
synergies

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal competences

**Revised recommendations: opinions of
experts.**

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The article n. 43 of the Law 10/2015, of Professional Training and Qualification, says that:

“The process of evaluation and accreditation of professional skills can demonstrate professional competencies acquired through work experience in social activities or other ways of non-formal or informal training, taking as reference **units of competence** of the **Catalog of professional qualifications** of the system of professional training and qualification of Catalonia.

The Agency for Public Education and Professional Qualification of Catalonia, regarding the evaluation and accreditation of professional skills:

a) Establishes integrated procedures of evaluation and accreditation of professional skills and has direct and immediate effects, with prior verification of the right claimed, in relation to:

- **validation of modules** corresponding to the respective professional qualifications of vocational education system, and

- **exemption of training modules** relating to certificates of professionalism of the labor training system.

b) Establishes regular and stable evaluation and accreditation processes; determines the training centers that provide this service; determines the organizations or companies that can contribute to carry it out, and the processes, requirements, the system of evaluation and quality assurance.

c) Authorizes the training centers that manage accreditation processes in certain qualifications, or vocational areas, in collaboration with business organizations and trade unions in Catalonia.

3. People evaluated should get, at the end of the evaluation and accreditation process:

- **a report of recommendations** to complete professional training programs, and

- **a certificate units of competence accredited.**

4. The evaluation and accreditation processes have been developed in collaboration with business organizations and trade unions in Catalonia, local governments, the official chambers of commerce and other organizations representing economic and professional interests.”

According to new law, the Catalan Government plans to deliver till 2018 almost 8,000 accreditations to unskilled workers, which will be the first plan of its kind developed under the Law of Professional Training and Qualification from 2015.

The forecasts of the Departments of Education, and Labour and Social Affairs, approved a budget of 2.8 million Euros to finance procedures of evaluation and accreditation of professional skills in the following fields:

- 4,000 workers will go through in the field of dependence,

- 1,000 workers, in the physical and sports activities, and

- 1,000 workers more, in the field of health.
- 700 workers in the sector of environment security and protection; and
- 200 workers in the sector of energy and water facilities.

There will also be a thousand spaces reserved for people with labour integration difficulties.

According to the opinion of the experts (and the Government is aware, also), 7,900 accreditation processes won't be enough, because this number **does not cover all needs**.

For recognition, applicants must demonstrate the skills acquired during their working life, through work done, or in non-formal courses or informal learning.

After recognition, users get an initial certification –it didn't exist until now- that can be used to get to get, with the additional training if necessary:

- a degree of vocational education, and/or
- a certificate of professionalism.

The ultimate goal is this whole bag of workers (many of them unemployed), who dropped off school, improve their employability thanks to the fact that what they have learned during the years of work experience is recognized.

The profile of the people involved in this processes of recognition are:

- Workers around 40 years old.
- Workers with more than 3 years of professional experience.
- Spanish workers with low qualification (primary studies), and migrant workers with non-recognized qualification from their origin country.

Recommendations to improve the process of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competences:

- 1) Intensify the efforts on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informally acquired competences, especially in the case of people with labour integration difficulties. Validation of competences will require more resources – places, train-the-trainers and opportunities.
- 2) Be aware that the process of validation is an intercultural sensitive issue. The qualifications of migrant people are worth less in the eyes of the host society.
- 3) Validation should be carried out earlier, more cheaply and more accessibly, above all, with respect to the situation of those seeking protection as well as migrants. Procedures are too lengthy and outsiders are hardly able to recognise and understand them. The system of validation focuses too much on the mastering of language. Other methods should be considered and implemented.
- 4) Focus on harmonisation of the documentation of validation on the national and European level. The European Qualifications Framework and definition of

occupations based in, international standards (e.g. ISCO-08) would be a great help in that respect. However, this is largely unknown to employers and employees. Much more needs to be done here to raise awareness. It would be great to launch information campaigns about the European Qualification Framework and the National Qualification Framework to companies and enterprises to clarify the relevance of these frameworks and the benefits they may gain.

- 5) Validation should increase the use of tools linked to practice (assessments, internships) and should not be based mainly on interviews. In that respect, some initiatives are already underway in the countries in question. This approach needs to be continued and intensified.
- 6) It is necessary to increase the number of offered qualification programmes to achieve formal degrees as well as to create individualised offers based on competence checks that would lead to a quicker and more efficient formal recognition. The processes won't lead to their finality if they are limited to recognise competences of professions with new legal regulations. It is necessary to professionalize occupations, but it is also important to improve employability of people in risk of labour exclusion.
- 7) Information, motivation and support for the target groups – the learners and the employers. It is of interest in this context that very few migrants utilise the existing recognition procedures. It would therefore be essential to intensify the exchange between employers and recognition authorities. Moreover, employers would benefit from publicly accessible databases that provide comprehensible and reliable information on foreign degrees and their domestic equivalents.
- 8) The variety of organisations working on validation should cooperate more intensively and be linked on a regional, national and European level. Learners, companies and organisations working on validation should be brought together.