

Slovakia National strategy Erasmus+ paper

Introduction

The objective of the paper is to state the way that particular country can elaborate/adjust their national strategy. The strategy should be based on the outcomes of the project, and of national conferences on QA policy in VNFIL to debate the value of Peer Reviews with the national networks.

The national strategy papers should be drawn up between December 2017 and May 2018 in all partner countries. It will take up from the Synthesis report (O 1) and all the experiences and outputs of the project.

The national coordinators are responsible for writing them, the Lithuanian Education Trade Union (P 10) will guide the process, analyse country papers and compile a synthesis for the whole project.

1. Lessons learned / experiences from the project on the institutional and national level (max. 0,5 – 1 page)

(For example, you can use outcomes of Synthesis report, PR reports and Meta evaluations, meetings, etc.)

Slovak Republic still needs **revision of the system of recognition and validation of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning**. Current legislation is not explicit in regard to the recognition of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning and consequently there are problems within the implementation of the legislation into the practise.

There is only a list of authorised institutions accredited for validation that organise the examination. All these are directed by the Accreditation Body on the department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. It is the

ministry, which approves of the qualifications standards, accredited educational programmes and allows the exams to the authorised institutions. Validation procedure is fully up to authorised institutions listed in the information system ISDV ,<http://isdv.iedu.sk/EligibleInstitutions.aspx> .

The outcomes of the non-formal and informal learning are **not accepted** by the employers and the labour market. The level of education in VNFIL is not recognised by the law, neither.

National Lifelong Learning Institute has been in liquidation process since January 18th 2018. As a consequence of that, it was decided by the ministry to terminate the existence of Adult Guidance Centres network, which has been under the auspices of the ministry of education and in direct responsibility of the National Lifelong Learning Institute. These centres were originally the “testing ground” for VNFIL in Slovakia.

Still, it elaborated and gathered plentiful important materials and outcomes.

2. Added-value of Peer Review (national and transnational) for VNFIL providers in the country (max. 0,5 – 1 page)

VNFIL along with the Peer Review was promoted on several events, where the topic of assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning resonated.

National Lifelong Learning Institute, “Peer Review for VNFIL Extended” project partner, organised an international conference on 21.9.2017 in Bratislava. The conference program integrated the institute’s key projects and activities.

Conference titled „Education of adults and lifelong guidance – problems and solutions“ fully covered topics such as upskilling of the low-skilled, entrepreneurship skills, adult education tools and policies and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

National Lifelong Learning Institute organised several events to promote the EU document “Upskilling pathways”. In particular, upskilling the low-skilled. During this event, VNFIL project coordinator performed a presentation on VNFIL. The

comparative method of presentation included description of validation processes in selected EU countries. Several examples came also from the experience of Peer Review. We described the accessible EU and national policy tools and consequently drafted out possible “pathways” for implementing VNFIL in Slovak Republic while explaining the advantages of Peer Review as quality assurance tool.

Slovak Republic still lacks the law admitting an independent body execute assessments, validation and certification of and individual at EQF levels scale. Validation and assessment of professional qualification according to the qualification and assessment standards in Slovakia takes place in a form of an examination in competent educational institutions, which include:

- schools and higher education institutions;
- professional organisations;
- organisations founded by the ministry to provide or fulfil tasks in lifelong learning.

Competent institutions are for this purpose authorized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic always in the respective accredited educational programme. Competent institutions, however, cannot make examinations conditional upon previous completion of an accredited educational programme. Applicants can also document the level of their knowledge and skills by demonstrating 5 year experience in the field.

The examination consists of a theoretical and practical part and it takes place in front of an examination board. Successful completion of the examination leads to a certificate of partial qualification or certificate of full qualification.

Currently, the list of qualifications, in which it is possible to have one’s professional competence validated, is a part of the [further education information system](#) (SK). On the 30th June 2015, this [list of qualifications](#) (SK) was comprised of 28 qualifications, among other for example a mason, carpenter, electronic engineer, butcher but also qualifications such as a teacher or further education manager. More qualifications should be added to the system at the completion of Tvorba NSK project at the end of 2015.

At the same time, it is necessary to say that verification of professional competence does not require a person to achieve a higher level of education. The obtained certificate of full qualification is first of all a document which enables the person to apply for trade licence in a particular trade.

It is important to mention, that the validation processes in the above described text are corresponding to the validation processes in CVANU, national project of the National Lifelong Learning Institute.

Yet, in practice, we cannot consider this a complementary assessment and validation due several reasons. The validation process covers only restricted area of applicants, the processes reflect insufficient quality assurance standards, and the certification basically leads to trading licence, but not to general acceptance of certificates. National Lifelong Learning Institute proposed legislation corresponding to the implementation of the VNFIL agenda. Particularly, in the new act proposal. These initiatives began with the national project CVANU implementation. In spite of its outcomes (methodology for validation, etc.), there has been no continuity or actions taken upon its outcomes, provided by the national project.

(You can use outcomes of the meetings with stakeholders, national conferences, etc.)

3. Potential and challenges for implementing Peer Review as a formative external evaluation for VNFIL into the QA system for VNFIL in the country (max. 1 – 2 pages) :

I believe there are distinct arguments for future implementation of Peer Review in the Slovak Republic. National Lifelong Learning Institute underwent a unique experience of practicing Peer Review on the international level. This cross-country experience equipped us with information to be used for lining up the strategy, if not the action plan, for implementing VNFIL in the Slovak Republic. If Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport will take the outcomes of the project (particularly the Peer Review outcomes) into account, in the near future we can expect several subjects being challenged by the Peer Review.

For instance, Peer Review could have recognised its progress on the level of guidance. Adult Guidance Centres, could practice Peer Review in order to develop mutual development and growth on the quality assurance level. In this case, Peer Review could have been examined as a tool to councellors' skills, knowledge, competence renewal and improvement, as well as tool for exchange councellors' field experience within the network deployed in all regions of the Slovak Republic.

In my opinion, Peer Review can operate on several levels in Slovakia. Both public and private. If the Slovak vnfil provider are prone to keep up with the EU quality standards and the ministry of education creates feasible conditions to vnfil implementation, Peer Review certainly endorses challenging position in the Slovak "vnfil market".

3.1. Basic validation features

Considering the fact, there is only a basic law leading to quality control of assessment and validation of vnfil in Slovakia, description of validation features would not provide the document with relevant or accurate validation features.

3.2. Conditions for developing and implementing validation

As mentioned above, the conditions for developing and implementing of validation need to be enhanced by new legislation. According to the latest statement of the Slovak minister of education Martina Lubyova, there is a plan to establish an independent agency for validation of vnfil in the near future. In addition to that, Slovak ministry of education aims at new national project to implement vnfil system in the Slovak Republic.

3.3. Validation contexts

The context of validation remains the same status quo as described in the former document.

It is important to remind that there is still an urgent need to regulate the funding of further education in the legislative, which has an impact on vnfil. Furthermore, the costs-burden of the validation process (in its limited policy and approach manner) is borne by the participant in the education. The state regulates the maximum amount of fees a learner can pay by determining the amount of the fee. The current law on lifelong learning determines the amount of the fee up to max. EUR 300 for the test of professional competence.

In case we understand that performing the exam of professional competence (allowed by the year praxis) is in fact the only outcome and goal of validation process in Slovakia, instead of establishment of use of successful evaluation methodologies that usually combine multiple techniques, although the most important and key role plays the portfolio; we have to admit that Slovakia is not even in the beginning of the assessment and validation process as understood by CEDEFOP (identification, etc.) and years of experience with validation in other EU countries.

3.4. Plans for further use of Peer Review for VNFIL in the country

*poradenstvo

Secondly, Peer Review for VNFIL can be used for both formatting and summarizing purposes. The aim would be feedback, obtaining information as learners / peers, revelation of difficulties and mistakes while diagnosing deficiencies. In terms of patterns regularity, it could be an excellent tool to monitor means of success:

- diagnosis (prevention, *control*) of employers'/company determination to apply knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes, direction; identification of strengths and weaknesses,
- prognosis: possibilities of their further development, what can happen and under what conditions,
- motivation: maintaining and increasing the interest in taking action
- learning: process of learning is obvious on all levels of Peer Review; every participant of Peer Review learns, through this process of learning naturally in the

work place environment; it also forms lots of positive qualities and attitudes (eg honesty, autonomy, diligence, reliance on oneself and others....) and removes many negative qualities (fear, mistrust, lack of self-assurance...),

- information - documentation of results and their continuous notification; insight into data shows different perspective in handling the same information; balance of bringing and receiving information makes Peer Review a good deal for all participants,

- developing – development of staff/company/systems/policies....Peer Review can help to set more precise and realistic goals to be reached step by step; Peer Review helps reading and limiting obstacles before they occur

- feedback: internal feedback- on the individual level, external feedback- on the level of peers, colleagues, etc.

3.5. Potential and challenges of building up a Peer Review Network in VNFIL on the European level.

Make it visible and usable ! It has to have a common feature, though each country can use it for its own purposes. Usability, worthiness and trustworthiness must be visible, or obvious to all participating units cross sectors. Potential of Peer Review can grow when well-fitted within cause and effect gadget. There are several causes where Peer Review could provide effect on the EU level.

The Princeton University Human Resources Department study shows that people acquire 70% of their skills in the workplace, 20% coaching and only 10% training. Training must also be immediately tested in practice, otherwise it will be unnecessary.

Having considered the validity of these data, we can be confident to say that Peer Review already guarantees bring high percentage reason to become effective while being set at a workplace already (and in fact, that is the only way to carry the Peer Review). Peer Review in fact validates the cause and effect of

implementation of wide range of skills, knowledge and competences and at the same time, asks all Peer Review participants to apply, acquire and improve theirs.

Secondly, Peer Review uses questions as a tool of re/search. Peer Review is very attentive to avoid making framed conclusions, suggestions, advices, etc. So its professionals ask coaching questions. It unlocks the potential and makes the Peer Review receivers to open doors, even the *thirtieth chamber*, if it finds the key and will for opening.

The third part could definitely stand for training part. Now, it is up to the company/individuals to train their experience from Peer Review in practice.

As far as Peer Review, we can go even little further. Re-taking Peer Review in periods don't prove company's failure or weakness, contrariwise, it supports determination to seal the progress and dust off the goals previously forecasted. Peer Review is in a position a mentor. This can at the same time bring valuable experience as evidence based data to the following areas:

1. improving policies: Peer Review can provide experts with relevant data; working groups on the national and EU level (also EU commission and its liaised institutes) can make use of the data and field evidence
2. implementation of policies: Peer Review can be helpful in pursuit of already existing initiatives and policies within EU ("Upskilling pathways", Strategy 2020, etc.)
3. further education: Peer Review can have influence on further education and its quality
4. guidance: Peer Review can have influence on quality of guidance

I believe Peer Review and its experts should apply for membership in vnfil working groups operating under EU Commission, agencies and other allied bodies.

LABEL OF UTILITY

Peer Review, when it develops a tool for independent monitoring and improvement of competences, skills, perhaps further education as such, along with other additive valuable data, could provide the inputs for the following:

- * EQF (European Qualification Framework)
- * Europass
- * ENIC-NARICs
- * EU register
- * European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning

Peer Review can open cooperation with non EU countries. Peer Review experts defined by standards should help in monitoring and forecasting the development of VNFIL in EU

- * European Inventory on Validation
- * Skills Panorama
- * EQAR
- * EQAVET
- * ESCO
- * EUROGUIDANCE

Peer Review experts should be able to write statements to be used in policy decision papers (regional, national, EU level). Consequently, it could become part of the recommendation documents.

(You can use information/outcomes of/from Business plan, Synthesis report, etc.)

4. Further dissemination of Peer Review in the country (including concrete activities and target groups) (max. 0,5 – 1 page)

If ministry of education starts to implement the national project on vnfil in the Slovak Republic, the counselling and training of those who manage and implement validation processes should include the training of peers in order to participate in Peer Reviews and gain knowledge of the tool as such. It could enhance their professionalisation, EU vnfil practices and the overall transparency of validation processes to be later launched in SR.

In the near future, Peer Review will be hopefully recognised by

- professional organisations, networks,
- organisations founded by the ministry to provide or fulfil tasks in lifelong learning,
- guidance professionals (e.g. public employment services....)

(Outcomes of Conferences on QA policy in VNFIL to debate the value of Peer Reviews with the national networks, stakeholders meetings, etc.)