Public prosecutions.
Sport and recreation, health and fitness, the outdoors, playwork and the caravan industry	Sport and recreation; health and fitness; the outdoors; playwork; and the caravan industry.
Broadcast, film, video, interactive media and photo imaging	Broadcast; film; video; interactive media; and photo imaging.
Retail	Supermarkets, department stores and corner shops; specialist food, drink and tobacco stores; specialist retailers of goods including textiles, clothing, footwear and leather, furniture, electrical, hardware, books and stationary, floor coverings and photographic equipment; antique retailers; and markets and mail order.
Building services engineering	Design, installation and maintenance of electro-technical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, refrigeration and plumbing; and oil and gas fitting design, installation and maintenance.

Annex 2
European Documents

COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 18 May 2004

9600/04

LIMITE

EDUC 118
SOC 253

PUBLIC

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

from : the General Secretariat of the Council
to : the Council

No. prev.doc.: 9175/04 EDUC 101 SOC 220

Subject : Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Delegations will find enclosed a text of the above Draft Conclusions as they result from the discussion of the Permanent Representatives Committee on 14 May 2004. At the end of the meeting the President found that, apart a DK Parliamentary scrutiny reservation, there was a unanimous agreement on the text.

Should this agreement be confirmed, the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council could adopt the enclosed conclusions.

Draft Conclusions
of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States
meeting within the Council on Common European Principles
for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Aware that,

In the context of the principle of learning throughout life, the identification and validation of nonformal and informal learning aim to make visible and to value the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where or how these have been acquired. The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning take place inside and outside formal education and training, in the workplace and in civil society.

Identification and validation are key instruments in enabling the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings. Identification records and makes visible the individual's learning outcomes. This does not result in a formal certificate or diploma, but it may provide the basis for such formal recognition. Validation is based on the assessment of the individual's learning outcomes and may result in a certificate or diploma[1].

Education, training and employability were recognised by the European Lisbon Council in March 2000 as an integral part of economic and social policies needed to attain the strategic goal of Europe becoming the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010.

In follow-up to the report on the concrete future objectives of European education and training systems (March 2001), the detailed work programme adopted by the Council (14 June 2002), called for the development of ways to officially validate non-formal learning experiences.

1 The term validation is used in a very specific sense in the above text but is used differently in the Member States. For some, the term is broadly used to encompass the identification as well as the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The Commission White Paper entitled 'A new impetus for European Youth' (21 November 2001) which set out a new framework for European co-operation on youth affairs, stressed the importance of non-formal learning and education.

The Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning (27 June 2002) invites the Member States to encourage co-operation and effective measures to validate learning outcomes.

The European social partners' 'Framework of actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications' (14 March 2002) underlines the point that the recognition and validation of competences and qualifications is both a shared objective and a main priority for action at the European level.

The Copenhagen Declaration (30 November 2002) and the Council Resolution (19 December 2002) on the promotion of enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training acknowledged that priority should be given to developing a set of common principles regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater comparability between approaches in different countries and at different levels.

The Council and Commission Joint Interim Report (26 February 2004) to the Spring European Council, 'Education and Training 2010', states that the development of common European references and principles can usefully support national policies. Although such common principles do not create obligations for Member States, they contribute to developing mutual trust between the key players and encouraging reform. The Joint Interim Report specifically calls for the development of common European principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Recognise that

The Member States, the Commission, the EEA-EFTA and accession countries and the social partners at European level, in following-up the Copenhagen Declaration, the Council Resolution and the work programme on the Future Objectives, have made progress in developing common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning serves the needs of the individual learner. They support social integration, employability and the development and use of human resources in civic, social and economic contexts. They also meet the specific needs of those individuals who seek integration or re-integration into education and training, the labour market and society.

A diversity of approaches and practices of identification and validation exists and is emerging at European national, regional and local level.

A diversity of stakeholders is also involved. They are, amongst others, providers and competent authorities in formal education and training, social partners in the workplace and non-governmental organisations in civil society. While identification is a matter for all stakeholders, as well as for the individual, in a certain number of Member States validation is only a matter for the competent authorities in accordance with national legislation.

Stress that

Common European principles are necessary to encourage and guide the development of high quality, trustworthy approaches and systems for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

They are necessary to ensure the comparability and wide acceptance of different approaches and systems in the Member States. They also enable the transfer and acceptance of all learning outcomes across different settings. They take particular account of the needs and entitlements of individuals.

The following common European principles, are addressed to the Member States, the Commission and stakeholders who are engaged in the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. They are, to be applied on a voluntary basis. They fully respect the rights, responsibilities and competences of the Member States and stakeholders. They inform the development of systems and approaches to identification and validation and do not prescribe any particular approach or system.

The common European principles reflect the cooperative work at European level in follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration, the Council Resolution of 19 December 2002, the work programmes on the Future Objectives and, in particular, the Joint Interim Report " Education and Training 2010 ", February 2004.

The principles are set out under the following main headings:

∞ Individual entitlements

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should, in principle, be a voluntary matter for the individual. There should be equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals. The privacy and rights of the individual are to be respected.

∞ Obligations of stakeholders

Stakeholders, should establish, in accordance with their rights, responsibilities and competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These should include appropriate quality assurance mechanisms.

Stakeholders should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.

∞ Confidence and trust

The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.

∞ Credibility and legitimacy

Systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders.

The process of assessment should be impartial and mechanisms should be put in place to avoid any conflict of interest. The professional competence of those who carry out assessment should also be assured.

INVITE, IN RELATION TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING, THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPETENCIES

To disseminate and promote the use of the common European principles.

To encourage the European social partners, in the context of social dialogue, to use and adapt the common European principles for the specific needs of the workplace.

To encourage non-governmental organisations engaged in providing lifelong learning opportunities to use and adapt the common European principles as appropriate.

To support the exchange of experiences and mutual learning including the development of a European Inventory on the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

To strengthen co-operation with international organisations with a view to achieving synergies in this field.

To develop and support coherent and comparable ways of presenting the results of the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning at European level, and consider how the existing instruments in the Europass framework for transparency of qualifications and competences can contribute to this.

To consider how the common European principles could support ongoing work on credit transfer and accumulation, quality assurance and guidance and, in general, contribute to the development of a European Qualifications Framework which was called for in the Joint Interim Report of the Commission and Council, February 2004.

To support the development of quality assurance mechanisms and, in particular, to consider how to promote the professional development of those who carry out assessment, for example, through support networks aimed at developing and disseminating good practice.

Malta 2007

European Inventory

on validation of informal and non-formal learning

Education and Culture DG

CEDEFOP

European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning

MALTA (draft)

C3342 / October 2007

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FOREWORD

Purpose of this report

This draft chapter has been written in 2007 by using a variety of national and international sources. Interviews with representatives of public agencies, voluntary organisations and social partners were also carried out both in 2004 and 2007.

The aim of the chapter is to provide a brief overview of the initiatives to assess and validate informal & non-formal learning in the country by building on to the work carried out for the Inventory in 2004. Thus, this version focuses on reporting developments from the past couple of years, and should be read in conjunction with the 2005 country report on Malta (can be accessed from www.ecotec.com\europeaninventory)

Comments and Feedback

We welcome any feedback and comments on the chapter. If you feel we have misrepresented some facts or in case you hold additional information/reports that we have not included, please contact us by e-mail: jo.hawley@ecotec.com.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In October 2005, under legal notice 347, a new organisation was launched - The Malta Qualifications Council (MQC). This organisation is tasked with implementing a new national qualification framework for Malta, which will be compatible with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The European agenda has been a key driver for Malta in establishing this new system.

The new qualification framework will form one single structure encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning. This framework has not yet been launched but the necessary structures and legislation are in place to allow the new system to be implemented. Importantly, an Implementation Plan for the new framework has been put into place and work on incorporating non-formal and informal learning is expected to start towards the end of 2007.

2.0 PUBLIC SECTOR

The emerging National Qualifications Framework for Malta forms a single over-riding public initiative for validating non-formal and informal learning, which has an application for all post 16 learning achieved in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

2.1 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The key features of the NQF parallel the European Qualifications Framework. For example in using 'credit' as a currency to understand/value all 'types' of learning whether that be vocational, academic, community based, workplace based, identifying credit at certain 'levels' of difficulty (Malta uses an 8 point scale) etc. This will enable qualifications achieved in Malta to be understood and transferred overseas.

There are two key organisations involved with the new qualification framework (and therefore eventually with informal and non-formal learning).

2.1.1 The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment

Although the National Qualifications Framework falls under the remit of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), the MQC is answerable to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. The Ministry has ultimate responsibility for the entire education system in Malta. This includes primary and secondary education as well as the University of Malta, the Institute for Tourism Studies, Malta Council for Science and Technology, Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, youth, employment and training etc[1].

2.1.2 Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)

MQC was established under legal notice 347, in October 2005 for "the development, assessment, certification and accreditation of qualifications other than those in compulsory education and degrees"[2].

MQC's functions are:

- To establish and maintain a qualifications framework for the development, accreditation and award of professional and vocational qualifications, other than degrees, based on standards of knowledge, skills, competence and attitudes to be acquired by learners;
- To promote and facilitate lifelong learning access transfer and progression;

1 http://www.education.gov.mt
2 http://www.mqc.gov.mt

- To foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta;
- To promote and maintain the National Qualifications Framework and establish the policies and criteria on which the framework will be based;
- To approve and ensure the publication of national standards of knowledge, skills, competence and attitudes for each development sector;
- To endorse and ensure the publication of the procedures to be implemented by the training agencies offering programmes of education and training for access, transfer and progression;
- To ensure that such standards and procedures are implemented;
- To endorse vocational education and training programmes delivered by training agencies;
- To endorse certificates awarded by training agencies;
- To keep and issue official records of certificates awarded.

The MQC is therefore ultimately responsible for incorporating non-formal and informal learning into the new qualification framework.

2.1.3 Developments since 2005

To date, there has not been any work carried out on validating non-formal or informal learning but it is thought that this will start towards the end of 2007.

With respect to the new National Qualifications Framework however:

- Three policy documents have been published by the MQC – "Qualifications as tools for Employment", "A glossary of Select Terminology Associated with Qualifications Frameworks" and a "National Qualifications Framework – A First Guide".
- An Implementation plan (2006) has been written. The piloting stage, which took place between November 06 and April 07, has been completed and documents, in connection with the NQF, have been published[3].

2.2 Current Validation Practices

Since there is currently no national approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning in place, it is still the case that differing examples of practice can be found in key organisations. The following offers examples of this.

3 A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. A Second Guide, June 2007; Valuing All Learning (working documents) Volumes 1, 2, 3; Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework Levels 1 to 3 (www.mqc.gov.mt)

2.2.1 The University of Malta

The University of Malta has taken the new credit framework on board and has applied credit values to degree and masters programmes (although not PhDs)1. In addition, the Extracurricular Credits System gives students the opportunity to engage in an activity / project which helps them to manoeuvre outside of purely academic limits. On completion of the activity / project, the individual student is assessed both by his/her particular activity supervisor and by the Extracurricular Credits Board. The mark obtained is weighted as 0.5% of the final global mark that is considered for degree classification purposes[4].

2.2.2 The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, was set up in 2001 with the aim of providing 'universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy' (Prospectus, 2002-3). The College provides a variety of courses of vocational educational training in the Institutes of Agribusiness, Art and Design, Building and Construction Engineering, Business and Commerce, Community Services, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Information and Communication Technology, Mechanical Engineering, and the Maritime Institute. The College is a major provider of off-the-job educational training element of apprenticeship schemes. It works closely with the Employment and Training Corporation in ensuring that these schemes meet the needs of local employees[5].

With respect to non-formal and informal learning, although there is no official policy in place, it is known that students are sent to the college by industry on the basis of their formal qualifications as well as their non-formal and informal experience.

2.2.3 The Institute of Tourism Studies

The Institute of Tourism Studies, set up in 1987, provides vocational education in the field of tourism. The accelerated growth in tourism increased the pressure on the local labour market for highly qualified technical and management personnel. Apart from certificate and diploma level courses, the Institute has apprenticeship programmes that fall under the 'Extended Skill Training Scheme' (ESTS). These programmes offer students the possibility to equip themselves with skills for entry into the hospitality and catering industry.

4 Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2006/2007 National Trends in the Bologna Process.
5 http://www.mcast.edu.mt

A more direct link with the concept of non-formal learning is found in the 'Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning' – (APEL) whereby prospective candidates with documented and related work experience in the tourism industry will be awarded credits[6].

2.2.4 The Employment and Training Corporation

The Employment and Training Corporation was established in 1990 under the Employment and Training Services Act. It was set up as a corporate body with a distinct legal personality, to provide and maintain a national public employment service. In essence, this means assisting people in finding suitable employment and assisting employers to find suitable employees. It was also given the mandate to provide training courses to promote employability and to gather the information required for establishing labour market requirements in Malta.

The Organisation is based on the twin European values of solidarity and subsidiary. Its mission is "to provide and ensure equitable access to training programmes and employment opportunities and to contribute towards the social and economic development of the community"[7].

Training services, Placement schemes, Apprenticeship schemes and specialist and individualised attention to disadvantaged groups are the main services that the Corporation offers (Azzopardi, A.E. (2003), 'Strategic Review of ETC Services for Young People', Report, Employment and Training Corporation)[8].

With respect to non-formal and informal learning, the ETC assesses and profiles nonformal and informal learning outcomes by means of trade tests and other newly developed tools. The registered unemployed and others in employment are tested for possible further training and employment possibilities.

2.2.5 The Armed Forces Malta (AFM)

The AFM has a system for recognising formal, non-formal and informal learning, which they adopted from the British Army. The army performs trade and other tests for training, re-training and lifelong learning. They collaborate with Educational Institutions in Malta to issue certificates and are looking at ways to further develop this system[9].

6 http://www.its.gov.mt
7 http://www.etc.gov.mt
8 http://www.etc.gov.mt
9 http://www.afm.gov.mt

3.0 PRIVATE SECTOR

Consultation work has ascertained that the private sector is involved with validation of non-formal and informal learning with companies taking an interest in developments. The examples provided in the previous ECOTEC report also hold true and hence:

There is evidence of individual organisations moving away from the conventional mode of production bonus systems to reward employees for learning more skills and as a consequence, improving their performance in their department. A particular case in point is the 'learning strand' taken by Playmobil Malta Ltd. where a multi-skilling programme was introduced in September 1995. A three-tier approach to the skills process is taken in terms of must-know, good-to-know and nice-to-know skills. The company also launched a training programme in first-aid and a computer-assisted learning technique among a representative group of workers from its various departments (Borg, undated in Haugøy, G., ed., Open Learning Environments in Adult Education: A Guide to European Models – www.statvoks.no/focal/).

4.0 THE THIRD SECTOR

The Youth Policy of Malta has been described by an international group of experts, acting as a Review Team, as 'a sound piece of work'[10]. More specifically, the Team particularly welcomed the 'reference to the accreditation of the acquired experience and skills through non-formal and informal learning'[11]. The expert team also stated that 'it is our view that investment in youth work would be money particularly well spent in Malta'[12] since 'youth work is, of course, the location within which non-formal education can take place very successfully'[13].

Articles 6.4 and 6.5 of the National Youth Policy[14] confirm that the State will follow a policy that complements formal education with non-formal and informal education. The policy also states that the various education and employment bodies should ensure the implementation of measures for the accreditation of prior learning and skills acquired through non-formal learning/education.

The Youth Information Handbook provides a list of 112 Youth Organisations with a social, political and religious orientation (2004:118) and 45 Sport Organisations (2004:171).

Among these organisations there are a large variety of opportunities for non-formal and informal learning experiences both in Malta and abroad. In particular cases, recognition is limited to terms of sponsorship for activities, such as exchange programmes offered by established institutions. There is no record of accreditation procedures being followed although participants in the various activities have claimed that Certificates of Attendance and Reference Notes have been given some consideration by employees' interviewing Boards[15].

10 Evans, 2003:62
11 Ibid:63
12 Ibid:30
13 Ibid:40
14 Youth Information Handbook, 2004:18
15 Interview, 06.09.04, Teuma, M., president, Malta Association of Youth Workers (may@nextgen.net.mt) and president ZAK3 – www.zakmalta.org

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Due to the creation of a new qualification framework in Malta, there is a national focus on non-formal and informal learning, with the aim of incorporating all forms of learning into the framework and adopting a common approach to validation.

Different institutes and organisations do hold experience in validating informal and nonformal learning of individuals and students but there is no common methodology in place, no common working tools such as portfolios, application forms etc. However, Malta will start working in this area towards the end of 2007 and will be looking at other countries to help practically implement a new national approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning.

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