

PIN PROJECT

IMPACT ANALYSIS

1. NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM

1a. What are the main characteristics of the national qualifications system?

(Describe levels, types of official qualifications, system, organization, structure of the qualifications)

TRADE UNIONS

Slovenia has a well-developed system of formal education by means of which a formal degree of education or qualification can be acquired. Upon completion of the 9- year obligatory primary education an individual can enrol into a general secondary school or gymnasium and after four (4) years of education the students take a number of exams and if successful, they acquire the so-called general 'Matura' degree – this degree enables them to enrol into any university or other higher education level study.

An individual can also enrol into any vocational or other secondary school (where a vocation can be acquired). After finishing two and a half years of studies an individual acquires a qualification to do less demanding jobs within a certain industry. After three years of studies an individual passes the so-called final exam and with this he or she acquires one or more vocational qualifications within a specific occupation. After four years of studies an individual passes the so-called vocational 'Matura' exam and at the same time acquires a qualification for practicing specific occupations (title: technician).

Vocational Matura exam enables a direct enrolment into higher education studies (Bologna short cycle, Bologna first cycle). However, if an individual takes an extra exam from one of the 'general' subjects, this individual can acquire previously mentioned general 'Matura' degree. Examination is entirely external and allows unlimited enrolment into university in the first Bologna cycle of higher education.

The acquired education and the vocational qualifications are placed into 8 levels of difficulty within the national classification system of education and training KLASIUS.

However, the formal education system is not the only means of acquiring a qualification; in 2002 Slovenia implemented a certificate system for acquisition of national vocational qualifications.

National vocational qualifications are classified up to difficulty level 6 of the national classification system of education and training KLASIUS.

EMPLOYERS

The qualification system includes all aspects of an activity at the national level that lead to acknowledgement of learning results/outcomes: ways and procedures of preparing and implementing the qualifications, institutional agreements, accreditation procedures, procedures for assessment and evaluation, acknowledgement of knowledge and skills and everything else that can connect education and training with the labour market and society in general.

Our system of secondary vocational education and training is based on a uniform occupational standard which in turn is the basis upon which young adults and adults can acquire vocational or technical education and within which they can also acquire a vocational qualification by means of certifying knowledge, skills and competences. Both general as well as vocational secondary education is provided by public secondary schools, either general (gymnasiums) or vocational. Practical classes take place either in a school or with an employer. Secondary vocational and technical school provides training for candidates in cooperation with employers.

With regard to the certificate system, the Law on National Vocational Qualifications defines the procedure for the preparation of standards of technical knowledge and skills as well as their assessment and validation. The emphasis is mainly on learning outcomes regardless of manner in which the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired – it doesn't matter whether they were acquired through non-formal learning, life of work experience, or even through formal education (e.g. uncompleted educational programme). Certification of the National Vocational Qualifications is intended solely for adults (18 years and above); the assessment and validation is done either directly, the candidate proves her or she possesses the knowledge, skills and competences, or by means of a portfolio, which holds all the candidate's documents and certificates. The assessment and validation of knowledge, skills and competences is done by a special commission composed of licensed experts.

The Act Amending the Law on National Vocational Qualifications from 2006 broadens the possibility of assessing and validating non-formally acquired knowledge to include the field of higher technical as well as university education. The field of vocational qualifications is also regulated by several sector-specific laws, e.g. health, special needs, private protection, agriculture and forestry, electrical power system, etc.

In order to familiarize the general public with importance of the non-formal education and informally acquired knowledge and skills and most importantly to establish the non-formal and informal learning as a supplement to the formal education Slovenia decided to carry out several projects whose aim was to do just that. One of the projects titled NEFIKS (an index or a list of all non-formal education acquired by a single person – targeted mainly at young people). The above-mentioned index/list, containing information regarding all non-formally acquired knowledge, was designed for different target groups, ranging from children to students to unemployed – the only condition is that the candidates are at least 14 years old. The NEFIKS offers a uniform system of recording non-formally acquired knowledge and all participation in different types of activities and gives effect to non-formal education of young people.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The SQF (Slovene Qualifications Framework) proposal attempts to take into considerations the characteristics of the Slovene educational system and its labour market. It is in accordance with the EQF directives and strives to achieve transparency of qualification systems in the country and in doing so it takes into account the national context:

The SQF proposal has 10 levels, levels 3 – 6 are reserved for VET classifications, levels 7 – 10 for higher education qualifications.

A descriptor for each level includes three elements of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and competences.

- **Knowledge**: *the result of learning and comprehension of concepts, principles, theories and practice. Learning takes place in different environments: educational process, at work, in the context of private and social life.*
- **Skills**: *are described as cognitive (e.g. use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and/or practical (e.g. creative abilities, use of materials, tools and instruments, crafts)*
- **Competences**: *ability to use and connect knowledge and skills in educational, professional and personal situations. Competences are classified with regard to their complexity, autonomy and responsibility of operations. We distinguish between generic and vocationally-specific competences.*

SQF includes three types of qualifications:

- **EDUCATION**: *individual acquires education upon successful completion of publicly valid educational programmes*

- **NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION**: vocational/working/professional qualification needed for an individual to perform a vocation at specific level of complexity.
- **SUPPLEMENTAL QUALIFICATION**: supplements the candidate's qualification and is common to a specific professional field, or it is transversal and applicable to several professional areas, which increases a person's chances of employment and strengthens lifelong learning.

1b. Do you have a National Qualifications Framework, in which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated?

If yes, describe the NQF and the reasons for establishing an NQF. If not, what actions are undertaken towards establishing a national qualifications framework?

Focus on actions like:

- **reasons for shifting to national standard**
- **reasons accepting a focus on learning outcomes**
- **Coordination and governance issues**
- **Quality assurance issue**
- **Transferability, progression, access and permeability**

TRADE UNIONS

Slovenia had already set up the »Occupational nomenclature« long before its independence, while it was still a part of the former Yugoslavia. In that nomenclature, for the sake of transparency, all formally acquired qualifications (in education and training were) classified into 8 different levels. Since 2006 Slovenia has been using the KLASIUS educational classification system, which classifies all educational outcomes as well as the National vocational qualifications into 8 levels.

In 2011 Slovenia prepared its own National qualifications framework (Slovene qualifications framework -SQF) but it has not been formally confirmed by the government yet, neither by an Act/Law or a Decree. The SQF will allow classification of learning outcomes of formal education/state-approved education as well as all the national vocational qualifications into 10 difficulty levels. As of this moment, the SQF does not foresee classification of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences which are not based on the national occupational standards used for awarding vocational qualifications. Slovenia shall implement its national qualifications framework, the SQF, in 2012.

The Slovene National Qualifications Framework combines two concepts - the educational activities concept (input concept) and the learning results concept (output concept), and is being described more as a communicational tool rather than a reformation tool. When classifying the qualifications based on the descriptors, the Slovene Qualifications Framework follows the already established KLASIUS classification system. We do expect to see some differences in the classification of qualification in terms of levels when compared to the EQF. We do not foresee any major difficulties or problems with the implementation of the NQF because for every qualification there are either the input criteria for acquisition of a formal

educational certificate or there are the national occupational standards, which are output oriented. We expect to see some problems with the assurance of quality of the learning outcomes and permeability into tertiary (higher) education, where the access is based on formally acquired certificates from the previous level.

EMPLOYERS

The Slovene National Qualifications Framework is still being prepared. An agreement among three competent ministries and social partners has been reached regarding the establishment of the Slovene Qualifications Framework (hereinafter SQF), which is to be a framework for classification of different qualifications on the basis of a range of standards that need to be reached for specific levels of learning. Its aim is to connect and harmonize Slovene subsystems of qualifications and improve transparency, accessibility, progress and quality of qualifications with regard to the labour market and civil society.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

NVQs are included in the SQF. These enable acquisition of qualifications by acknowledging non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and they supplement formal education and training. The NVQ system is a flexible approach to qualification acquisition as required by the labour market. The system makes it possible for people to prove they have necessary qualification in a publicly valid manner – this increases their chances of employment and career development. By doing this SQF connects the NVQ system and the acknowledgement of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge.

10 years ago Slovenia began developing occupational standards as a link between labour market and education. Occupational standards determine the content of a NVQ at a specific level of complexity and define necessary learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, and competences.

On the basis of occupational standards educational programmes for vocational, technical/professional and post secondary professional education are developed, as well as NVQ catalogues – this enable assessment and validation procedures of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge.

1c. Does the qualification system in your country include assessing learning outcomes from the education sector, the labour market and the voluntary sector (non-profit organizations, sports associations, associations for voluntary social work etc., ICT courses, creative courses, liberal adult education for personal development etc.)?

If possible, can you describe examples?

TRADE UNIONS

The learning outcomes (results) are assessed and evaluated regardless of the manner in which they were acquired. A certain learning outcome (result) is assessed on the basis of the national occupational standard and is acknowledged as a national vocational qualification. For further (university) education learning outcomes (results) of formal education (certificate) are required specific learning outcomes, which are the result of informal education or training, have not been classified in any of the systems. The NQF foresees the additional/supplemental (sectoral or transverse) qualifications to be classified within the system of NQF – these would serve as proof of candidate's other abilities (e.g. ECDL, professional exam needed for employment in public administration, etc.).

EMPLOYERS

In 2006 the Slovene government adopted a Decree on the Implementation and Use of the Education and Training Classification System (KLASIUS), which is the formal basis for the development of SQF and implements an 8 level classification scale with 2 additional sublevels (level 6 – sublevel 6/1 and 6/2 and level 8 – sublevel 8/1 and 8/2). The levels are described with descriptors defined in the European Qualifications Framework, but they are based, in particular, on the national documents and materials which contain formal guidelines for the preparation of educational programmes or the bases for publicly valid assessment and validation of knowledge and skills.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Descriptor levels are determined on the basis of:

- *Learning outcomes, which are in turn based on knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility*
- *key competences (ability to learn, communication and social skills) and technical as well as vocational competences, and educational activities done for qualification purposes acquired after already completed accredited educational programmes.*

In the SQF there are NVQs as well as supplemental qualifications, which will include qualifications that will supplement the candidate's other qualifications. This supplemental qualification can be common to a specific professional area (e.g. banking) which enable greater employability. However, criteria still need to be determined for the classification of this qualification.

1d. What impact does the implementation and use of EQF have on your field of work:

- Does it influence (and in what respect) your policy of collective bargaining?
- Does it influence the legal position of the employee?
- How do you value the problem of data protection vs. transparency?

TRADE UNIONS

As the NQF has not yet been put to use we cannot evaluate the impact it might have on the activities of the trade unions in Slovenia. During the process of classification of different qualifications into specific levels of the NQF the trade unions intend to state their demands and shall also suggest assessment and evaluation and especially classification of national vocational and additional/supplemental qualifications through their representative in the National Committee for NQF. Classification of a specific qualification within the NQF influences the legal status and rights of an individual in his or her workplace, because it is the acquired qualification that determines his or her employment (especially in the public sector) as well as their starting (basic) salary.

As far as data protection is concerned (with regard to individual's qualifications) we currently do not see any problems, and we believe that this data should be publicly accessible.

EMPLOYERS

The European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter EQF) will have an influence on the classification of qualifications into either a higher or a lower reference level in the SQF, as the current classification of qualifications in the KLASIUS system is in some cases higher than is permitted by the EQF. An agreement will have to be reached with the trade unions regarding the classification of specific qualifications. Namely, an acquired qualification does influence the labour rights of employees and their status.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The implementation of the NVQ system will influence the collective bargaining process. The collective agreements are currently mainly based on achieved formal education and this influenced job posts as well.

The levels of formal education are determined with the classification system of educational and training – KLASIUS. In the future, collective agreements in the public sector will also have to take into account other accomplishments (non-formal and informal learning) not just formal education when determining salaries.

The SQF will increase the transparency of qualifications.

Data Protection Act safeguards individuals private information. As a rule, individuals are willing to share the information regarding their education and qualifications when applying for a job.

1e. What kind of offers are in your country with regard to guidance and individual career development and the assessment of competences? Please name organisations and conditions (fees, costs...)?!

TRADE UNIONS

The state ensures that an individual receives help and counselling regarding their choice of employment or their pursuit of career by means of a network for career counselling provided by public agencies for employment. Regional centres for lifelong learning have also been established where an individual (employed or unemployed) can seek opportunities of employment as well as financial and any other help needed for the acquisition of new competences and/or qualifications. Assessment and evaluation of knowledge, skills and competences is as a rule payable for adult learners. In formal education intended for young people, the assessment and evaluation of knowledge, skills and competences is free of charge.

EMPLOYERS

The system of National Vocational Qualifications that enables acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge is under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The acquisition of a vocational qualification can be financed in several ways:

- *A candidate bears all the expenses alone*
- *An unemployed candidate is financed by the national Employment Agency*
- *An employed candidate can receive financial support from the company that employs them (e.g. KRKA)*

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has specified the Methodology of Costs Determination for the Acquisition of the National Vocational Qualification Certificate in the Rulebook defining the method and the procedure of assessing and validating the National Vocational Qualifications (hereinafter NVQ).

In accordance with the above mentioned methodology the candidate shall be responsible for the costs of assessment and validation depending on the manner in which the validation is done – whether it was done directly or by means of a NVQ portfolio. If it was done by means of a portfolio the candidate does not have to pay the costs for the direct assessment, which is about one third of all the expenses.

The financial resources for funding public education, including the funds allocated for providing information and vocational counselling intended for young people and adults, have been guaranteed for all the schools in both the national and municipal budgets.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In Slovenia two ministries are responsible for the development and the operation of the educational system: the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Others involved are local communities (municipalities), expert councils appointed by the government of the Republic of Slovenia, and public institutions established for the purpose of development and counselling in the field of education:

- **THE NATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**
- **THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**
- **THE SLOVENIAN INSTITUTE FOR ADULT EDUCATION**
- **THE NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS CENTER**
- **CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Universities and independent higher education institutes are autonomous and can, in accordance with the law, design their study programmes and define criteria which have to be fulfilled by the higher education teachers/professors and assistants. Educational and training which does not yield a publicly valid education is not governed by law and is left to the initiative of companies and schools. Educational institutions usually deal with this type of education.

In order to achieve quality and comparability of schools in the country the educational system works according to the principle of external assessment of results of education. At the end of educational process, and during, results are being assessed by means of assignments, questions and different examinations prepared by a group of experts at the National Examinations Centre. The system that we have developed the most is the system of external assessment for the so-called general Matura. We are also developing elements of external assessment and evaluation at primary school level, elements of external assessment are being implemented in the vocational Matura examination, which happens at the end of secondary technical/professional education.

The funds for financing public service in education are guaranteed in the national and municipal budgets. National budget finances:

- *Higher education institutes*
- *Post-secondary technical/professional education*
- *Secondary schools*
- *Halls of residence for secondary school students*

- *Schools and institutes for special needs children*
- *Adult education*

Local communities guarantee a certain amount of funds for:

- *Primary education*
- *Adult education*

In Slovenia there are 14 operable Counselling centres which offer education guidance to adults who wish to develop their careers. They are free of charge.

2. LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

2a. What is the nature of lifelong learning policy in your country? What are the goals? Which problems is it expected to solve?

Focus on responsible actors/stakeholders, who takes initiatives, what are the reasons for these actors to act?

TRADE UNIONS

The government of the Republic of Slovenia has, within the National developmental program 2007-2013, adopted the Strategy for Lifelong Learning, which is based on the Memorandum of the EC on Lifelong Learning. In order to put into force the aims of lifelong learning our government has adopted 3 different Acts: Vocational Education Act, Higher Education Act and National Vocational Qualifications Act. Goals of the Lifelong Learning Strategy are many, so allow us to list only a few:

- *To encourage employability of employment seekers*
- *To increase possibilities of social inclusion*
- *To develop human resources*
- *To encourage entrepreneurship and adaptability of work force*
- *To support lifelong career orientation.*

All national strategic documents support the acknowledgement of non-formal and informal learning, while concrete results were achieved by introduction of the system of National Vocational Qualifications.

EMPLOYERS

The choice of non-formal education is entirely in the individual's domain. Individuals tend to take part in the kind of educational programmes they feel close to, that are interesting to them – those they believe will exceed the investment of their free time and effort. Education of young people is mainly about compromise between them and their parents, and depends on several factors:

- *What kind of education programmes they can afford*
- *What kind of education programmes they find interesting*
- *What they want to do in the future*
- *How long a specific education programme lasts*
- *Etc.*

Later in life individuals tend to make autonomous decisions and participate in those educational programmes they find the most interesting.

In this day and age all successful companies are aware how important it is for their employees to have knowledge and skills, which is why they are often willing to offer them further/additional education, where the company is the contracting authority. The greatest competitive advantage a company can have is its employees who not only have formal education but have other experience and knowledge as well. On the other hand, the fact that the company is willing to provide its employees with additional education says something about the company itself – they appreciate and respect their employees; they consider them an investment and have long-term plans for them. Enthusiastic and motivated individuals will always look forward to participating in this kind of education, and not only because they do not have to pay for the education but because they know that the knowledge they will gain will further their expertise and will benefit their careers.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The 2011 White Paper on Education emphasises the importance of lifelong learning and sets the foundations for acknowledgement and assessment of non-formal and informal learning. There are several EU co-funded projects underway, whose goal it is to complete and improve the current system of acknowledgement and assessment of non-formal and informal learning. These projects' goals are the establishment of institutions for validation (Centres for Lifelong learning) and the development of models for procedures of assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning of adults.

2b. Is there a policy on recognition of non-formal and informal learning practiced as an element in the lifelong learning policy?

TRADE UNIONS

Each individual has the right to demand acknowledgement and validation of non-formal and informal learning – as part of lifelong learning. Acknowledgement and validation of acquired knowledge and skills represents motivation for an individual's participation in different forms of lifelong learning.

Trade unions predict that the National (Slovene) Qualifications Framework shall become an instrument for acknowledgement of learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning within lifelong learning process.

The validation will be done by means of sectoral qualifications frameworks which are currently being prepared, or by means of the general qualifications framework. Non-formal and informal learning will also be acknowledged by the employers by means of pay increase, and will also be acknowledged by the providers of higher education; however, this will be done according to their own rules and judgement.

EMPLOYERS

The 2011 White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, the basic principle on which the entire system of education is based emphasises the principle of lifelong learning that should be available to all. This principle is based on the assumption that learning takes place at any given time in life in different environments and in different manners and contributes to the full development of both individual and community.

In 2007 Slovenia adopted a Strategy for Lifelong Learning where numerous goals were defined, below you find some examples:

- To enable learning and education for all people during any period of life in all aspects of life and in all environments. Special attention must be paid to educationally disadvantaged groups – they need to be given opportunities for further education.*
- Raise awareness of all people that education and learning are their rights as well as their responsibilities.*
- Provide people with tailor-made education – meaning that education and training must be suited to an individual needs and demands as much as possible*
- Etc.*

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Educational programmes are not only adjusted to the adult by only leaving out certain elements, they whole system is developed in such a way that it offers adults individual educational paths – the system can acknowledge previously acquired knowledge – non-formal as well. Credit system is one of the tools that can contribute to this principle. The same standards of knowledge, skills and competences are used for both young people and adults, same competences and learning results as well; all are based on the same criteria.

Every day schools are faced with individuals who transfer from one school to another or wish to exchange the educational programme they are currently in. There are individuals who are employed but would like to continue with their education or would like to renew their knowledge. Then there are those who have already acquired a NVQ and would also like to acquire a formal education. All these examples encourage schools to think about the possibilities of acknowledging previous knowledge acquired through formal learning environments as well as non-formal situations, e.g. workplace.

2c. Are all education sectors cooperating in creating lifelong learning programmes?

TRADE UNIONS

Three ministries are involved with the creation and the final implementation of the policy on Lifelong learning: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The operator and the financier of the formal vocational education and higher professional education (both post secondary – short cycle) is the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for the assurance of the quality of the system by means of awarding accreditation to educational programmes and through assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes in higher education. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs is the »owner« of the National Vocational Qualifications system. A network of public institutions for development and implementation of lifelong policies has also been established and the institutions responsible are: Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and the National Examinations Centre responsible for the preparation of instruments and other bases for assessment and evaluation of knowledge, skills and competences.

EMPLOYERS

In 2008 the consortiums of secondary vocational and technical schools - MUNUS II, BIOTECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS CONSORTIUM and UNISVET – included an activity titled »Acknowledgement of non-formal knowledge« into their projects co-financed by the European Social Fund. Within the same project they also formed working groups in order to find concrete solutions for the implementation of the system for acknowledgement of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge. The working groups were formed in cooperation with the National Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training. The reasons for doing this lies in the fact that this is an area where neither Slovenia nor other countries have yet managed to develop expert solutions needed for the implementation of the system.

In 2010 an inter-institutional working group was formed. This group operates under the supervision of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. Its tasks are:

- to coordinate methodologies of acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge in full-time and part-time education and training*
- to exchange project results obtained in the field of acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge*

- *To prepare starting-points for a regulatory framework relating to the acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge*

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

All educational sectors (young people, adults, general secondary and vocational secondary education) take part in projects dealing with acknowledgment of non-formal and informal learning. A special inter-institutional working group has also been established and it operates under the coordination of the Centre for Adult Education of Slovenia.

2d. is there national legislation for lifelong learning? Or is lifelong learning regulated on a sectoral level?

TRADE UNIONS

Lifelong learning is governed by the Vocational Education Act, Higher Education Act and National Vocational Qualifications Act.

EMPLOYERS

Slovenia does not have any national laws or regulations that would explicitly regulate lifelong learning but we do have laws relating to the field of adult education as well as laws regulating national vocational qualifications.

Adult Education Act regulates the field/the scope of non-formal education financed by public funds. According to this law adult education comprises of education, advanced training, training and learning of persons who have fulfilled their primary school obligations and would like to acquire, update, broaden or deepen their knowledge but do not have the status either that of a pupil, secondary school student or student.

The Law on National Vocational Qualifications regulates the procedure and determined the bodies or authorities and organizations competent for approving catalogues of technical knowledge and skills standards, as well as determining conditions and procedures for acquisition of national vocational qualifications.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

There is no national legislation on lifelong learning. The starting-points have been given in the 2011 White Paper on Education as well as in the Resolution on the national adult education programme valid until 2015.

In practice lifelong learning is represented in the National Vocational Qualifications Act. The field of adult education is regulated by the Adult Education Act.

2e. On the national level: What are your experiences with regard to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning?

TRADE UNIONS

If we take into consideration the experience of the System of Certification by means of which an individual can acquire a National Vocational Qualification then we can claim that it gives an individual an opportunity to formalise non-formally acquired knowledge at secondary and tertiary levels (up to level 6). However, a National Vocational Qualification today does not yet hold its true value at the labour market where employers, and especially the public sector, base their demands solely on formal certificates of specialised skills or qualifications.

The National Vocational Qualification is a basis only for determination of one's salary and this is only true for some collective agreements, not all. The connection of the System of Certification with the formal education system is weak and does not allow permeability to higher levels of education. What is also quite weak is the degree of knowledge and the information the employers as well as individuals (workers) have regarding the possibilities of acquisition of a National Vocational Qualification – not much has been done to inform the public.

EMPLOYERS

After 10 years we have come to a conclusion that the advantage of the system of national vocational qualifications lies in its flexibility and adaptability as it enable a much quicker response to the changing needs of the labour market than the standard formal educational programmes. The possibility of validation of previously acquired knowledge and formation of shorter educational programmes for the acquisition of missing knowledge and skills (which eventually leads to an acquisition of a vocation) has a positive influence on the elimination of divergences between supply and demand on the labour market.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Evaluation of field of acknowledgment of non-formally acquired knowledge and skills carried out in 2010 by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) in cooperation with outworkers showed that the procedures of non-formal learning acknowledgement are not numerous. However, schools and, to a lesser extent, students/learners are familiar with them and do use them – this is especially true for adult education and higher technical education.

It has been emphasised that greater unification of the system at the national level would facilitate the implementation or the execution of procedures, should ensure comparability of assessment and validation of learning outcomes and would consequently lead to people having more trust in the system itself (the system of acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge).

2f. On the companies/trade unions/training organisations level: Are there any examples for good practice? Please describe!

TRADE UNIONS

With the support of trade unions, one of the pharmaceutical companies in Slovenia, KRKA, put into force a number of Vocational Qualifications, qualifications which prior to this were only 'internal' and not recognized as National Vocational Qualifications. This was an important step also for the workers employed in Krka's factories abroad, where the company asserts the high standard of the Slovene National Qualification.

One of the trade union confederations has also proposed a new occupational standard, which will serve as the basis for a new National Vocational Qualification for a Trade Union Shop Steward/Trade Union Officer. If this qualification is accepted we would have comparability of competences for trade union work in immediate work environment.

EMPLOYERS

The system has been used by several Slovenian companies. As an example of good practice we can mention KRKA d.d. and Iskra Avtoelektrika.

The pharmaceutical company KRKA has prepared occupational profiles for workers participating in the production process (a 'processor') and 5 other occupational profiles. The participants who have trained to acquire new skills and knowledge have had the opportunity to do so directly during the work process on processing machines and devices in the company. Krka used its own experts in the educational process. The certificate awarded to the participants is a National Vocational Qualification and opens doors for workers either in the company or elsewhere in pharmaceutical industry (promotion, new jobs). So far 620 workers received the NVQ Certificates.

Iskra Avtoelektrika is a company that produces starters, generators, electrical drive systems and other devices for global consumers.

The company has used the certification system (NVQ) in order to acquire new workforce (from unqualified to qualified) and to adjust their skills, knowledge and competences to the requirements of new technologies. The company submitted their own occupational profile 'machine operator in the production process' for confirmation to the National Institute for vocational education and training. They have also organized a training programme with the help of an external educational provider.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The use of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) enables companies to quickly respond to the changes in the labour market and to the changes in work processes. Namely, the NVQ system offers numerous NVQs which the companies need. Employers are also able to suggest new NVQs. They determine competences, skills and knowledge that are required or sought after in the company, and with that they make sure they will receive suitable staff. The NVQ system helps companies in several ways:

- ***Ensures much needed qualifications***
- ***Enables an overview of existing qualifications in the company***
- ***Enables better employee knowledge management – identification, organization, improvement and assessment of knowledge in the company***
- ***Detects hidden capabilities of employees***
- ***Enables requalification and reallocation of workers***
- ***Etc.***

One example of good practice that we can point out was developed in cooperation between the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training and the national broadcasting company – public institute - Radioatelevizija Slovenija – RTV. After three years of intense work 13 NVQs were developed all at complexity level 5 and level 6 of the KLASIUS system – with this, all needs for so-called specific media vocations were met.

Also, older employees of specific media vocations were given an opportunity, by means of NVQ assessment and validation procedures, to assess their hidden knowledge and obtain certificates.

At the same time we came to a conclusion that the above mentioned range of occupational standards and catalogues does not only cover the needs of the RTV Slovenija company, but enables resolving educational and staff issues also in the theatre sector, in the field of archives and in the field of video production (mobile technology, online newspapers, etc.)

So far over 150 candidates obtained certificates through NVQ assessment and validation process. It is estimated that in the next two years at least another few hundred candidates will decide to prove their professional abilities and competences using the same method.

Another example of good practice are also the Advisory Centres for Adults, because they help adults not only choose the type of educational programme but they also (during the advisory process) help individuals by evaluating their non-formally acquired educational accomplishments as well as helping them with their portfolio.

3. ROLES IN THE LEARNING-PROCESS

3a. Which kind of lifelong learning-practices are functioning in your country? Do they include summative (aiming at qualification/certification) and/or formative (aiming at career perspectives) approaches?

TRADE UNIONS

Lifelong learning in Slovenia is strongly focused on acquiring vocational qualifications. The goal of the majority of individuals is an acquisition of a certificate (National Vocational Qualification, ECDL certificate, etc.), which is issued by one of the authorized institutions. National Vocational Qualification certificates can only be issued by a registered provider of education and training – the institution must be registered with the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. Examination is done in front of a Board of Examiners appointed by the National Examinations Centre. The Board of Examiners must consist of licensed examiners. At the moment there are 362 National Vocational Qualifications available for acquisition. Slovenia mainly uses the summative approach towards lifelong learning.

EMPLOYERS

In Slovenia the first two forms and levels of acknowledgement of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences are:

- *Assessment and validation of foreign languages*
- *Assessment and validation of National Vocational Qualifications which are based on the national occupational standards*

These two forms, however, are not part of the formal, publicly valid education

The system of assessing and validation national vocational qualifications, also referred to as the certificate system, is the most established method used to validate non-formally acquired knowledge. It is developing relatively independently and it is also used as a supplement to the formal system of vocational and technical education – mainly, it enable an individual who has dropped out of the system to acquire a qualification and as a result get a job.

In majority of cases people in Slovenia decide to participate in this kind of lifelong learning, as it results in a qualification and a certificate. Therefore, it is mainly a summative approach.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In Slovenia the summative approach is the prevailing one. The system of acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge in the fields of Vocational and Professional Education and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education has also started to be exercised - in the sense of awarding qualification documents, diplomas and certificates.

Current socio-economic development demands constant adjustment from the citizens and requires them to be more actively involved with the working processes as well as with the development of their personal career development. It is becoming increasingly more important for people to take part in ongoing further professional training – people must follow new developments in specific work fields. The number of occupations no longer regulated is increasing. At the labour market formal education is no longer the only requirement for getting a job, nowadays showing evidence of suitable vocational competences also plays an important part.

In this kind of a system one must predict different educational paths through which an individual can acquire vocational competences needed for successfully performing different tasks or vocations. There, it is extremely important for both, young people and adults to have different educational paths available to them. We need to make it possible for them to acquire vocational qualifications in formal education after they had already acquired basic general education (vocational course for general secondary school student, requalification during a vocational course). People who have already acquired a vocational or technical education have to be given the opportunity to make up for the deficit in their general education (Matura courses) and to enrol in one of the university courses.

3b. What is the responsibility of the adult learner in designing his/her learning process?

TRADE UNIONS

Adults can only partially influence the educational process, meaning that where possible they can come to an agreement with their education provider regarding the length of the educational process and how the subject matter will be covered.

Unemployed persons usually contact Employment Agencies (which are public agencies) and they prepare educational plans for each individual separately. Adults can also join groups or go to individual counselling regarding their career development – this is offered by both public and private Employment Agencies.

EMPLOYERS

Enabling competitiveness is vital in the economy of knowledge. Therefore, university degrees, certificates and other documents play an important part – as a reference – in the labour market, for both employers as well as individuals. Because of this the question of modernisation of systems for acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge because ever so important in all EU states.

Making sure that learning is recognized and appropriately validated is an integral indicator of the quality of services. Any kind of acknowledgement is – besides other benefits that it has – an efficient method of motivation for the untraditional participant as well as those that have been absent from the labour market for quite some time. It is important that we develop a quality system for recognizing and acknowledging previously acquired and experiential learning, and it's also important that we promote its use in different environments.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

It is desirable for a person who is learning to find his or her own way through the network of learning programmes and opportunities. If this learning path becomes too complicated, help and guidance should be provided. When making decisions regarding learning and education as well as directing one's personal and vocational path with the help of learning, it is important that we make sure that an individual receives proper and continuous information and guidance.

In the last 10 years Slovenia has focus mostly on the development of two activities. We have well-developed information and counselling services for the field of adult education (<http://isio.acs.si/>) – a network of 14 regional counselling centres is in operation. Regional partnerships for adult education counselling have also been established – lifelong learning centres. Besides the previously mentioned network of counselling centres Slovenia also has operational Centres for Information and Vocational Counselling (<http://www.ess.gov.si/ncips/cips>). Lately, career centres have also begun to be established.

Adult education also means that every educational institution is obliged to carry out the first interview with the person enrolling in a new programme. Counsellor together with the candidate prepares his or her own individual educational plan, which has been adjusted to his or her previously acquired knowledge, skills and competences.

3c. What is the role of social partners (employers and trade unions) in the learning process to build up competencies sustainably?

TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions and employers are working together to prepare Occupational Standards and other educational programmes (representatives of trade unions are members of the Board of Experts responsible for the validation/confirmation of Vocational Standards for Educational Programmes.)

The employers are also directly involved - as a part of Examining Boards for the final exam in vocational education. Trade unions and employers received reports on the validation of education and may express and share their opinion with the specialised (expert) institutions. The best possible way in which they can influence the sustainable competences is by setting up or renewing Occupational Standards – as a rule, a Occupational Standard is renewed once every 5 years.

EMPLOYERS

Recognizing individuals' non-formal knowledge, their skills and competences has a positive effect on the labour market mobility, formation and development of formal education systems and at the same time it eases the search for employment – employers also benefit from it as they can employ a well-qualified workforce in different job positions.

Because of that employers are willing to create conditions in which the workers can receive necessary training at their posts and are prepared to participate in the process of certificating and validating non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences.

Employers are therefore putting a lot of effort into the establishment of a system that will acknowledge non-formal education and training.

They believe that it will strengthen the status of employees as well as the status of young people at the labour market, that it will increase their employability and consequently have a positive influence on their personal development, their pursuit for independence and their autonomy.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The fundamental principle set out in the 2011 White Paper on Education in Slovenia states that it is social partnership which should regulate and carry out vocational and technical education. This means that it is necessary to coordinate interests of all partners – workers and trade unions, employers and ministries.

Employers hope to gain (from the system of vocational and technical education) properly qualified staff, as well as mean to get a requalification and additionally train their current workers so that they can compete at already overly competitive global markets.

Workers, organized in trade unions, are interested in the educational system because they hope to gain enough general and fundamental knowledge to fulfil their educational ambitions, as well as to gain vocational and technical knowledge that will make more competitive when looking for an employment or creating their own.

Ministries represent the broader interest of the government /country:

- *They are responsible for ensuring that the concept of lifelong learning is realized,*
- *that certain basic knowledge needed for the development of sense of national belonging is assured,*
- *that there is realization of human right and*
- *that there is gender equality*
- *that there is the pursuit for democracy, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and respect,*
- *that there is protection of the environment as well as the protection of natural and cultural heritage*
-

All the involved parties must work together to come to an agreement and find suitable legislative and organizational solutions that will balance the practical needs and long-term demands of the fast developing economy and country.

The principle of social partnership is observed when planning, programming and implementing vocational and technical education. Employers together with the rest of the partners define occupational competences needed for performing a specific job.

In the last 10 years social partners participated in the development of majority of occupational standards for most of the vocational fields. On the basis of an occupational standard educational programmes of vocational, technical and higher technical education are prepared. The

educational programmes have a 20% open curricula which means that schools are free to add any content they believe would benefit the learner based on the specific needs of the region or the employers.

3d. What are your strategies concerning Lifelong learning with regard to target groups (young, old, low-qualified, men and women...)?

TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions (and employers as well) have strategies regarding the entire system of lifelong learning as well as regarding individual target groups. Trade unions are in favour and have supported the systematic change that allows young people to acquire at least a 4-year secondary education. Trade unions also support inclusion of vulnerable groups (older workers whose job position is threatened, women, the unemployed) in the vocational training and would like to see these people to acquire new skills and competences (computer literacy, communication skills).

Between 2009 and 2010 Slovenia with the help of the first of two emergency laws allocated several million Euros for on-the-job training of workers whose jobs were threatened for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge and skills. The second emergency law the government co-financed salaries of those employees who would have otherwise lost their jobs - at the same time these workers took part in trainings for new skills needed in the labour market.

EMPLOYERS

Association of Employers of Slovenia does not have its own strategy regarding lifelong education of young people as it is being shaped by the state (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education). It also does not have any strategies regarding lifelong education of older people, unqualified workers, men or women as these strategies are being developed by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Employment Agencies and are subject to different projects for individual segments of lifelong learning.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

There are no special strategies for the involvement of specific target groups. Counselling centres for adults turn to individual groups with individually adjusted calls for enrolment directed at the less-educated, unemployed, older prisoners, immigrants, etc. The response is great as long as counselling is free of charge.

The counselling centres offer free web portals where people can download materials for autonomous learning.

They also have information points where people can obtain information on available educational programmes and training opportunities.

Centres for information and counselling at regional units of the National Employment Agency are also in operation – first and foremost, they offer counselling services and help to unemployed, but they also deal with young people and adults.

3e. What runs good or not?

TRADE UNIONS

The strategy for further development of the entire system of education and training that is based on basic principles of lifelong learning was completed in May 2011 (the White Paper on Education). The White Paper is the foundation for all future changes in the legislation that are to follow in 2011. The trade unions have succeeded in asserting several of their viewpoints, especially the ones related to the issues of vocational education (extending secondary schooling to 4 years instead of 3, modularity of educational programmes, higher technical education, regional centres for lifelong learning, etc.).

Trade unions have to come to a conclusion that even if you do ensure public emergency funding for training for new skills and competences this will only have a partial effect on the preservation of a greater number of jobs but it will not solve the problem of employability, at least not as a long term solution. The effects of training within the scope of lifelong learning are not always positive. As a rule, 50% of people who participate in some kind of a training programme find their way back to the Employment Agency after a year or so.

EMPLOYERS

Increasingly greater and more stringent requirements for knowledge in companies that can be observed in increasingly greater educational and other demands when applying for a job position dictate implementation of such systems even at the level of high/university education.

The Lisbon Strategy also encourages us to do so as it demands for the EU member states to mutually acknowledge acquired formal education. Acknowledgement of non-formal education and experiential learning at the level of higher education has also been foreseen by the Slovene legislation – the basis for this can be found in Article 35 of Law on Higher Education, while its Article 49 imposes upon the Higher Education Council to determine the standards or criteria for acknowledgment of knowledge and skills acquired before the enrolment into a higher programme of the first cycle – this has already been done to a certain extent when the criteria for accreditation of higher education establishment and education programmes was set/adopted (Article 9).

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

No answer was given!

4. NON-FORMAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

4a. In how far are people supported in non-formal learning? What are the instruments and kinds of support?

TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions regularly inform their members about the options they have regarding the acquisition or validation of their non-formal or informal learning. Sectoral collective agreements are used by the trade unions to ensure that the employers respect the rights of employees when it comes to their participation in education and training within the scope of non-formal learning environment (they also define the conditions for training). Trade unions demand higher salaries for workers who acquire new qualifications. They also advise their members regarding their career development and options they have.

EMPLOYERS

Employed and unemployed people can pursue non-formal learning. If an employee whose job position has become endangered, or an unemployed person decides to take part in an educational programme that will enable him to get a requalification or an upgrade of vocational knowledge, the national Employment Agency will support his decision.

Public agency for human recourses and scholarships operating within the framework of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs regularly publishes applications aimed at companies which offer training for workers who want to receive new technical knowledge and competences.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Two principal support activities, which enhance the motivation of adults to participate in education and learn, are providing information and counselling and assessment and acknowledgment of knowledge acquired through non-formal learning and experience

The government finances the so-called Programme for the reduction of educational deficiency, which focuses on two things: the improvement of general education of adults and the increase in the educational level of the citizens of Slovenia, aged 25 – 64.

By co financing school fees it encourages adults to finish programmes of formal education up to secondary level of education (level 5) and thus increasing their educational level. Completed secondary level of education improves individual's chances of getting an employment and increases his or her competitiveness at the labour market.

Employee education and training is the key instrument in human resources development. An employer, who ensures the development of his employees contributes to their qualifications and adaptability, broadens their knowledge, competences and strengthens their feeling of belonging to the organization in which they work. With this the employer also contributes to higher quality of work and company's competitiveness –at the same time he also makes a contribution to the development of a society based on knowledge.

The state, through the national Employment Agency, also finances acquisition of either formal education or national vocational education for unemployed persons.

The establishment and the operation of Competence Centres for Human Resources development are also being co-financed. The goal is:

- ***greater competitiveness of companies and branch economic activities***
- ***cooperation of companies in human resources development***
- ***definition of competency profiles for specific occupations and job positions in a specific branch***
- ***development of branch competency model***
- ***lowering (with the help of result oriented training) of the deficiencies in employees' competences***
- ***contributing to acquisition of new specific skills and competences***

4b. Is there a praxis in your country to assign EC VET credit points?

TRADE UNIONS

The European credit system EC VET is used in the vocational and technical education here in Slovenia. All educational programmes of secondary and higher vocational education usually consist of modules and assigned a certain number of credit points.

EMPLOYERS

All the programmes of vocational education in Slovenia are evaluated with credit point – this is in accordance with the EC VET system. Non-formal education and training is – with regard to individual educational modules – evaluated with credit points.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Educational programmes in the field of vocational and technical education are awarded credit points – 1 credit point for each 25 hours of student's educational work where:

- ***lower vocational education allows the acquisition of 120 credit points***
- ***secondary vocational educations allows 180 – 240 credit points***
- ***secondary technical education allows 240 – 300 credit points***

Post-secondary Vocational Education Act foresees assessment of student workload expressed in credit points – these take into consideration the time needed for the student to complete all his planned educational activities, such as attending lessons, practical classes, individual work, preparation of projects, researches, etc. With this in mind, each year is given 60 credit points, higher education programmes are given 120 points and last two years, study programmes for further education are given at least 10 but no more than 35 credit point.

The predetermined part of the credits awarded (depending on the educational programme) includes practical education. The school may acknowledge a certain number of credit points to students who have previously acquired non-formal knowledge and experience.

High education has also seen an adoption of a law, which defines criteria for assessment of educational programmes according to EC TS. One credit point here also means 25 to 35 hours of student's work - there should be approximately 1500 to 1800 hours of work in one academic

year. Higher professional education programmes and university programmes should be awarded at least 180 to 240 credit points and last 4 years. Masters programmes are awarded 60 – 120 credit points and last one to two years, but can, in the same area of expertise, together with the first Bologna cycle educational programme last for 5 years. Doctoral study programmes are awarded 180 credit points and last 3 years.

4c. In how far does EC VET increase flexibility of training programs?

TRADE UNIONS

The credit system increases the flexibility of vocational education and enables validation of individual qualifications acquired during non-formal and informal learning. School legislation determines the framework for the preparation of modules.

EMPLOYERS

In our opinion the credit system in the vocational and technical education increased the flexibility of education.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In Slovenia the credit system is applicable to the formal programmes of education. The National Vocational Qualifications Act foresees the credit points to be used for evaluation the NVQs as well, but this has not yet been implemented.

4d. How do you identify (what methods do you use?) skill profiles due to future skill needs?

TRADE UNIONS

Skills profiles in individual sectors can be identified according to a special methodology used by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education (CPI) for the purpose of preparation of Occupational Standards.

EMPLOYERS

Companies identify the needs for new knowledge and skills and prepare analysis of needs for new occupational profiles with the help of chambers (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chamber of Crafts and Business,). They also take an initiative for the preparation of new occupational profiles – they send the request to the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI). Different expert committees for occupational standards at the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) are responsible for the preparation of new occupational profiles and occupational standards. Occupational standards are being revised and renewed every 5 years.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Preparation of occupational standards is done through social dialogue - all key partners at national level are included in the process of designing the content of occupations and qualifications, the levels of difficulty or expertise, and define the labour market need for the future years.

The most important part of the process is the cooperation of experts directly from the industries, crafts and services sectors as they help us discover ahead of time the needs for new qualifications and future developmental trends.

The initiatives for occupational standards coming from employers are valuable contributions to the development and relevance (up-to date) of the system and the qualification structures.

4e. In how far does this influence the formulation of curricula?

TRADE UNIONS

The needs for new profiles greatly influence the curricula in vocational education. An Occupational Standard for a specific qualification is usually revised and renewed every 5 years. This is followed by a change in the curricula. A thorough reform of the entire educational system is not uncommon (every 10 to 15 years)

EMPLOYERS

Occupational standards are the basis for the revision and renewal of curricula (educational programmes) in formal secondary and higher technical education.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In years 2007 – 2008 there was comprehensive renewal of all educational systems – of all levels, from lower to higher education.

Educational programmes are designed in such a manner that they allow connection between the generic, vocational and personal competences, lessons at school are balanced; there is practical training with an employer. Educational programmes, as we have mentioned before, also have a 20% of open curriculum, which allow schools to better respond to the needs of local environment and individual needs of students. A new relationship between educational programmes and occupational standards is being established because the educational programmes are no longer so narrow; one does not only learn for one occupational standards but receives knowledge for more related occupational standards or for an area of work.

Educational programmes for more occupational standards are modular.

4f. What are your quality assurance standards within education and training (EQARF)?

TRADE UNIONS

Examination of knowledge in general secondary and vocational secondary education in Slovenia is external and it is based on the national standards of knowledge and skills. The National Examinations Centre is responsible for this type of examination which is carried out on the same day and the set of questions are the same for everyone – this is the so-called general 'Matura' (general secondary education).

In secondary vocational education the students have to take the so called vocational 'Matura' exam, where all general subjects are examined externally. To ensure the quality the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education (CPI) and the Centre for Adult Education developed special kinds of tools for self-evaluation of education which is done by the education providers and are based in the EQARF. The trade union focus group believes that the emphasis put on external examination of knowledge and skills is too great.

EMPLOYERS

In vocational education in Slovenia the EQARF standards are the established practice. The basis for quality standards are prepared by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) while specific standards are being set by specific sectors. As a rule each educational establishment/organization has adopted education quality standards. In formal education and in the process of assessing national vocational qualifications the system of external examination of knowledge and skills is being practiced.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

At national level the expert council of the National Institute for Vocational Education and training is responsible for the design of quality indicators on the basis of which the National Institute follows the quality of vocational and technical education on yearly basis and prepares a report on the quality of vocational and technical education.

Expert council of the Republic of Slovenia for vocational and technical education adopted 7 indicators which represent the current national framework considered to be a long-term framework designed to determine and ensure quality in vocational and technical education. Indicators follow to a great extent the contents of the indicators set at the European level

(EQARF). Contextual, input, process as well as output indicators (impact indicators) have been taken into consideration.

Adult education follows the most established self-evaluation model in Slovenia, so-called POKI model (brief translation of the acronym - offering quality education to adults) – according to our data approximately 35% of all educational organizations used this model for evaluation.

5. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

5a. What are the tools/instruments/methods used for the identification (e.g. portfolio, interview, demonstration, self-assessment) of competences? What kinds of proof can be submitted?

TRADE UNIONS

All above mentioned tools and methods of validation and accreditation of qualifications are being used. Tools (aids) for portfolio management have been developed (at CPI). Boards of Examiners (Examination Committees) use different methods of testing:

- *a written examination*
- *an interview*
- *a product*
- *a demonstration*

Examples of examinations can be found at the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and the Centre for Adult Education which offer support to the educational providers as well as examination committees.

EMPLOYERS

When assessing and validating National Vocational Qualification the examiners check all the candidate's accomplishments – these can relate to his learning experience, work and other experience, all the acquired competences and qualifications that meet the requirements of catalogues of technical knowledge and skills standards.

Documents which are the basis for acknowledgement of non-formally acquired knowledge are:

- *Documents of training and further vocational training (upgrading knowledge)*
- *Certificates issued in accordance with regulations relating to the acknowledgement of vocational qualifications*
- *Documents showing evidence of acquired knowledge and fulfilled obligations relating to a specific educational programme*
- *Employer certificates that confirm in-service training*
- *Other similar documents*

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

The rulebook clearly defines the method and the procedure of assessment – this ensures unity and transparency of documents and certificates.

The procedure of assessment and validation of NVQs is carried out by the procedure performers inscribed in the National Examinations Centre register. The assessment and validation is done in front of a three-member committee. The committee members are experts at their field of work, which they must prove with required knowledge, skills and work experience.

Means of assessment and verification of a NVQ:

- *direct 'live' assessment of skills and knowledge*
- *assessment based on documents acquired under programmes of vocational education or training or acquired in any other way - portfolio (verification)*
- *combination of assessment of documents in the portfolio and 'live' assessment*

In the NVQ system candidates prepares their portfolio with the help of their counsellors – the portfolio is prescribed by the National Institute for Vocational Educational and Training and is published in the Institute's web page.

A portfolio *is a 'folder' with relevant documents demonstrating the candidates' knowledge and skills, and containing information regarding the candidate's desired NVQ (the NVQ the candidate would like to acquire). Relevant documents in the portfolio demonstrate that the candidate has knowledge and skills described in the knowledge and skills standards catalogue.*

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is developing key tools/instruments/methods needed for measuring the 8 key competences - this is being done within the framework of the Determination and acknowledgment of non-formal learning' project.

The key tool is an electronic portfolio, used by adult to 'gather' different relevant documents, learning accomplishments, CV, etc.

Validation procedure: *Committee for assessment and verification of NVQs firstly (in accordance with the adopted standards of knowledge and skills and agreed criteria) assesses individual relevant documents in the portfolio and then compares the entire portfolio with the standards of knowledge and skills from the catalogues. The committee decided whether the conditions that is that standards from the catalogue have been met and direct assessment is not necessary – NVQ can be validated. If the conditions have not been met, or have been partially met, the candidate is sent to further, direct, assessment. If this happens the*

committee defines, in accordance with the catalogue, the contents and exact instructions regarding the assessment and validation for each individual candidate separately.

Assessment procedure: *When the candidate is being assessed directly in front of a committee, the committee can use different methods of determining the candidate's knowledge - an interview, a real or simulated situation, the candidate may have to defend a certain service that was done or a project assignment that was done – sometimes the candidate may also have to write a test. The methods of assessment are prescribed in the standards catalogue. The assessment may not take more than 180 minutes altogether.*

5b. How is informal learning measured and validated? To what extent can validation use the same standards and references as formal education and training? If not, what other standards are used - job, or sectoral (branch)?

TRADE UNIONS

The results of informal learning can be measured on the basis of the National Occupational Standards for different sectoral qualifications. This is especially true when an individual wants to acquire a particular (individual) qualification or additional (supplemental) qualification, for which the Occupational Standard is set by the sector. The same Standard as for the formal education is used. However, with certain national vocational qualifications, if an individual would like to acquire this particular qualification, he or she has to have a certain formal education (the education is a prerequisite).

EMPLOYERS

Informal learning is currently not acknowledged at the national level. However, an employer is free to acknowledge it in combination with non-formal learning.

In the process of acknowledgement the following criteria are being used:

- *References*
- *Work experience*
- *Provable non-formal education (diplomas, certificates)*

A broad spectrum of non-formally acquired knowledge seems to be gaining value (from an employer's point of view)

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In vocational and technical education the occupational standard is the basis for the preparation of both an educational programme as well as for the NVQ system. IN practice, the informally acquired knowledge has not been systematically integrated into the NVQ system.

Non-formal learning is an intentional, time-limited, institutionalised activity which does not end with an acquisition of a publicly valid qualification. However, it is structuralised and planned...there are goals, teachers, limited period of time.

Non-formal learning from the candidate's point of view is an intentional activity.

Informal learning is intentional, time-limited activity, which does not take place in an educational institution and does not end with an acquisition of a publicly valid qualification. It is learning that takes place in the real world, in every day situations, at work, at home, during free time – it is not structuralised and it is not planned and does not lead to an acquisition of a certificate. It could be intentional, but in most cases it is not incidental.

5c. What kind of advice/feedback may be made by assessors or mentors, counsellors, peers examiners?

TRADE UNIONS

Mentors, examiners, counsellors are available for consultations throughout the educational/training process. The mentors are provided by the educational institutions. They advise the candidates with the learning process and with the examination preparations as well. However, they cannot help the candidates during the examination.

EMPLOYERS

In the system of validation of national vocational qualifications the procedure can be carried out by the institutions recorded at the register kept by the National Examinations Centre (RIC). The candidate applies with an education provider (institution) which can, if needed, provide help and guidance. However, the assessment is done by an independent three-member committee – the examiners must be licensed National Examinations Centre. During the procedure the candidate cannot receive any help. Feedback is given upon completion of examination – usually by the examination provider.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

In the NVQ system the candidate must receive information regarding the possibilities and the conditions for the acquisition of the NVQ. The candidate is also entitled to proper counselling.

The counsellor's role is to inform the candidate about the procedure of assessment and validation, to help him/her find options for personal development and overcoming present obstacles. During the first meeting counsellor tells the candidate about the individual NVQs, describes different paths he/she can take to get there, and offers him/her support and guidance with collecting relevant documents. The entire process must be based on individual's autonomy. The candidate must think about his experience and the counsellor's role is to help him present these experiences in a way that will enable the candidate to have these experienced validated.

The guidance and help the candidate receives from the counsellor motivates him and makes him feel more valuable to the society. This is necessary especially when the candidate finds himself in unfamiliar situations where he must find a way to be able to present his experience in such a way that they would hold certain formal value. Tasks of the committee members:

- *to check the portfolio*
- *keep records of the (un)suitability of the portfolio*
- *validate the NVQ when the candidate meets all the requirements set in standards catalogue*
- *invite the candidate for further assessment when he/she does not meet all the requirement from the catalogue – in the same process, the committee determines the knowledge and skills the candidate must prove – if the candidate is successful, the committee must issue a certificate within 8 days of the assessment and validation procedure – if the candidate fails, the committee must issue a decision regarding his failure to fulfil the requirements.*

6. SWOT

6a. **Which strengths** are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Focus on sustainability issues, cost-benefit issues, ethical issues, transferability between sectors and EQF-related aspects.

TRADE UNIONS

The advantages of the Slovene educational system are:

- *High percentage of young people enrolled in both general and vocational secondary education (non-obligatory) after completed 9-years obligatory primary education*
- *Education and training in public schools is free of charge*
- *For many years now Slovenia has had a classification system of educational and training – KLASIUS – the system classifies all qualifications into 8 levels and serves as the official basis for employment, tariff policy, career advancement (promotion, etc.*
- *It enables validation of informally and non-formally acquired qualifications in individual sectors by an acquisition of a national vocational qualification*
- *It can adjust to the EQF requirements*

EMPLOYERS

Educational system enables acquisition of education and skills in a formal or non-formal way and is accessible to all citizens. The National Qualifications Framework will, in the long run, improve the quality, connections and validation of qualifications in the labour market within the country and internationally.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- *KLASIUS*
- *National qualifications framework is a permanent instrument for determination of qualification levels and classification of qualifications, which has already been established in Slovenia*

6b. Which weaknesses are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Focus on sustainability issues, cost-benefit issues, ethical issues, transferability between sectors and EQF-related aspects

TRADE UNIONS

The **weaknesses** of the Slovene educational system are:

- *A large number of trainings that take place in companies are internal and are only valid at that one employer because validation based on the national occupational standards is not possible and neither is acquisition of a National Vocational Qualification (certificate)*
- *National Vocational Qualification does not enable permeability into higher levels in the educational system. Higher education requires certificates of formal education or requests further examinations.*
- *Many collective agreements – especially in the real sector – do not include any bases for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and by not doing anything about it they don't really contribute to an individual's career development*

EMPLOYERS

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EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- *Learning results are not clearly defined*
- *Non-formal and informal learning is not integrated into the qualification acquisition system*
- *Too great an emphasis on formal education*
- *Qualifications are defined in view of time and not in view of learning results/outcomes*
- *Qualifications are linked to the tariff section of collective agreements*

6c. Which opportunities are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Focus on sustainability issues, cost-benefit issues, ethical issues, transferability between sectors and EQF-related aspects.

TRADE UNIONS

The European (a national) qualifications framework offers:

- *Greater transparency of knowledge, skills and competences provided by national educational systems and lifelong learning*
- *Comparability of occupational standards and qualifications (knowledge, skills and competences) that exist in different countries of EU*
- *Greater employment possibilities of employment seekers at both national and EU level*
- *Greater chances of 'vertical' promotion and career development*
- *Increases in the status of qualified workers in companies and institutions*

EMPLOYERS

National Qualifications Framework will enable acknowledgement and validation of qualifications which have developed in the labour market. Both the national and the European qualifications frameworks provide an opportunity for individuals who have not yet received formal educations to take part in the labour market.

The age we live in requires not only formal knowledge and skills but also many additional skills and competences that individuals pick up in a non-formal way – computer courses, language courses, etc – and with this they improve their chances of employment.

Assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning within the framework of SQF is regarded as beneficial and positive and is considered to be an advantage of the Slovene educational system. The EQF will enable transparency and transferability of validated and acknowledged qualifications within EU.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- *Qualifications developed in the labour market will also be included into the SQF*
- *Individuals who have no formal education will also get an opportunity at the labour market*

6d. Which threats are facing your country's learning system when it comes to implementing the EQF?

Focus on sustainability issues, cost-benefit issues, ethical issues, transferability between sectors and EQF-related aspects

TRADE UNIONS

The implementation of the EQF can cause:

- *Greater fluctuation of workforce from one EU country into other EU countries*
- *Workers may feel pressured to take part in educational and training programmes for the sake of keeping their current job position and the same salary*
- *Greater competitiveness among the employees – either to keep their employment or get a job*
- *Lowering difficulty/complexity levels when classifying a specific qualification/ or certain occupations in the NQF levels*

EMPLOYERS

We believe that the implementation of the SQF does not present any threats to the national educational system.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- *To achieve consensus in countries regarding the levels and inclusion of non-formally acquired knowledge*
- *Question of ownership of the National and European qualifications frameworks Implementation*

7. Thematic outline

7a. On page 1 there are 10 issues (themes) formulated: Are these addressed issues relevant or not relevant for you

TRADE UNIONS

<i>Addressed issue</i>	<i>Relevant (3)</i>	<i>Less relevant (2)</i>	<i>Not relevant (1)</i>
<i>Collective bargaining</i>	x		
<i>Impact of the learning outcome-approach for initial and further training</i>	x		
<i>Assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning</i>	x		
<i>Data protection vs. transparency</i>		x	
<i>Increase flexibility in training programmes (e.g. EC VET)</i>	x		
<i>Permeability between general, vocational and tertiary education and training</i>	x		
<i>Quality assurance within vocational education and training (EQARF)</i>	x		
<i>Guidance and individual career development</i>	x		
<i>Standards for developing new skill profiles due to future skill needs</i>	x		
<i>Mismatching (low and over qualification)</i>		x	

EMPLOYERS

<i>Addressed issue</i>	<i>Relevant (3)</i>	<i>Less relevant (2)</i>	<i>Not relevant (1)</i>
<i>Collective bargaining</i>		X	
<i>Impact of the learning outcome-approach for initial and further training</i>	x		
<i>Assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning</i>	x		
<i>Data protection vs. transparency</i>	X		
<i>Increase flexibility in training programmes (e.g. EC VET)</i>	x		
<i>Permeability between general, vocational and tertiary education and training</i>	x		
<i>Quality assurance within vocational education and training (EQARF)</i>	x		
<i>Guidance and individual career development</i>	x		
<i>Standards for developing new skill profiles due to future skill needs</i>	x		
<i>Mismatching (low and over qualification)</i>	X		

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

<i>Addressed issue</i>	<i>Relevant (3)</i>	<i>Less relevant (2)</i>	<i>Not relevant (1)</i>
<i>Collective bargaining</i>	x		
<i>Impact of the learning outcome-approach for initial and further training</i>	x		
<i>Assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning</i>		x	
<i>Data protection vs. transparency</i>	X		
<i>Increase flexibility in training programmes (e.g. EC VET)</i>	x		
<i>Permeability between general, vocational and tertiary education and training</i>	x		
<i>Quality assurance within vocational education and training (EQARF)</i>	x		
<i>Guidance and individual career development</i>		x	
<i>Standards for developing new skill profiles due to future skill needs</i>	x		
<i>Mismatching (low and over qualification)</i>	X		

7b. On page 1 there are 10 issues (themes) formulated: From your national point of view what else issues are relevant for you in the process of implementation and use of EQF? Please give us a detailed description. Do you have any approaches (strategies or experiences) to solve these challenges?

TRADE UNIONS

The trade union focus group found all the issues relevant, with the exception, perhaps, the issue of personal data protection because in our opinion, these are secure enough and we do not see any problems with the way they are being processed. The trade union focus group would like to point out another issue that we find is a problem, a problem that in our opinion is growing in size – the issue of the discrepancy of qualifications, the discrepancy between formally and non-formally acquired knowledge, skills and competences and the needs of the labour market/employers. It seems that everybody would like to acquire as high of an education as possible, while the employers mostly require workers with a vocational qualification. The majority of employers also show no willingness to pay for the ones with higher qualifications.

The trade union focus group is of the opinion that that the starting points and the bases for future development (the White Paper on Education) in Slovenia enable responses, or shall we say make it possible to take steps towards putting into force all relevant/priority issues. Further development depends upon economic growth and political decisions made to be made in the future in this country.

EMPLOYERS

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EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Collective bargaining is vital for a successful implementation of the SQF because it must be accepted by all social partners as the mechanism for ensuring transparency of qualifications. If consensus is not reached the SQF will remain only on paper.

Implementation of learning results into vocational and technical education has been one of the priorities for many years here in Slovenia. A step forward was made when educational programmes were connected to occupational standards, which represent wanted leaning results as seen by the employers.

Assuring permeability between programmes of vocational education is also an important issue which is being dealt with in two ways:

- *Implementation of the ECVET system and*
- *Acknowledgement procedures*

However, we must admit that we have only at the beginning.

Permeability between general, vocational and tertiary education and training relates to the previous topic. What is important is that we build on creating trust among different levels of educational and this is where the SQF becomes useful.

One way in which we can build trust among different systems of educations is that we ensure quality within vocational education and training (EQARF). However, we must also implement systems for quality assurance in other systems of educational at the national level (general secondary schools – gymnasiums, higher education).

Standards for the development of new skill profiles needed in the future are an important issue which plays a vital part in the development of vocational and technical education. However, we do not believe that SQF will greatly contribute to this particular issue.

Mismatching: current situation at the labour market - we are faced with over qualification for the current available job positions (a large number of unemployed people with university degrees) but on the other hand, there are many older people with very low qualifications.

8. Information and support by PIN

8a. What information do you expect from PIN, from a trade union, in company and educational providers point of view?

TRADE UNIONS

Pin project can help us gather detailed information regarding the state of educational systems and the classification of qualifications within NQF with our partners (12 project partner countries), which we consider to be a valuable contribution with the development of the NQF here in Slovenia.

EMPLOYERS

The project is interesting for the employers as well because of exchange of information among different partners from the 12 EU states.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Experience of other countries when dealing with assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning of adults. Systemic and application level!

8b. What support do you need?

TRADE UNIONS

At this moment we would like to receive detailed information on NQFs in countries which are partners in the project, as well as information on the role of social partners in the establishment and development of the NQF.

EMPLOYERS

Association of Employers of Slovenia does not expect to receive any support from the project partner.

EDUCATION PROVIDERS

No answer was given!

Participants of the TRADE UNION focus group:

Marjan Urbanč – Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia

Bojan Zupančič – Health and Social Care Trade Union of Slovenia

Vladimir Tkalec – Public Services Trade Unions' Confederation of Slovenia

Participants of the EMPLOYERS

(Teja Kadunc) - Association of employers of Slovenia

Dimičeva 9, SI-1000 Ljubljana (<http://www.zds.si>)

NOTE!

Several companies that we have asked to participate in this focus group have turned us down and refused to fill out the questionnaire because they thought it was too demanding. The representatives of these companies believed that they did not have enough information to be able to complete such a demanding questionnaire.

Educational providers focus group participants:

Mag. Tanja Vilič Klenovšek

Andragoški center Republike Slovenije/ Slovenian Institute for Adult Education

Mag. Urška Marentič

Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje/National institute for vocational education

Mag. Maruška Željeznov Seničar

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