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Validation in the care and youth work sectors

Thematic report for the 2016 update
of the European inventory on validation

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Foreword

There is an overwhelming consensus on the importance of making visible the knowledge, skills and competences gained through life and work experience. To value what they have learned, people should be able to demonstrate what they have learned in all settings in life and to use this in their career and for further education and training.

This is why validation of non-formal and informal learning can make an essential contribution to the EU ambition of achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as set by the Europe 2020 Strategy. Its impact can be significant in better matching of skills and labour demand, promoting transferability of skills between companies and sectors and supporting mobility across the European labour market. It can also contribute to fighting social exclusion by providing a way for early school leavers, unemployed individuals and other groups at risk, particularly low-skilled adults, to improve their employability.

This is one of a series of four thematic reports prepared within the framework of the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The inventory, together with the European guidelines, is a major tool supporting the implementation of the 2012 Recommendation on validation that calls on Member States to establish, by 2018, validation arrangements allowing individuals to identify, document, assess and certify their competences to obtain a qualification (or parts of it).

The thematic reports take a closer look at specific aspects that are particularly relevant for the development of validation arrangements in Europe. They have contributed to the development of the country reports updates, which will be available at Cedefop's web page at the end of 2016. The reports treat the following themes:

- (a) validation in the care and youth work sectors: this looks into how validation arrangements link to specific sectors of care and youth work;
- (b) monitoring validation: this provides an overview of the way the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning is recorded across Europe;
- (c) funding validation: this presents an overview of funding sources for validation of non-formal and informal learning and discusses associated issues such as sustainability and accessibility of validation arrangements;
- (d) validation and open educational resources (OER): this focuses on validation of learning acquired through OER, for instance through participation in massive open online courses.

The thematic reports are a source of information to support dialogue between the different stakeholders in developing and implementing of validation in Europe. Our key objective is to assist Member States in thinking European but acting locally, so that more learners and workers provide new skills to support competitiveness.

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Introduction

This is one of a series of four thematic reports prepared for the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (the inventory). It focuses on two sectors: care and youth work.

The purpose of the report is to provide insights into how validation arrangements are implemented in these sectors, illustrated by national examples. To compile a data resource for this report, inventory country experts were asked to respond to five related questions:

- (a) what is the rationale for the existence of validation arrangements in the care/youth sectors and the rationale for individuals to make use of those systems;
- (b) how widespread is awareness and use of validation arrangements in the two sectors? Are there mainly small, project-based initiatives or are there more established opportunities available to large numbers of individuals;
- (c) what type of validation can support care workers/volunteers in the two sectors and what is the role of employers/youth organisations in facilitating access to them;
- (d) is there any evidence of the benefits/outcomes of engaging in validation in the two sectors: benefits in the labour market, award of formal qualifications/credits, future upskilling or personal development/retention into the profession? Is there any evidence of these benefits (e.g. data on outcomes, evaluation studies)?

The responses to these questions used information provided in previous versions of the inventory (2007, 2010 and 2014), country experts' wider knowledge of validation in the country, and relevant literature. A few telephone interviews were also carried out by the author to gain further information on specific topics.

Following a brief section outlining the scope and rationale for the choice of the two sectors, the report provides information and illustrative examples (in boxes) in relation to the care sector and then the youth sector. The final section of the report draws conclusions and highlights differences between these two sectors. Recommendations are also offered, focusing on steps to be taken to support engagement in validation initiatives in these sectors.

Both sector-specific sections are structured in the same way and refer to:

- (a) rationale for validation in the sector;
- (b) use and awareness of validation opportunities in the sector;
- (c) type of validation opportunities available in the sector;
- (d) role of employers/youth and other organisations in aiding access to validation opportunities in the sector.

Scope and rationale

In the following, the two sectors covered in this report are briefly described and the rationale for their selection is presented. It is worth noting that general validation initiatives described in inventory country reports might also be relevant for the care and the youth sectors, although the descriptions make no specific reference to these sectors. Several inventory country reports provide references to third sector initiatives and volunteering; youth work could be included within these but this is not always explicitly mentioned. This report focuses only on those initiatives for which a clear connection to these sectors was identified but does not claim to reflect all validation opportunities offered and used in these two sectors. It provides some insights into validation arrangements in these sectors but it is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview across all European countries based on the data available.

2.1. Care sector

There is no commonly agreed definition across Europe of the care sector. Sometimes social care and health care are defined as one sector and sometimes as two different sectors. Countries also seem to take different approaches in how they define the sector/s. A pragmatic approach is taken in this report and a broad understanding is used. 'Care' is treated as one sector in this report and it includes the following fields:

- (a) work in the social care field can be defined as providing help to 'any person of any age with a social care need, which hampers the person in some of his/her daily activities' (Eurofound, 2006, p. 5). Social care workers work in different areas of social care; depending on their specialisation, they offer their services to a variety of target groups. For example, they provide support to families, elderly people, children in residential care or day care centres, people with mental health needs or with learning and physical disabilities, people with alcohol/drug dependency, or the homeless. The report also looks at examples from the field of early child care;

(b) the health (care) field 'comprises workers primarily delivering healthcare services such as health professionals (doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, pharmacists and dentists), health associate professionals, public health professionals, health management and administrative and support staff' (EU Skills Panorama, 2014). Health care workers operate in a range of settings including community healthcare (such as doctor's surgery, dental surgery, health centre), hospitals, medical laboratories, care homes or hospices, as well as in people's own homes.

The report covers data provided by the country experts, in relation to both social care and health care, but excluding regulated health professions such as nursing. The main focus is on social care, with some aspects relating to health care workers also presented.

The care sector is characterised by a large number of low-qualified workers, a priority for the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2012) because they could potentially benefit from validation. Work in the care sector is also sometimes a suitable option for people who wish to return to work having spent many years looking after children or family members. They may wish to continue on a professional basis what they had been doing in a private capacity, and for which they have many skills and qualities that lend themselves to validation towards a qualification. In many countries there are also specific requirements or regulations for workers in this field that encourage people to become qualified workers; validation of non-formal and informal learning can support them in this process. The broadly understood care sector is also characterised by the existence of staff shortages in many countries. This encourages migrants with qualifications and work experience from their home context to seek validation in the host country.

For these reasons, the care sector was chosen as one topic of this thematic report.

2.2. Youth work sector

‘Youth work is a broad term covering a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. (...) Youth work is organised in different ways (...) It is delivered in different forms and settings (...) and is given shape at local, regional, national and European level’ (Council of the EU, 2013).

Youth organisations and youth workers have an important role to play in facilitating opportunities for non-formal and informal learning and any subsequent validation processes. The *EU strategy for youth: investing and empowering; a renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities* of 2009 called for better recognition of skills acquired through non-formal education for young people and stressed the need for full use to be made of tools established at EU level for the validation of knowledge, skills and competences for the recognition of qualifications. It was endorsed by the Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 within a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-18). The *European youth work convention, 2015*, highlights the need for recognition and validation of the learning and achievement that takes place through youth work in non-formal and informal learning environments (*European youth work convention, 2015*).

Youth work, therefore, is an area of particular interest for validation and so was chosen as the second sector to be covered by this thematic report.

Validation in the care sector

3.1. Rationale for validation in the care sector

There is evidence that certain sectors are more prominent in validation initiatives in some countries: the care sector is usually among them and this is the case in France, Iceland, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK) ⁽¹⁾. Although most studies do not have a sectoral focus, the care sector is also among those economic sectors that tend to concentrate most of the attention of validation research ⁽²⁾. Several reasons for the interest in providing validation procedures in the care sector can be identified and are presented in this section. However, that many initiatives for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are linked to the recognition of formal qualifications acquired elsewhere in the care sector and we have limited evidence of practices in which non-formal and informal learning is validated.

The main reasons for using validation opportunities in this sector include:

- (a) obtaining legally required qualifications;
- (b) compensating for shortage of skilled labour;
- (c) providing a stepping stone towards a formal qualification for low-qualified workers or the unemployed;
- (d) integrating migrants into the labour market;
- (e) supporting human resource development in companies, ensuring the quality of the services offered or raising standards and enhancing motivation and self-confidence of employees.

Validation procedures in the health and care sector often seem to be motivated by regulations stipulating compulsory qualifications for people wishing to work in certain occupations or to perform specific tasks. For example, in Belgium-Flanders, validation arrangements in the care sector help care workers to gain formal qualifications legally required to work in this sector.

Some countries are moving towards introducing regulations which require individuals to have a qualification to undertake their role in this sector, so

⁽¹⁾ E.g. European Commission et al., 2014q, p. 5; Fejes and Andersson, 2009; Sandberg, 2010; 2011.

⁽²⁾ European Commission et al., 2014q, pp. 5 and 11.

validation can provide access to newly required qualifications for employees in this sector. The demand for validation of non-formal and informal learning is often generated by sectors and employers to ensure that new standards or new regulatory requirements are met by their staff. This can be illustrated with the following examples:

- (a) the 2007 inventory (European Commission et al., 2010e, p. 18) found that in the UK, accreditation of prior experience and learning (APEL) had been developed for workers in the childcare sector, in response to new day care standards, requiring a qualification for those working with children to meet the standards. The APEL qualification was intended to recognise the working practice and experience of early years practitioners and play workers who had already been working in the sector but did not have current formal qualifications;
- (b) in Galicia in Spain, an enormous increase in applicants for the annually organised *convocatorias* for the recognition and accreditation of competences in care of dependent persons at home or in institutions was observed in 2011. This increase (8 000 applicants compared to 300 certifications offered) 'was boosted by a new regulation requiring, as of 2015, a minimum certification for people working – often informally – in this field' (Damesin et al., 2014, p. 194);
- (c) in Romania, occupational standards are used as reference points for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The 2007 inventory (European Commission et al., 2007b, p. 8) referred to the growing need for social service professionals in Romania to be legally recognised and trained as well as to a large group of people that worked informally in this field but were not officially recognised as professionals, although they had acquired relevant years of experience and relevant skills working in the sector. Validation of informal learning based on occupational standards was used to provide evidence of which of the specific competences required for a certain qualification/occupation had already been acquired and which still needed to be achieved in training modules. The initiative for defining new occupational standards in the social care system was mainly taken forward by the non-governmental sector dealing with the issues of equity and social exclusion.

Shortage of skilled labour also seems to be a driver for validation procedures to make competences gained through work experience visible. Since the care sector is often affected by such shortage, revealing the actual competences available seems to help employers to fill vacancies. In several countries, the care sector is (or at least was, at the beginning) the focus of newly launched

initiatives for validating non-formal and informal learning, This can be reported for Galicia in Spain, where the *convocatorias* originally focused on the care sector but have since been extended to industrial jobs and those in the tertiary sector (Damesin et al., 2014, p. 66). A further example was highlighted in the 2007 inventory for the Flemish region of Belgium, where the first rounds of pilot projects for recognition of acquired competences (*Erkenning van verworven competenties* or EVC) were carried out in relation to 'out-of-school childcare' and for nursing staff (European Commission et al., 2007a, pp. 3-4). Similarly, the 2010 inventory found that in the Dutch health and social care sector, EVC was particularly used to find new competent employees and in sectors such as care and education, recruitment and selection of personnel was increasingly taking place among target groups without the formal requirements (European Commission et al., 2010d). Further examples are presented in Boxes 1 and 2.

Box 1. Validation initiative based on regional and sectoral needs

In Yvelines, a district of the Ile de France Region in France, a so called 'collective project/approach' that involves all regional stakeholders in the health support and social services support sector (services to people sector) was initiated in 2015 (Desplebi, 2015).

Regional analysis had identified a great need for qualifications in this sector and also problems of recruiting people with the right qualifications (meeting minimum requirements for the level of qualifications in this sector). Candidates for the validation procedure were identified and selected in cooperation with the employment service. The selection criteria included high motivation and at least three years' work experience in the field. The whole validation process (including individual coaching and training) lasted for only two and a half months. This limited duration was seen as important for candidates in order not to lose motivation. At the end of the process, in December 2015, a public event was held to award the diplomas. Companies were also present at this event and 'job dating' opportunities were organised. 124 job offers had been identified and during the 'job dating', 107 interviews were carried out and around 25 potential contracts signed. Experience shows that this approach (linking validation initiatives closely to labour market needs in a sector) seems to be successful: in a similar validation initiative in 2014, 75% of candidates received a job three to six months after the end of the validation.

Box 2. I CARE: informal competences assessment and recognition for employment services

Please note this is not the same project as described in Box 3.

The Leonardo da Vinci project I CARE was coordinated by an Italian organisation and ran for two years (2010-12). It promoted innovative procedures for recognising and certifying competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings in Italy and Romania, with specific focus on 'white jobs' (i.e. in health and social services) and the profession of carer. The rationale for initiating this project was the need for a qualified and competent workforce and, in particular, for specific procedures to recognise the competences of people employed in 'white jobs'. These people are often not formally qualified but possess significant competences, acquired in informal/non formal settings, which tend to remain unrecognised.

I CARE developed a certification procedure based on the methodology of the digital portfolio and supporting web-based platform. It was derived from both an exchange of European best practices in validating informal learning (coming specifically from the Netherlands and the UK) and the procedures, instruments and methods already in use in the employment services (*).

(*) Adam: Projects and products portal for Leonardo da Vinci: *I CARE*
<http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=6989#.Vuq9uMtf2yQ> [accessed 17.3.2016].

In some countries, validation practices at higher education level also focus on this area because private sector employers and professional bodies have identified a need for workforce development and qualifications at that level. For example, at the time of writing the 2010 thematic report on the subject, validation in higher education was concentrated in the health and social care sector in the UK and in health care and education sectors in Belgium-Flanders (European Commission et al., 2010g, p. 5).

Combating shortage of qualified labour can also involve supporting the unemployed and low-qualified in taking first steps towards achieving a certificate or qualification. Validation arrangements in the care sector can even provide a stepping stone towards a formal qualification:

- (a) in Germany, the care sector has been examined in recent years to see how validation can help with the huge shortage of skilled workers. Several initiatives have been carried out including *Servicestellen Nachqualifizierung Altenpflege Niedersachsen und Rheinland-Pfalz*

(Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate service centre for the recognition of skills and second-chance training in elderly care). This project investigated possibilities for experienced workers to acquire parts of formal VET qualifications in elderly care through validation. Assessment steps were further investigated and tools have been developed to accommodate validation (Blumenauer et al., 2013);

- (b) at the time of preparing the 2010 inventory (European Commission et al., 2010h, p. 18; 2010f), procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL) introduced in Scotland supported workers to progress towards achievement of recognised qualifications. They were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and skills and to match their competences with units included in the Scottish qualifications framework. The pilot project supported learners in reflecting on what they have learned from past experiences and how they apply this in their current social care practice. Learners were also encouraged to select evidence of their learning and to identify further action needed to achieve fully, or demonstrate all units of, a formal qualification. The pilot project was not a direct route to gaining qualifications but prepared learners for most of the requirements of one unit of the Scottish vocational qualification in health and social care;
- (c) in Malta, a trade testing system was set up to assess individuals who have acquired knowledge, skills and competences in a particular occupation (including occupations from the care sector) but who do not possess a formal qualification. This system does not provide a formal qualification but candidates who successfully pass the testing are awarded a certificate of competence in that particular occupation (European Commission et al., 2014j, p. 13). Validation of informal and non-formal learning has been developed for the child care sector, at levels 4 (workers in child care centres) and 5 (child care supervisor/manager) of the Malta qualifications framework (MQF)/European qualifications framework (EQF) (see also Box 5);
- (d) in France, validation (VAE) is particularly relevant in healthcare and childcare, where jobs are traditionally held by low-qualified female workers, who might benefit from undergoing validation (Damesin et al., 2014, p. 107).

Validation arrangements can also provide a stepping stone towards a higher education qualification: for example, access to degree programmes at universities of applied science, including those focusing on social work, without the upper secondary school leaving exam but based on relevant professional experience, is possible in Austria (European Commission et al.,

2014a, p. 5). In Germany, the ANKOM-initiative ⁽³⁾ developed validation approaches to raise permeability between vocational and higher education. Two of the projects conducted within this initiative focused on the social care sector and provision of access to and/or exemption from parts of higher education programmes based on the validation and recognition of relevant professional experience ⁽⁴⁾.

An important target group benefiting from validation in this sector is migrant people who already have relevant work experience or qualifications from their home country and who want to work in care occupations. Validation can be used for integrating migrants into the labour market ⁽⁵⁾. In many cases, validation for migrants is interlinked with the recognition of foreign qualifications. There is also some evidence that initiatives and approaches are being developed in this context that link these processes with other European tools, as illustrated by the ECVET project I CARE.

Box 3. I CARE: improving mobility and career paths for personal care and social workers

Please note this is not the same project as described in Box 2.

The Italian I CARE project (with partners from Germany, Portugal and Romania) was one of the ECVET pilot projects funded by the European Commission focused on the national implementation of ECVET in the context of lifelong learning. Partners analysed existing qualifications in personal care and social work in their respective countries to develop a recognition model, encouraging mutual recognition of training and qualifications. The rationale of the project was that, apart from those regulated professions for which a specific recognition framework already exists (2005/36/EC, European Parliament; Council, 2005), there is lack of common methodologies and frameworks for the evaluation, transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes. Related flexible training solutions are also rare. This situation can delay the full labour market integration of migrants and prevent the development of human capital.



⁽³⁾ BMBF-Initiative: *Ankom*. <http://ankom.dzhw.eu/> [accessed 8.3.2016].

⁽⁴⁾ BMBF-Initiative: *Ankom*: Ergebnisse: nach Fächern: *Sozialwesen*. <http://ankom.dzhw.eu/ergebnisse/faecher/fach10> [accessed 8.3.2016].

⁽⁵⁾ In general, however, 'in the majority of European countries, immigrants are not a dominant group in the area of validation' (Souto-Otero and Villalba-Garcia, 2015).

The I CARE project used ECVET as a framework to develop a recognition model valid across borders. A matrix of competences was developed which compared the learning outcomes of five health care professions across the partner countries (care operator, socio-assistance assistant, family assistant, dental assistant, and baby sitter). Using this matrix, an assessment method was piloted in the partner countries. This ensured that the learning outcomes (including those acquired in non-formal and informal contexts) could be assessed equally. At the end of the process, the partners were able to develop a recognition model for prior learning for awarding qualifications, whatever the learning context (formal, non-formal and informal). This model could be used by VET providers, but also by competent institutions to formalise achieved learning outcomes and progress or upgrade a qualification (*).

(*) *I CARE project: improving mobility and career paths for personal care and social workers:*
<http://www.icareproject.eu/> [accessed 8.3.2016].

In Germany, health care professionals are one of the main professional groups seeking recognition of their foreign qualifications in the context of the vocational qualifications assessment law ⁽⁶⁾. In addition to training certificates, the law also refers to proof of relevant professional experience or other certificates of competence if they are necessary for establishing equivalence, so permitting competences acquired in informal or non-formal learning to be taken into account when checking equivalence of foreign and German qualifications.

Validation can also be used as a tool for human resource development in companies: there are examples of validation used in the care sector for this purpose. This has dual purpose: as a means for ensuring the quality of the services offered or for raising standards; and for enhancing employee motivation and self-confidence. As an example, in the Czech Republic, companies are expected to use the national register of qualifications (NSK) for further education and training of their workers, as well as for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In 2013, a prize was awarded to companies demonstrating innovation in human resources using the NSK. One such company was an early childcare centre which used competence descriptions in the NSK to allow employees to

⁽⁶⁾ Federal Ministry of Education and Research: Recognition in Germany: Professional recognition: Federal recognition act. http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/federal_recognition_act.php [accessed 8.3.2016].

improve their skills and also to show their commitment to the quality of services to parents (European Commission et al., 2014, p. 7).

In Scotland, procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) introduced in the social services sector are said to have helped to increase the self-confidence of the workers who took part. One result is that RPL procedures have had a positive impact on workers as described in Box 4.

Box 4. **Increasing learner confidence and motivation**

In Scotland, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is an integrated part of the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF). As part of the implementation of the SCQF, the Scottish Social Services Council ran a pilot project between 2006 and 2008 using RPL procedures to help support workers to progress towards recognised qualifications. The target group was workers lacking in confidence as learners and/or those who were reluctant to undertake formal learning. The pilot project supported learners to identify their level of competence and skills against the SCQF and to reflect on what they had learned from past experiences and how they could apply this in their current social care practice. Learners were asked to select evidence of their learning and to identify further action they needed to take to achieve fully or demonstrate all units of a formal qualification. The wider context of the pilot project is a registration requirement for social services staff which is now compulsory in Scotland.

Increased self-confidence was emphasised by learners and mentors as a result of the validation. The reflection process was considered to be particularly helpful for low-qualified employees since they were able to identify the value of their work experience and to recognise that this was comparable to colleagues with more formal qualifications. This is also reported as having a positive impact on their work.

3.2. Care sector awareness and use of validation

In many countries there are no detailed statistical data on the use of validation procedures in this sector. However, there is evidence that in some countries specific sectors (including the care sector) are more prominent in validation initiatives than others:

- (a) in France, the home and personal care services sector appears to be the predominant user of validation (VAE) (Damesin et al., 2014, p. 107). In

2012, nine out of the 10 most popular qualifications for VAE were in health and social care and accounted for 47.8% of all VAE applications assessed by juries. The three qualifications most commonly requested by VAE applicants were:

- (i) the diploma for nursing assistant (DEAS) with 6 050 applications assessed (12.4% of the total);
- (ii) the diploma for carer (DEAVS), with 4 506 applications assessed (9.3% of the total);
- (iii) the childcare diploma (*CAP petite enfance*) with 3 133 applications assessed (6.4% of the total).

Together, these three qualifications represented 28.1% of all applications assessed by VAE juries in 2012 (European Commission et al., 2014f);

- (b) in Iceland, at the time of preparing the 2007 inventory report, several industry projects to validate non-formal and informal learning were encouraged by the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC). The social work sector was among the sectors selected for these projects (Souto-Otero et al., 2008, p. 80);
- (c) in Spain, in Aragon, the current focus of validation initiatives is on sociocultural occupations (domestic care and children's education); in Galicia, the focus is on the care sector. Validation is slowly being extended to other sectors in the service and industrial fields (Damesin et al., 2014, p. 195);
- (d) in the UK, in terms of subjects at higher education level, health and social work was a popular subject for APEL candidates at the time of writing the 2010 inventory report. At the University of Plymouth, for example, the health and social work faculty was said to be 'the most advanced in terms of publicising APEL and processing claims' (European Commission et al., 2010e, p. 11);
- (e) in Switzerland, there are a range of local initiatives that support validation of practices in this area. They include opportunities to achieve the Swiss Red Cross certificate of health through validation in the Canton Vaud. At IVET level it is also possible to achieve the Federal VET diploma of education assistant and community healthcare assistant through validation. At higher education level, validation of non-formal and informal learning can be used to access social work provision in all universities of applied sciences.

A 'medium' but growing interest in validation initiatives in this sector can also be observed in other countries. In the Netherlands, according to the findings of

the inventory report 2010, although several industrial sectors including the care sector had set up initiatives regarding validation since the end of the 1990s, awareness in the sector was still considered as 'medium' (European Commission et al., 2010d). This is also the case in Germany, where awareness of validation initiatives was considered as 'medium' among the relevant sectors, with the health care sector also characterised by the huge shortage of skilled workers. Initiatives such as the *Servicestellen Nachqualifizierung Altenpflege Niedersachsen und Rheinland-Pfalz* (Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate Service Centre for the recognition of skills and second-chance training in elderly care) have limits which hinder wider application. Attendance at courses is a requirement to reach a formal qualification and this is seen as an obstacle from the employers' side; this is because workers are needed immediately to fulfil duties in the workplace and workers taking time out to attend courses will invariably lead to further staff shortages. Workers also view course attendance as an obstacle because of the loss of income (Blumenauer et al., 2013).

There are also suggestions that some learners in the care sector, for example in the UK, prefer training rather than RPL because they are taught the required competences. In Denmark, certain sectors, such as the healthcare sector, are more reluctant to introduce validation of non-formal and informal learning, because they are 'intent on protecting traditional access routes' (Damesin et al., 2014, p. 71).

3.3. Type of validation opportunities in the care sector

Many validation initiatives in this sector aim at the acquisition of a qualification (i.e. the formal recognition of competences gained in informal and non-formal learning contexts), either to meet new requirements or to support unqualified workers in obtaining qualifications and ensuring the quality of services in the care sector. Most validation opportunities in this sector focus on assessment and certification, based on officially approved standards. These are of particular importance where the achievement of a formal qualification is the main aim, because this requires the confirmation that an individual's learning outcomes meet agreed standards. This is also confirmed by the Cedefop report on validation in enterprises which refers to standards from State institutions, sector organisations or collective agreements as a type of reference which 'seems to be most important in the healthcare sector, which is highly regulated in terms of legally obligatory skills requirements' (Cedefop,

2014, p. 42). Validation might also include identification and documentation activities supporting individual reflection, learning and competence development processes but usually not as ends in themselves.

In some countries, validation opportunities in the care sector are developed in the context of national qualifications frameworks, so assessment and certification (reflecting learning outcome-based standards) have to be the focus. This is the case in the RPL pilot project in Scotland presented above and also in Malta, as described in Box 5.

Box 5. Occupational standards for personnel working within children's day care facilities in Malta

The Malta qualifications framework (MQF) was established in 2007; its objectives encourage qualifications achieved through non-formal or informal learning. Occupational standards have been developed, against which validation of non-formal and informal learning can be carried out. These describe what a person in a particular occupation must know and be able to do to be formally recognised as competent in a given occupation. They are developed in partnership with employers and approved by sector skills councils, with the aim of recognising competences which are not usually offered within traditional educational training institutions. These standards also provide the opportunity for workers to validate their learning as part of their work experience and obtain certification. Occupational standards for personnel working within children's day care facilities in Malta are already available (at MQF levels 4 and 5, linked to EQF levels 4 and 5) (ETC and NCFHE; n.d.). The assessment for the certificate of competence level 4 (childcare workers in childcare centres) includes a written test, an interview, the development of a portfolio and a practical test where candidates are observed by the assessment board (ETC and NCFHE; n.d.). This is also the case for the certificate of competence level 5 (childcare managers and childcare supervisors in childcare centres) but without the practical test (ETC and NCFHE, 2015).

Various assessment methods are used in this sector, often in combination, for confirming that relevant standards are met, as in the example from Malta. Similarly in Sweden, the validation process for health care assistants consists of interviews, tests and also the validation of skills in practice. Another example of the use of a multiplicity of methods taken from the 2007 inventory report for Romania (European Commission et al., 2007b, p. 8) is presented in Box 6.

Box 6. Assessment approach of the Training and Resources Centre for Social Occupations *Pro Vocație* in Romania

Pro Voca ie was set up in 2002 as an assessment centre for several social occupations. The certification process through *Pro Voca ie* is as follows. Each candidate, assisted by an assessor, analyses his or her own professional performance in relation to the occupational standard. The assessor then explains the contents and stipulations of the occupational standards. Depending on the results of the self-assessment, the assessor recommends to the candidate that he or she joins the assessment process for the whole, or part of, the standard (or not to continue the assessment process). The ultimate decision to continue the assessment process lies with the candidate.

Pro Voca ie has produced sets of documents and assessment tools for each occupation: direct observation, simulation, written test, oral test, project, portfolio, and report. Assessment files are compiled including self-assessment and feedback from the whole assessment process. At least three methods are used for the assessment of each candidate, one of which must be direct observation. These are used at three stages of the assessment: at the beginning, through the self-assessment process, and as part of the feedback at the end of the process.

The decision concerning the candidate's competence is established for each unit of assessment. Individuals who are assessed as 'competent' obtain a certificate of professional competence for the relevant units. Those who are successful in all the units specific to an occupation and/or qualification obtain a certificate of professional competence for the entire occupation and/or qualification in accordance with the occupational standards.

There is also evidence that information and guidance is of crucial importance in validation, plus examples where validation opportunities and further training for the acquisition of missing competences to obtain a qualification are interlinked. The following example from Germany illustrates this approach.

Box 7. Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate service centre for the recognition of skills and second-chance training in elderly care

This project was initiated to develop and test a model for validating the professional experiences of workers caring for the elderly, particularly care workers without a relevant VET qualification. The aim was to provide the opportunity to obtain this qualification in a shortened training programme. The validation process in elderly care offered by this service centre comprises six phases (Blumenauer et al., 2013, pp. 52-58):

- information and guidance is the first step. It includes initial clarification of individual needs and of options offered by the validation procedure;
- an initial competence assessment is carried out. Applicants are required to prepare a portfolio presenting their learning experiences from formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts;
- in the second competence assessment phase, competence standards for the qualification in elderly care are used. Candidates are asked to compare their already acquired competences with those required for the qualification. This is followed by written, oral and practical exams based on practice-oriented cases. The practical performance is assessed based on observation and an assessment grid. From the results, the assessors recommend the extent of the recognition of competences and the shortening of the training programme;
- the results of the assessment and the recommendation of the assessor are forwarded to the competent body (in this case, the educational authority of Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate). If all formal requirements are fulfilled, the responsible body recognises the already acquired competences;
- the missing competences are acquired in a shortened training programme;
- the qualification is awarded based on successful participation in the final exam.

In some cases, the main instrument of the validation procedure in this sector is a portfolio for documenting evidence about the competences developed. Portfolios are used not only for encouraging reflection but also for supporting certification processes that are usually characterised by a high degree of standardisation: portfolios need to be compiled based on the detailed requirements of the respective qualification standard. This is illustrated by the following example from the UK which was presented in the 2010 inventory report (European Commission et al., 2010e).

Box 8. Portfolio development for an APEL qualification for early years and play workers in the UK

In the UK, an APEL qualification was developed by Duo Training, a training centre approved by the awarding body City & Guilds, for early years and play workers without formal qualifications who wish to gain a qualification that recognises their working practice and experience (*). This qualification is classified as level 3 on the national qualification framework (NQF). It can be achieved by recognising previous experience and knowledge alone (i.e. no further training is required). However, Duo candidates have access to a mentor who can provide advice and support and Duo also provide guidance materials (including a tool kit) to candidates.

The main assessment elements for achieving the qualification require candidates to:

- provide at least two professional testimonies according to a detailed set of criteria;
- produce a reflective account which demonstrates their sector knowledge and understanding in relation to practice. The account is broken down into 10 sections, each one requiring 500 to 700 words.

Candidates are also required to prepare a portfolio containing all the evidence. This is assessed by an APEL 'scrutineer' who makes a recommendation to an expert panel. The expert panel checks a sample from each candidate's reflective account and their professional testimony, ensuring they are content with results from the scrutineer. The panel then recommends award of qualification.

(*). Duo Consulting: *APEL qualification: level 3 certificate I work with children*. <http://www.apelme.co.uk/> [accessed 9.3.2016].

There are also types of validation opportunities in this sector which do not primarily focus on assessment and certification but on the other stages of validation: identification and documentation. In these cases, the purpose of validation is not primarily to obtain a qualification but to make competences gained through volunteering in this field visible. For example, the 2010 inventory report found that in France, in addition to the VAE procedure, some actions had been designed to support identification of volunteers' competences and help them to ascribe value to their learning outcomes. In social care, a passport for volunteers (*passport bénévole*) launched in September 2007, was supported by most awarding ministries with a VAE process and was used by many charity associations (including la Croix Rouge,

Association des Paralysés de France, Secours Populaire, Secours Catholique, les Blouses Roses) (European Commission et al., 2010b).

3.4. Care sector employers and access to validation

There is evidence that employers are interested in facilitating access to validation initiatives, aiming to keep employees motivated, to ensure that they meet new standards and/or requirements, and to fill vacancies. Employers inform their (potential) employees of validation opportunities and support them in the process. Employers are also involved in processes for developing occupational standards as a basis for validation procedures (seen in Malta).

In some cases, such as in Belgium-Flanders, care sector employers refer their employees to education institutions, encouraging them by making validation procedures and training accessible. They provide incentives by giving time off and paying fees. In Sweden, validation procedures for care workers are carried out in adult education (both private and municipal), using different approaches to aid access to validation. One example is the case of care workers taking 20% time off from work to be validated over the course of approximately a year. Some employers pay the employees' full salary during this timeframe so that the individual does not suffer a pay cut.

As presented in Section 3.1, some companies have internal procedures using validation processes for human resource development, particularly for ensuring the quality of their services.

Validation in the youth work sector

4.1. Rationale for validation in the youth sector

The following main reasons for providing and using validation procedures in the youth sector can be identified:

- (a) increasing awareness and providing evidence of the skills gained for enhancing employability and ensuring 'currency' in relation to the labour market;
- (b) supporting active citizenship and participation;
- (c) strengthening cooperation between the public and third sectors in youth work;
- (d) providing a link to (existing) qualifications and lifelong learning;
- (e) improving the quality of work in the youth sector.

More detailed information and examples are provided in the following paragraphs:

4.1.1. Increasing awareness and providing evidence of skills acquired

Young people involved in youth organisations can gain various skills. In many youth organisations, they have options to engage in activities with high degrees of responsibility and autonomy. For example, young people with responsibility for managing finances during voluntary work in the youth sector can develop competences that are also relevant to other labour market jobs. The competences gained through non-formal learning in youth work are wide-ranging and include soft skills, mathematical capabilities, digital capacities, budget management experience, and foreign language knowledge (European Commission, 2014, p. 15). A study on the *Impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability* (Souto-Otero et al., 2012) concluded that there is a good match between the six soft skills most frequently demanded by employers and those developed in youth organisations. These skills are often seen as key elements of successful job performance: communication, organisational or planning, decision-making, confidence or autonomy, and team work. Experience in youth work could be

seen as an asset in the recruitment process. However, often neither young people nor employers are aware of the skills that have been gained. Equally the potential arising from youth work is neglected. For example, the above study on youth work and employability found that employers are generally positive towards young peoples' experiences in youth organisations but they are not made sufficiently visible and young people need to be more confident in presenting their skills. Making young people aware of the competences gained in youth work and documenting them in a way that can be used in job applications might increase their employability. This is also confirmed by a German study which concludes that evidence of competences gained in youth work can support employers in their decision on which applicants will be invited to a job interview (Baumbast et al., 2012, p. 51).

International tools such as Youthpass and Europass, are used to increase awareness of skills gained. Several national initiatives (such as Nefiks in Slovenia, Stardiplats in Estonia, C-Stick in Belgium-Flanders or *Keys for life* in the Czech Republic) aim to increase awareness of informal and non-formal learning in youth work by providing user-friendly tools to young people, educators and employers (European Commission, 2014, p. 28). Validation can also make less-obvious competences gained in youth work visible, such as creative and innovative capacities of young people relevant to employability (European Commission, 2014). Validation initiatives can enable young people to gain recognition for the activities they undertake outside formal education and to make these 'currency' in the labour market (European Commission et al., 2014r, p. 6). In Austria, for example, a competence model for youth workers is currently being developed which should enhance the visibility of the competences gained as well as their comparability (?).

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is also considered to contribute to the personal development of young people, helping them to gain more self-esteem. The Oscar tool (Box 9) is an example of how validation can help young people by making the skills and competences gained through involvement in youth work visible to employers.

(?) aufZAQ, Certified quality of non-formal education in youth work: Fachtagung *Recognise it! Kompetenzen von JugendleiterInnen und JugendarbeiterInnen* [Symposium *Recognize it! Competences of youth leaders and youth workers*] <http://www.aufzaq.at/fachtagung/>

Box 9. Oscar, a tool for validating competences gained in sociocultural work in the youth sector

In Belgium-Flanders, the tool Oscar was introduced in 2009 by Socius, the support service for social and cultural adult education and the Support Centre for Youth. The tool aims to make people's competences within the sociocultural sector more visible. Oscar can be used as a portfolio to bring together experiences from informal and non-formal learning environments. These are integrated into the portfolio as 'competence documents'. The portfolio is a simple and uniform tool to create and collect documents of competences by organisations and other participants involved in sociocultural work for youth and adults. It is also linked to other procedures within the EVC (*erkennen van verworven competenties*, recognition of acquired competences). Additional activities have raised awareness and made the usefulness and added value of Oscar visible to labour market actors and providers of education and training. Recently, the Oscar tool has been adopted by organisations working in other sectors (European Commission et al., 2014b).

4.1.2. Supporting active citizenship and participation

Validation of skills and competences is also used to increase the motivation of volunteers in youth work. In Bulgaria, there is no system of recognition of skills and competences acquired by volunteers but some organisations, including youth organisations, have projects aiming to motivate young people to take part in volunteering activities. Volunteers have the chance to gain communication, social, and multicultural competences and receive a certificate for non-formal training. The certificate describes the knowledge, skills, competences, and experience acquired as well as personal and professional qualities demonstrated (European Commission et al., 2014c, p. 9). Disadvantaged young people belonging to groups at risk of social exclusion have the opportunity to develop competences through voluntary activities; making these competences visible can support them in their particularly vulnerable situation (Souto-Otero et al., 2012; European Commission et al., 2014r).

4.1.3. Strengthening cooperation between the public and third sectors in youth work

Youth work is carried out in the public and third sectors, though the extent of cooperation between these two differs across countries. In Lithuania, a current

initiative is to ‘strengthen the State and non-governmental sectors working with young people, as well as to develop, promote and strengthen inter-sectoral cooperation between the public and third sectors’ (European Commission et al. 2014h, p. 3). This project, financed by the European social fund, aims at developing and establishing a competence assessment mechanism of youth workers.

Box 10. **Validation as a pathway for working with the young**

Lithuania’s national project *Development of an integrated youth policy* was implemented between August 2010 and January 2015 by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. It involved government (national and municipal level) and non-government organisations. The project introduced the youth worker certification system along with a competence assessment mechanism covering validation of non-formal and informal learning for youth workers. As part of this project, 600 youth workers, including those from the public (social workers, police officers, job centres’ workers and similar) and non-governmental sectors will have their competences validated. The main rationale of this part of the project was to recognise the role of a youth worker, to bring ‘some order’ to what it means to be a ‘youth worker’ and to broaden their labour market opportunities. The main rationale for the youth worker to take up validation of the skills and knowledge already gained is to see a pathway towards professional development (European Commission et al., 2014h).

4.1.4. **Linking to (existing) qualifications and lifelong learning**

In some countries, initiatives aim to provide a link between non-formal and informal learning and existing qualifications. Exemptions from training programmes are possible in some cases. This was reported, for example, for individuals who have completed competence assessments while they are volunteering for Scouting Gelderland: volunteers who have had their prior learning validated could be exempted from following certain formal training courses (Nelissen and Froy, 2005). In Belgium-Flanders, the Oscar project aims to link learning in the youth sector to the national qualifications framework (European Commission et al., 2014b). In the Czech Republic, an initiative to validate and recognise non-formal and informal learning in the youth sector has been linked to the national qualifications register. In the Netherlands, a validation initiative in the youth sector supports recognition of prior learning in

higher education. The last two examples are presented in more detail in Boxes 11 and 12.

Box 11. *Keys for life*

Keys for life in the Czech Republic supports recognition of competences for individuals holding positions in youth and children's organisations. Within the project, qualification standards were developed for professions in the children and young people sector. The project also developed procedures through which the skills and competences outlined in the qualification standards can be identified and documented. The follow-up project K2 (quality and competitiveness in non-formal education) aims at disseminating the personal competence portfolio, a pilot supplement to the Europass CV. Some of the occupation descriptions were converted into qualifications and nine were finalised by 2014. The idea was that these qualifications, or at least some, would be integrated into the national qualifications register in 2014 (European Commission et al., 2014e).

Box 12. **Recognition of youth workers' experience in higher education**

A project in the Netherlands supported recognition of youth workers' experience against a higher education professional qualification. The prior work experience and learning outcomes of group leaders promoted to senior group leaders within the youth organisation were assessed and recognised in a validation of prior learning (VPL) procedure using both sector standards as well as higher education qualifications. The report produced through the VPL process was assessed by an examination committee of the university as part of the intake for a qualification programme (including portfolio and assessment). The aim of this evaluation is two-fold: first, to obtain directly the higher education qualification linked to the sector-standard for senior group leader; second, to obtain a tailor-made learning programme, considering prior learning outcomes and filling in the remaining learning targets in the higher education programme (European Commission et al., 2014k, p. 16).

4.1.5. Improving the quality of work in the youth sector ⁽⁸⁾

There is some evidence that there are trends towards professionalism of youth workers to improve work quality. Professionalism does not only refer to formal qualifications; volunteer youth workers also integrate a professional approach into their work with young people. The *European youth work convention 2015* highlights the need for pathways for the professionalisation of youth work in cooperation with the education sector (European youth work convention, 2015). There are initiatives focusing on clarification of common minimum competence standards for youth workers across the different organisations and roles (European Commission et al., 2014s, p. 13). In the Czech Republic, for example, the *Keys for life* project aimed at strengthening the continuous training of those working with children and young people to improve the quality of the education offered (European Commission et al., 2014s, p. 70).

4.2. Use and awareness of youth sector validation

The expert group report, *Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability* highlights the expectation that the increase in recognition and validation of non-formal learning in business contexts and across education will help providers, young people and potential employers to appreciate the competences gained through informal and non-formal learning (European Commission, 2014, p. 6). However, from the inventory reports we have little information on awareness of validation opportunities in this sector, for example in terms of take-up. The youth sector is involved in validation procedures, though this seems contained to a small number of initiatives in a limited number of countries. Youth associations and initiatives often provide learning opportunities to youth workers but there is less evidence of recognition and validation tools in comparison to the provision of training (European Commission et al., 2014s, pp. 126-127). As stated in the 2014 inventory report, much more needs to be done to achieve greater involvement of the youth sector in national validation policies (European Commission et al., p. 21).

⁽⁸⁾ The expert group on youth work quality systems in the EU Member States recently presented a common quality framework for development of youth work (European Commission, 2015). In 2015, the European Commission also published a call for a *Study on youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union: handbook for implementation* (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/calls-for-tenders/study-youth-work-quality-systems-and-frameworks-in-european-union-handbook-for-implementation_en). The study will be carried out in 2016.

In some countries, validation initiatives within youth organisations can be identified, for example in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Finland (European Commission et al., 2014m, p. 108). However, they are considered small-scale initiatives compared to other sectors. For example, in France, the number of educator/youth worker diplomas (*diplôme d'état moniteur éducateur*, ISCED 3) issued, based on validation, is low compared to the care sector (European Commission et al., 2014f). Although representatives of this sector could also be among the most active and interested stakeholders for developing a validation system, validation opportunities in the youth sector are, in many cases, offered through small projects and the level of awareness is low.

Although many working with young people in the Czech Republic were reached through *Keys for life*, awareness of the initiative among workers in the specific profession (of working with youth in their free time) was assessed as medium. A relatively high proportion of workers are aware and there is a good level of take-up, although there is potential for this to increase. The project evaluation observed an increase of awareness among organisations regarding contribution to the development of more 'soft' competences (European Commission et al., 2014f, p. 11).

It seems that validation opportunities and tools offered at European level are not sufficiently known by participants in the youth sector. Because of different stakeholders involved, and the huge diversity in the conceptualisation of youth work across Member States, it is sometimes challenging to reach the ground level. Detailed information needs to be communicated directly in each of the countries to make the validation opportunities useful for stakeholders and young people. It is also important to involve youth organisations in the development of national validation strategies: to achieve this, it is necessary to explain the benefits of validation practices in the field. The impact on personal development and motivation needs to be highlighted, as well as opportunities for gaining access to validation, the labour market and social inclusion.

4.3. Youth sector validation types

Validation opportunities available for individuals working and/or volunteering in the youth sector currently focus on identification and documentation. The study *Visible value: mapping of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/education at European and national levels* (EU-CoE youth partnership, 2014), coordinated by the EU-CoE youth

partnership, identified a wide range of types of tools and practices, tackling one, or a combination, of four different aspects or dimensions: self, social, formal and political recognition. The types of tools identified in the mapping study include assessment, certification/attestation, self-assessment, portfolios, websites/platforms, publications/handbooks, events/seminars/workshops, videos/films and official documentation.

The study indicates the following trends:

- (a) recognition tools and practices are increasingly offered as digital and online versions hosted on specially designed web platforms (for example Nefiks booklet in Slovenia, or the Council of Europe's portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers);
- (b) there is a trend to use existing frameworks (such as the European framework of key competences for lifelong learning) or to develop specific frameworks for assessing competences gained in the youth field;
- (c) many existing tools and practices are imported from other areas and adjusted to the context of youth work and youth organisations instead of starting from scratch: the CH-Q model: programme of career development ⁽⁹⁾ was developed in Switzerland and since implemented by Scouting Gelderland (the Netherlands), the UK and Norway (Nelissen and Froy, 2005);
- (d) both assessment and self-assessment approaches can be identified: assessment is more likely to be used when it comes to the recognition of learning outcomes but in several cases a combination of both is used;
- (e) tools are increasingly offered with an 'open access' approach: they can be used either by individuals (Nefiks in Slovenia, *Keys for life* in the Czech Republic, European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers of the Council of Europe) or by organisations (Oscar in Belgium) to focus on recognition of non-formal learning in various contexts and activities.

Differences in approaches to validation and recognition can be observed according to the type of organisation involved: validation and recognition of youth organisations are more likely to list specific competences and skills while most government initiatives for the recognition of learning in the youth work sector are centred around recognising the completion of particular approved training programmes and are qualification based (European Commission et al., 2014s, p. 127).

⁽⁹⁾ Gesellschaft CH-Q: Kompetenzmanagement portal [competency management portal]: <http://www.ch-q.ch/> [accessed 9.3.2016].

The main types of validation approach identified in the inventory reports focus on recording experiences through issuing passes or certificates (not qualification) and the development of portfolios for documenting competences gained within the youth sector, which are mainly based on self-assessment. In some cases these tools for documenting informal and non-formal learning results are accompanied by, or embedded in, 'broader' validation procedures. These might include workshops, assessments or skills audits as well as guidance for supporting young people to reflect on their learning experiences and identify competences gained. The approaches and tools used can also be distinguished by the degree of standardisation on which they are based. For example, some tools for documenting competences gained are open to collect learning experiences of each young person in an individualised way (such as the *Recreational activity study book*, Finland (European Commission et al., 2010a)) while others are based on competence profiles (such as the C-Stick tool, Belgium-Flanders⁽¹⁰⁾) or are oriented towards a specific qualification or skill needed for a particular job.

Examples of these opportunities are presented in the following.

4.3.1. Focus on recording experiences: passes, portfolios and certificates

The tools used in these approaches support the first two phases of validation (identification and documentation) because they mainly focus on identifying and recording experiences. However, some may also result in certificates. These procedures usually do not result in the awarding of a qualification since they are not based on specified competence standards to be achieved. In most cases these approaches are based on self-assessment but sometimes the validation opportunities include confirmation of the competences recorded by tutors or coaches (perhaps based on observation).

There are, two main European level validation opportunities based on a portfolio approach: the Youthpass and the European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers.

4.3.2. Youthpass

Youthpass is a European tool for self-assessing and documenting non-formal and informal learning in youth work, gained within projects funded by Erasmus+/ *Youth in action* and *Youth in action* programmes. With Youthpass, project participants can describe what they have done and show what they

⁽¹⁰⁾ JES: C-Stick: <http://www.jes.be/C-Stick/index.php?TK=En> [accessed 9.3.2016].

have learned. It aims at strengthening the social recognition of youth work and supporting employability by making visible and validating competences through certificates. In the context of the economic crisis, with increased youth unemployment and high school dropout rates, there is an increasing will to recognise all learning that happens during one's life – formal, non-formal and informal – and so support the creative and innovative potential of young people (European Commission, 2013). By having all their learning recognised, young people gain increasing self-awareness and self-esteem, which they need for a successful future. Youthpass consists of certificates that can be obtained by participants in several actions and sub-actions of the Erasmus+ *Youth in action* programme; and a defined process which supports young people, youth workers and youth organisations to reflect about learning outcomes from projects (European Commission, 2013). Since its establishment in 2007, 500 000 certificates were issued (as of December 2105). The Youthpass impact study highlights the importance of Youthpass to the communication of non-formal learning to employers and its contribution to the social recognition of youth work. However, lack of awareness was identified about the complementary role of international youth work in educational pathways as well as employers' awareness of the value of learning the results from youth work (European Commission, 2013). According to the 2014 inventory, awareness of Youthpass is also considered as low to date.

Youthpass is not formally recognised by structures at national level in both formal education and in the labour market. The impact study recommends further development of technical tools and further measures to support awareness, development and recognition of the learning value of youth work. It also suggests that measures should link Youthpass to the individual, social, formal and political recognition of non-formal and informal learning and of youth work (European Commission, 2013, p. 35) ⁽¹¹⁾.

4.3.3. European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers

Another European tool for validating informal and non-formal learning in the youth sector is the European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers ⁽¹²⁾, developed by the Council of Europe supporting the assessment and description of competences acquired in youth work. This aims to help

⁽¹¹⁾ Recent developments include the experimentation *Youthpass goes national* which started as pilot projects for implementing Youthpass at national levels in Estonia and Lithuania. This initiative will be evaluated in the third quarter of 2016.

⁽¹²⁾ Council of Europe: *Youth work portfolio*:
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/home> [accessed 9.3.2016].

individual, teams and organisations doing youth work around Europe to understand their competence and develop it more effectively. It can also be used by trainers, youth work managers and policy-makers. The portfolio combines self-assessment of competences with evidence of experience, testimonies from participants' activities, references and certificates from further learning and training. However, options for recognition are currently limited: 'there is no specific recognition, validation or certification process associated with the portfolio at this point. Furthermore, there is no "one-stop shop" which explains the recognition, validation and certification options available to people doing youth work across Europe. These two facts can make acquiring recognition for their achievements, and for the value of their work, seem complicated to people doing youth work' ⁽¹³⁾.

Other validation opportunities resulting in passes, portfolios and certificates are developed at national or project level. Examples include:

- (a) in Austria, the Provincial Youth Department in Styria issues the Ehren.Wert.Voll (Worth.To be.Cherished) certificate, aiming to make competences visible that are acquired in voluntary activities in work with children and young people. The certificate is based on the competence portfolio developed by the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer at the University of Graz (European Commission et al., 2014a, p. 14);
- (b) in the German youth sector, voluntary activities can be recognised by certificates, cards and documentation in school reports. An example is the card for youth leaders, the *Jugendleiter/in-Card* or *Juleica* which is the most common certificate for young volunteers in Germany (around 3 000 cards are issued each month). Some federal States have their own system for certifying competences (European Commission et al., 2010c);
- (c) the German *Nachweise International* (certificate of participation international) initiative issues certificates of engagement and competences acquired through international youth work projects; it includes information on the project and the individually demonstrated competences and is issued by certified coaches based on a competence-based project analysis (European Commission et al., 2014g, p. 10);
- (d) the Oscar tool in Belgium-Flanders is used for documenting and validating experience from informal and non-formal learning environments;

⁽¹³⁾ Council of Europe: Youth work portofolio: *further information*.
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/key-questions-about-the-portfolio> [accessed 9.3.2016].

- (e) the *Stardiplats* (starting place) website in Estonia, supports young people to recognise and analyse their experiences and include them in their portfolio and CVs ⁽¹⁴⁾;
- (f) *Volunteering and skills*, a portfolio for students, an initiative launched by Animafac, the French students' organisations network ⁽¹⁵⁾;
- (g) the ELD method (experience, learning, description) developed by the Swedish Centre for International Youth Exchange (CIU) supports recognition of learning acquired by young people through international voluntary work (European Commission et al., 2014l, p. 10);
- (h) the Scout Association (UK) has developed several tools to translate Scouts' skills to employers, as well as toolkits to raise awareness among employers about the essence of scouting skills (Scout Association, 2013).
Two, more detailed, examples of validation opportunities resulting in passes, portfolios and certificates are presented in Boxes 13 and 14.

Box 13. **My experience (*moje izkušnje*)**

A student employment agency (*) in Slovenia developed a tool for validation and recognition of work experience gained through student work. Students and secondary school pupils can obtain a certificate of their work experience. The employment agency automatically collects information about all jobs a student completed via their services, including competences gained through work experience. Students can print their electronic certificate to show to potential employers and improve their employability.

The labour market seems to value such experience; at the same time, young people are better aware of it, and are able to demonstrate it when looking for student or regular work. Between September 2012 and 2013 over 135 000 young people in Slovenia have obtained such a certificate. At the same time, 35% of employers requested to see it when looking for student workers, and many take it into consideration with candidates for regular employment (European Commission et al., 2014r, p. 16).

(*) *Moje izkušnje*: <http://www.moje-izkusnje.si/sl/moje-izkusnje> [accessed 9.3.2016].

⁽¹⁴⁾ Estonian Youth Centre: *Stardiplats*: <http://www.stardiplats.ee/> [accessed 9.3.2016].

⁽¹⁵⁾ EUCIS-LLL: *Volunteering and skills*, Animafac: <http://www.eucis-lll.eu/good-practices/volunteering-and-skills-animafac/> [accessed 9.3.2016].

Box 14. Recreational activity study book

To promote the validation of non-formal learning in Finland, the Recreational activity study book was developed in 1996 by the Youth Academy, the main youth NGO in the country. It has been widely used in the youth work sector since then. The study book is a portfolio/CV for documentation and recognition of both qualifications and competences acquired by participating in youth voluntary activities. Young people can ask their (adult) tutors to give an assessment of their activity, which is then recorded in the study book. This approach focuses on the individual learner, with more emphasis on the development of each young person's personality rather than the actual qualifications or the skills required in particular jobs. There are no criteria for measuring learning outcomes or performance, nor are any public examinations held to assess the competences acquired by the young people. One of the main reasons for choosing this approach was the fear that, by formalising the system, the basic motivation for participation in youth activities would be endangered, i.e. the joy of being, doing and learning together.

In 2009, the activity book was introduced as a web-based tool: SKENE-X includes an electronic and updated version of the Youth Academy's Recreational activity study book and is provided by the Youth Academy, the Guides and Scouts of Finland, the Swedish Study Centre and the Young Finland Association (European Commission et al., 2010a).

In some cases, the competences to be recorded are linked to the eight key competences.

This is illustrated by the following two examples.

Box 15. Certificate of competences acquired during volunteering

Croatia changed its volunteering act in 2013, reflecting the recognised need for validation and valorisation of volunteer work, especially in the youth sector. The new law enables acknowledgement and validation of skills and competences acquired during a period of volunteering. Employers in Croatia can issue a certificate of competences acquired during volunteering (*Potvrda o kompetencijama ste enim tijekom volontiranja*) (*) at the volunteer's request. The certificate contains the following information:



- the organiser of the volunteering;
- the volunteer; description of the volunteer's position (tasks and responsibilities);
- type, name and duration of additional training undertaken during volunteering period;
- description of competences acquired during volunteering period, divided according to eight key competences as defined by the European Commission (communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning how to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression).

One of the options is to present the skills, competences and knowledge gained through volunteering practice to a third party (e.g. future employer) (European Commission et al., 2014d, p. 11).

(*) Logo organizatora volontiranja: *certificate of competences acquired through volunteering*:
http://www.ufri.uniri.hr/files/Volontiranje/Potvrda_o_kompetencijama_steenim_kroz_volontiranje.pdf
[accessed 9.3.2016].

Box 16. Nefiks

The project Nefiks in Slovenia provides an online portfolio, where young people can document their knowledge, experiences and skills acquired through active citizenship, work experience, organised forms of education, camps and voluntary work, exchanges and visits to foreign countries. The project targets young people with a particular focus on those who are at risk of exclusion. Activities include workshops, stakeholder involvement and counselling activities (European Commission, et al., 2014n, p. 3). Competences recorded are linked to the eight key competences and project outcomes are linked to the Europass CV (*).

(*) *NEFIKS*: <http://www.nefiks.si/> [accessed 9.3.2016].

The following example from Belgium-Flanders presents a tool for documenting learning experiences in youth work, based on a competence framework.

Box 17. C-Stick

In Belgium-Flanders, the C-Stick tool was developed by the youth organisation JES. This organisation guides young people who do not easily find their way in society such as early school leavers. It aims to increase the awareness of young people of their talents, limits and interests, as only then will they be able to make strong and motivated choices concerning participation in society, learning, and work. (*). Young people can add their acquired experiences to the C-Stick which automatically generates a CV from it. The C-Stick also includes a set of techniques for identifying competences and competence development, with the following core elements: observation of competences, feedback, group dynamics, peer learning and experiential learning. C-Stick is linked to an accessible and clearly developed competence framework (European Commission et al., 2014b).

(*) JES: *C-stick*: <http://www.jes.be/C-Stick/index.php?TK=En> [accessed 9.3.2016].

In some cases skills audits are offered in the youth sector. An example was identified in the 2010 inventory for Luxembourg: the *Bilan de compétences* is a specific type of skills audit, offered by the public employment service (ADEM). It is a tool to explore personal and professional skills, including an investigation phase usually organised in four sessions with a specialist advisor. A specific type of audit is offered by ADEM to young people aged 16 to 29: held during a three-week programme, the audit is delivered in cooperation with non-profit organisations (European Commission et al., 2014i, p. 4). A specific initiative is also offered in the youth area.

Box 18. The *attestation de compétences* (certification of competences)

The *attestation de compétences* (certification of competences) initiative by the Fédération Nationale des Eclaireurs et Eclaireuses du Luxembourg (Luxembourg federation of scouts) and the Service National de la Jeunesse (National Youth Service) aims to validate the activities of young people in voluntary work. The process is open to individuals under 30, who have carried out at least 150 hours of training in youth, sociocultural, education and sport areas; have been involved in



youth-related organisations on a voluntary basis for at least 400 hours; have achieved national voluntary service (*service volontaire*) on a full-time basis and without interruption for a minimum of three years.

The procedure comprises the following steps (European Commission et al., 2014i, p. 9):

- the applicant is interviewed by the member of staff at their youth organisation who is going to prepare their application. This interview should be used to provide the young person with information about the process and to identify what documentation will be required. It should also be used to discuss the tasks and competences which will be evidenced in the application for the attestation;
- the application form is completed by the staff member and sent to the National Youth Service;
- the National Youth Service verifies the form received and completes the attestation;
- the attestation is signed by the minister with responsibility for youth affairs;
- the attestation is sent to the young person concerned and a copy is sent to the supporting organisation. It aims to value the competences and skills acquired by young people, and describes the tasks undertaken as well as related competences. The certificate is acknowledged by the Union des entreprises luxembourgeoises (UEL) (European Commission et al., 2014i, pp. 8-9).

4.3.4. Validation procedures linked to qualifications

Some types of validation opportunities offered in the youth sector aim at achieving a qualification (or parts of it) and might also provide a link to the formal system. These procedures might include workshops, assessments or skills audits as well as guidance. Many also use portfolios and passes or certificates for documenting competences, skills and knowledge gained in youth work. They also offer counselling, assessment or skills audits based on the competence standards required for obtaining a qualification. The focus is not only on identification and documentation but also on assessment and certification. For example:

- (a) the *Keys for life* projects in the Czech Republic aim to support the validation and recognition of competences for individuals working in youth and children's organisations, based on qualification standards for professions in this sector (European Commission et al., 2014e);
- (b) the national validation of experience initiative (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*, VAE) in France was implemented by law in 2002 and

provides a framework for the validation of informal and non-formal learning. This leads to partial qualifications or the same qualifications which could also be awarded through participation in formal education and training (European Commission et al., 2014f, p. 3). In youth and sport, a guide was published by the Ministry of Youth, Education and Research, outlining the procedure for assessing, valuing or validating an individual's skills and qualifications to obtain a specific diploma (European Commission et al., 2014f, p. 11).

Box 19 illustrates that international youth organisations are also interested and engaged in developing competence profiles aligned with the European qualifications framework for youth workers and in providing certification processes to support recognition of their competences.

Box 19. Certifying the qualifications of youth workers in NGOs: a road to greater recognition of youth work

The youth exchange umbrella association Juvenil (youth for exchange and understanding) has launched a project, in cooperation with partners, within the lifelong learning programme for developing a process of certifying youth workers. This should give youth workers in NGOs the possibility of assessment and validation of learning outcomes and recognition across Europe of their qualifications, particularly those acquired through experience at work in non-formal and informal contexts.

Within this project, they develop youth worker competence profiles, a methodology for evaluation, and a certification process. Competence profiles have been developed for junior youth worker and senior youth worker (considering the EQF descriptors for level 5 and 6), based on eight key areas identified. The certification procedure is carried out by an advisory board (three members) and comprises five steps: CV evaluation and interview; online test; one-hour case study; philosophical statement; and interview. All elements of the procedure can be done face to face (recommended) or online. The certificate also refers to the most important soft skills of the youth worker.

Successful participants receive a European certificate for youth workers in non-governmental organisations (*).

(*) Youth exchange umbrella association Juvenil (youth for exchange and understanding): *certification of the qualifications of the youth workers in NGOs*. <http://www.youth-workers.eu/> [accessed 9.3.2016].

The types of validation opportunity presented here, as well as the rationale for supporting and engaging in validation initiatives in the youth area, all point to the different purposes of validation practices and to a complex and sensitive dilemma in the youth field.

On the one hand, the lack of awareness and recognition of documentation tools from the youth sector within formal education and the employment context is criticised. On the other hand, it is often highlighted that the voluntary nature of youth work should prevail and there is a reluctance to 'formalise the informal'. There is a fear that over-bureaucratisation of youth work to improve the employability of young people might change the nature of such work (Škulj, 2011) ⁽¹⁶⁾. Also the use of certificates for providing evidence of competences gained for the legitimatisation of the value of youth work is a controversial subject: the study *Impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on young people's employability* (Souto-Otero et al., 2012) reveals that employers might use such certificates to decide which applicant to invite to a job interview but, for them, it is more important that young people are able to reflect on competences gained and how they could be used in different types of employment where they are interested in working.

4.4. Role of youth organisations in validation

Youth organisations often provide support to youth workers and volunteers in using different types of validation tools, such as self-assessment or development of portfolios. In several cases, youth organisations act as facilitators of validation opportunities and also issue documents or certificates attesting the acquisition of competences through youth work. Youth organisations acting as partner organisations in the *Youth in action* programme are involved in providing access to validation processes by issuing the Youthpass (European Commission, 2013). The European portfolio for youth leaders and youth workers ⁽¹⁷⁾ includes tools which youth organisations can use to implement the portfolio process in their own organisational work.

Some youth organisations have developed, or were involved in the development of, validation approaches and tools (as with the C-Stick initiative in Belgium). Another initiative in Belgium-Flanders, the portfolio Oscar tool,

⁽¹⁶⁾ For a discussion on this issue in Germany, see Baumbast et al., 2012.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Council of Europe: *Youth work portfolio*: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/home> [accessed 9.3.2016].

was taken over by the national youth organisation (Vlaamse Verenigingen Jeugd) (European Commission et al., 2014b, p. 13).

In the Netherlands, the youth competence centres in Antwerp provide support to young people's learning, as described in Box 20.

Box 20. **EVC counsellors (Antwerp, Belgium)**

Youth competence centres (YCC) in Antwerp provide training and guidance, training for youth work volunteers, support for youth clubs and youth work initiatives and also support to young people's learning. The YCCs all focus on a particular strategy that aims to increase young people's awareness of their competences: the competence-led strategy. This strategy helps young people to identify their professional abilities and qualities, develop them and have them formally recognised and validated. In this way, the self-esteem of young people is strengthened and their personal development, participation and position on the labour market are also enhanced.

YCC are staffed by youth workers and the EVC (recognition of acquired competences) counsellors who deal with the recognition of acquired competences. They focus on young people between the ages of 12 and 25 whom they try to meet in their leisure time, (youth work, cultural activities, sports, events and voluntary work). The EVC counsellor helps the young individual to identify competences, give feedback and determine further actions to get most out of the youth work activities (European Commission, 2014, p. 22).

The YCC also employs work-related acquired competences counsellors who mainly focus on young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are in a particularly vulnerable position because they have left school and/or are unemployed.

The C-Stick, a digital portfolio, is used for identifying and documenting competences (*).

(*) JES: *C-Stick*. <http://www.jes.be/C-Stick/index.php?TK=En> [accessed 17.3.2016].

Youth organisations often cooperate with national initiatives, promoting validation of non-formal and informal learning and providing information on validation processes, for example as partners within the national youth council. Several youth organisations are also actively involved in policy processes to strengthen the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the youth

sector. One example is Slovenia, where non-governmental youth organisations have issued a resolution on validation and recognition of youth non-formal education (National Youth Council of Slovenia, 2013). Similarly, Iuventa, the Slovak youth institute, has issued a *Declaration on recognition of contribution of non-formal education in youth work* (Iuventa, 2014) which has been signed by 42 institutions. In Austria, representatives of the youth area are involved in developing the national validation strategy (BMBF, 2015).

At European level, for example, nine national youth councils cooperate in the project NFE South R-Evolution which aims to empower non-formal education in Southern Europe by supporting national policy strategies for the validation of lifelong learning competences developed through non-formal education (NFE South R-Evolution, n.d.). SALTO-Youth south-east Europe resource centre has been supporting efforts to increase awareness and recognition of non-formal education/learning in youth work in south-east Europe and has developed a handbook for setting up validation and recognition strategies in the youth work area (SALTO-Youth, 2011).

National and international scouts organisations seem to be quite active in developing tools for validating non-formal and informal learning. One example is Scouting Gelderland (the Netherlands) which has developed a portfolio based on a competence profile (Nelissen and Froy, 2005); Scouts et guides de France (France) have developed *Valorise-toi*, a tool which helps young people to understand and share information on the skills and competences they have gained through scouting and guiding⁽¹⁸⁾; the Fédération les scouts (Belgium) has created an online tool called scout leader skills, to recognise and validate the skills acquired as a scout leader or manager (Les Scouts asbl, 2013).

Some youth organisations, however, are reluctant to support validation practices, fearing that such processes might become too dominant at the expense of their actual activities. For example, supporting reflection on learning experiences or organising peer feedback are already integrated parts of the activities of many youth organisations. Supporting young people in documenting competences gained is sometimes seen as an additional burden with very little use, and as something which might impact on the nature of the work carried out in the youth area.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Scouts guides: *Valorise tes compétences [Develop your skills]*:
<http://blogs.sgdf.fr/badeo/les-formations-de-lanimation/valorise-tes-competences/>
[accessed 9.3.20106].

Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Comparing approaches in the two sectors

When comparing the validation initiatives offered in the care and youth sectors, a stronger focus on identification and documentation (including self-assessment) is observed in the youth field compared to care, where assessment and certification are of higher importance.

This is a sensitive issue in the youth area: since reflection, introspection and peer feedback is strongly integrated into activities in the youth area, the identification of competences and values seems closely linked to these approaches. Documentation of competences gained is also supported in many contexts but with some reluctance. For example, there is lack of awareness of the potential benefits of such tools and also a limited acceptance of validation initiatives in the labour market and in formal education. Assessment and certification with a view to achieving a qualification does not have a tradition in the youth field. Although some approaches to formalisation and a closer link to qualifications can be identified in the youth sector, it is feared that youth work might be overly bureaucratised and formalised, and that this would change its nature.

Alongside this, there are also workers in the youth sector – of varying ages – who may be seeking validation for career advancement reasons. Examples of initiatives offering such opportunities have been presented in this report.

The care sector usually has a stronger focus on assessment and certification and the achievement of a qualification. The aim of validation opportunities is usually to obtain a full qualification and they often combine different methods, such as the development of portfolios and tests and observations. This approach is mainly due to high quality requirements and regulations as well as to the level of professionalisation in this sector and the major need for skilled workers (meaning that they hold the appropriate and necessary certificates) within it.

Similarly, it is more common to base validation approaches on (learning-outcomes-based qualification) standards in the care sector than in the youth

sector. Despite the reluctance in the youth sector regarding formalisation and developing a link to formal qualifications, there is a growing trend towards using competence frameworks as a reference for validation. This is particularly the case for youth sector workers seeking validation. It is also acknowledged that to facilitate the recognition of validated competences by employers, it is often essential to translate the skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning in youth work into labour market and formal education requirements, using measured taxonomies such as the European qualifications framework (European Commission, 2014).

These different approaches also reflect the different extent of labour market connection of validation initiatives in these sectors, which is currently stronger in the care sector than the youth sector. Further, different purposes of validation in relation to the labour market in these sectors can be observed:

- (a) in the care sector, the main purpose of validation is supporting people who are already working or have experience of working in the sector to obtain qualifications required to work in the field or for progression in their career. It is about formalising their vocation-specific or work-related competences for supporting employability and labour market mobility;
- (b) in the youth sector, the main purpose of validation practices is to make the competences gained more visible by supporting young people entering the labour market and improving their chances of finding a job. The focus is mainly on transversal skills: identifying them and formulating them in a way that potential employers can understand.

The evidence emerging from both the care and youth sectors highlights examples of the way in which the different stages of validation identified by the 2012 recommendation (Council of the EU, 2012) are being used and applied to different user groups. Although validation is defined as 'a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard' the recommendation also encourages the use of the different elements in arrangements for validating non-formal and informal learning, either separately or in combination, in accordance with specific needs. There is potential for wider application of validation practices and for employing appropriate methods for different target groups and different purposes. There is also evidence from the analysis in these sectors that the documentation and identification on the one hand, and assessment and certification on the other, could be closely interlinked and can be of equal importance in an individual's validation (and lifelong learning) process.

5.2. The way forward: some recommendations

Although some research studies refer to benefits for employees in the care sector ⁽¹⁹⁾ or to benefits in the youth sector (European Commission, 2014), limited information is available in both sectors on the benefits and impact of engaging in validation. However, employers, particularly human resource departments and youth organisations, need to be aware of the opportunities for and benefits of validating and recognising learning outcomes gained in different contexts (work experience as well as youth work) to support such initiatives. Further effort is needed for analysing risks and benefits and monitoring the impact of validation initiatives as well as for raising awareness.

In some countries, information, support and guidance are provided to candidates. However, there is also evidence that individuals need further clarification on validation opportunities and follow-up procedures: as an example, following validation procedures, there should be further guidance and clear arrangements for up-skilling or personal development.

This report has provided some insights into validation opportunities in two sectors and how they are linked to the labour market but further exploration is needed. The data available do not allow for general analysis and do not provide a comprehensive picture of what is happening across Europe. Data need to be collected on validation opportunities in specific sectors and how they are used on the labour market. It will be important that future analyses are able to elaborate on which sectors are more advanced and why, what are the benefits, and are there any promising validation practices and methods that could be transferred to other sectors serving similar purposes. It would be of particular benefit, given the current influx of migrants to Europe, if Member States were able to exchange know-how on assessing and validating the prior experience and qualifications of migrants from certain countries of origin.

However, since different sectors seem to have different needs of validation (because of different target groups and purposes) it is important to involve representatives from different fields in developing national validation strategies. These stakeholders might have diverging views but they can bring

⁽¹⁹⁾ E.g. Fejes and Andersson (2009) review a validation experience in the care sector for elderly people to explore the relationship between experience and learning, using an experiential constructivist perspective that allows participants' prior learning to be taken into account as the starting point of the validation. The perspective also allows peer learning through 'learning conversations' and the creation of new learning.

their own specific ideas and experiences to the process. If validation practices are supposed to support employability, it is of crucial importance to involve labour market stakeholders in their design.

A coordinated approach across sectors is recommended to avoid fragmentation of validation arrangements and actively support individuals to make use of the opportunities offered in the best possible way. It might also be worth exploring to what extent and how a more coherent approach across Europe could be developed for aspects such as documenting professional experience, which may mean developing existing initiatives (such as Europass).

List of abbreviations

APEL	accreditation of prior experience and learning
EVC	<i>erkenning van verworven competenties</i> recognition of acquired competences
RPL	recognition of prior learning
VAE	validation of acquired experience

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This report is based on data provided by the European inventory country experts in relation to a series of questions on validation in the care and youth sectors, which they answered using information provided in previous versions of the Inventory (2007, 2010 and 2014), their wider knowledge of validation in the country, and relevant literature they were aware of and had access to. Reports and studies on these topics were also analysed. A telephone interview with a representative from the European youth area was carried out and several events were used for collecting further information on national initiatives, such as:

European Association for the Education of Adults: *action plan for validation: AVA jour fixe*, Vienna, Austria, 13 October 2015.

<http://www.eaea.org/en/projects/eaea-coordinated-projects/ava/ava-jour-fixe.html>

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Web links

Adam: Projects and products portal for Leonardo da Vinci: *I CARE*

<http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=6989#.Vuq9uMtf2yQ>

BMBF-Initiative:

Ankom. <http://ankom.dzhw.eu/>

Ankom: Ergebnisse: nach Fächern: *Sozialwesen*.

<http://ankom.dzhw.eu/ergebnisse/faecher/fach10>

Council of Europe:

Youth work portofolio: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/home>

Youth work portofolio: further information.

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-portfolio/key-questions-about-the-portfolio>

Duo Consulting: *APEL qualification: level 3 certificate I work with children*.

<http://www.apelme.co.uk/>

Estonian Youth Centre: *Stardiplats*: <http://www.stardiplats.ee/>

EUCIS-LLL: *Volunteering and skills, Animafac*:

<http://www.eucis-lll.eu/good-practices/volunteering-and-skills-animafac/>

European Commission: EACEA: *Study on youth work quality systems and frameworks in the European Union: handbook for implementation*

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/calls-for-tenders/study-youth-work-quality-systems-and-frameworks-in-european-union-handbook-for-implementation_en

Federal Ministry of Education and Research: Recognition in Germany:

Professional recognition: *Federal Recognition Act*.

http://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/federal_recognition_act.php

Gesellschaft *CH-Q: Kompetenzmanagement portal [competency management portal]*: <http://www.ch-q.ch/>

I CARE project: improving mobility and career paths for personal care and social workers. <http://www.icareproject.eu/>

JES: *C-stick*: <http://www.jes.be/C-Stick/index.php?TK=En>

Logo organizatora volontiranja: *certificate of competences acquired through volunteering*: http://www.ufri.uniri.hr/files/Volontiranje/Potvrda_o_kompetencijama_steenim_kroz_volontiranje.pdf

Moje izkušnje: <http://www.moje-izkusnje.si/sl/moje-izkusnje>

NEFIKs: <http://www.nefiks.si/>

Scouts Guides: *Valorise tes compétences [Develop your skills]:*

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Validation in the care and youth work sectors

Thematic report for the 2016 update
of the European inventory on validation

This thematic report provides insights into how validation arrangements are linked to the labour market. Based mainly on data collected for the European inventory, the report explores the rationale for validation and considers the use, awareness and types of validation opportunities and the role of employers/organisations in supporting validation in two sectors. The report compares approaches in the care and youth work sectors, reflecting the different purposes of validation and the extent of its labour market connection, currently stronger in the care sector compared to the youth sector. Evidence from both sectors highlights the way different stages of validation are used and applied to different user groups, indicating potential for wider application of validation practices for different target groups and purposes.

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