TRACK PROJECT

TRAINING AND RECOGNITION OF INFORMAL CARERS SKILLS

FEASIBILITY STUDY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main **purpose** of this study is to clarify for all partner countries (Austria, France, Germany, Spain), which rollout perspectives exist for the TRACK (Training and recognition of informal Carers sKills) blended learning offer (combining online and face-to-face sessions) and how the training can be promoted and be made available best for the target group of informal caregivers of Alzheimer and Dementia patients.

Introduction to the TRACK training and certification offer

The TRACK blended learning offer aims to support informal caregivers in their care activities and their daily life with Alzheimer and Dementia patients. Thus, the training offers information for informal caregivers and helps to assure quality in the care of Alzheimer and Dementia patients.

It is provided in 4 European language versions (English, French, German, Spanish) and will be available free of charge at the TRACK website hosted by Eurocarers (http://eurocarers.org/track/index) and via a Moodle platform hosted by IPERIA. Training providers which use Moodle platforms will be able to implement the TRACK training and certification programme free of charge in their learning environments.

The TRACK blended learning combines 16 hours of face-to-face sessions with 4 hours e-learning. The e-learning follows a modular structure and a micro-learning approach which takes into account informal caregivers' time constraints. Self-evaluation activities at the end of each learning module summarize the learning outcomes that have been achieved so far and raise awareness for skills and competences that have been acquired. Mentoring between informal caregivers and care professionals plays an important role in the overall concept of the TRACK blended learning offer, since informal caregivers need both, personal contact and professional advice.

Informal caregivers who have passed the TRACK training receive a certificate that is based on a summary of the learning outcomes which have been acquired during the TRACK training. On one hand the certificate and the summary of learning outcomes underline the relevance of the acquired skills and competences in the field of care for Dementia patients, on the other hand, the learning outcome descriptions and the certificate offer the possibility to be used in the context of professional skills audit tools at national level (e.g. *ProfilPASS* in Germany, *bilan de compétences* in France, *dossier de competencias* in Spain) or in the context of recognition of prior learning (further education and training offers in the field of care). In some countries such as France or Spain, where validation procedures for the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning are already well established for a long time, the TRACK training and certification offer might raise the informal caregivers' interest in having their long-term care experience validated and recognised. In

Germany and Austria, where the formal education system is quite strong, cooperations with vocational education providers will be very important to ensure the recognition of the TRACK learning outcomes and certificate.

Overall, the TRACK blended learning and certification offer

- Provides concrete information and support for informal caregivers with regard to daily challenges in the care of Alzheimer and Dementia patients
- helps to assure the quality of informal care of Alzheimer and Dementia patients while at the same time supporting the self-care of informal caregivers
- increases the self-confidence of informal caregivers and the awareness for skills and competences acquired in the field of care
- emphasises the value of informal care and unpaid care services provided by informal caregivers for their family members or close persons at personal and at social level
- might arouse informal caregivers' interest in further vocational education and training or in becoming a professional caregiver after a period of long term informal caregiving
- might offer new professional perspectives and in the context of (re)entering the labour market

Objectives and content of the present Feasibility Study

Based on these considerations, the study aims to draft a roadmap for the rollout of the TRACK training and certificate in each of the partner countries and to show pathways to further vocational education and training, to existing skills audit and validation procedures and to care professions that might offer the most appropriate "entry point" for informal carers into the labour market. The national validation systems and certification approaches represent the background for drafting the roadmap and for defining care professions that can serve as a possible entry point into the labour market. Since social and health care professions are regulated professions requiring by law a specific qualification in many EU Member States, informal carers who are interested in working in the field of care can usually either decide to enter the labour market "directly" and work in low-qualified and low-paid non-regulated care assistant jobs not requiring any specific qualification or they can take advantage of vocational education and training offers for qualified care professions. The TRACK training offers small e-learning units tailored to the requirements of the informal caregivers and of users that are less familiar with internet and e-learning (using short information units, lots of visualisation and spoken text). Thus, the TRACK training might raise the motivation to learn and arouse informal carers' interest in further (vocational) training. The certification of the skills acquired by passing the TRACK training aims to improve the quality of informal care and to recognise the value of informal care services. Furthermore, the TRACK certificate offers the possibility that the acquired skills and competences are recognised in the context of already existing vocational education and training offers as prior learning.

In several European countries, such as France and Spain, everybody can (under certain conditions) apply for the validation and recognition of his/her work experience (including volunteer work) and acquire a corresponding professional qualification. These validation procedures provide, especially for people with no or little formal qualification, a good opportunity to acquire a qualification that is in line with their practical work experience. In the context of the validation of non-formal and informal learning the TRACK certificate could be used to document part of the proof required in the validation procedure for a specific care profession.

The TRACK certification roadmap refers to care professions that offer a good entry point into the labour market for informal caregivers of Alzheimer and Dementia patients. Thus, informal caregivers could decide to either participate in further vocational training for these care professions and apply for the recognition of prior learning in TRACK, or to apply for the validation of their professional experience, if they fulfil the conditions for the validation procedure and use the TRACK certificate for documenting part of the skills they acquired in the field of care.

As the validation of informal and non-formal learning represents in general an important issue of European lifelong learning policy, the present study offers also basic information on national validation procedures, existing skills documentation tools and options for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the partner countries. Besides, good practice examples for validation and certification in the field of care are presented.

Methodology

Information has been collected through desk research, literature review and study of good practices, from discussions and exchange with project partners, experts and stakeholders. In particular, interviews have been made with 8 national and 2 international validation and certification experts and feedback has been collected during 3 validation workshops from 61 experts (informal caregivers and care professionals, vocational education and training providers, policy and decision makers, representatives of placement services and care institutions etc.).

Based on the above-mentioned objectives and application scenarios of the TRACK training and certificate, the TRACK feasibility study offers

- Background information on informal care
- Information on possibilities to recognise skills and competences that have been acquired non-formally (via the TRACK training) or informally (via work experience) by informal caregivers
- Information on the policy background for validation and the recognition of skills at European level and in the piloting countries
- An overview of European initiatives supporting the comparability and transferability of skills and competences

- Information on validation procedures and standards, existing skills audit tools, institutional frameworks, main actors, financing, information and guidance as well as quality assurance procedures in the piloting countries
- Good practice examples for validation and the recognition of skills at European, national and regional level
- Recommendations for the implementation of TRACK at European level and in the piloting countries
- A roadmap for the rollout of the TRACK blended learning and certification offer
- Information on vocational education and career perspectives for informal carers (based on the comparison of competence profiles of care professions at national level and from ESCO)

Although the scope of the TRACK project is limited, the project aimed to explore a series of issues and to gain knowledge about the most appropriate further steps in supporting informal carers and the recognition of their competences.

Different scenarios for using TRACK

The following scenarios for using the TRACK certificate can be roughly differentiated:

- *Option 1:* caregiver receives a certificate for passing the TRACK training; in addition, he/she has the possibility to document all acquired care competences based on an overview of the achieved TRACK learning outcomes by using a national skills audit tool.
- *Option 2:* caregiver goes for further training: a) by doing a follow-up training for informal caregivers; he/she collects several certificates that can – under certain conditions – be recognised in validation procedures (especially in France and Spain) or by other education providers; b) by participating in a vocational training for a specific care profession.
- *Option 3:* caregiver uses the TRACK certificate to apply for recognition of prior learning at education and training providers who are TRACK partners and/or offer training for relevant care professions (some training offers for specific care professions that provide a good "entry point" into the labour market for informal caregivers show overlaps with the TRACK training, therefore, the TRACK training could be recognised as prior learning).
- *Option 4:* caregivers with long-term care experience may – under certain conditions – apply for official validation of his/her professional competences (especially in France and Spain), In this context the TRACK training could be seen as a kind of preparation training for a corresponding full qualification such as the *assistant(e) de vie (ADVD)* in France; the TRACK certificate could eventually also be used to document part of the acquired competences in caring for dementia patients; in order to refer informal carers to the possibility of having their skills formally recognised, the TRACK website will provide links to national information and guidance portals for validation.

Possibilities for rolling out the TRACK training in pilot countries

When starting a rollout of the TRACK training programme in the partner countries, it must be considered that some countries are more centralised, e.g. France, while in others, such as Spain or Germany, regions and municipalities are responsible for services in the care sector.

France is very centralised and the committee which is the responsible awarding body only meets twice a year The implementation of a new qualification can therefore get delayed by bureaucracy and can take a long time. Due to the small scope of the TRACK training (20 hours overall) it is not possible to position the resulting certificate as a full qualification. In the expert workshop, it was however stated that the TRACK training and certificate could be a starting point for further training for informal caregivers and could eventually be recognised as a kind of *preparation training for a full qualification* such as the assistant(e) de vie (ADVD).

In **Spain**, the regions are responsible and launch calls for validating non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences for professional qualifications that are in high demand in their area. If skills and competences are validated for professional qualifications, they are valid all over Spain, not just in the respective region. Special calls can also be launched in the regions, which then result in a regional certificate that is only valid in the specific region; special calls can be launched if both employer and employee organisations support such a call. TRACK could possibly initiate a special call in Andalusia, since the Deputation of Jaén belongs to the project partnership and could possibly help in finding the necessary cooperation partners for such a call (trade unions and two big companies). Such a special call leading to a regionally recognised certificate might offer a first step for the rollout of TRACK at regional level and for linking the TRACK certificate to the national validation procedure of Spain and to further education and training offers at regional and national level.

In **Germany**, it is recommended to implement the TRACK training at regional and national level: The German validation workshop showed that the regional Public Employment Service and the AWO (Workers' Welfare Organisation) in Halle are potential cooperation partners with an interest in implementing the TRACK training. A cooperation with these institutions at regional level could possibly lead to a broader rollout at federal or national level. During the workshop the cooperation with self-help groups, family doctors and "mobile" nurses, who normally are in direct contact with concerned persons and know their situation very well, was also mentioned as a promising way to promote and roll out the TRACK training. In addition, the TRACK training and certificate could be promoted at national level by convincing the Ministry of Health and/or the public social security system to support informal carers of dementia patients and the quality of informal dementia care by funding blended learning offers such as TRACK for all informal carers.

In all partner countries exist skills audit tools that are of different relevance for the public. In France and Spain, these audit tools are more important for competence documentation than for example in Germany and Austria where these tools are either not so well-known

(Austria) or compete with similar tools and are often limited to specific regions (Germany). However, in the expert workshops these tools were regarded as the most appropriate first step for the documentation of acquired skills and competences and a low threshold approach for becoming aware of one's professional competence profile. Therefore, it is recommended to either envisage a direct cooperation with institutions that are issuing these audit tools (*bilan de compétences* in France, *dossier de competencias* in Spain or the *ProfilPASS* in Germany) or to inform informal caregivers of the existence of such tools and how the TRACK competences can fit into these. In Spain, where the *dossier de competencias* is a central element of the validation process, the completion of the TRACK training programme could be connected to the *dossier de competencias* as an indirect evidence of non-formal training enabling the acquisition of the skills to be evaluated. The skills dossier is a portfolio including a self-introduction, a CV, information about professional experience and training completed so far and a self-assessment.

Challenges in promoting and recognising the TRACK training

The following main challenges for promoting TRACK in the target group of informal caregivers exist:

- Lack of self-understanding as an informal caregiver
- Lack of awareness for the importance of training in the field of care for dementia patients
- Time constraints of informal caregivers of dementia patients
- Difficulties in using internet and e-learning applications
- Reservations with regard to learning (bad experience with learning, missing motivation)
- Informal caregivers of dementia patients are difficult to address, because they are seldom organised in networks, associations, self-help groups etc.

The TRACK project aims to overcome these challenges by offering a user-friendly blended learning that is tailored to the needs of the target group (innovative micro-learning, mentoring, overview of acquired skills etc.). TRACK also intends to improve the self-understanding and self-confidence of informal caregivers by offering a training that helps them in their daily life, improves their care skills and offers further perspectives for future vocational training and career in the field of care.

The following main challenges for achieving recognition of the TRACK training and certificate at national level exist:

- There exist only limited training offers for informal caregivers in some piloting countries and they are not regarded as an attractive target group for (vocational) education and training
- Some stakeholders, for example in Germany, are quite suspicious regarding the idea of offering informal caregivers the possibility to acquire a formal qualification in the field of care without passing the foreseen education and training pathway

- General reluctance of national education and training providers as well as companies in the field of care to implement and recognise training programmes and certificates of "foreign" providers
- The small scope of the TRACK training (overall 20 hours) corresponds to the need of informal caregivers and their limited time resources, but it does not suffice to position the TRACK certificate as a full qualification in the national education and training systems
- Comprehensive validation and recognition procedures are not available in all piloting countries: while in France and Spain validation procedures for experience-based and non-formal learning exist, but are often linked to complex and demanding procedures, validation procedures for non-formally and informally acquired competences are still under development in Germany and Austria and are not available so far for health and social care professions.
- There exist different competence profiles for care professions that deal with the care of dementia patients at national level; Most of the health and social care professions are regulated by national law, which means that the content of vocational education and training for these professions is also defined by law; in order to be recognised the TRACK training and certification has to fit with these regulated training offers
- Existing European transparency tools so far do not offer a good basis for comparison of the competence and qualification profiles of relevant care professions for informal caregivers

Despite the mentioned challenges there exist several possibilities to roll out the TRACK training and support recognition at national level.

Short term perspectives

The TRACK training will be offered free of charge in formats that are commonly used for distance learning (moodle; web export interface) to every organisation interested in implementing it. Thus, education and training providers and other institutions will be able to receive and implement the distance learning lessons in four language versions (English, German, French and Spanish) and will only have to "invest" the organisational and technical infrastructure and staff that is needed for training support and mentoring. Furthermore, the training platform will be available also after the end of the project for everybody interested in using it and having internet access and a personal computer.

By offering the TRACK training in this way, the distribution, use and recognition of the TRACK training by national VET providers, caregiver associations, self-help groups, public institutions and so on will be stimulated.

Empowerment and concrete support of informal caregivers for dementia patients in everyday life is one of the main aims of the TRACK training. In addition, informal carers will be supported by making the competences they acquired visible: the skills and competences acquired by passing the TRACK training are described as learning outcomes and can be easily compared with learning outcomes of other care professions. The feasibility study collected information on national care professions that could be good entry points into the labour market for informal caregivers and compared the learning outcomes of vocational

trainings for these professions with the learning outcomes of TRACK. The care professions that can be considered as most appropriate for the labour market entry of informal caregivers of dementia patients are *Assistant/e de vie* in France, *Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs. 3 SGB XI* in Germany and *Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio* and *Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales* in Spain. Overlaps between the learning outcomes of the TRACK programme and the learning outcomes of these care professions and the most relevant care profession profile in ESCO (European taxonomy of Skills, Competences, qualifications and Occupations) will be made transparent for informal caregivers. Furthermore, TRACK will offer information on skills audit tools at national level that can be used to document one's professional experience and will provide links to information on existing validation procedures.

Long term perspectives

In a long-term perspective connecting the TRACK training programme (and possible follow-up programmes for dementia care) to an NQF and therefore linking it to the EQF would be an important step. A future perspective could also be to create a more comprehensive international training programme for informal carers that covers, besides the core competences of the identified relevant care occupations in each piloting country, specific skills and competences for the care of dementia patients. The creation of such an international training programme could eventually be used to start partnerships with (other) big training providers. In this context, ESCO and the input of professional care organisations could be used to define a competence profile of informal carers (minimum requirements for a good quality of informal care) at European level. Furthermore, existing occupation descriptions of ESCO could be refined in a way that national care qualifications such as *assistant(e) de vi*e, *Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio, Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI* could be linked to this profile. The TRACK competences would partly overlap with all mentioned competence profiles.

If the TRACK training programme and certificate is further developed into the direction of an international qualification for (informal) carers, it will be worth thinking about a collaboration with the trade unions and Eurocadres, who defined the so-called professional card (at present available for a few professions only, among those general care nurses and physiotherapists), and to discuss options for developing a professional card for (informal) caregivers for the elderly.

The best option to implement the TRACK training and certificate at national level seems to be this link to already existing training and education offers in the field of care for dementia patients. In general, existing qualifications or professional standards and related further training and education programmes offer the possibility to recognise the TRACK training as a kind of preparation training. As mentioned in one of the expert workshop the TRACK

training could also be linked as a specialisation module or "add-on" to existing programmes e.g. for paramedics and similar professional groups dealing with dementia patients.

Another option for the rollout of the TRACK programme at European level could be to link TRACK to already existing European qualification offers, such as the European Care Certificate (ECC), where TRACK could play the role of an entry training based on which carers could – if they like – move on to the ECC in a next step. In case this cooperation is considered, it has to be clarified to what degree overlaps between the ECC and the TRACK competences exist and if the assessment approach of TRACK and the ECC are "compatible".

Conclusion

The TRACK project will help to

- Improve the quality of informal care by offering specific training for informal caregivers of dementia patients
- Support informal caregivers in their need for information and in their daily care routine by offering a training that is easy to use and to access and meets the requirements of the target group (blended learning approach, small learning units), hence contribute to releasing the stress and anxiety affecting some of them, and improving their quality of life
- Raise awareness about informal caregivers' contribution to care and about the competences they have acquired in this context by offering a certified training
- Document competences and skills acquired by informal carers (e.g. during the TRACK training by integrating an overview of the passed learning outcomes in the training)
- Raise informal carers' interest for (lifelong) learning by offering a training tailored to their needs
- Develop further education and career perspectives for informal caregivers by demonstrating existing overlaps between the TRACK competences and the competence profiles of certain care professions and related vocational education and training
- Offer new vocational training and career perspectives for informal carers by collaborating with providers who offer comprehensive trainings for informal carers and are willing to recognise the competences acquired during the TRACK training
- Raise self-confidence and self-awareness of informal caregivers by supporting a transfer of acquired TRACK competences to existing skills audit tools

It must be mentioned that the validation and recognition of non-formal education in the field of care is – despite many initiatives for more transferability and comparability at EU level – still extremely difficult. Some Member States still need to catch up with the implementation of the EC recommendations for validation and with the development of clear rules and procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

Furthermore, the need for training and the recognition of informal carers' skills should be paid more attention in order to ensure the quality of home care and the future contribution of informal carers to the health and social system. EU funding schemes will play an

important role in this context as they could support projects that trigger comparison of national conditions and developments. Structural funds should be dedicated to the training and recognition of informal carers' skills and competences and the systematic information exchange between informal caregivers and care professionals.

Cooperation in a large partnership that aims at the recognition and validation of (informal) carers' skills for dementia patients could help to bundle forces and to reach more effectiveness at European level. Such a partnership should include care professionals, informal caregivers, companies, VET providers, policy and decision makers, trade unions and other important stakeholders.

1. PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES

The main purposes of the TRACK (Training and recognition of informal Carers sKills) project is to provide a training programme that is tailored to the needs and requirements of informal caregivers of Alzheimer and Dementia patients. Informal carers receive training and information on the disease and how to deal with it. The TRACK training programme supports informal caregivers by improving their competences in care and self-care. This contributes to improving the quality of informal care and raises the awareness for the care competences acquired by informal caregivers. The description of learning outcomes and the TRACK certificate contribute to building a training pathway that can lead to further vocational training or can possibly help informal caregivers from disadvantaged backgrounds to (re)enter the labour market. Certification helps to make the skills and competences acquired by informal caregivers in the TRACK training (and in their daily life) visible and comparable with vocational training offers in the field of care and with the competence profile of existing care professions.

In a previous phase of the TRACK project, a study on informal caregiving and learning opportunities across the EU has been conducted (report available at the project website, under publications section[9]) and the training offer for informal caregivers has been constructed based on the input received by focus group discussions with the target groups. The TRACK training has been tested in the piloting countries and feedback from the target group has been collected.

The actual study aims to explore the added value of the certification process and to clarify how certification can informal caregivers in their career and further training perspectives. In this context, the study offers basic information on recognition and validation procedures in the participating countries (Austria, France, Germany and Spain). Good practice examples for the validation and certification of informal learning (e.g. in private life or work) and non-formal learning (e.g. in training offers of non-formal training providers) are presented and shortly analysed. Finally, a roadmap for certification is proposed based on the information collected from discussions and exchanges during the TRACK project and its valorisation activities, expert workshops and consultation, as well as desk research results.[10]

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[9] See: http://www.eurocarers.org/track/publications

[10] Information gathered through desk research were complemented with information acquired through dialogues with stakeholders and policy makers. In concrete, three expert workshops were organised in March 2017, where the project results and a first outline of the certification roadmap have been presented and discussed. A formal validation of the final version of the roadmap took place in the frame of the multiplier event E7, an international conference in Brussels, in June 2017.

The following main areas and basic questions, are covered by the study for each partner country and, where applicable, from a more general EU specific point of view:

- Legal framework: to what extent and how is recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning supported by law? Which regulations exist for care professions? Which care professions offer "entry points" into the labour market and which competence profiles do they have?
- Procedures and guidance: which procedures and/or guidance offers exist in the field of validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning? Are there official procedures or systematic approaches for recognising (care) competences that can be used by TRACK?
- Financial aspects: who covers the costs of validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning? Are there funding offers for individuals, companies, etc.?
- Stakeholders: who are the main actors involved in the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What role and responsibilities do they have and how are they related to each other? Which institutions could be potential partners?
- Quality assurance and evaluation: which quality assurance and evaluation procedures exist in the field of recognition and validation?
- Good practices: which examples of good practice for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal (care) competences exist at local, regional and national level?
- TRACK certification perspectives: which possibilities exist on the national level for the certification of competences acquired in the TRACK training programme and for the recognition of the TRACK certificate? Is it possible to link the TRACK certificate to existing recognition and validation procedures?
- Implementation scenarios: which professions and professional competence profiles in the field of caregiving could represent an "entry point" to the labour market? Which vocational training offers could be open for recognising the TRACK training and certificate as prior learning? How could the certificate be linked to existing skills audit tools and validation procedures?
- Recommendations: what are the most promising approaches for implementing the TRACK training and certificate at national level and how could the rollout look like?

Concretely, the study includes the following general information:

- Introduction to recognition of non-formal and informal learning (chapter 2)
- European perspective on recognition of non-formal and informal learning (chapter 3)
- European best practices and recommendations for TRACK (chapter 4)
- For each partner country: a country report providing an overview of existing procedures, relevant legal frameworks, important stakeholders in the field of validation, guidance and quality assurance aspects, national good practice examples for validation and recommendations for the rollout of the TRACK training (chapters 5-9)

- Draft of a TRACK profile of skills and competences for informal caregivers and references to the care profiles of existing care professions (chapter 10)
- Summary of the national reports and draft model for the rollout of TRACK (chapter 11)
- A glossary with definitions of core terms and concepts

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The objective of this report is to analyse national approaches to the validation of non-formal and informal learning and to define possible rollout and implementation scenarios for the TRACK training programme and certificate at a national level and regarding a broader European perspective. The report is based on literature review, the analysis of good practice examples and on the expertise of relevant stakeholders collected in expert interviews, workshops with stakeholders and during the final TRACK conference. It also aims to sketch out possible future career and vocational education pathways for TRACK-certified caregivers in the pilot countries. The proposed rollout scenarios and certification roadmap were evaluated in expert workshops by experts in the field of care, education and training, validation and policy making.

Desk research and expert interviews were conducted between May 2016 and January 2017 and included:

- Reviewing of relevant scientific literature and publications issued by the national authorities of the participating countries and of the institutions of the European Union, the OECD, CEDEFOP and other organisations involved in validation strategy development and analysis;
- Reviewing of the intellectual outputs of the project (e.g. IO1 study and TR5 report on focus group results);
- Searching of examples of good practices in validating or recognising competences at national and European level;

In order to gain a better understanding of existing validation procedures as well as implementation and dissemination possibilities for TRACK interviews were conducted with 8 national and 2 European experts from:

- ministries, national and regional authorities (Cristina Vázquez and Ángeles Santiago, Service of Certification and training offer adequacy, National Public Employment Service, Employment and Social Security Ministry; Trinidad Rubio, Department of Education, Diputación Provincial, Jaén; Brigitte Bouquet, CNCP France);
- awarding bodies (Camille Savre and David Gueret, IPERIA);
- education and training providers, universities and research institutions (Sandra Biewald, WBS Halle; Peter Dehnbostel, Deutsche Universität für Weiterbildung; Ottmar Döring, Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung, f-bb);
- European institutions and initiatives (Ernesto Garcìa Villalba, Cedefop; James Churchill, ECC project).

2. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

AN AGEING SOCIETY AND THE NEED FOR LONG-TERM CARE (LTC)

30 % of the population of the EU will be 65 or over by 2060 (ETUC, ICF 2014, 7). This increase in life expectancy is accompanied by an increase in the occurrence of chronic diseases that can limit the ability to handle some daily activities. The need for long-term care (LTC) is expected to grow in the future (EC 2013, 6).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) refers in a fact sheet from April 2016 to the fact that Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide. Although Dementia mainly affects older people, it is not a normal sign of ageing, but rather *"a syndrome in which there is deterioration in memory, thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday activities"*. The WHO emphasizes that 47.5 million people have Dementia and 7.7 million new cases are diagnosed every year. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of Dementia. It is estimated to contribute to 60-70 % of the cases. The WHO also points out that Dementia has a physical, psychological, social and economic impact on caregivers, families and society[12].

Based on OECD statistical data the number of long-term care recipients at home increased as well in many EU countries during the past years. For example, between 2013 and 2014 an increase of 9,82 % (from 67,212 to 73,811 cases) in Austria, of 4,15 % (from 1123,388 to 1170,030) in Germany and 29,46 % (from 372,319 to 482,007) in Spain could be observed.[13] For France there is no data available in the OECD long-term care statistics.

The need for long-term care is expected to keep growing in the future, not only because of the demographic changes in the analysed countries, but also because of social changes such as "the growing migration for employment, the increasing number of women in the workplace or the need for more than one wage earner in families and smaller family sizes" (UN 2016, 5).

Long-term and formal care is likely to increase with an expected reduction in the availability of informal carers, for example as a result of changing family structures (EC 2012, 3).

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[12] Source of information: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs362/en/ (2017-02-01)
[13] Source of information: OECD.Stat, Long-Term Care Ressources and Utilisation - http://stats.oecd.org//Index.aspx?QueryId=30140# (2017-02-01)

At present, many Member States of the European Union are already facing critical workforce shortages in certain health professions, medical specialisations or geographic areas. Difficulties to recruit and retain healthcare staff as well as a significant retirement bulge contribute to a drastically shrinking healthcare workforce in many EU Member States (ibid., 3f.).

> Without further measures to meet these challenges, the Commission estimates a potential shortfall of around 1 million healthcare workers by 2020 rising up to 2 million if long term care and ancillary professions are taken into account. This means around 15 % of total care will not be covered compared to 2010 (ibid., 5).

FORMAL AND INFORMAL CARE, CARERS AND PERSONAL CARE WORKERS

At present, European countries tend to organise their long-term care systems in very different ways, one of the most important differences being the role of the state in funding and organising long-term care versus individual responsibilities (Eurocarers 2015, 11).

Care services are categorised as being informal or formal: **formal care** includes institutional care and home care often provided in the form of assisted living, while **informal or family care** is defined as

> any care service that is not paid (despite the fact that a care allowance could be paid to the caregiver) and it is provided by a person having a family or social tie with the person cared for (ETUC, ICF 2014, 16).

As approximately 80 % of people requiring long-term care receive care from their spouses, relatives and friends, the number of informal carers is estimated to be at least twice as large as the formal care workforce. Thus, carers represent "an indispensable part of the provision, organisation and sustainability of health and social care systems" (Eurocarers 2016, 9).

Ferrer defines informal carers as persons of all ages who provide care (usually unpaid) to someone with a chronic illness, disability or other long-lasting health or care need, outside of a professional or formal employment framework (ibid.). On the side of formal caring, it should be mentioned that there are differences among European Member States regarding the definition of "care workers". This is due to the fact that usually health care related tasks or care provided in institutional care are carried out by professional nurses, while the majority of home care or social subsistence tasks are carried out by personal care workers. The definitions and the training requirements for personal care workers vary significantly throughout the various European countries (ETUC, ICF 2014, 21).

DIFFERENCES IN TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR (FORMAL) CARE WORKERS AND INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

While in some Member States specific care professions are legally regulated and a minimum number of years of training is required for working as a formal personal care worker, other countries have no such regulations or minimum requirements for training. In many countries, personal care workers lack specific training in care of the elderly (ETUC, ICF 2014, 21).

As specific education and training offers for informal caregivers are rare, the WHO and the European Commission stress the importance of supporting informal carers particularly with training offers to ensure the sustainability of (informal) carers' contribution to the health and social care system (Eurocarers 2016, 9).

At present, the policies for supporting informal carers are very unevenly implemented across European Member States: in some countries, effective support systems for informal carers can be found, others are at an early stage of development and only beginning to give this issue attention (ibid., 13).

While formal carers often must cope with a broad range of difficulties, such as physical and psychological stress, informal caregivers face additional challenges, for example the difficulty to be recognised as a distinct group with distinct needs. Informal carers are also quite often confronted with a lack of financial support and missing flexible working arrangements (ibid., 15f.). Furthermore, the competences and skills of informal carers (health related as well as transversal skills) are often not recognised by the public. Training offers for informal carers can contribute to increase the visibility of their competences and skills, their self-esteem and the recognition of the importance of their work. It can also help to develop an additional education and career perspective and for example show possibilities for informal carers to (re)enter the labour market in the future.

Informal carers who combine their caring responsibilities for a relative with employment face additional challenges:

> *These are primarily practical (the ability to negotiate enough flexibility to combine work and caring tasks), financial (mainly resulting from many carers' being required to reduce working hours or having to leave the labour market entirely), organisational (having to spend time to co-ordinate between service providers) physical and emotional. Beyond this there is also a wider gender impact, cementing even further the unequal gender distribution of caring roles in society and resulting employment and pay and pension gaps (ETUC, ICF 2014, 37).*

Moreover, it can be extremely difficult for carers who have left the labour market to fulfil a caring role to negotiate their re-entry into the labour market, especially if the period of care was an extended one and they live in regions with generally difficult labour market situations. For them, feelings of social isolation and financial, physical and emotional pressures can be even more challenging than for officially working carers (ibid.).

DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT DEGREES OF VALIDATION SYSTEMS

European countries have developed their validation and recognition systems at different levels. Three types of development levels can be found:

- High degree of conversion (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the UK): in these countries, it is possible to determine and validate learning outcomes of individuals systematically; a general strategy for validation has been implemented and acceptance of validation as a tool for supporting lifelong learning is very high. In most of these countries there are appropriate legal structures.
- Medium degree of development (Germany, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Poland, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Hungary): these countries are beginning to implement procedures through piloting projects. The acceptance of validation may vary from sector to sector. There is still no comprehensive legal structure for validation.
- Low activation level (Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, Turkey and Cyprus): these countries often describe validation as a new issue; validation plays no or almost no role in education, training or employment (Reiter, Weber 2015, 35).

SUPPORTING INFORMAL CARERS – THE TRACK ONLINE TRAINING

The care sector is regarded as a promising and continuously expanding sector for employment. As several European countries face or will face shortages of semi-qualified and highly-qualified care professionals in the future (ibid.), it would seem natural to support the re-integration of informal carers into the labour market by recognising the skills and competences they acquired in caring for their relatives. However, measures taken by governments, social partners and individual employers that focus specifically on the recognition of the competences of informal carers are rare (ETUC, ICF 2014, 37).

The TRACK project aims to:

- Design and implement a learning pathway for informal carers dealing with people diagnosed with Dementia to support informal carers in their daily responsibilities, improve their well-being through reducing their level of stress, and help them to implement an active lifestyle for the care receiver;

- Support carers in reconciling their personal life and their mission as carers and in actively connecting with formal carers and other informal carers during the training;
- Empower informal carers by documenting the competences and skills they acquired during the TRACK training (TRACK certificate and description of learning outcomes);
- Facilitate the inclusion of informal carers in the labour market through the provision of information on validation, vocational education and training and potential "entry professions" to the labour market (present feasibility study and TRACK website);
- Encourage the European rollout of the TRACK training for Dementia patients and the establishment of a European training offer that ensures the support of informal carers, the awareness for their work and the quality of informal care and possibly contributes to the recognition of informally acquired care competences.

While the duration of a training programme is used quite often as criteria whether a person can work as a formal personal caregiver or not, the TRACK projects aims to put the focus more on the quality and the skills and competences required to fulfil the tasks of an informal caregiver for Alzheimer and Dementia patients. However, the limited scale of the project allowed only for the development and implementation of a relatively short training based on the evaluation of needs, as well the present feasibility study. Though, based on some TRACK outcomes, a series of potential developments in the future can be suggested. For example, the so far defined competences most needed by informal caregivers of Dementia patients could be complemented and refined by others to define a kind of minimum set of competences required to improve the daily life of informal carers of Dementia patients. The definition of these additional competences could be based on needs expressed by informal carers themselves, as well as on input from professionals and on existing curricula for (vocational) training in the field. According to the EFN position paper on Dementia care, nurses are in the best position to ensure a transfer of professional care knowledge in conjunction with informal carers' and care receivers' needs (EFN 2015, 1).

As emphasized in the EU Stakeholder Joint Paper on Dementia, coordination and collaboration between all relevant health, social care, professional and policy actors is needed to tackle the Dementia challenge at European level. According to the paper, there is an urgent need in

> *development and deployment of Dementia strategies and policies at EU and local level, making best use of the collective knowledge and experience of the professions from timely better diagnosis to caring for people with Dementia, their relatives and carers* (EFN 2016, 6f).

Above all, financial support for the education and training of involved stakeholders and the providence of "*enough, qualitative, client-centered, affordable and integrated care at home or in the community*" is required (ibid.).

3. EU POLICY BACKGROUND FOR VALIDATION AND THE RECOGNITION OF SKILLS

EU POLICY OBJECTIVES AND INSTRUMENTS

The European Union aims to maintain and further develop the competitiveness of its knowledge-ba sed economy by improving the competences and skills of European citizens. In this context, lifelong learning and a more output-, outcome- and skill-oriented approach to education and training, as well as increasing the mobility of learners and workers, have gained importance in the EU. These measures are expected to reduce unemployment and social exclusion. Based on the assumption that economic growth and prosperity will increasingly depend on the ability to capitalise on the skills and experience of the European labour force, several policy instruments have been developed. These instruments focus on improving the transferability and comparability of qualifications within Europe, and on facilitating skills and competence orientation in labour market and education contexts. While the comparability and transferability of occupational profiles and qualifications represents an important focus of the EU policy measures, lifelong learning and the recognition of informal and non-formal learning provides another one.

The TRACK project can benefit directly from the EU support for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning which resulted in the implementation of official recognition procedures in many EU Member States. This process is still ongoing for example in Austria and Germany. The TRACK certificate refers to non-formal learning that is in the recognition process made comparable to formal training. The comparability and transferability of occupational profiles and qualifications is important for TRACK as the comparability of the TRACK certificate with other education and training offers supports the recognition of the TRACK certificate as part of already existing vocational education and training offers for specific care professions.

EU INITIATIVES SUPPORTING COMPARABILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY

EQF AND QF-EHEA

At the European level, the development of qualifications frameworks began with the **Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)** 1999 (Bologna Declaration; the Dublin descriptors were adopted in 2005).
This was followed by the development of the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which began in 2005. The EQF provides a common European reference and translation tool

to facilitate the comparison of qualifications issued all over Europe. It consists of eight levels that are defined according to learning outcomes. The descriptors through which learning outcomes are defined are knowledge, skills, and competences. Thus, the EQF also supports the comparison and assessment of the level of knowledge, skills, and competences that a qualification holder has acquired. It is anticipated that eventually all qualifications awarded in Europe will be referenced in the EQF:

> ... the EQF is a framework for frameworks and/or systems and it can therefore be defined as a 'Meta-framework'. /.../ This meta-framework will enable qualifications systems with their implicit levels or/and national and sectoral qualifications frameworks to relate to each other. In the process of implementing the EQF it is intended that each country will reference its national qualifications (in terms of diplomas, certificates, or awards) to the eight EQF levels via national qualifications frameworks or the implicit levels in the national qualifications systems. /.../ In the long run, all qualifications awarded in Europe should have a reference to the EQF (EQF Series 2008, 4).

There are clear similarities and areas of overlap between the QF-EHEA and EQF meta-frameworks. Differences, however, can be observed regarding their general aims and the descriptors used. While the QF-EHEA intends to harmonise systems by introducing common degree structures (three-cycle degree system), the EQF aims to relate systems to each other and function as a type of translation device to clarify the relationships between qualifications and different systems.

The EQF asserts compatibility with the QF-EHEA and there is a clear cross-referencing at levels 5 to 8 (at higher levels the EQF learning outcomes directly draw on EHEA cycle descriptors):

Thus, the QF-EHEA's respective cycle descriptors – developed by the Joint Quality Initiative as part of the Bologna process – are understood to be compatible with the descriptors for levels 5 to 8 of the EQF. Although different descriptors are used, both frameworks have a common view of the dimensions of progression regarding knowledge, skills (application) and professional conduct (European Commission 2008, 9).

However, since the EQF is an overarching framework and seeks to not only include learning in higher education but also professionally oriented qualifications, the descriptors are broader, more generic, and more encompassing than the Dublin descriptors[14]. EQF levels 5 to 8 are compatible not only with degree qualifications acquired formally through study in a higher education institution, but also with vocational qualifications awarded through formal, non-formal, or informal learning. Nonetheless, although the descriptors that define levels in the EQF and the Dublin descriptors differ to a certain extent, the EQF level

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14 In the QF-EHEA, learning outcomes are understood as descriptions of what a learner is expected to know, to understand, and able to do at the end of the respective cycle. The Dublin descriptors refer to the following five dimensions: 'knowledge and understanding', 'applying knowledge and understanding', 'making judgements', 'communication' and 'learning skills'. Whereas the first three dimensions are mainly covered by the knowledge and skills dimensions in the EQF, the EQF does not explicitly refer to key competences such as communication, or meta-competences, such as learning to learn (European Commission 2008, 10).

descriptors fully integrate the Bologna descriptors and they are thus compatible with one another (European Commission 2008, 9f).

NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS (NQF)

Many European Member States have already referenced the levels of their national qualifications to the eight common EQF reference levels, or are currently in the process of doing so[15]. **National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs)** classify qualifications according to a set of levels based on learning outcomes. These levels reflect what the holder of a certificate or diploma is expected to know, understand, and able to do. Different European nations adopt different approaches to NQFs and some countries have operated fully developed frameworks for many years. Others are currently in the process of developing NQFs, and a minority of European countries have yet to begin development of their own NQFs. In general, NQFs developed after 2005 reflect principles and concepts introduced by the EQF and share common features such as:

- *being designed as comprehensive frameworks for lifelong learning, covering all levels and types of qualifications;*
- *proposing or adopting an eight levels structure. Exceptions among post-2005 frameworks include those of Norway and Iceland, whose NQFs have seven levels (…);*
- *adopting learning outcomes-based descriptors reflecting the three tiers in the EQF that distinguish between knowledge, skills, and competences (Cedefop 2012a, 2).*

There are three main models for the operation of a comprehensive NQF. Each offers different solutions to facilitating the comparability of qualifications found in the vocational and academic spheres of the national education and training system:

In the first model, NQFs have comprehensive and coherent level descriptors spanning all levels of education and training. As descriptors refer to levels and learning outcomes, similarities and differences between, for example, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) qualifications are more easily visible. NQFs in Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Scotland, Ireland, Estonia, Slovenia and Lithuania take this approach. In the second model, used in countries such as Denmark and Bulgaria, NQFs distinguish between levels 1-5 and 6-8, restricting the higher levels for qualifications awarded by HE institutions (under the Bologna process (3)). In the third model, used in Austria for example, NQFs divide levels 6-8 into two parallel strands. One strand covers qualifications awarded by HE institutions (Bologna process,) and the other addresses professionally or vocationally-oriented qualifications awarded outside HE institutions (Cedefop 2012a, 3).

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15 For more details see Cedefop (2012a) and national referencing reports at:
https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/documentation (2016-12-06).

ESCO, EUROPEAN TAXONOMY OF SKILLS, COMPETENCES, QUALIFICATIONS & OCCUPATIONS

ESCO, the Taxonomy of Skills, Competences, qualifications and Occupations is a multilingual taxonomy and part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The Commission launched the project in 2010 with an open stakeholder consultation. DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and DG Education and Culture – supported by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) – jointly coordinate the development of ESCO. Stakeholders are closely involved in the development and dissemination of ESCO.

ESCO is based on the EURES classification of occupations, skills, and competences which is currently utilised in the European Job Mobility Portal. ESCO's occupational structure is based on ISCO, the International Standard Classification of Occupations. By providing a tool for identifying, sorting, connecting, and applying relevant terms in all EU languages, ESCO is expected to facilitate dialogue between the labour market and the education and training sector, and between different national (terminological) systems. This in turn will encourage greater regional mobility.

The version 0 of the ESCO taxonomy was first published in October 2013. Several smaller updates of version 0 were anticipated for 2015 and 2017[17] and the publication of the present ESCO version 1.0 took place in July 2017[18]. The content of ESCO changed substantially between version 0 and version 1, as sector reference groups have undertaken a re-development of the whole taxonomy under the guidance of the ESCO maintenance committee. In an additional online consultation process with external experts feedback on the developed content has been collected[19]. ESCO aims to offer a terminological reference tool for the description of occupational profiles and qualifications in which skills and competences represent a common descriptor.

It is foreseen that ESCO v1.0 displays not only information on national qualifications, but also private, sectoral and **international qualifications**. The implementation of the latter is still in a testing phase.[20] There are two approaches for inclusion of qualifications into ESCO:
- *Indirect inclusion:* Member state's national qualification databases will provide input and qualification data for ESCO
- *Direct inclusion:* It is foreseen to include international and sector qualifications directly based on a defined set of descriptors and metadata information (Linked Open data will be used as enabling technology).[21]

International qualifications feed into the development and implementation of both the ESCO and EQF initiatives. As some NQFs take international qualifications into account,

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[17] ESCO website: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/ESCO_v0.1 (2017-07-30)

[18] ESCO website: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/occupation (2017-07-29)

[19] ESCO website: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/ESCO_v1 (2017-07-29)

[20] ESCO website: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/news/9d091acc-3a66-4dcb-a500-293a9040a217 (2017-07-29)

[21] ESCO website: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Qualifications_pillar (2017-07-30)

while others do not, there is currently no homogenous approach for referencing these qualifications to the EQF. It will still take some time to define referencing processes for this kind of qualifications. It is foreseen that ESCO information on qualifications will also include information on how awards influence the right to access and practice an occupation.[22]

Currently (July 2017) only 672 Greek qualification descriptions have been implemented for test purposes[23], so that it is unclear how the information provided for international qualification will look like in ESCO in the future. Anyway, ESCO should be kept in mind as a possible future distribution platform for international and sectoral qualifications.

In the context of the TRACK project and the present feasibility study a few occupational profiles in the field of care described in ESCO v1.0 have been analysed and the competence profile *home care aide* has been identified as the most appropriate occupational profile for informal caregivers and regarding the TRACK training programme. Thus, the competences described for *home care aide* in ESCO v1.0 have been compared with the learning outcomes and skills and competences of the TRACK training. There exist overlapping skills and competences, but the occupational profile for *home care aide[24]* is much broader and covers a lot of housekeeping skills that are not included in TRACK. On the other hand, TRACK covers self-care and self-reflection competences which are not taken into account in the *home care aide* profile. The occupational profile for *home care aide* refers however to several professions at national level which cover similar tasks and competence profiles and also overlap with the TRACK competence profile. These overlaps refer to the possibility of recognising the TRACK training and certificate in vocational education and training offers for these occupations.

EUROPEAN TRANSPARENCY DOCUMENTS

European transparency instruments support the documentation and validation of individual skills and qualifications acquired in work or education and training contexts.

Europass offers a set of five standardised documents and a skills passport available for free in 26 languages, designed to enable users to present their skills, qualifications and experience in a common description format that is used across Europe:
- **Europass CV:** a document to present the skills and qualifications of an individual (online: http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae)
- **European Skills Passport[25]** covering:

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[22] Source of information: ESCO website https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/escopedia/Qualifications_pillar (2017-07-29)

[23] Source of information: ESCO website https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/qualification (2017-07-29)

[24] See: ESCO website, occupational profile for *home care aide* https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/occupation?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fdata.europa.eu%2Fesco%2Foccupation%2F1391bdf 9-bd61-4fb5-91ca-c29036ab2b60&conceptLanguage=en&full=true (2017-07-29)

[25] Source of information: Europass website http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu (2017-06-17)

- ✓ Language passport, a self-assessment tool for skills and qualifications
- ✓ Europass Mobility, a record of skills acquired during learning experience in a European country
- ✓ Certificate Supplements, a description of skills acquired by holders of vocational training certificates
- ✓ Diploma Supplements, a description of skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees

Besides, the European Commission fosters the recognition of non-formal learning with the **European Youthpass**, a tool to document and recognise learning outcomes acquired in the context of youth work and project activities. The Youthpass is available for projects funded by Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014-2020) and Youth in Action (2007-2013) programmes.[26]

It contributes to strengthening the social recognition of youth work by offering a Europe-wide validation instrument for non-formal learning in the youth field. While creating their Youthpass Certificate together with a support person, the participants of the projects have the possibility to describe their activities and tasks and which competences they have acquired. Thus, the instrument supports as well the reflection upon the personal non-formal learning process.

Furthermore, Youthpass aims at supporting the employability of young people and of youth workers by documenting the acquisition of key competences on a certificate.[27]

EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEMS

The **European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)** and **European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)** are existing instruments for quantifying learning performance. ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) is used to denote learning performances by individuals and is well established in higher education. ECTS expresses the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. Students can transfer their ECTS credits from one university to another so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training. ECTS is a central tool in the Bologna Process, which aims to make national higher education systems more compatible.[28]

ECVET (European credit transfer system for vocational education and training) is used in vocational education and training to quantify an educational offer, a qualification, or a certificate to facilitate international comparability. ECVET is a framework for transfer, recognition and accumulation of an individual's learning outcomes aiming at achieving a

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[26] Source of information: https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/about/ (2017-06-17)
[27] For more details see: https://www.youthpass.eu/en/youthpass/about/ (2017-06-17)
[28] For more details see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/ects_en.htm (2017-06-19)

qualification through documentation of competences. It can be used in mobility projects where learners are to achieve learning outcomes abroad, and get them documented, assessed, validated and recognised in the home country as a part of a qualification. ECVET aims at providing greater comparability between the various vocational education and training (VET) systems across Europe, and therefore simplifies accumulation of learning outcomes acquired in a different country and get them recognised as a part of a qualification acquired in one's home country.[29]

EU APPROACH TO NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

The **Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning** (2012) foresees that by 2018 EU Member States shall – in accordance with national circumstances and specificities, and as they deem appropriate – have in place arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to:

- *have knowledge, skills and competences which have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, including, where applicable, through open educational resources;*
- *obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification, on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences, without prejudice to other applicable Union law (...)*
(Council Recommendation 2012, 3)

This provides the opportunity to all citizens to have their knowledge, skills and competences validated, irrespective of the contexts where their learning took place.

The Recommendation underlines that whilst considering as well national, regional, local and sector needs and characteristics, the following principles in arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning shall be taken into consideration:

- *the validation arrangements are linked to national qualifications frameworks and are in line with the European Qualifications Framework;*
- *information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as on the relevant procedures, are available to individuals and organisations;*
- *disadvantaged groups, including individuals who are unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, are particularly likely to benefit from the validation arrangements, since validation can increase their participation in lifelong learning and their access to the labour market;*
- *individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment have the opportunity, in accordance with national legislation and specificities, to undergo a 'skills audit' aimed*

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[29] For more information on ECVET have a look at http://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu (2017-06-19)

at identifying their knowledge, skills and competences within a reasonable period of time, ideally within six months of an identified need;

- *the validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by appropriate guidance and counselling and is readily accessible;*

- *transparent quality assurance measures in line with existing quality assurance frameworks are in place that support reliable, valid and credible assessment methodologies and tools;*

- *provision is made for the development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process across all relevant sectors;*

- *qualifications or, where applicable, parts of qualifications obtained by means of the validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences comply with agreed standards that are either the same as, or equivalent to, the standards for qualifications obtained through formal education programmes;*
(Council Recommendation 2012, 3f)[30]

The Council also recommends to promote "coordination on validation arrangements between stakeholders in the education, training, employment and youth sectors, as well as between those in other relevant policy areas" (Council Recommendation 2012, 4). Furthermore, all relevant stakeholders, such as employers, national entities involved in the process of recognition of professional qualifications, employment services, youth organisations, education and training providers, and civil society organisations should be involved. The Council recommends to foster participation in the process as follows:

- *employers, youth organisations and civil society organisations should promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired at work or in voluntary activities, using relevant Union transparency tools such as those developed under the Europass framework and Youthpass;*

- *education and training providers should facilitate access to formal education and training on the basis of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings and, if appropriate and possible, award exemptions and/or credits for relevant learning outcomes acquired in such settings;* (Council Recommendation 2012, 4)

The Council's Recommendation underlines the need for appropriate tools and instruments for validation of non-formal and informal learning and refers in this context to the European transparency tools (e.g. Europass framework documents or Youthpass) and the need to "assure that synergies exist between validation arrangements and credit systems applicable in formal education and training system, such as ECTS and ECVET" (Council Recommendation 2012, 3f).

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[30] Martens points out that the Council recommendations place far too much emphasis on the formal, school and vocational training system. He argues that a return to the formal system appears to be the wrong approach regarding the fact that only part of the competences acquired in the traditional school and vocational training system are later used in the workplace (Martens 2012, 23).

The Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning address on one hand national authorities in charge of the development of validation procedures and quality criteria, on the other hand, relevant stakeholders such as Higher Education institutions, training providers, certifying bodies and other organisations concerned with the validation of non-formal and informal learning which are often requested to recognise prior formal, non-formal or informal learning. Since the TRACK training represents a non-formal learning offer, one possibility of a rollout of the TRACK certificate is to be recognised as prior learning in the context of relevant vocational education and training offers by national VET providers. A second option is that the TRACK certificate together with the work experience of an informal carer can be used to apply for official validation of the professional competences of a specific care profession. Therefore, the TRACK certification process should take into consideration the existing validation guidelines for non-formal and informal learning.

Cedefop underlines in the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning the importance of differentiating the purpose of validation and the different phases of validation: identification, documentation, assessment and certification. The phases of validation are mixed and balanced in different ways, reflecting the specific purpose of a validation arrangement (European Union; Cedefop 2015b, 15).

Guidance and information must be available for all interested persons prior to the validation process. Candidates must be supported in taking decisions based on reliable and unprejudiced information on processes, different forms of evidence, costs and requirements. Competent staff is required to offer guidance and information (ibid.).

Links to national qualification systems and frameworks

Cedefop predicts a growing trend in regulating and accepting international and sector specific qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training sector for the future and refers to the intention of many EU Member States to support the linking of qualifications offered by private and non-formal bodies to their National Qualification Frameworks (Cedefop 2013, 3).

As National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) of Member States are linked to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) the referencing of an international, sector or company specific qualification to National Qualification Frameworks provides a possibility to link the qualification indirectly to the EQF. However, many Member States have still not defined concretely, how qualifications of private and non-formal bodies can be linked to their NQF and there might also emerge problems if one Member State references the same international qualifications to another EQF level than another Member State.

While the Council Recommendation stresses the importance of linking validation arrangements to national qualifications systems and frameworks and the EQF, Cedefop emphasizes that national qualification frameworks may support the introduction and integration of validation (Cedefop 2015a, 29). In practice, the situation in the Member States is quite different, especially regarding validation: Some countries, like Spain or France, have already established a comprehensive system and gained experience in validating non-formal and informal learning; other countries, like Austria, have little experience – especially when it comes to validating and recognising informal learning – and are still in a developing stage. Germany also has little experience and is still discussing different approaches in developing a comprehensive system.[31]

Standards and learning outcomes

Cedefop highlights the necessity to implement learning outcome based quality assurance systems for ensuring trust in qualifications. **Learning outcomes** are defined as „what a learner knows, understands and is able to do at the end of a learning process". Learning outcomes (LO) gained importance in the context of European education and training policy and especially regarding qualification descriptions, since they support a better understanding and transferability of qualifications, active learning and more responsibility of qualification providers. Therefore, it is crucial to define and describe learning outcomes carefully (for example: appropriate level of detail, balance between generic and specific skills, extent to which descriptors of qualifications frameworks can be assessed) and to systematically monitor and improve their use. The systematic quality assurance of learning outcomes shall for example include the elaboration of descriptors of qualifications frameworks, the setting of qualification standards, writing of curricula and agreement on assessment standards (Cedefop 2013, 2).

Cedefop emphasizes the challenge of formulating learning outcomes: too narrow formulations may lead to loss of important facets of the individual learning experience, too general formulations may cause a loss of orientation in assessment and result in lack of consistency and reliability. Furthermore, it is important to keep the balance between job/task-specific and transversal skills and competences. It is most important to foresee continuous review and improvement of the defined standards based on experience gained from validation (Cedefop 2015a, 30).

Furthermore, Cedefop emphasizes the importance of **providing a clear reference point for assessment** and using agreed and approved standards especially regarding assessment and certification (Cedefop 2015a, 29).

Standards generally relate to two main categories of standard (although not separate entities in all countries), which operate according to different logics:

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[31] For more details see: Anerkennung informellen und non-formalen Lernens in Deutschland. Ergebnisse aus dem BIBB-Expertenmonitor Berufliche Bildung 2015 (BIBB 2016).

- *Occupational standards:* following the logic of employment, these standards focus on what people need to do, how they do it, and how well they do it in an occupational context. They exist in all European countries but each nation has its own style of derivation and presentation. Occupational standards form a bridge between the labour market and education because educational standards (syllabuses and pedagogies) can be developed from them;
- *Education/training standards:* following the logic of education and training, these standards focus on what people need to learn, how they learn it, and how the quality and content of learning are assessed. Traditionally these standards have been formulated in terms of input (subject, syllabus, teaching methods, process and assessment) but the ongoing shift to learning outcomes in most European countries means that educational standards increasingly apply principles typically found in occupational standards.

(Cedefop 2015a, 30)

In general learning-outcomes-based standards are considered to benefit validation, since output orientation rather than input orientation allows for focussing on what a learner knows, understands and is able to do, taking into account individual variations in learning careers and the possibility that the same outcome can be reached in various ways (ibid).

Note: For the TRACK training programme learning outcomes have been defined that serve as background for the assessment of the skills and competences acquired by passing the TRACK training. These learning outcomes were reviewed by external and internal experts who emphasised the importance of an unambiguous formulation of the learning outcomes to keep the TRACK learning outcomes comparable with the learning outcomes of other vocational education and training offers. It is foreseen to further refine and improve the TRACK learning outcomes in the future.

The phases of validation

Identification

Cedefop refers to the „considerable methodological challenge" of identifying knowledge, skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning and underlines the requirement to use methods and approaches that are „open to the unexpected" and avoid a narrowing down of the range of knowledge, skills and competences taken into account (ibid.).

Quite often online self-assessment tools are used to support the identification of knowledge, skills and competences acquired by an individual. In this context Cedefop underlines the necessity for active involvement of advisers and counsellors „able to enter into a dialogue with the candidate and direct him/her to appropriate options and tools". The advantage of ICT-based tools is that they reach more people and are often cheaper to use, their disadvantage is their potential failure in identifying the specific combination of

knowledge, skills and competences an individual has acquired. Cedefop refers to the fact that interviews can be costlier but might be of greater value to the candidate (ibid.).

Note: TRACK will support the identification of acquired skills and competences by providing an overview of learning outcomes covered by the TRACK training. The learning outcomes will be tagged with key words of skills and competences that can be compared with occupational competence profiles.

Documentation

Documentation involves provision of evidence of the learning outcomes acquired which can be done for example by creating a „portfolio" including a CV with career history information, documents and/or work samples.

As different validation providers at local, regional, sectoral, national and European level use different documentation formats, the skills and competences candidates present are normally not comparable and/or transferable. The use of common formats for the presentation of learning experiences and especially the use of Europass transparency documents such as the CV, skills and language passport, Certificate and Diploma Supplements promote better understanding of the documented learning outcomes. The use of learning outcomes supports as well overall transparency and comparability as it promotes a common way of expressing knowledge, skills and competences across different economic sectors and education and training qualifications (ibid.).

Note: The TRACK training will offer an overview of the acquired skills and competences.

Assessment

The standard used as reference point for assessment is of the highest importance to ensure validity, reliability, credibility and fairness of the assessment process. Even if many of the methods used for assessing non-formal and informal learning are based on, or similar to, methods used in formal education these methods have to put a greater emphasis on the specific experience and learning outcomes of an individual and the context in which it took place. Therefore, the assessment of non-formal and informal learning may require more than one tool and needs to apply practical demonstrations, simulations or gathering of evidence from past practices (ibid.).

Note: The TRACK training will offer a comparison of the acquired learning outcomes and skills/competence keywords with competence profiles of relevant care professions or learning outcomes of related trainings.

Certification

The European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning define certification as the final valuing of the learning identified, documented and assessed which

is commonly the award of a formal qualification or partial qualification (in economic sectors also issuing licences which allow individuals to carry out specific tasks). Cedefop emphasizes

> *Whatever the case, validation reaching the stage of certification requires a summative assessment officially confirming the achievement of learning outcomes against a specified standard. It is crucial that this process is managed by a credible authority or organisation. The value – or the currency – of a certificate or qualification acquired through validation largely depends on the legitimacy of the awarding body or authority. The use of summative approaches (...) for validating non-formal and informal learning needs to be strongly linked – preferably integrated – into national qualifications systems (Cedefop 2015a, 18).*

Cedefop refers to the requirement that validation tools should be as clear, precise, unambiguous and non-judgemental as possible (Cedefop 2015a, 46).

Note: TRACK will offer a certificate for the training and refer to possibilities for further (vocational) education and training. It will support the recognition of the TRACK certificate by cooperation with other training providers that offer relevant training.

Practitioners involved with validation

Cedefop refers to evidence from the 2014 inventory showing that assessor's qualifications and experience are a key element in the quality assurance of validation. Assessors shall receive training and the possibility to network in order to ensure professional development and coherent practices in validation (Cedefop 2015a, 33f).

Note: The TRACK training is based on profound pedagogical concepts and experiences. Distance learning sessions assure a common approach to testing and the assessment. However, as the training programme is used in different countries, it must be guaranteed that face-to-face sessions and training support follow common guidelines and standards.

Another important player in the field of validating and recognising formal, non-formal and informal learning is the **awarding body**. Traditionally, awarding bodies for qualifications have been educational institutions, such as universities, or public authorities, such as ministries. But in the past years more and more private multinational companies, sector bodies and international organisations award their own company- or sector-specific qualifications. Therefore, national and international quality assurance arrangements and the possibility to link such qualifications to National Qualifications Frameworks have been developed in several European Member States (Cedefop 2013, 3).

Note: The TRACK project can take advantage of having a project coordinator that is an awarding body concerned with validation in the field of specific care professions. Their experience will be used to sketch out a pathway from the TRACK training and certificate to the validation of professional competences.

4. EUROPEAN GOOD PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRACK

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR VALIDATION IN THE FIELD OF (INFORMAL) CAREGIVING

CARER+
http://carerplus.eu/

A project partially funded under the ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) as part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme by the European Community has been launched by an interdisciplinary and international team of institutions in 2012. The partnership included partners from Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Latvia, Romania, the UK and the European Distance Education Network. It identifies and enhances ICT competences of care-workers who support older persons at home and puts an emphasis on anticipating a new and vital role for care workers. New, easy-to-use internet-based technology tools for older people, a competence framework, curriculum and training tools in theory and practice, training for trainers, an open online learning space and community for care-workers have been put in place in the context of this project.[32]

The domiciliary care-workers are understood as key mediators between technology and every-day life of elderly people in this project. CARER+ created a list of ICT knowledge and skill-based competences for domiciliary care workers with related certification process for digital competences of care-workers. Based on this framework and non-formal hard and soft skills, special learning environment and resources have been put in place and disseminated. The CARER+ framework and methodology has been piloted in five countries with 500 care-workers. Following the lessons learned during the pilot phase, a complete set of guidelines has been developed to ensure transferability for all areas of the field.[33]

Based on the carer+ experience IPERIA has implemented 21 hours for digital competences in the education and training for the assistant de vie, which had not been part of the training before. IPERIA is planning to take as well into account the results of the TRACK project in their existing training offers.

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[32] Source: Carer+ website: http://www.carerplus.eu/content/european-project-carer-launched-develop-care-workers-digital-competences (2016-09-17)
[33] Source: Carer+ website: http://www.carerplus.eu/content/european-project-carer-launched-develop-care-workers-digital-competences (2016-09-17)

ECC – EUROPEAN CARE CERTIFICATE

The European Care Certificate (ECC) was developed as a basic entry certificate in the care sector as part of a Leonardo da Vinci project funded by the European Commission (end of the project: 2008). In two follow-up Leonardo projects (ending in 2011 and 2014) more Member States were included and an ECC training programme for workers ("Best Practice in Social Care") as well as a course to 'train the trainers' to deliver the new training based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities ("Doing Things Right in Social Care") were produced.[34]

The Certificate is awarded by the lead partner organisation in the different European countries after passing an exam. It records the personal details and the date the ECC exam has been passed. The ECC provides employers with evidence that the holder of the certificate has demonstrated that she or he understands the basic knowledge required to work safely in the care sector.

The name of the certificate holder is recorded as well on a central database of people holding the ECC and employers can check this if they wish.[35] The ECC is based on learning outcomes called BESCLO[36] and it tests knowledge in order to award the certificate. The partnership clearly decided to only test knowledge as they think it is easier to assess across different countries, compared to competences and skills, and can be tested via a standardised test – online or paper and pencil.

Given the difficulty to reach reliable validation, the ECC therefore only validates knowledge but not competency. At present the ECC is recognized at level 3 of the UK NQF and is set up in 20 European countries among which are all TRACK piloting countries except Spain.[37]

The ECC is well accepted by the employers in specific countries such as Austria, where the ECC, recognised in Hungary and the Czech Republic, shows that the holder knows what he/she is doing in the field of care. Based on the information given by James Churchill, project co-ordinator of the ECC projects, during an interview, the ECC is not officially approved in Germany, but recognized as "something that works".

A possible European rollout of the TRACK programme could be based on a cooperation with the ECC, where the ECC partnership could provide a possibility to distribute the TRACK training programme. In practical terms this would mean that the English version can be used as a standard and ECC partners could translate it into their national languages. The distribution via the ECC network would be easier if the TRACK certificate

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[34] Source of information: http://www.eccertificate.eu/united-kingdom/what-is-the-ecc.html (2017-01-25)

[35] Source of information: http://www.eccertificate.eu/united-kingdom/what-is-the-ecc.html (2017-01-25)

[36] See: http://www.eccertificate.eu/united-kingdom/menu-left/besclo.html (2016-12-13)

[37] Source of information: http://www.eccertificate.eu/united-kingdom/what-is-the-ecc.html (2017-01-25)

uses a similar assessment process as the ECC itself. This option will have to be analysed in more detail.

I-CARE[38]

A high number of professional personal care and social workers are currently mobile across Europe, but the recognition of their competences, gained in other countries and learning settings (formal, non-formal, informal ways of learning), is difficult as no equivalent qualifications exist in different European countries. The lack of common frameworks for the evaluation, transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes and the rarity of related flexible training solutions hinders full labour market integration and an increase in mobility.

The I-CARE project aims at applying the ECVET system for the establishment of a recognition model in the field of personal care apart from those regulated professions for which a specific recognition framework already exists (2005/36/EC). It also aims at establishing a mutual trust area among partner countries (Italy, Germany, Poland, and Romania) and to further develop mutual recognition of training paths and qualifications. During the project tools for a steady application of ECVET principles and specifications were tested and developed. In concrete, the following objectives have been defined:

- Adaptation of vocational qualifications (Regional Framework for Professional Profiles of Regione Lombardia) that are described in terms of learning outcomes units complying with the ECVET technical specifications
- Development and application of a suitable methodology for assigning and applying ECVET points to the relevant vocational qualifications in the personal care and social work field
- Development of a suitable common methodology for evaluating learning outcomes (including the validation of non-formal or informal Prior Learning)
- Development and testing of a learning outcome transfer process among partner countries (including evaluation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes aiming at awarding)

The framework for facilitating the recognition of competences gained in other countries, systems or learning settings by personal care and social workers travelling across Europe is mainly based on professional profiles included within the Regional Framework for Professional Profiles of Regione Lombardia (qualification sub-system of Social Services and Personal Care). The Lombardy professional profiles are analysed in comparison with those existing in Germany, Poland, Romania and differences and similarities are highlighted.

The I-CARE project was supposed to include seven professional profiles of the personal care

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[38] Source: http://www.icareproject.eu/index.html

and social work sector. However, housekeepers and cleaners originally foreseen for analysis, were later excluded from the project, because the partners of the project considered validation and recognition of competences would not facilitate the workers' integration into the labour market. Thus, only five profiles remained: Family Assistant/Caregiver, Dental Assistant, Socio-Assistance Assistant, Care Operator, and Baby Sitter. These professions require a basic knowledge of medicine and/or personal care. A person whose competences had been certified can assure a good care of patients and children. The certificate will therefore facilitate the entering into the labour market (which was seen as not being the case for housekeepers and cleaners which had finally been excluded from the project)

Professional profiles, test material in different languages, templates for Memoranda of Understanding and a Guide for Assessors have been developed during the project and can be found at the project website.[39]

In the context of a European rollout of the TRACK programme the project results and lessons learned by I-CARE can be useful for TRACK. In particular, it can be helpful to learn more about the used test materials and the professional care and social worker profiles (such as the Family Assistant) and to compare the competences of these profiles with the competences used in the context of TRACK. It could be also interesting to learn more about the lessons learned by using ECVET and templates for the Memoranda of Understanding. Concerning the intended rollout of TRACK in other European countries it could be useful to learn more about critical success factors and challenges the I-CARE project faced for care professions that are relevant for TRACK.

IMPROVING QUALIFICATION FOR ELDERLY ASSISTANTS – THE IQEA PROJECT

The Leonardo project IQEA aims at developing and testing an ECVET agreement among training agencies from Italy, Romania and Poland for the professional profile of the elderly care assistant, providing assistance either at home or in nursing facilities. The agreement offers students the possibility to achieve a qualification recognised in all the territories of experimentation, regardless of the training institution issuing the diploma.[40]

Based on the national education and training concepts of partner countries the project describes the tasks of carers at home and evaluates the acquired and missing competences for fulfilling these tasks. The use of ECVET points supports the comparability of the competences and helps to define their application context. The project contributes to the evaluation of qualifications acquired in Poland and Romania and prepares the integration of carers in the Italian labour market. Experience shows that the qualification of unskilled or low skilled carers can be further developed focussing on tasks and this can help to

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[39] Source of information: I-CARE project website http://www.icareproject.eu/pages/results/tests.html (2016-12-13)
[40] Source of information: project website of IQEA http://www.iqea.eu/?page_id=79 (2016-12-13)

improve the quality of care (von Bandemer et al. 2013, 7).

The TRACK project could learn from this project, how tasks of elderly care assistants have been described in the professional profiles and have been evaluated with regard to acquired and missing competences. It could also be interesting to learn how ECVET points were used to support the comparability of competences.

FORWARD

The FORWARD[41] project is an EU project developed by partners in Spain (Catalonia), Italy, Romania, Austria, Finland and Lithuania and focused on migrant women who are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Europe in terms of labour participation and social inclusion. FORWARD works with competence-based models that have proven very valuable for the empowerment of women. A competence approach allows for the recognition of socially discredited skills acquired in informal and non-formal contexts, such as those related to feminized tasks (care of dependents, housework), as well as their transference to work contexts and further development. FORWARD builds on this approach to address the competences developed by migrant women during migration processes, such as stress management in transnational care tasks or the ability to adapt to change which every integration process requires. The final report of the project brings together a lot of information on tools that can be used to identify skills and competences of migrant women[42] and information on the competence-based approach used within the project[43].

The competence-based approach to recognition applied in the FORWARD project for the empowerment of women could be of interest for TRACK regarding the intended empowerment of its target group.

ECVC "ELDERLY CARE VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE"

The "Elderly Care Vocational Certificate" (ECVC) is an e-training programme for formal, informal and migrant carers of older people in Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania, Spain and Hungary. It aims at vocationally training informal and migrant carers to achieve the "Elderly Care Vocational Certificate" in the health and welfare educational field, therefore indirectly benefiting also care recipients. The training utilises the existing e-learning curriculum developed by the LdV ECV project (www.ecvleonardo.com in 2005-2007) supplemented with practical experience at elderly care providers and covers different care aspects both theoretical and practical.

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[41] See: http://forwardproject.eu/project-the/ (2016-06-17)
[42] See: http://forwardproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TOOLBOX-EN-FINAL.pdf (2016-06-17)
[43] See: http://forwardproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/HANDBOOK-EN-final.pdf (2016-06-17)

The service is free of charge and funded with public research resources by the European Commission LLP Leonardo da Vinci-Transfer of Innovation. The costs of both two-year programmes were met by the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme of education, training and lifelong learning and the participant country organisations. The training costs are met through the budgets of the responsible partners in each country. It involves different organisations such as regional, national and local authorities, local health and social care providers, private care institutions and private companies as partners. Health, social care professionals and volunteers run the service.

The ECVC improves the quality of working and social life of the care recipient, informal and migrant carers as well as their acceptability of ICTs. The reconciliation of work and care among informal working carers, can produce financial benefits at meso- and macro-level for private care institutions and companies.[44]

Evaluation information given on this project at the EUROCARERS website refers to the fact, that the service has a positive impact on the quality of life of formal and informal caregivers and paid assistants, as "it provides an additional chance for improving their skills, enhances their employability on the market and gives them an opportunity for socialisation". It has also a positive impact on the quality of life of elderly people as it improves their health and social relationships and quality of life. As an additional benefit the programme supports the acceptance of ICT by informal and formal carers. Evaluation also showed that the service has a positive impact on private organisations that provide care, as it helps them save costs and optimize resources while being effective in the training of the carers.[45]

As the ECVC follows a similar approach as TRACK it could be useful to exchange experiences made in both projects and to collaborate in the vocational training of informal and migrant carers. It should be further clarified if the TRACK certificate can be linked to the ECVC certificate as a module focussing on the care of Dementia patients. The network of ECVC partners could eventually provide a distribution network for the European rollout of the TRACK certificate.

DISCOVER

DISCOVER is helping carers (family carers, volunteer carers, paid care workers, care organisations) to use computers and the internet, to embed digital technology in their day-to-day lives. The partnership includes organisations from the UK, Greece, the

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Netherlands and Spain[46]. DISCOVER is about using these and other digital technologies to enable carers to find the information they need, when they need it and in an appropriate format. It is about carers using digital technologies as an everyday part of their care routine and thus removing the boundaries between formal learning and experiences that take place at home. Carers can watch short video clips on caring in the videos section of the DISCOVER website and, later, discuss or share an idea with other carers accessing DISCOVER.

As part of the Skills Zone, carers can also build an online portfolio that will enable them to record the wide range of knowledge, skills and experience that they are gaining through their caring role.

The e-Portfolio Pack will allow them to capture and evidence their achievement, which can then be used in different situations, including seeking employment during or beyond their caring role.

In the context of the European rollout of the TRACK programme, collaboration with the DISCOVER project would make a lot of sense, since for TRACK it will be important that informal carers have enough digital skills to use the TRACK online offer. Carers who use the DISCOVER services could be also interested in the TRACK certification offer. A collaboration with DISCOVER could offer a concrete European rollout and "customer" acquisition scenario for TRACK. Furthermore, the Skills Zone and the e-Portfolio Pack of the DISCOVER network could be used to record also the skills and competences acquired via the TRACK programme.

KEYFORA

The Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project KEYFORA (2011-2013) aimed to create innovative methods of identifying core competences of family carers, life assistants and the like, based on European standards. The partnership created a set of tools for identifying strengths and weaknesses of candidates for employment, vis-à-vis their professional competence. Based on a Traffic Light Self-Assessment Skills Audit information already acquired and still required skills and competences for working at the labour market have been identified.

The beneficiaries of the project have been family carers, home care workers and migrant care workers who, despite not having a formal qualification, wanted to increase their employability skills in terms of core competences and skills. The target group of the project suffered from isolation and needed support in terms of developing their competence.

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[46] See: http://discover.psicoed.es (2016-06-17) and http://www.discover4carers.eu/ (2017-01-14)

Project partners come from France, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Slovakia and Spain and include training organisations, family carer organisations, personal and household service providers, local community organisations and so on.

The offered training is implemented on a minimum of two days, depending on the availability of beneficiaries, once a week in sessions of 2 to 4 hours.[47]

A collaboration between TRACK and KEYFORA could offer benefits for both parties: the KEYFORA partnership provides an additional pathway for the European rollout of the TRACK certificate and a pool of persons potentially interested in training and the KEYFORA Self-Assessment Skills Audit tool as well as the training offer could be also of interest for TRACK users. On the other hand, the TRACK training could complement the existing KEYFORA training and provide a special training for competences in the field of care for Dementia patients.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF VALIDATION

SIQUCAE

This project, implemented by partners in Italy, France, Spain, Belgium and Ireland, highlights the importance of quality assurance for the introduction of new non-formal and informal learning validation systems. SiQuCAE contributes to challenges in the validation of non-formal and informal learning by:

- improving governance systems on recognition of prior learning
- establishing frameworks for quality assurance of recognition of prior learning.
- the identification of partner organisations' quality label
- training of labour and training workers
- accreditation of providers[48]

A critical aspect of the procedure concerns the implementation of one of the requirements provided by the European Recommendation on validation, that is ensuring compliance of qualifications, or qualification segments, obtained through the validation of non-formal and informal learning, with the standards of qualifications obtained through formal education and training; the testing showed the heterogeneous nature of the learning experiences which are submitted for validation and the resulting difficulty to frame them in the existing standards of qualifications. Therefore, it will be necessary to create more

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[47] Source of information: Eurocarers newsletter No 9, p. 17f, https://www.eurocarers.org/userfiles/files/Newsletters/Newsletter%20-%20Issue%20no%209.pdf (2017-01-14) http://keyfora.com/sites/default/files/archivos/Keyfora%20Project/WP4/WP4_description_formatione/KEYFORA_description%20formation_EN.pdf (2016-06-17)

[48] Source of information: http://www.discuss-community.eu/quality-in-vocational-training-education-3/item/236-siqucae-a-system-for-quality-assurance-in-non-formal-and-informal-learning.html (2017-01-14)

articulate and flexible qualification and credit frameworks than the existing ones, to include and formally recognize the different types of learning submitted for validation (SiQuCAE 2013, 49).

As the quality assurance aspect is very important for validation, the results of the SiQuCAE project should be taken into account when it comes to quality assurance issues in the further rollout of the TRACK programme. Furthermore, a collaboration with the SiQuCAE partnership network could offer an additional distribution pathway for the TRACK certificate.

NQF-IN

The project launched in 2015 will last until 2018 and aims at developing organisational and financial models to include non-formal sector qualifications in National Qualifications Frameworks as so far very few countries have introduced systemic solutions to include non-formal sector qualifications into their NQF. The consortium consists of partners from Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland, Poland and the UK. Since it is envisaged that the inclusion of non-formal sector qualification will constitute one of the most important topics in discussions on NQF implementation at the EU and national levels in the coming years "the main goal of the NQF-IN project is to provide evidence-based support to national governments, EU agencies and key stakeholders in developing policies on including non-formal sector qualification into NQFs. This will be done based on case analysis in the seven countries and providing detailed descriptions of the organisational and financial models".[49]

In the context of a European rollout of the TRACK programme it could be useful to exchange experiences gathered during the TRACK project with this initiative. Furthermore, information on different options and strategies for including the TRACK certificate into the national NQFs of other European countries could be analysed in detail.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRACK

When discussing recognition, it is important to understand that, as James Churchill from the European Care Certificate, put it: "There is recognition and there is recognition". By this he means that there is official acknowledgment of a programme's validity, like in the NQFs in the various Member States, and then there is unofficial acknowledgment by the labour market, e.g. when employers find out that a training programme is relevant to the care sector and then acknowledge its value.

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[49] Source: NQF-In website: http://www.nqf-in.eu/index.php/about-the-project/objectives-of-the-project (2016-09-19)

Also, there are various players in the field: academic/training providers who develop and provide training units; and the employers, who would like to see training relevant to the workplace that is practical, useful, recognised, and carries some weight. This implicit labour market relevance is very important.

It should also be taken into consideration that it is very difficult to overcome the reluctance of established institutions to acknowledge the validity of a training programme coming from elsewhere – and in some countries, it may not be possible at all. There is great reluctance to accept programmes not designed in the regions or by the institutions in question. "Foreign" training programmes may be regarded as insignificant, as it is assumed that they do not reflect the specific circumstances of a region or institution. This challenge could be overcome by including regional partners. Besides, some institutions tend to "take over" training programmes, so the TRACK partnership must make sure that its core – the training programme and certification – will be used by all organisations that provide training in the same way, and that the assessment will be carried out consistently in the various countries.

Implementation in Europe, i.e. in the various Member States, also depends on who the awarding bodies within the care sector are: in some countries, it is the Ministry of Health, in others it is the central or regional government, municipality, local authority or a recently-set-up independent body. It is important to know who is responsible for the recognition process and get them on board as soon as possible. For example, in Spain, the *Institute for Professional Qualifications* in Andalusia is the region's authority responsible for the region where the TRACK partner *is* located, and therefore the partner tried to get in contact with that institute to find out whether some sort of collaboration could be set up. An expert recommended in an interview getting in contact with major employers in the care sector in the respective region as well as with the trade union(s) to try to drum up demand for validation of the competences acquired through the TRACK training programme. Although such a specific push and its validation would only lead to a regional certificate, it might be a first step for informal caregivers to start further education and training, because in Spain there is a shortage of skilled care professionals. Two professional qualifications, "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*" (Social and health care for people at home) and "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*" (Social and health care for people in social institutions), exist that are in high demand in Spain. The TRACK certificate could be used as an entry point for the way forward to these two professional qualifications.

Integrating or anchoring a training programme to an NQF and therefore linking it to the EQF has clear advantages, as the linking to the NQF or EQF shows that a training programme meets several quality criteria and is already recognised in at least one Member State. Given the small amount of learning outcomes of the TRACK training, this can, however, only be a long-term goal requiring further elaboration of the TRACK training or

the link to already existing and more elaborated training and qualification offers, such as the *assistant(e) de vie* (life assistant) in France.

Furthermore, the competences acquired in TRACK could, at European level, ideally become a part of a more general competency profile that defines competences required for relatively low-qualified caregivers. It could be considered to adapt the existing *home care aide* profile in ESCO v1.0 based on existing national care professions in a way that the competence profiles of relevant home care professions at national level are better reflected in the profile and give this profile the shape of a "basic caregiver profile" that could be used as a common link between national care professions that provide a comparable entry level for caregiving in the labour market. This would make similar caregiving professions in Europe better comparable and would lead to more visibility of the competences of caregivers at international level. The overlaps of the TRACK competence profile with these national profiles and the ESCO profile would underline that the TRACK training programme can be a first step to the vocational education and training for these occupations.

The following projects should be further analysed regarding a possible cooperation with TRACK:

- ECC: the project could help to distribute the TRACK training programme and TRACK could benefit from the ECC experience made regarding the European rollout of the certificate; for further cooperation, the compatibility of both approaches would have to be examined in more detail;
- ECVC: TRACK could possibly be used as a specialised module for the care of Dementia patients;
- I-CARE: TRACK could benefit from the experience made in the project regarding the use of ECVET and the rollout at European level;
- DISCOVER: since for TRACK users it will be important to have enough digital skills to take advantage of the online lessons, a cooperation with the DISCOVER project would make sense; Carers who use the DISCOVER services could also be interested in the TRACK training and certification programme;
- KEYFORA: the TRACK training could complement the KEYFORA training offer with a special training for informal caregivers who care for Dementia patients;

5. AUSTRIA

INTRODUCTION AND SHORT OVERVIEW

Development towards an Austrian strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning has only started in 2013 – after the Council Recommendation on validation – and is closely connected to the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLL:2020) and the NQF development. Therefore, no uniform framework for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning exists in Austria so far.

Existing standards and procedures are very much oriented by the assessment logic of the formal education system. Besides the learning mode, the same standards for examinations are applied, e.g. for the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination or the *Externistenprüfung* (external exam).

There are no systematic or standardised measures for skills audits in place but there are some ongoing initiatives mainly provided by adult learning institutions, freelanced guidance practitioners or coaches, and the Austrian Public Employment Service, AMS.

For recognition two different procedures exist:
- **Procedures with commitment** (*Verfahren mit Verbindlichkeit*) that lead to a regulated qualification, e.g. certificates or formal qualifications, like the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination, Competence with System or You have skills/competences! (see below).
- **Procedures without commitment** (*Verfahren ohne Verbindlichkeit)* that do not lead to a regulated qualification, like the Austrian Volunteer Passport (see below).

With regard to care work, in Austria a distinction between social and health care policies exists: Two ministries are involved – the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, and the Ministry of Health. The federal state and the provinces are responsible for social care and health care: The federal state can only establish basic laws in the field, the provinces (*Bundesländer*) have the authority to establish laws and the responsibility to implement them (forquality.eu 2015b, 7).

Caregivers, mostly women, working in the 24-hour home care system in Austria have to undergo a training of minimum 200 hours or perform at least six months of home care for the care-recipient. In the past, there was a lack of quality control of the 24-hour care system, therefore these minimum requirements for caregivers were introduced.

A shortage of home care workers is forecasted for the coming years in Austria, especially in the group of qualified workers. In this respect a certificate, like TRACK, showing gained

skills and competences through caregiving could be a first step to move into the direction of a qualified care worker.

LEGAL SITUATION AND THE POLICY ON VALIDATION

In 2011 four federal ministries (Education, Arts and Culture; Labour and Social Affairs; Science & Research; Economy, Family and Youth), together with the social partners and key stakeholders, agreed on a joint Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (LLL:2020)[50]. Within the strategy, developing a coherent approach of validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning is central.

Agreed measures include:
- establishing a national validation strategy, that is still under discussion,
- developing and implementing competence-based schemes,
- providing training programmes for enhancing know-how with regard to assessing learning outcomes gained through non-formal and informal learning,
- developing a cross-sectoral quality assurance system for assessment procedures (European Commission et al. 2015d, 6; BMBF 2015).

The National Qualification Framework (NQF) in Austria has been referenced to the EQF in 2012, but so far there are only so called "reference qualifications" included in the framework and linked to the EQF. The actual inclusion of qualifications is still a work-in-progress.

The Austrian NQF clearly distinguishes between formal, non-formal and informal qualifications as it is organised in three strands:
- Corridor 1 contains the formal qualifications system,
- Corridor 2 includes qualifications acquired in non-formal learning, like in adult education centres or workplace learning,
- Corridor 3 will bring together qualifications based on informal learning.

Work of allocating qualifications to the NQF has begun for corridors 1 and 2, although adult education providers still need more support describing their qualifications by using learning outcomes in order to comply with NQF descriptors; work on corridor 3 is still at the beginning and closely connected to implementing the Council Recommendation from 2012 (European Commission 2015d, 8; Mayerl, Schlögl 2015, 387f.). In 2016 the NQF Act was passed in parliament and came into force in March.

Development towards a national strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning has only started in 2013 – after the Council Recommendation on validation – and is closely connected to the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLL:2020) and the NQF

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[50] See: https://www.bmbf.gv.at/ministerium/vp/2011/lllarbeitspapier_ebook_gross_20916.pdf?4dtiae (2016-06-08)

development. There is no uniform framework for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Austria.

In 2013, a working group for the development of a **national validation strategy** was established. It consists of representatives from relevant federal ministries (e.g. Education; Science, Research and Economy; or Labour and Social Affairs), social partners, youth organisations, Universities Austria and Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences. In 2015, a consultation document[51] for this national validation strategy was published, including key objectives and measures, and a consultation process was set-up. The results of the consultation process were analysed and used to develop a national validation strategy; this national validation strategy will also be used to define organisational structures and a detailed implementation plan. In the past a fragmented "validation landscape" existed in Austria, serving the needs of different sectors and target groups. The national validation strategy will bring clarity in terms of concepts and definitions and will provide an overview of existing validation arrangements (European Commission et al. 2016a, 1f.).

Reasons for the relatively minor role of validation of non-formal in informal learning in Austria are:

- a strong orientation of education and economy on initial vocational education and training (IVET);
- the dual system[52] includes a high proportion of informal learning in the workplace and therefore there seemed to be no need to establish additional procedures to recognise this form of learning;
- focus on occupational profiles and formally acquired qualifications as proof of ability and competence (European Commission et al. 2015d, 4).

The Austrian ECVET strategy was launched in 2014; one aim is to improve the recognition of competences gained through non-formal and informal learning (European Commission 2016a, 1).

Vocational education and training is regulated through several laws. With regard to recognition the following three laws are important:

- Vocational Training Act (*Berufsausbildungsgesetz*)
- School Education Act (*Schulunterrichtsgesetz*)
- Industrial Code (*Gewerbeordnung*)

Apprenticeship training is regulated through the Vocational Training Act and for the recognition of non-formal and informal competences (§ 23) there are two possibilities:

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[51] See, only in German: https://ec.europa.eu/epale/sites/epale/files/konsultationspapier_beilage_.pdf (2017-02-28)
[52] The dual system combines apprenticeship in companies with vocational education in a vocational school (*Berufsschule*). The dual system is very strongly established in Austria (and also in Germany).

- **Exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination** (*Außerordentlicher Zugang zur Lehrabschlussprüfung*): The applicants have to be over 18 years old and have evidence of having acquired the corresponding vocational skills and competences, e.g. through work practice or in courses. Applicants have to go through the regular written and oral apprenticeship examination at the respective apprenticeship centre of the Chamber of Commerce, the regulations are the same as for those who have completed the "regular" apprenticeship training. Adult education institutions offer preparation courses for candidates without formal training.
- **Recognition of prior learning for exemption of parts of the practical part of the final apprenticeship examination** (*Anerkennung von facheinschlägigen berufsbildrelevanten Kompetenzen für den praktischen Teil der Lehrabschlussprüfung*): The revised Vocational Training Act from 2011 provides a possibility to grant exemptions from parts of the practical section of the final examination for candidates in second-chance education who can provide evidence of relevant professional experience (Mayerl, Schlögl 2015, 397; European Commission 2014d, 11).

Within the **School Education Act** the *Externistenprüfung* (§ 42, examinations taken as an external student to graduate from upper-secondary academic schools or VET colleges) is regulated: applicants have to submit their application to the regional boards of education; the examination takes place at the corresponding schools or at set-up examination centres. Adult education organisations and private schools offer preparation courses (European Commission 2014d, 11).

The **Industrial Code** brings together information on all regulated trades in Austria; at the moment there are more than 80 trades regulated in Austria. To be able to do business in one of these trades, proof of relevant vocational skills and competences is needed (*Befähigungsnachweis*). This proof can be delivered through different certificates, like university degrees or master's certificates, or through work experience and professional tasks[53] (Mayerl, Schlögl 2015, 398).

POLICY AND LEGAL BACKGROUND FOR CARERS

In Austria a distinction between social and health care policies exists: Two ministries are involved – the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, and the Ministry of Health. The federal state and the provinces are responsible for social care and health care: The federal state can only establish basic laws in the field, the provinces (*Bundesländer*) have the authority to establish laws and the responsibility to implement them (forquality.eu 2015b, 7).

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[53] See: https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Service/Wirtschaftsrecht-und-Gewerberecht/Gewerberecht/Gewerbeanmeldung/Befaehigungsnachweis_-_FAQs.html (2016-06-09)

Austria can be placed in an intermediate position with regard to the main responsibility for care, between the Nordic model of high individual responsibility and a stronger role for the government in service provision, and the Mediterranean model of high family responsibility, although it is in many ways closer to the latter.

Based on the federal **Long-Term Care Allowance Act** (*Bundespflegegeldgesetz*) from 1993 all persons in caring need can receive federal cash benefits which are financed from taxes. This care allowance is not sufficient to cover the costs and therefore the need for informal care is high and it seems like informal care is preferred by the Austrian authorities (as they do not try to set up affordable and appropriate quality care facilities).

With regard to caregivers, it is characteristic for Austria that approx. 65,000 caregivers are migrants from Eastern-European neighbouring countries, who are mostly employed in the framework of the 24-hour home care system. This system provides care around the clock and the assistance is given to the person under care at the household. Usually women from Eastern-European countries work for two weeks straight and then go home to their families for the following two weeks, taking turns with another woman caring for the individual during these two weeks (ibid. 5, 9). As mentioned before, minimum requirements – training of minimum 200 hours or having performed at least six months of care for the care-recipient – have been set up for these caregivers.

In September 2016, a new law regulating care professions became effective and this new healthcare law (*GuKG-Novelle 2016*) introduced a new care profession: professional care assistant (*Pflegefachassistenz*). This new occupation is located between the already existing care assistant (*Pflegeassistenz*) and the higher service in nursing and care (*gehobener Dienst für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*). Altogether the new law brings better permeability for people working in the care sector and the possibility to choose between a 1-year training (care assistant), 2-year training (professional care assistant) or 3-year training (higher service in nursing and care). The trainings are compatible with each other and a care assistant needs only one additional year to finish his/her training to become a professional care assistant.[54]

Besides the new healthcare law, a new register of healthcare occupations *(Berufsregister für alle Gesundheits- und Krankenpflegepersonen)* has been developed in Austria: From January 2018 onwards, all persons working in healthcare will be registered. Besides qualifications, further education and training and freelance work will be registered. Including care professions in this register can be regarded as another attempt to professionalise and recognise care work as people registered receive a badge that shows their qualifications.[55]

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[54] See: http://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten_details.php?nid=11456 (2017-03-20)
[55] See: https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160921_OTS0007/gesundheitsberuferegister-gesetz-tritt-mit-112017-in-kraft; https://derstandard.at/2000055960296/Vieles-neu-bei-den-Gesundheitsberufen (2017-04-20)

At the end of October 2016 a new regulation was adopted dealing with professions in the area of care assistance: "*Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Gesundheit und Frauen über Ausbildung und Qualifikationsprofile der Pflegeassistenzberufe (Pflegeassistenzberufe-Ausbildungsverordnung – PA-PFA-AV; Regulation of the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs on training and competence profiles of care assistance professions)*". [56] This regulation includes for the first time a section on validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences: §13 (1) states that these competences have to be recognised if:

- they can be verified by using a recommended validation procedure;
- their equivalence with competences acquired during the training for care assistance can be determined.

The validation procedures must be based on those listed within the EU Recommendation on validation and include the following steps:

- Information and guidance
- Identifying competences
- Documenting competences
- Assessing competences
- Credit the results of the assessment (Pflegeassistenzberufe-Ausbildungsverordnung 2016, 8)

Additional information on how these validation procedures will look like and how they will be implemented in Austria were not available at the time of finalising this report (July 2017). The information we received shows that the procedures are not developed yet and good practice examples in other countries are analysed to find a way to establish validation procedures in this area.

PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS

Existing standards and procedures are very much oriented by the assessment logic of the formal education system. Besides the learning mode, the same standards for examinations are applied, e.g. for the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination or the *Externistenprüfung* (external exam).

There are no systematic or standardised measures for skills audits in place but there are some ongoing initiatives mainly provided by **adult learning institutions, freelance guidance practitioners or coaches**, and the **Public Employment Service**, AMS. The AMS is currently using different approaches to recognise competences through work experience and informal learning for refugees coming to Austria in 2015/16.

There are no specific standards in place to support validation. Some organisations develop their own standards or procedures to identify competences, sometimes based on good

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[56] See: https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2016_II_301/BGBLA_2016_II_301.pdf (2016-11-22)

practice examples from abroad, like CH-Q – the *Swiss Qualifications Handbook System of Managing Competencies*, sometimes more or less oriented towards procedures and standards used in the formal education system (European Commission 2015d, 7f.).

Two different procedures for recognition exist:

- **Procedures with commitment** (*Verfahren mit Verbindlichkeit)* that lead to a regulated qualification, e.g. certificates or formal qualifications, like the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination, Competence with System or You have skills/competences! (see below).
- **Procedures without commitment** (*Verfahren ohne Verbindlichkeit*) that do not lead to a regulated qualification, like the Austrian Volunteer Passport (see below).

FINANCING

There is no national funding framework for validation in Austria. The funding depends on the respective measure, procedure or project and can be provided, for example, by the Ministry of Education, AMS, sometimes also co-sponsored by ESF-funds. There are also subsidies and partial course cost reimbursement via the Educational Account of the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (WAFF) or regional chambers of labour who grant educational vouchers. Pilot projects are often funded by EU money, like Erasmus+ projects or, previously, Leonardo da Vinci or Grundtvig projects. Also, provincial and municipal governments as well as social partners sometimes set up their own initiatives (European Commission 2015d, 22).

Most procedures available in Austria at present are co-financed or funded by the above-mentioned stakeholders; but that does not mean that no costs at all occur for participants: usually individuals have to contribute to test fees or costs for preparatory courses. Some measures are free of charge completely, like the acquisition of a compulsory schooling qualification in second-chance education or measures for unemployed people.

There are also commercial procedures, like competence certifications that are usually financed by the participants (Mayerl, Schlögl 2015, 424f.).

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, RESPONSIBILITIES, MAIN ACTORS

Different institutions and actors are involved in validation across all sectors:

- The Federal Ministry of Education
- The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
- The Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy
- Educational institutions, like secondary academic and VET schools and colleges, universities of applied sciences, universities, adult education institutions

- Social partners
- Apprenticeship offices of the competent economic chambers
- Public Employment Service, AMS
- Coordinating platform for the LLL:2020 strategy
- NQF steering group and the working group focusing on NQF corridor 2

The main role of the **ministries** is to prepare and adopt the legal framework conditions for validation procedures. **Social partners** are a major player in the design of the legal, economic and social framework conditions in Austria. Educational institutions organise and provide preparatory courses for exams, hold exams and design other procedures to validate non-formal and informal learning (European Commission et al. 2015d, 10f.).

The **AMS** developed Competence with System (*Kompetenz mit System*): This is a model that puts occupational training offered by the AMS in the context of qualifications belonging to the formal system. The aim is to support jobseekers who have completed compulsory schooling at most. Participants are supported to acquire the competences necessary to pass the final apprenticeship exam and thus receive a qualification from the formal system, without actually participating in a programme offered by the formal system. The training is based on competence matrices that reflect the contents of the legally specified apprenticeship profiles. Every course is completed with a competence check and based on this check a certificate is issued. So, even participants who are not interested in a final apprenticeship exam can show different levels of competences acquired through the courses. Competence with System is implemented at national level by a public-private partnership of AMS, and research and consulting organisations Prospect consultancy, ibw and öibf (European Commission 2014e).

Adult education and training providers experimented with recognising individual competences, like Quali-Box developed in the province of Vorarlberg by BIF[57] (Career and education information of the Austrian chamber of commerce and the province of Vorarlberg); the Quali-Box includes several brochures with exercises for participants to identify their interests, knowledge and competences.

In Upper Austria, another Austrian province, the project "*Du kannst was*! – You have skills/competences!" started in 2007 and supports people with professional experience in nine selected professions, like brick-layer, cook or metal worker, to have their prior learning accredited for the final apprenticeship examination.[58] The project works with a portfolio approach in order to show acquired competences and compare these to competences of the corresponding occupational profile and examination regulations; as well as guidance and counselling related to, if necessary, additional training. Since 2012 the project is also available in the province of Burgenland, where at present recognition for seven occupations is available.[59]

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[57] See: http://www.bifo.at (2016-06-08)
[58] See: http://www.dukannstwas.at (2016-06-08)
[59] See: http://www.dukannstwas-bgld.at/index.php/dasprojekt (2016-06-08)

Private sector organisations issue certifications based on work experience, in-company training, and/or demonstrating the required knowledge, skills and competences. The certificates usually have importance within the company, but have no connection with the formal system.

The **third sector** is actively involved in including qualifications acquired non-formally or informally into the NQF and some have developed approaches regarding how to validate competences gained in voluntary activities. For example, the Austrian Volunteer Passport (*Freiwilligenpass*)[60] was introduced in 2005 and provides a certification of competences and qualifications obtained through volunteering. The certificate gives information on time spent by the volunteer on a volunteer activity, the person's function within the organisation, the volunteer's tasks, skills, competences and attitudes (like social competences and ability to cope with stress, commitment, willingness to accept responsibility, motivation, self-discipline, leadership or management competences) and relevant professional competences (e.g. language competences or IT skills) (European Commission 2015d, 13).

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Information is provided by adult education institutions that offer preparatory courses for different measures and by institutions that offer validation or portfolio processes. Besides these, AMS, responsible ministries, social partners and advisory centres for different target groups provide information. Websites are especially used to share information, e.g.:

- The website of the Ministry of Education provides information about second-chance education.[61]
- The website www.erwachsenenbildung.at, funded by the Ministry of Education, serves as an online platform on Austrian adult learning and second-chance education. It also provides information on initiatives related to validation of non-formal and informal learning relevant for adult educators or guidance professionals.
- The website of the Austrian Initiative on Adult Education provides information about accreditation and recognition criteria as well as courses provided within this initiative.[62]
- The website www.bildungsberatung-online.at brings together information about guidance and counselling in all 9 Austrian provinces. According to a study by Schlögl et al. (2014) there were more than 50,000 counselling contacts in Austria in 2013 and a part can be connected to recognising non-formal and informal learning, like information about obtaining a qualification later in life (17 %) or on individual competences (8 %).

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[60] See: http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/index.php?id=CH3570&PHPSESSID=bin32athrvmno51moc2e2atdm6 (2016-06-08)
[61] See: http://www.bildungssystem.at/en/second-chance-education/ (2016-06-09)
[62] See: https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at (2016-06-09)

There exists no overall information, advice and guidance network related to validation of non-formal and informal learning in Austria. Counselling and guidance is mostly provided by the relevant educational institutions and institutions offering validation (European Commission et al. 2015d, 25). The consultation document for the development of the national validation strategy (2015) refers to the need to develop a coherent communication strategy for informing about validation possibilities in different sectors. One option to support this would be the development of an easily accessible online portal (BMBF 2015, 17).

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

Different ministries and sections within these ministries are responsible for different qualifications in the formal education system and for the respective quality assurance. Hence, no overall quality assurance framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning exists. Many procedures for validating non-formally and informally acquired competences belong to the formal education system and/or aim at receiving a qualification equivalent to one of the formal system. Therefore, the same quality assurance mechanisms as in the formal systems are relevant and used.

Quality assurance in adult education includes preparatory courses for taking different external exams or procedures for identifying and recording competences, like skills audits or portfolios. Some use general international quality assurance standards, like ISO standards or the European Foundation of Quality Management, others generically developed criteria and processes, e.g. developed at regional level or by individual providers. An initiative for an overall framework for quality for adult education in Austria started in 2011, Ö-Cert63: It is an overall framework of quality for adult education providers developed and recognised in Austria. Its main objective is to assure and develop quality of provision of adult learning and to improve quality of adult education, including procedures for recognising non-formal and informal learning provided by these institutions (European Commission et al. 2014d, 27f.).

Quality assurance is also closely connected to the qualifications of the validation practitioners: until now, no specific profile of validation practitioners exists in Austria. Depending on the measures and projects, they are teachers, experienced professionals or members of authorities, like ministries or social partners. The consultation document for the development of a national validation strategy refers to the need to introduce measures for professionalisation of validation practitioners, developing competence profiles and corresponding further education programmes (BMBF 2015, 10f.).

No overall framework for the evaluation of non-formal and informal learning exists in Austria. Evaluation is carried out in different forms for different measures and projects, but not by all. Usually evaluation is carried out by independent experts or researchers and is

63 See: http://oe-cert.at/meta/english-overview.php (2016-06-09)

commissioned by the institution providing validation measures or by the responsible ministry.

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR LOCAL INITIATIVES

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

For national initiatives see also above, chapter on "National institutional framework, responsibilities, main actors" with descriptions of the following projects:

- Competence with system
- *QualiBox*
- You have skills/competences!
- Austrian Volunteer Passport

Academy of Continuing Education (Weiterbildungsakademie, wba)
http://wba.or.at/

The **Academy of Continuing Education** (*Weiterbildungsakademie*, wba) developed a model for recognising professional experience to be used by adult educators. The wba certifies and issues degrees to adult educators (2-level-certification for 2 degrees: Certified Adult Educator and Graduate Adult Educator) according to defined standards using six steps for the validation process:

- Information and guidance
- Initial assessment
- Education and training plan
- Competence acquisition
- Qualification "Certified Adult Educator"
- Qualification "Graduate Adult Educator"

The wba-model is often cited as a good practice example how non-formal and informal learning can be validated and recognised: validation of informal learning can be achieved through several ways, for example candidates can write a paper on a particular topic or submit their own publication(s) on relevant topics. For some subjects, the employer can use a specific form to confirm the acquisition of the relevant competences. In this case, the candidate has worked for the employer for a certain period of time and the candidate's relevant experiences and practices have to be described in sufficient detail.

For longer educational activities with a duration of seven days or longer, extra-credits for personal and social competence can be awarded, because it is assumed that personal and social competences are developed as a matter of time in this kind of learning environment.

Personal competences can also be accredited based on supervision or coaching processes received by the candidate (Müller-Riedlhuber 2015, 16f.; Prokopp, Luomi-Messerer 2010, 3f.).

In 2015, a new learning outcome-oriented wba-curricula, the "qualification profiles[64]", entered into force and brought along a detailed insight on required competences for adult educators (connected to ECTS). The revision of the curricula aimed at preparing the wba-certificates for inclusion in the Austrian NQF.

OVERVIEW AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR VALIDATION IN (INFORMAL) CAREGIVING

Caritas

http://www.caritas-rundumbetreut.at/train-to-care/

Train to care offers further training for persons working in the 24-hour care system in Austria. The training is available in Slovakian, Romanian and Hungarian language and it is delivered in the countries of residence of the caregivers (Slovakia, Rumania and Hungary).

Main topics are:

- Dealing and communicating with people suffering from Dementia;
- Kinaesthetics in caregiving (basic information);
- Supporting German language competences regarding care records and communication during caregiving;
- Conflict management – dealing with psychological stress;
- Caregiving in the final phase of life;

There is no mention that validation of informal learning is part of any of the training courses.

Rotes Kreuz

http://www.roteskreuz.at/pflege-betreuung/kurse/pflegende-angehoerige/

The Austrian Red Cross offers different, short training courses for caregiving relatives. The main aim is to prepare caregiving relatives with regard to different topics of home care and support them in their daily lives.

Main topics are:

- Care and nursing at home – basic training programme (16 hours)
- Focusing on the care recipient (4 hours)
- The heavy burden of care-giving – moving and supporting care-recipients (4 hours)

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[64] See for example qualification profiles of certified adult educator, only in German:
https://wba.or.at/login/downloads/Curriculum_wba-Zertifikat.pdf (2017-02-28)

- Staying healthy – training for care givers (3 hours)

The training courses are provided all over Austria, usually for a fee between 24 and 65 Euros. There is no information available that validation of informal learning is part of any of the training courses.

TRACK CERTIFICATION PERSPECTIVES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Caregivers, mostly women, working in the 24-hour care system in Austria must undergo a training of minimum 200 hours or perform at least six months of care for the care-recipient. In the past, there was a lack of quality control of the 24-hour care system and caregivers were often faced with limited job opportunities in their home country (as many come from neighbouring Eastern-European countries) (forquality.eu 2015b, 11). The TRACK certificate could be an interesting option for this huge group of caregivers to get their skills and competences recognised.

Besides this, an expected shortage of home care workers is forecasted for the coming years in Austria, especially in the group of qualified workers (Eurofound 2013, 18), also in this respect a certificate showing gained skills and competences through caregiving could be a first step to move into the direction of a qualified care worker.

Therefore, a special labour market policy has been established by the Ministry of Labour that aims at upskilling low-qualified employees (esp. low-qualified women) in the field of health and social professions. Besides upskilling these persons, the programme also envisages a better labour market integration of the participants through better qualified jobs. Professions that are supported through this programme are for example care assistance professions where additional qualified workers are needed.[65]

PROFESSIONS IN CAREGIVING TO WHICH TRACK CERTIFICATES COULD BE LINKED

Regulations on social care professions fall under the competence of the Austrian provinces. Related training programmes and professional profiles, however, were harmonised within the framework of an agreement on social care professions made between the Federal Government and the provinces pursuant to Art. 15a of the Federal Constitutional Law (*Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz*). Social care professions to which the TRACK certificate could be linked are:

- Qualified social care workers specialised in services for elderly persons
- Social care workers specialised in services for elderly persons
- Home helps
- Care assistant

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[65] See:
https://www.sozialministerium.at/cms/site/attachments/2/5/2/CH3434/CMS1450440107704/arbeitsmarktpolitik_basisbericht_2013_2014.pdf s. 123 (2016-12-01)

Besides these, assistant nursing education and training forms an integral part of the education of both qualified social care workers specialised in services for elderly persons and social care workers specialised in services for elderly persons (BMG 2016, 88) and therefore might be an entry point for the TRACK programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL[66]

The national validation strategy, still being under development, will be used to define organisational structures and a detailed implementation plan. In the past, a fragmented "validation landscape" existed in Austria, serving the needs of different sectors and target groups. The national validation strategy will bring clarity in terms of concepts and definitions and will provide an overview on existing validation arrangements (European Commission et al. 2016a, 1f.). Therefore, it should also be helpful for validation efforts in the area of (informal) care.

In Austria, a distinction between social and health care policies exists and different ministries, the federal state and the provinces are involved. Compared to other countries, Austria can be placed in an intermediate position with regard to the main responsibility for care, between the Nordic model of high individual responsibility and a stronger role for the government in service provision, and the Mediterranean model of high family responsibility, although it is in many ways closer to the latter.

A recently introduced new healthcare law (GuK-Novelle 2016) aims to bring better permeability for people working in the care sector and the possibility to choose between a 1-year training (care assistant), 2-year training (professional care assistant) or 3-year training (higher service in nursing and care). The trainings are compatible with each other and a care assistant needs only one additional year to finish his/her training to become a professional care assistant.[67]

Besides this, at the end of October 2016 a new regulation[68] was adopted dealing with professions in the area of care assistance. This regulation includes for the first time a section on validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences and states that these competences must be recognised if:

- they can be verified by using a recommended validation procedure;
- their equivalence with competences acquired during the training for care assistance can be determined.

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[66] As no expert workshop was conducted in Austria (as Austria is not a piloting country) the following recommendations are based on the desktop research and many inputs received throughout the process of working on this report.

[67] See: http://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten_details.php?nid=11456 (2017-03-20)

[68] "*Verordnung der Bundesministerin für Gesundheit und Frauen über Ausbildung und Qualifikationsprofile der Pflegeassistenzberufe (Pflegeassistenzberufe- Ausbildungsverordnung – PA-PFA-AV; Regulation of the Ministry of Health and Women's Affairs on training and competence profiles of care assistance professions)*"

Additional information on how these validation procedures will look like and how they will be implemented were not available at the time of finalising this report (July 2017), but this is obviously an area of increased activity and more development can be expected.

Altogether we must conclude that on the Austrian national level it might be quite difficult to certify non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences in the care sector, although latest developments show it is a topic that is becoming more and more important (also due to forecasted labour shortage).

The Austrian NQF development is focusing very much on formally acquired qualifications, non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences are not part of the first referencing work to the NQF. *Korridor 2 and 3* are dealing with non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences are still under development and how they will be included in the NQF will be an interesting process that will probably start in 2017. At present, first methods and procedures on how to recognise these skills and competences are tested but most of this work is not open to the public yet and will only materialise in the coming months (and probably years).

Summing up, the following different routes for informal caregivers in Austria who have participated in the TRACK training programme can be highlighted:

- Informal caregivers take part in the TRACK training programme and have no further interest in further education and training;
- Informal caregivers take part in the TRACK training programme and have interest in further education and training:
    o They can start by having their competences gained through the TRACK training programme recognised within procedures without commitment (*Verfahren ohne Verbindlichkeit*) that do not lead to a regulated qualification, like the Austrian Volunteer Passport (see above). Or they can have their competences recognised within procedures with commitment (*Verfahren mit Verbindlichkeit)* that lead to a regulated qualification, e.g. certificates or formal qualifications, like the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination, Competence with System or You have skills/competences! The latter option will be more complicated and time-consuming than the first one;
    o They can move on to flexible training programmes and choose from existing offers, like courses conducted by *Caritas* and *Rotes Kreuz*;
    o They can proceed with a full training pathway to the existing care assistant (*Pflegeassistenz*) and then, if they like, can move on to professional care assistant (*Pflegefachassistenz)* or even to the higher service in nursing and care (*gehobener Dienst für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*);
- Informal caregivers who are not interested in further education and training still benefit from the TRACK training programme as it brings together a lot of different information from key areas dealing with Dementia. Additionally, awareness-raising and empowering should not be underestimated: Informal caregivers often do not know how much

knowledge and competence they have already acquired through their work, how important their work is and how much they are accomplishing – and it is very important to acknowledge their experience and know-how.

6. FRANCE

INTRODUCTION AND SHORT OVERVIEW

France is the European country with the most long-standing experience in the identification, assessment and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The validation system for non-formal and informal learning is well-developed and based on a comprehensive legal framework that takes into account aspects of legal claim and practical realisation (Gaylor et al. 2015, 41). It also builds upon long-standing practices in the field of identification and recognition of prior learning and professional experience (European Commission et al. 2014f, 3).

The most important aspects of the legal basis for validating non-formal and informal learning are:

- Equivalence with formal qualifications;
- Individual right for validation with and without certification;
- Legal regulation of all core elements of the validation process;
- Eligible for all qualifications listed in the national register of professional certifications RNCP (Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles);
- Nationwide rules for the practical realisation;
- Voluntary utilization;
(Gaylor et al. 2015, 44)

A key milestone in the French system of validation is the *Validation of Acquired Experience* (Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience, VAE) implemented in 2002. It created a type of validation procedure applicable across different education and training sectors and was introduced together with the *Social Modernisation Act* which offers beside primary education, vocational education and continuing education another possibility to acquire full qualification via validation (Damesin et al. 2014, 104).

Qualifications that can be acquired via validation are all described in the *National Register of Vocational Qualifications* (Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles, RNCP) which goes hand in hand with the *French National Qualification Framework*. The French NQF plays a strong regulatory role and is well established. It covers three main types of qualification: vocational/professional certificates and diplomas awarded by French ministries in cooperation with social partners through *consultative vocational committees* (CPC), vocational qualifications produced by sectors under the responsibility of social partners without consultative vocational committees and certificates delivered by chambers, public or private institutions in their own name (they are registered on demand after the expertise, advice and fulfilment of strict quality criteria for inclusion in the NQF) (EC, Cedefop, ICF 2016d, 10).

Following the European inventory report for France, the demand for VAE focuses on a narrow range of qualifications, many of which can be found in the field of health and social care. The VAE procedure is of specific interest to the home and personal care services sector as there are major recruitment needs and employees (for the most part women) have normally only few or no formal qualifications that are however required in a sector that is in general largely dependent on certifications (Damesin et al. 2014, 107).

In Yvelines, a district of the Ile de France Region, a so-called 'collective project' has been initiated in 2015. It involved all regional stakeholders in the health support and social services support sector, because regional analysis showed a need for qualifications in this sector and problems in recruiting people with the right qualifications (meeting the minimum requirements for qualifications in this sector). In cooperation with the Employment Service, candidates for the validation procedure were identified and selected based on selection criteria such as high motivation and at least three years' work experience in the field. Experience from this project and a similar validation initiative done in 2014 (where 75 % of candidates received a job three to six months after the end of the validation) showed that linking validation initiatives closely to the labour market needs of a sector represents a success factor (Cedefop 2016, 16).

Following the EU Skills Panorama for France, home-carers are the occupations with the highest projections of net job creation (159,000) in 2012-2022. Given these figures and the fact that continuing vocational education as well as the *bilan de compétences* and the VAE are well established in France and in the health and social care sector, the TRACK offer for distance learning and certification can be expected to be of public interest. The most adequate profession for entering the labour market for informal caregivers is the *assistant(e) de vie*. As the project coordinator IPERIA is an official certificatory organisation and responsible for VAE procedures for the *assistant(e) de vie*, it can provide information on a possible further qualification pathway for informal carers which can start with the TRACK certificate and go on with further vocational training, e.g. for the *assistant(e) de vie*.

LEGAL SITUATION AND THE POLICY ON VALIDATION

In France, the validation system is well-developed and based on a comprehensive legal framework. The main system for validation of informal and non-formal learning is the **Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)**, which was introduced in 2002 based on the *Social Modernisation Act* (Loi de modernisation sociale). Each person with at least 3 years of experience in paid, unpaid or voluntary work has the right to apply for the validation of his/her non-formally and informally acquired competences (Gaylor et al. 2015, 41). VAE can be used to award full qualifications or units of full qualifications (Cedefop 2008b, 26)

The **Social Modernisation Act** provides not only the legal basis for the individual right of participating in validation procedures, it also regulates all other important parts of the validation process: guidance, financing and institutional duties. The validation procedure is voluntary and results in an official certification which is equivalent to initial vocational

education. A number of reference profiles, namely all recognized qualifications covered in the *National Register of Qualifications* (Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles, RNCP) and other qualifications recognized at sector level build the basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning in France. Also, the individual right for a competence audit (*bilan de compétences*) which does not directly result in certification is based on legal regulations (Gaylor et al. 2015, 41).

One of the earliest achievements in this field goes back to 1934 when individuals were enabled by a law to obtain an engineering diploma based on professional experience (Cedefop 2008b, 26).

Later the law on the **bilan de compétences** adopted in 1985 aimed at the validation of vocational skills acquired outside the formal education system. The bilan de compétences supports employees in better understanding their professional and personal skills as well as their motivation. Based on this improved understanding professional career plans and opportunities for advancement are enhanced (Wallner 2002, 75).

In 1992 legislation broadened the scope for **Validation of Prior Occupational Learning** (Validation des Acquis Professionels, VAP) and linked skills acquired through work experience directly to national systems of qualifications. This approach ensured the legal equality of skills acquired within and outside the formal education and training system (Wallner 2002, 76).

In 2002, a new legislation and various decrees represented another key milestone in the French system of validation by creating a type of validation procedure applicable across different education and training sectors: the **Validation of Acquired Experience** (Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience, VAE) (European Commission et al. 2014f, 4). The VAE was introduced together with the **Social Modernisation Act** (Loi de modernization sociale) and complemented by further laws, for example the Decentralisation Act of 2004, as well as many agreements between professional sectors or companies (Unesco 2015b, 13). The *Social Modernisation Act* offers beside primary education, vocational education and continuing education another possibility to acquire full qualification via validation (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 143).

The decrees that followed the *Social Modernisation Act* in 2002 are of special importance since they defined quality standards for different aspects of the validation procedure, for example: *Decree No 2002-590* for the application of VAE in Higher Education, *Decree No 2002-615* for the application of VAE in the field of vocational certification, Decree No 2002-617 regulates the setup of the RNCP and the modalities of registration as well as the composition, tasks and methods of the CNCP; *Decree No 2002-795* defines the conditions of granting educational leave for the certification of previously acquired competences (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 148).

In 2002, the setting up of the **National Committee on Vocational Qualifications** (Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionelle, CNC[69]) and the **National Register of Vocational Qualifications** (RNCP) marked the establishment of the French National Qualification Framework (Cedefop 2012b, 93).

The **French NQF** belongs to the first generation of European qualifications frameworks. Compared to other European NQFs it is less comprehensive and puts a clear focus on vocational and professional qualifications (including all higher education qualifications with a vocational and professional purpose). The French NQF plays a strong regulatory role and is well established (Cedefop 2012b, 93).

It covers three main types of qualification:

- Vocational/professional certificates and diplomas awarded by French ministries70 in cooperation with social partners through consultative vocational committees (CPC) are registered automatically;
- Vocational qualifications certificates produced by sectors under the responsibility of social partners but where no CPC is in place;
- Certificates delivered by chambers, public or private institutions in their own name are registered on demand after the expertise, advice and fulfilment of strict quality criteria for inclusion in the NQF;
  (Cedefop 2012b, 27)

In 2010, the NQF and its five-level structure were referenced to the EQF. Both, the NQF and EQF levels are clearly indicated in databases as well as in certificate and diploma supplements (UNESCO, ETF, Cedefop 2015, 119). It is planned to adapt the five-level structure of the French NQF to the eight-level structure of the EQF, but for the time being (autumn 2016) it is unclear when this adaptation will be available (Cedefop 2012b, 93).

The Law on lifelong vocational training and social dialogue (Loi n° 2004-391 du 4 may 2004 relative à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie et au dialogue social) of May 2004 includes the national obligation to ensure lifelong further and continuing education and the ***Individual Right to Vocational Training and Education*** (droit individuel à la formation – DIF) for all salaried employees as well as the ***right for skills audit*** (droit au bilan de compétences). It supports education and training measures for specific target groups and foresees an increase of employers' mandatory contribution to the equal fund system for financing vocational further and continuing education (Schreiber-Barsch 2015, 31).

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[69] The CNCP is composed of ministerial representatives, social partners, experts and representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and the Regions and has the following key objectives: to establish and maintain a National Register of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP); to oversee reform and updating of qualifications (diplomas and certificates) on the basis of developments in education and the labour market; to provide recommendations to organisations that deliver vocational qualifications and to provide information about the relationship between different types of qualification (Ottero, McCoshan, Junge 2005, 109).

[70] These are the ministries responsible for Education, Employment, Health and Social Affairs, Youth and Sports.

In 2009, the *Individual Right to Vocational Training*, DIF, was further strengthened by a **Law on Guidance and Lifelong Learning** (Loi 2009-1437 relative à l'orientation et à la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie). The **National Council for Lifelong Further and Continuing Education** (Conseil national de la formation professionnelle tout au long de la vie) was founded with the aim to support coordination in the field between the State, regional councils and social and economic partners (ibid., 32).

In 2014, the **Law on Vocational Education and Training, Employment and Social Democracy** (Loi no 2014-288 du 5 mars 2014 relative à la formation professionnelle, à l'emploi et à la démocratie sociale) replaced the *Individual Right to Vocational*, DIF, by an **Individual Learning Account** (compte personnel de formation – CPF) which is used from 2015 onwards to document the professional career and phases of unemployment of a person throughout his/her lifespan. The Individual Learning Account is accredited with a maximum of 150 hours over nine years (ibid.).

Furthermore, the **National Council for Employment, Vocational Training, Education and Guidance** (Conseil national de l'emploi, de la formation et de l'orientation professionnelles, CNEFOP) has been founded and replaced the *National Employment Council* and the *National Council for Lifelong Vocational Training* (ibid.). CNEFOP is responsible for the coordination and evaluation of policies on employment, basic and ongoing vocational training and guidance, and lifelong guidance (ILO 2015, Normlex website).

PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS

France has an extensive validation procedure in place which includes all educational and learning areas. The vocational education and training is to a large extent centrally controlled and there exists a comprehensive legal basis for the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills. The participation in the validation process is voluntary and people who seek only a confirmation of their competences and not necessarily strive for a formal degree can have their competences validated and confirmed in the form of a certified portfolio (*bilan de compétences*) (Gaylor et al. 2015, 40).

The qualifications awarded through VAE have the same value as those awarded in formal education and training. The comprehensive legal framework and the formalization of validation results in different fields (occupations, employment, volunteering, etc.) contribute to the equivalence of qualifications acquired in non-formal or informal learning or via professional experience with formal qualifications. (Gaylor et al. 2015, 41).

In France, informal and non-formal learning is taken into account based on **summative as well as formative methods**[71]:

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[71] Norway or Switzerland developed formative approaches in parallel to summative, certification-oriented approaches (Cedefop 2008b, 14f).

Legally regulated, but settled below the regulatory level, the **bilan de compétences**[72] is a **formative** process for identifying, analysing and reflecting the professional and non-professional skills acquired by an individual and does not aim at certification as such. The skills audits are carried out in specific registered institutions, but there exist no specific requirements defined by the law concerning the methods applied for skills audits. In practice, there is a wide range of methods in use. The reason for this is on one hand that the target group is very heterogeneous, on the other hand the counsellors have different backgrounds. The handling of synthesis documents that are used to document the competences of candidates turned out to be challenging. In particular the use and disclosure of the results is seen as problematic (Biffl et al. 2012, 100).

The **VAE** is a **summative** process and aims at formal recognition. It is a further development of the validation of prior occupational learning, **VAP**[73]. VAE includes the validation of competences acquired in the private and voluntary sector and allows to validate parts or a whole qualification (vocational or university degree). Partial validation must be completed by validating the lacking competences within five years. (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 143).

Every person with at least three years of experience in paid, unpaid or voluntary activity has the right to have his or her prior experience and learning assessed[74]. VAE as an individual right is closely connected to the **individual right to continuous vocational training** (droit individuel à la formation, DIF), which aims at all employees without any distinction between their level of qualification or competences (European Commission et al. 2014f, 3; European Commission; EACEA; Eurydice 2015, 121).

Comparable to the previous VAP procedure the **VAE** uses a portfolio or dossier in which the professional development, work experience and individual activities are described in detail. The dossier is evaluated by a jury and is presented to the jury in an interview situation. Based on the dossier and the interview results the jury decides whether the diploma or certificate applied for will be granted and if it is granted fully or partially (Biffl et al. 2012, 99). The awarded diploma, certificates and qualifications do not include any reference if they have been acquired via VAE or as formal qualifications (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 144).

THE FIVE STEPS OF THE VAE PROCEDURE DEFINED BY LAW

1. Information on the VAE process provided by regional centres, national information systems (for example www.vae.gouv.fr) and education and training organisations.

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[72] Following the European Commission and Cedefop the bilan de compétences cannot be considered a validation procedure in that sense that it does not result in certification (European Commission et al. 2014f, 3f).

[73] The *Validation des acquis professionnels (VAP)* aimed at the recognition of professional and personal experience to grant access to higher education programmes through exemption of the normal requirements (European Commission et al. 2014f, 3f).

[74] Annen and Schreiber point out that the core concept of „experience based knowledge" was most important for the recognition of experience gained in the context of working and voluntary activities in France (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 148).

2. Decision on the legitimacy of the application is done based on proof of at least three years of professional experience and the comparison of the period of vocational experience in relation to the content of the qualification.

3. Candidates create a dossier in which his/her professional experience is described (different proof of evidence material). In this phase, the candidate is offered mentoring and can receive financial funding.

4. Interview: a dialogue with a jury can be requested by the jury or the candidate; the interview is only obligatory in Higher Education.

5. Consideration and decision by the jury based on the dossier and its own observations. (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 143f)

VAE procedures apply to all officially recognised qualifications and diplomas in France. Officially recognised qualifications include all higher education qualifications which are considered as **Certifications Professionelles** and are awarded by universities or other higher education institutions and are accredited by the Ministry. They must be registered in the RNCP together with sectoral VET qualifications such as the **Certificats de Qualification Professionelle** (CQP) (European Commission et al. 2014f, 5).[75]

While the legal framework on VAE sets general parameters, it is the responsibility of each authority awarding qualifications listed in the RNCP – for example Ministries, chambers of commerce, chambers of trade, universities – to design and implement specific rules and procedures. This results together with the broad range of qualifications in a variety of practices, methodologies, stakeholder cooperations, working cultures and HR as well as active labour market policy measures that can be found at provider level, local and regional levels in France (European Commission et al., 2014f, 4).

VAE practices differ depending on the ministry awarding the qualification. For instance, for a diploma from the Ministry of Education the file used to prove the know-how of applicants is very academic-oriented and applicants need to describe in well-chosen language, what they are able to do. In order to obtain a qualification from the Ministry of Labour, applicants must as well demonstrate their skills and competences in a vocational context (Damesin et al. 2014, 52).

This means that candidates who apply at the Ministry of Labour create a dossier (*Dossier de synthèse de pratique professionnelle*) describing their experience. Afterwards they are observed in a simulated working situation and finally they have an interview with a jury. For qualifications under the responsibility of another ministry, the candidates must apply at the ministry responsible for the relevant occupation (e.g. Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education etc.) and must prepare a dossier in case of the acceptance of the application. The evaluation of the dossier and the validation of the candidates' competences is done via tests and an interview with a jury (consisting of teachers and instructors) in an

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[75] Only regulated professions cannot be awarded through a VAE procedure since activity made without the corresponding qualification is illegal for these professions (European Commission et al. 2014f, 3).

accredited institution (Gaylor et al. 2015, 48). At this stage, applicants have the legal right to take 24 hours of leave from work and to receive support from the accrediting body (Damesin et al. 2014, 105).

PARTICIPATION IN VAE PROCEDURES

Based on a study from 2015 each year 65.000 people participate in the VAE procedure and 30.000 full qualifications are awarded (Gaylor et al. 2015, 48).

Table 1: Participation in VAE and VAP 85 procedures

Participation context	Number
VAE successful participants 2002-2012	250,000
VAE applicants per year	60,000 – 65,0000
VAE awarded full qualifications per year	30,000
Higher Education (HE): VAE applications in 2011	4,300
Higher Education (HE): VAE awarded full or partial qualifications in 2011	more than 4,000
Higher Education (HE): VAP 85 successful validation granting access to HE programmes	12,000

Source: European inventory, country report for France (European Commission et al. 2014f, 4)[76]; own representation.

Annen and Schreiber refer to the increasing trust in the VAE concept and an increasing number of participants over the past years, despite the fact that many French still tend to value formally acquired qualifications more than those acquired via VAE. They also point out that compared to the overall number of certifications in France (1,5 million per year) and in relation to 300.000 certifications per year in the field of continuing education the share of VAE certification is rather small. The authors also refer to the fact that VAE is used more frequently in the health and social service sector and by women[77] (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 144).

Following the European inventory report for France, the demand for VAE focuses on a narrow range of qualifications, many of which can be found in the field of health and social care. For example, in 2012, 9 out of the 10 most popular qualifications for VAE took part in health and social care and accounted for 47.8 % of all VAE applications assessed by juries (European Commission et al. 2014f, 4).

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[76] Note: The information on VAE applicants per year is based on DARES and only considers applications which went through a first eligibility check (European Commission et al. 2014f, 4).
Data collection on the flows of VAE beneficiaries is carried out by the research department of the Ministry of Labour DARES, while the Directorate for Evaluation, Prospective and Performance (DEPP) of the Ministry of National Education carries out annual surveys on the activities of the DAVA, in relation to State technological and vocational qualifications (secondary and tertiary level) and on VAE procedures carried out by higher education institutions (European Commission et al. 2014f, 17).
[77] This increased use of VAE by women might however result from the fact that more women work in sectors using VAE most frequently (e.g. the health and social care sector). Damesin et al. refer especially in the context of validation (VAE) in French healthcare and childcare to the fact that jobs in these sectors are traditionally held by low-qualified female workers, who might benefit from undergoing validation (quote from Cedefop 2016, 18).

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The three qualifications most commonly requested by VAE applicants in 2012[78] were:

- Diploma for nursing assistant (DEAS): 6,050 applications assessed (12.4 % of the total); Diploma for carer (DEAVS): 4.506 applications assessed (9.3 % of the total);
- Childcare diploma (CAP petite enfant): 3.133 applications assessed (6.4 % of the total); (Cedefop 2016, 22)

The most important level of qualification for in-home personal service workers corresponds to **Auxiliary State Diploma for Social Services**, DEAVS, level 2 (Diplôme d'Etat auxiliaire de vie sociale) and is held by approximately 30 % of the workers. This qualification is required for all care-related work (except simple tasks like cleaning the home). For workers directly employed by private individuals there is no minimum qualification required. The DEAVS can be obtained through vocational training and by having the worker's professional experience recognised (forquality 2015b, 10).

Following an internal report stating internal data collected by IPERIA, a certificatory organisation in the field of social care, 13,876 candidates requested a certification and 8,614 candidates obtained certification between 2010 and August 2014. The obtained certification distribute as follows[79]:

- Life assistants: 4,207 (48.83 %);
- Household employees: 3,481 (40.41 %);
- Childcare assistants: 926 (10.74 %);
- Overall 4,392 candidates received a partial certification in 2014.

The above stated data refers to the fact that VAE procedure is of specific interest to **home and personal care** services sector which is due to the fact that there exist major recruitment needs and employees (for the most part women) have normally only few or no formal qualifications that are however required in a sector that is in general largely dependent on certifications laying down the requirements for employees' qualifications (Damesin et al. 2014, 107).

CHALLENGES

Cedefop and the European Commission indicate that although the French VAE system is relatively well developed, there is still a need for improvement: for example, it is required to broaden access, to increase the transparency of the procedure, to shorten the length of the procedure and to encourage use across a wider range of qualifications. The European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning for France emphasizes that the potential of VAE is still underused with regard to addressing many different user groups and with regard to positive individual impacts such as self-esteem, participation in lifelong

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[78] These three qualifications cover 28.1 % of all applications assessed by VAE juries.
[79] Source: IPERIA internal report with data information.

learning, employability and career development aspects (European Commission et al. 2014f, 4).

Following Biffl et al. France is especially facing challenges with regard to maintaining the credibility of diplomas and ensuring access to validation for all in the implementation of VAE (Biffl et al. 2012, 99).

The European Trade Union Institute points out that a major share of the population at work continues to have low skills and that continuing education and training does not always lead to qualification (Damesin et al. 2014, 37).

STANDARDS

The **RNCP** (Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles) exists since 2002 and is a national register containing, listing and systematically describing diploma, certificates and qualifications that can be acquired via VAE. Besides the National Qualification Framework this register can be regarded as a relevant reference framework for informally acquired competences (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 148).

Following the information given at the CNCP website the purpose of the RNCP is

> to provide people and companies with up-to-date information about diplomas and qualification documents for professional purposes, together with the certificates shown in the lists drawn up by the national joint employment committees in the various professional branches.[81]

The qualifications listed in the RCNP are recognized throughout France and are described in detail by using e.g. the categories: activities targeted, sectors of activities, elements of competence acquired, modalities of access, levels etc.[82]

For each qualification, there exist standards (**référentiels de certification**) which describe skills, knowledge and know-how. They are defined in relation with functions and tasks to be performed within an occupation (**référentiels d'activities**). For the technical and vocational qualifications (responsibility of the Ministry of National Education), the *référentiels* are updated on a continuous basis by the **Commissions Professionelles Consultatives**, which are also in charge of the higher technician degree and technological degrees delivered by universities (European Commission et al. 2014f, 7).

FINANCING

Besides the individual's right to participate in validation there are also other elements relevant for the validation process **legally regulated** in France, for example, financing, guidance and institutional responsibility (Gaylor et al. 2015, 41). The validation procedure VAE is legally defined as a part of continuing vocational education (CVT). The Labour Law

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[81] Source: http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/qualificationsFramework (2016-09-13)
[82] Source: http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/qualificationsFramework (2016-09-13)

(Code du Travail) foresees that the costs for the VAE procedure must be covered in accordance with the guidelines for continuing education (Bertelsmann 2015, 254).

In most European countries **enterprises contribute** fully or to a certain degree to the financing of the validation of employees (Gaylor et al. 2015, 55). Following Schreiber-Barsch in France, enterprises clearly serve as the main financers of further and continuing education and the total company expenditure on continuing and further education is twice as high (2010: 1.6 % of the total labour cost) as in the EU as a whole (0.8 %). The guiding principle of the French funding scheme can be characterized as „train or pay" approach[83] (Schreiber-Barsch 2015, 35).

Public officials concerned with the VAE procedure are paid by the state, a regional authority or other public institution. The same applies for the staff of the ministries which are responsible for VAE. This means that services from state institutions are never fully charged, but guidance, coaching and training and education services from public institutions are not free of charge. Depending on the institution doing the validation and certification and the status of a person (employee, non-employed, self-employed) the financing differs (Bertelsmann 2015, 254).

Costs for VAE procedures include:

- The organisation of the validation procedure, registration fees for the application and the evaluation of the application, the organisation of jury interviews, payment of the jury members, administrative costs ...
- Costs for training, guidance and coaching (depending from the requirements of the person and the qualification);
- Eventually additional courses for a partial validation or a full validation at a later point;
- Expenditure for the creation of application forms (transport, copies, telephone etc.)
- Opportunity costs; (Bertelsmann 2015, 254)

COSTS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Employees: Based on the individual right for continuing education DIF the costs for employees can be covered by the enterprise or an approved association (for example the Organisme Paritaire Collecteur Agréé, OPCA). In March 2014, this right was replaced by a **personal account for continuing education** (Crédit Personnel de Formation, CPF), which means, that in the future the costs for VAE underlie special conditions and will be covered by this account (Bertelsmann 2015, 255).

The enterprise can cover the costs for VAE also in the context of the **individual's continuing educational leave** (Congé Individuel de Formation, CIF). The CIF allows employees during their professional career to attend continuing education and training offers independently from the education and training offer of the enterprise. In 2014, also the CIF has been

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[83] Since the Delors Law of 1971 companies are obliged to invest a certain amount (percentage, depending on the company size) in further and continuing education (Schreiber-Barsch 2015, 35).

replaced by CPF. The employee must fulfil certain preconditions and must in advance hand out an application to the employer (ibid.).

Under certain conditions the employee can apply for financial funding at an approved institution such as OPACIF or FONGECIF. These organisations were financing the CIF model via obligatory charges paid by enterprises. In relation to CPF and CIF the enterprise normally pays for the employee and receives refunding of the costs by OPCA, OPACIF, FONGECIF etc. (Bertelsmann 2015, 255f).

Unemployed: the costs of the VAE procedure are divided between the state, Pôle Emploi and the regional governments. The division depends on the region involved. For example, in the region of Bretagne the regional government overtakes all costs for unemployed. The division for all VAE applicants is as follows: regions 30 %, FONGECIF, OPACIF: 30 %, OPCA: 30 %, Pôle Emploi and individuals: 10 % (Bertelsmann 2015, 256).

Only a few persons must cover a large part of the costs for the VAE procedure. Therefore, financing is normally not an issue for the VAE candidates (ibid.).

FUNDING AT COMPANY LEVEL – TWO APPROACHES

Companies are obliged to contribute to an equal fund system for the financing of further and continuing education. The mandatory contribution amounts to 1.6 % of gross annual wages for companies with 20 and more employees, 1.05 % for companies with 10-19 employees, 0.55 % for companies with less than 10 employees. The contributions are collected and redistributed within or between sectors by two joint organisations of accredited collectors: **OPCA** (Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés au titre de la formation professionnelle) and **OPACIF** (Organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés au titre du CIF) (Schreiber-Barsch 2015, 35).

In addition, companies must pay a so-called education tax (taxe d'apprentissage) which is fixed at 0.68 % of the total salaries paid in the previous year. Companies may pay this tax either by covering equivalent costs for the direct further and continuing education of their employees, by paying other social benefits or by transferring the sum to the French treasury. The **Collectors Organizations of the Education Tax**, OCTA (Organismes collecteurs de la taxe d'apprentissage) is in charge of collecting these contributions. Up to half of the profit is redistributed: to the **Centres for Vocational Education and Training**, CFA (Centres de formation d'apprentis,), to the regions (further autonomous distribution) and to those adult education providers that were chosen by the companies initially (ibid.).

FUNDING AT THE STATE LEVEL - TWO-FOLD RESPONSIBILITY EMBODIED BY TWO MINISTRIES

Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research: finances initial (vocational) education and training and networks of local institutions offering a wide range of adult and continuing education.

Ministry of Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue: finances above all adult education measures for specific target-groups (e.g. migrants, senior citizens, people with special needs, basic education etc.).

In total, the state contributed 4.3 billion euros, representing 14 % of the national expenditure on further and continuing education in 2012:

- 36 % for initial vocational education and training;
- 36 % for civil servants;
- 16 % persons in employment of the private sector (e.g. subsidies for the CNAM, the GRETAs, Centre Inffo etc., Accreditation of Prior Learning – VAE);
- 11 % job seekers;
  (Schreiber-Barsch 2015, 36)

National institutional framework, responsibilities, main actors

In France, validation is structured at institutional level in a way that it takes place between the individual and the awarding institution based on a legal framework provided by the State. The validation procedure is supported by counselling and guidance institutions, which means regional centres or special departments at universities. As a rule, the awarding institutions are the line ministries responsible for a profession and the universities (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 147).

While the Ministry in charge of lifelong learning is responsible for the general institutional framework for VAE, each authority awarding qualifications that is included in the RNCP defines the specific rules for the implementation of the VAE procedures. In higher education, each institution specifies its own procedures within the general legal framework and the decree on the implementation of VAE in higher education institutions. In any case the procedure must be in line with the different phases of the VAE procedure: information and guidance, dossier and counselling, assessment and interview by a jury. The Ministry of Higher Education provides general guidance and assesses the different validation systems. Actual validation procedures differ depending on the type of qualification targeted and the awarding authority, but comply with general principles defined by law (European Commission et al. 2014f, 7).

The social partners played an important role in implementing the VAE framework at company level. Many enterprises have facilitated employees' access to validation of experience-based skills, either through an individual initiative or on a collective basis (UEAPME, the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, UNICE, the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe, and CEEP, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises) (Cedefop 2008b, 26).

Awarding bodies are responsible for implementing the validation procedure and issuing qualifications after the jury has taken a decision. Mainly public authorities award occupational qualifications accessible via VAE, but there are also private stakeholders: the occupational sectors award *occupational qualification certificates* (Certificat de Qualification Professionnelle, CQP), and the network of *Chambers of Commerce and*

Industry (CCI) award *certificates of on-the-job competence* (Certificat de Compétence en Entreprise, CCE) on the basis of work-based assessment (Damesin et al. 2014, 105f).

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

France has a specific guidance system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in place, and a network for providing information on VAE (European Commission; EACEA; Eurydice 2015, 108). Awareness-raising and recruitment is the joint responsibility of different stakeholders and guidance on VAE is done within the frame of lifelong guidance. The responsible institution for the information system that has been set up together with the VAE procedures is ***Dispositif académique de validation des acquis,*** DAVA[84]. It offers information for enterprises and individuals via leaflets, telephone counselling and events. (Gutschow et al. 2010, 25)

Since 2002, a network of regional offices, the ***Points d'Information Conseil*** (PIC), provides also information on VAE. The PIC offer basic information about the process and refer applicants to the relevant awarding body. Several PIC act as information centres (Centres d'information et d'orientation, CIO) that offer guidance on initial training and education and also guidance on VAE (European Commission et al. 2014f, 15).

For health and social care qualifications, services and guidance on VAE are provided on behalf of different Ministries by so called ***Agence de Services et Paiement***, ASP (ibid.).

Other stakeholders also provide general information and refer candidates to the right contact points, for example:

- Mission locales of the Public Employment Services (vocational guidance and placement service for young people);
- Guidance providers that are not part of PIC network;
- Social partners;
- Stakeholders involved in guidance, continuous training or skills audits;
- Local offices of the *Association for the vocational training of adults*, AFPA;
- *Networks of education and training institutions in charge of adult training*, GRETA;
- Private providers (support with application and preparation of the portfolio); (European Commission et al. 2014f, 15f)

While **early guidance** is provided mostly by the regional PICs and a range of different stakeholders, counselling (*accompagnement*) is provided by the awarding body responsible for the organisation of the procedure either at the provider level (e.g. universities) or at the regional level. Guidance practitioners are well informed about VAE as the current

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[84] DAVA are primarily meant to support candidates who are interested in acquiring a qualification delivered by the Ministry of National Education, but can provide initial guidance to all candidates regardless of the qualification chosen.

system has already been established for a long time. General vocational guidance and advice on lifelong learning is often offered together with guidance on VAE (ibid.).

For **vocational and technical qualifications** (delivered by the Ministry of National Education) DAVA provide initial information and guidance on how to submit an application during the first phase of application (free of charge). During the second phase of the application, DAVA offer upon request intensive counselling for the preparation of the portfolio (not free of charge). Depending on the needs of the candidate, each DAVA counselling can be done individually or collectively. In **higher education** support is provided by a specific service in charge of VAE and/or continuous training. Counselling is generally provided by a team of two professionals, a general guidance practitioner and a professor responsible for the type of qualification targeted (European Commission et al. 2014f, 15).

For the public, an **information website** (www.vae.gouv.fr) was launched offering information for candidates, employers and validation practitioners (e.g. providing access to reference documents, practical information and a list of the regional PIC). Due to the importance of the VAE procedure for the health and social care sector there exists also a specific website on VAE in this field (http://vae.asp-public.fr) (ibid.).

It is expected that as part of the ongoing reforms to the continuing vocational education and training (CVET) system an institutional network will be created that is able to deliver validation services together with guidance and the provision of education and training programmes (European Commission; EACEA; Eurydice 2015, 114).

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

France has established a **comprehensive quality assurance system** supporting the validation of informal learning by implementing the VAE procedure and the RNCP. The VAE procedure is based on information, institutionalization and participation of different actors, professional counselling by education and training providers and different methods for identifying and assessing competences (Gutschow et al. 2010, 25).

The 2002 legislation on VAE sets some **general criteria on the procedure** that covers as well the functioning and composition of VAE juries. VAE quality assurance procedures are under the responsibility of each body awarding qualifications, but a Quality Charter developed in 2008 outlines a set of key principles for the provision of support to ensure that all State services offer the same level of quality. The most important aspects are:

- *Offering suitable conditions for the provision of support;*
- *Shortening as much as possible the length of the procedure;*
- *Providing required documentation to candidates;*
- *Guaranteeing the quality of guidance;*
- *Listening to candidates' needs;*
  (European Commission et al. 2014f, 16)

An **inter-ministerial committee on VAE** is responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of VAE at national level. At the same time, each body awarding qualifications is expected to develop its own quality assurance system that should take account of the evaluation of the implementation of VAE, process and procedure reviews and measures for improvement (European Commission et al. 2014f, 17).

The VAE procedure and quality assurance systems applied by different awarding bodies can vary. However, the evaluation of the competences of a candidate in relation to the envisaged qualification takes place in the context of an interview with a jury in accredited centres. The interview is held in addition to the dossier evaluation done by appointed advisory councils that aim at measuring the learning experience of an individual. Another method used to validate the skills and competences of a candidate is the assessment via so called *mise en situation*, an assessment method simulating situations from the professional practice (Annen, Schreiber 2011, 149).

The **registration of qualifications in the RNCP** is also related to quality aspects: it signals that all stakeholders underwrite the validity of a given qualification. Therefore, a qualification must meet several requirements and quality criteria referring to national coherence and the overall quality of qualifications. Registration in the RNCP is also a precondition for receiving funding, financing validation of non-formal and informal learning, exercising certain professions and entering apprenticeship schemes (Cedefop 2012b, 27).

In social care, the ***French accreditation agency*** ANESM (Agence nationale de l'évaluation et de la qualité des établissements et services sociaux et médico-sociaux) is developing a set of quality indicators for the domestic aid component of home care, while in comparison the Spanish national system uses process and outcome indicators for the home health services, but not for the domestic aid component of home care (WHO 2012, 92).

Annen and Schreiber underline the challenge of **information asymmetry in validation procedures,** which refer on one hand to the fact that the competences of the individual are at the beginning not known by the awarding authority and on the other hand, the methods and criteria used by the awarding authority are not know by the individual which makes it impossible for them to judge the quality of the procedure. Different signalling and screening measures in the French validation system foresee that individuals and the awarding bodies actively engage in the reduction of such information asymmetries:

Table 2: Methods aiming at the reduction of information asymmetry in VAE

	Active individual	Active awarding body
Signalling	Dossier/portfolio creation (and interview)	Registration in RNCP; Implementation of a standardized procedure

Screening	Use of guidance and counselling offers (selecting the right qualification, educational institution and procedure)	Interview with a jury; dossier/portfolio evaluation by advisory councils

Source: Annen, Schreiber 2011, 150; own representation

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR LOCAL INITIATIVES

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Pôle Emploi support for jobseekers - example of a public institution initiative

The public employment service offers through Pôle Emploi support for jobseekers to use VAE. The following measures have for example been undertaken:

- Recruitment of VAE managers to train and inform officers and to develop tools for jobseekers;
- Signing agreements between the Pôle Emploi and the RNCP that created a link between the qualifications in RNCP and the ROME job profile reference guide (Référentiel Opérationnel des Emplois et des Métiers);
- Creation of a VAE space on the Pôle Emploi website;
- Certification of 180 to 200 regional branches to counsel jobseekers on VAE;
- Signing of an agreement with the French National Agency for Personal and Home Care Services ANSP (Agence Nationale des Services à la Personne);
- Pilot projects in three regions (Limousin, Midi-Pyrénées, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur), aiming at jobseekers' willingness to use VAE to quickly return to employment (reduce the time taken to examine VAE claims, improve synergies to boost relations between stakeholders, and reduce withdrawals of claims in process);
- Implementation of VAE as part of the return-to-work process by creating VAE workshops for unemployed: providing information on the system and identifying the ROME profiles associated with the experience (result: summary sheet and awarding body contact information for the jobseeker);
  (Damesin et al. 2014, 108f)

Passport for volunteers - example of a non-profit organisation initiative

In addition to the VAE procedure, some actions have been designed to support identification of volunteers' competences and help them to describe the value to their learning outcomes. In social care, a passport for volunteers (passeport bénévole) was launched in September 2007 and supported by most awarding ministries with a VAE process. The passport is used by many charity associations (e.g. the Red Cross, Association des Paralysés de France, Secours Populaire, Secours Catholique, les Blouses Roses) (Cedefop 2016, 27).

Based on the information on the website of the initiative and given by the experts of IPERIA the passport for volunteers is officially supported by the Public Employment Service (Pôle Emploi), the Ministry of Education and the AFPA (Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes). [85] It is generally well accepted with 120.000 passports distributed since 2008.

Additional partnerships have been developed in the past years with Job Centres, the Ministry of Associative Life (2012: introduction of a reference document of skills acquired in the exercise of associative responsibilities), the National Association of DRH (ANDRH), Territorial Collectives such as for example the city of Paris and the General Council of Bouches du Rhone, Missions locales etc.[86]

The added value of this passport is that it is helpful for the volunteers to document their experience and skills, but it is also helpful for organisations working with volunteers who receive information on the competences of the volunteers.

VAE system of Club Méditerranée - example of a company initiative
The Club Méditerranée introduced a VAE system at the beginning of the 2000's and uses approximately one hundred occupations found in the company, mainly in hotels and entertainment, to improve the recognition of the experience acquired by the employees outside the company. The project was brought forward by the trade union CGT-FO (Confédération Générale du Travail-Force Ouvrière) which appointed an *Academic Centre for the Validation of Learning*, CAVA, to conduct a study of the 93 job profiles within the company and to identify possibilities for validation against official education qualifications (Damesin et al. 2014, 110).

> *The people targeted were mainly "old-hands" with no qualifications. They had long experience not just in the work but also in mobility, as they had generally worked in holiday villages in different countries. The aim of the project was to have all holiday village employees worldwide, whatever their employment contract, eligible to make a VAE claim, as long as they spoke French (ibid.).*

Through an information campaign carried out by the Human Resources (HR) departments, the CGT-FO holiday village employees throughout the world where invited to take advantage of the VAE procedure. Interested persons were recruited through interviews carried out via video conference by a panel composed of State education representatives and the Club Méditerranée HR departments. 15 people were identified within the first year. By gradually involving the Adult Learning Association AFPA (Association pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes) it became possible to extend VAE to occupational qualifications (*Certificat de Qualification Professionnelle*, CQP) and to use other methods

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[85] Source of information: http://www.passeport-benevole.org/ (2016-12-15); For additional information see also: http://www.vae-npdc.fr/Lists/Document/Passeport%20b%C3%A9n%C3%A9vole.pdf (2017-01-31)
[86] Source of information: http://www.resolis.org/fiche-pratique/le-passeport-benevole-/237/uk (2017-01-31)

than foreseen in the French education system [87]. Furthermore, higher education institutions were asked to offer validation for a Master qualification (foreseen mainly for holiday village managers) (Damesin et al. 2014, 111).

Club Méditerranée brought all these partners together in villages to assist the project managers there according to demand and number of candidates. These visits lasted one week and were funded. On site, a series of meetings were held and finally each institution could present its VAE process, the conditions for eligibility, the claims preparation process, and the support available. The advantages of bringing together all stakeholders at the same time in the villages were (ibid.):

- The employees were available for the duration of the stay;
- It was possible to identify their potential qualification;
- A work-based assessment could be carried out;
- The examination date could be set (six months or one year later);
- The documents required for any work-based assessments were on site;
  (Damesin et al. 2014, 111)

At the end of the process, candidates were invited to held the exam for State education qualifications in France. An assessment jury comprising professionals and trainers decided on claims prepared by the employees of the Club Méditerranée and awarded full or partial qualifications. The follow-up, once the validation group had left the village, was carried out by the HR Department, trade union representatives and the State education system and turned out to be one of the main challenges of the whole process (ibid.).

Based on information given by the experts from IPERIA, the project represented a kind of pioneer action, trying to recognise non-formal learning and skills out of the "official pathways". It was also an innovative approach of training and promoting internal staff rather based on skills ("British way") than on official diplomas and training pathways.

OVERVIEW AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR VALIDATION IN (INFORMAL) CAREGIVING

At the beginning of the 2000's VAE was introduced in a pilot project for domestic assistance. The fact that the French Ministry of Social Affairs was reforming the associated diploma and that the social partners were negotiating a new classification system worked as supporting factors in this process. The VAE procedure provided candidates with the ***Diploma in home care assistance,*** DEAVS[88] (Diplôme d'Etat d'Auxiliaire de Vie Sociale), the prime qualification in the sector. Employees aiming at validation of their competences had to complete an eligibility application covering several criteria. When these criteria have been met, the agency representing the awarding ministry, the so called ***regional department of health and social affairs, DRASS*** (Direction Régionale des Affaires Sanitaires

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[87] Unlike the French education system, the AFPA favors know-how rather than knowledge. Validation is based on role-playing which is observed and evaluated by a trainer and professional working together in team. It takes place on platforms that reproduce the work situation as accurately as possible (Damesin et al. 2014, 110)

[88] Following the European Trade Union Institute claims for the DEAVS are the ones most often presented (14.7 % of all claims examined by the panels) (Damesin et al. 2014, 108).

et Sociales), provided a VAE claim form to be completed (written proof of experience) and presented before an assessment jury (comprising employers, trainers and employees form the sector). During the oral presentation of the claim (lasting approximately one hour), the jury may ask questions. At this stage, the applicant had the right to a statutory minimum of twenty-four hours of support. The time between registering a VAE claim and the decision of the jury amounted to approximately six months. If a partial qualification was awarded, the candidate had five years to complete the missing modules of the validation procedure. In the pilot project, approximately 70 % of candidates were awarded the qualification (Damesin et al. 2014, 107f).

The sector's trade unions, in particular CGT and CFDT, supported the process and carried out an information campaign throughout France to encourage employees to apply. In parallel, the trade unions negotiated the reform of the old classification system, which did not make any distinction between skilled and unskilled employees and awarded them identical salaries. Their negotiations resulted in salary recognition for qualifications, particularly those achieved via VAE (Damesin et al. 2014, 108).

Based on information received from Camilles Savre from IPERIA the ***Diplôme d'Etat d'Auxiliaire de Vie Sociale*** has been replaced by the ***Diplôme d'Etat d'Accompagnant Educatif et Social*** (DEAES). The DEAES requires about nine months and 900-1000 hours of training, including 2/3 internship periods (stages) of 2/3 weeks. In comparison, the diploma for the *assistant(e) de vie dépendance* (ADVD) requires 484 hours of training. There are however partial validations/equivalences recognised officially between this DEAES and our ADVD.

In **Yvelines**, a district of the Ile de France Region, a so-called '**collective project**' has been initiated in 2015. It involved **all regional stakeholders in the health support and social services support sector**, because regional analysis showed a need for qualifications in this sector and problems in recruiting people with the right qualifications (meeting the minimum requirements for qualifications in this sector). In cooperation with the Employment Service candidates for the validation procedure were identified and selected based on selection criteria such as high motivation and at least three years' work experience in the field (Cedefop 2016, 16).

> *The whole validation process (including individual coaching and training) lasted for only two and a half months. This limited duration was seen as important for candidates in order not to lose motivation. At the end of the process, in December 2015, a public event was held to award the diplomas. Companies were also present at this event and 'job dating' opportunities were organised. 124 job offers had been identified and during the 'job dating', 107 interviews were carried out and around 25 potential contracts signed* (ibid.).

Experience from this project and a similar validation initiative done in 2014 (where 75 % of candidates received a job three to six months after the end of the validation) showed that linking validation initiatives closely to the labour market needs of a sector represents a success factor (ibid.).

TRACK CERTIFICATION PERSPECTIVES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Following the EU Skills Panorama for France, **home-carers are the occupations with the highest** projections of net job creation (159,000) in 2012-2022:

Figure 1: Occupations with the highest projections of job openings 2012-2022

▼ Figure 2 – Occupations with the most important projections of job openings in 2012-2022[14]
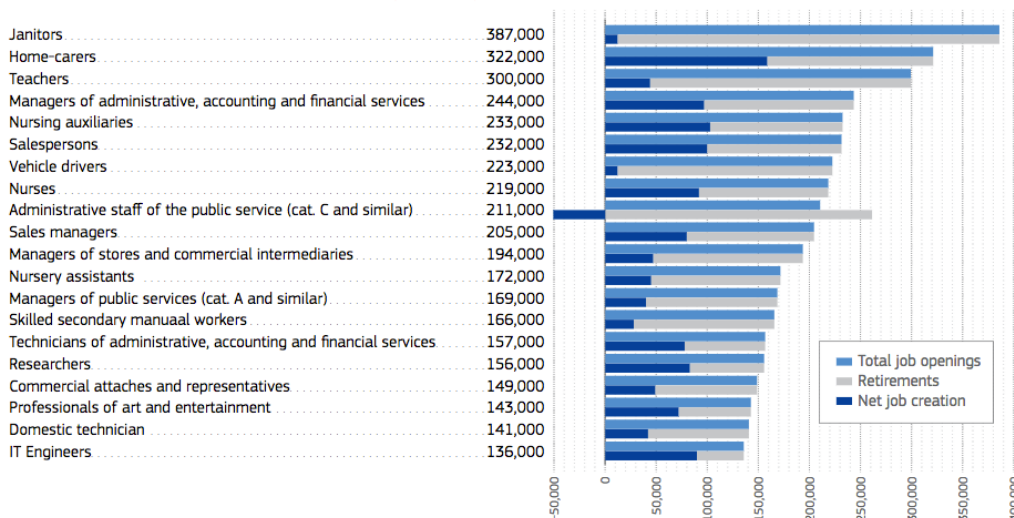
Source: EC, Cedefop, ICF 2015, 5

Furthermore,

> among the 20 occupations declared to be 'hard-to-fill' by employers (BMO survey 2013), one-fourth are 'professional market occupations' where the link employment-education/training is particularly strong (EC, Cedefop, ICF 2015, 5).

Caregivers belong to these 20 occupations. For them relevant and high quality training is regarded as most important to reduce skills mismatches and solve recruitment difficulties (ibid.).

Given these figures and the fact that continuing vocational education as well as the *bilan de compétences* and the *VAE* are well established in France and in the health and social care sector the TRACK offer for distance learning and certification can be expected to be of public interest. On the other hand, as the TRACK programme covers only a small amount of learning outcomes, the certification will probably have to aim at a modular acquisition and/or focus on the attainment of a partial qualification. The *bilan de compétences* could however serve as a good starting point for making caregivers aware of the professional competences they acquired.

PROFESSIONS IN CAREGIVING TO WHICH TRACK CERTIFICATES COULD BE LINKED TO

The RNCP includes the following certificates related to life assistance at EQF level 3 and French NQF level V:

- **Assistant(e) de vie dépendance**[89] (ADVD)
  Awarding body: IPERIA l'Institut
  Related ROME fiche:
  K1302, assistance auprès d'adultes
  The certificate consists of three competence units:
  - AT1 Organisation of the professional space
  - AT2 Development of multiemployer activity
  - AT3 Home and care

- **Assistant(e) de vie aux familles**[90]
  Awarding body: Ministère chargé de l'Emploi (DELEGATION GENERALE A L'EMPLOI ET A LA FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE (DGEFP))
  Related ROME fiches:
  K1302, Assistance auprès d'adultes
  K1305, Intervention sociale et familiale
  K1303, Assistance auprès d'enfants
  K1304, Services domestiques
  The professional title has three certificates of professional competence (CPC):
  - Accompanying people in the essential activities of daily life
  - Relaying the parents in the care of their children at home
  - Assisting people in maintaining their lifestyle and preparing their meals

- **Brevet d'études professionnelles: Accompagnement, soins et services à la personne**[91]
  Awarding body: MINISTERE DE L'EDUCATION NATIONALE
  Relevant ROME fiches:
  K1302, Assistance auprès d'adultes
  K1303, Assistance auprès d'enfants
  J1501, Soins d'hygiène, de confort du patient
  K1304, Services domestiques
  J1301, Personnel polyvalent des services hospitaliers
  Description of certification components:
  - Technical services to the user
  - Care, hygiene and comfort
  - French, history, geography Civics
  - Physical and Chemical Sciences and Mathematics

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[89] Source: http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/visualisationFiche?format=fr&fiche=17800 (2016-09-21)
[90] Source: http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/visualisationFiche?format=en&fiche=4821 (2016-09-21)
[91] Source: http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/grand-public/visualisationFiche?format=en&fiche=12800 (2016-09-21)

- Physical education and sport

All listed certificates can be acquired by passing a VAE process. The TRACK training programme could eventually be used to acquire a partial certification for one or more of these certificates. This is especially likely for those diplomas where IPERIA as the responsible awarding body and the project coordinator of the TRACK project is concerned. The TRACK project will at least offer a comparison of the competences that can be acquired through the TRACK training and the competence profile of the *assistant(e) de vie dépendance* (ADVD).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF TRACK AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Based on the predicted strong labour market demand for home-carers and the existence of a well-developed comprehensive validation system that is especially well established in the field of the home and personal caregiving, the TRACK training programme and certificate might provide a starting point for informal carers to be more aware of their needs for training and of the specific competences they acquired. Some might even think about the recognition of other competences they acquired during their caregiving. Therefore, the TRACK project will offer information on additional possibilities for the validation of competences via VAE and on possible pathways to (re-)enter the labour market as a professional caregiver. Information on care professions with relevant competence profile and on related vocational training can also be understood as a kind of guidance for informal carers with regard to career development and lifelong learning.

Therefore, it is recommended to use an overview of the competences acquired during the TRACK programme to make informal carers aware of the competences they have already acquired. The documentation of the acquired competences could be in line with the already well-established *bilan de compétences* approach.

In a second step the competences acquired via the TRACK programme can be compared to the competences required for relevant *life assistance* certificates and related education and training. References to existing overlaps with the TRACK certificate can be made. Based on the competence overlapping between the TRACK certificate and the relevant care diploma recognition scenarios in the context of existing vocational education and training offers could be presented. As IPERIA offers a training for the ADVD, the TRACK certificate can either be recognised for the ADVD training as prior learning or as a kind of initial module. Besides this, information on the possibility to claim VAE validation for other competences in the field of caregiving could be provided.

As the TRACK certificate covers only a small part of a full qualification it should be made clear that the TRACK training is only a starting point and that further training will be needed to acquire a partial or full qualification for relevant care professions. In this context, the plans for a continuing TRACK training programme could be mentioned.

In the context of the expert workshop held in March 2017 formal and informal caregivers, VET and training and education experts, VAE and certification experts as well as policy and enterprise representatives discussed on the possible rollout of the TRACK training and certification offer in France. It was common sense in this discussion that informal carers need support in the field of professional care. It was mentioned that, given the big disparity of informal caregivers e.g. regarding age or cultural origin (traditional strong family boundaries or not) TRACK might attract only a part of them. With regard to older informal carers, the issues were raised about the fact that these caregivers are not easily involved in training and that becoming professional caregiver is of less relevance for them.

One participant was convinced that informal caregivers are interested in training, also because training helps them to clear their mind and think on other things, especially in the case of those informal carers that do not have a job. In this context, it was appreciated that the TRACK training and certification offer is light and affordable and can be regarded as a starting point. The training also helps to overcome several obstacles like "training is like going back to school", "who takes care of my care recipient when I am completing the training" by offering a few face-to-face sessions in combination with distance learning.

The most important factors that could motivate informal caregivers to participate in TRACK training are from the point of view of the participating caregivers and care professionals: information on the disease (e.g. different phases of the disease; to know how to deal with the patient in a certain phase) and information on homecare (e.g. how to move a patient; how to take care of oneself). Furthermore, exchange with peers is regarded as extremely important: human communication with other people in the same situation show informal caregivers that they are not alone and is quite enriching. It helps to feel comforted and understood and to exchange useful hints.

Regarding the interest in certification and working as a formal caregiver in the future, all participants emphasize that training is helpful in any case, with or without considering the perspective of becoming a professional caregiver. Two out of five informal caregivers say that they are not interested in becoming a professional caregiver, while two others would be interested on knowing more about the ADVD profile and training offer and think, they might consider this option after their informal caring experience. One informal caregiver tells about his/her way from an informal to a professional caregiver: the family doctor referred to the possibility of "direct employment"[92] for personal and household services during a talk with the informal caregiver. Based on this information the caregiver was employed and worked as a professional caregiver for his/her parents. Now he/she is taking care of an old lady with Alzheimer.

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[92] According to information gathered from IPERIA and other interview partners, the possibility to employ informal caregivers exists in France, but not in Spain, Germany or Austria.

All workshop participants agreed that with regard to labour market perspectives there are not that much professional options for informal caregivers except becoming a professional carer or possibly a care assistant (corresponding in France to a kind of low nurse profile).

Three out of five informal caregivers see distance learning as a good possibility to offer training for informal caregivers, because it is flexible and modular and because face-to-face sessions often pose the problem of the carer' replacement. It was mentioned that many face-to-face trainings fail because informal carers are not able to find a person to replace them in taking care of the care recipient. Furthermore, the issue was raised that, for those considering becoming professional caregivers, information on employer profiles could be helpful. Besides, information on how to access training from the lifelong learning catalogue and VET providers close to the informal caregivers' place might be requested by IPERIA.

From the point of view of participating informal carers, the best ways to address informal caregivers would be through: family doctors, pharmacist, medical services such as hospitals and health centres and the internet.

VET providers who participated in the expert workshop underlined that the number of 20 hours training of TRACK as well as the blended format seems appropriate for the target group from a pedagogical point of view and given the time limitations of informal caregivers. The challenge is, that on one hand, face-to-face sessions are important to prevent isolation, promote sharing of experience, analyses of practices and the creation of a peer network, on the other hand, informal caregivers often face difficulties to be available for face-to-face training, since they have nobody to replace them in caring for the care recipient. The latter challenge was also faced during the test phase of the TRACK training, where face-to-face sessions could not be attended by any of the informal caregivers. Therefore, a good balance between face-to-face and distance learning lessons is crucial.

In order to motivate training providers to implement the TRACK training it will be necessary to raise awareness about the growing importance of the care sector and informal care and to refer to the huge potential of the market (about 8 mio. of informal carers and 900.000 people affected by Alzheimer). Workshop participants recommended to start an information campaign via media and the network of VET providers on the care sector.

Regarding the implementation of the TRACK training offer into the training programmes of other VET training providers, the TRACK training is understood as a kind of positioning tool enabling the self-assessment and the valorisation of competences by informal carers themselves. The participants think that the proposed contents can be considered as a "pedagogical initiation" (*réveil pédagogique*), reactivating and valorising the results of the non-formal and informal self-learning and co-learning at home. As such, it is not a training module, nor a certification, but rather a pre-qualification stage. Participants find it possible and relevant to integrate TRACK within a bigger training programme, but also see a need to further clarify the compatibility and complementarity with the existing offer. They recommend to highlight beside the role of informal caregiver also the aspect of "good treatment" (*bientraitance*).

TRACK training can be implemented into the existing training offer of VET training providers depending on the possible correspondences with the standards of competences in the social and health care sector (both at home and at institutions) and, more concretely, in the field of personal services at home. The certifying trainings included in the *National repertoire or professional qualifications* RCNP are the most reliable because they are based on standards, mainly based on the European format of "competence units" and well identified by public funding bodies. The RNCP includes about 15 certifications in the field of assistance to adults, in a large part focused on home care.

Workshop participants in the field of VET providence referred to the following main challenges for implementing the TRACK blended training within existing training offers of VET providers in France:

- Getting decision-makers convinced of the relevance of TRACK training, as a first level of recognition of an activity of public utility (i.e. Alzheimer Plan 2015-2019);
- Building one or several professionalising pathways connected to the already existing certifications (cooperation among certifying authorities);
- Informing and raising awareness on the public funding bodies;
- Reaching informal caregivers taking care of people affected by Alzheimer and getting them informed;

Participants referred to the following training providers as organisations possibly interested in implementing TRACK:

- The *Caisse nationale de solidarité pour l'autonomie*, CNSA[93], which developed and supported since 2007 several initiatives for informal caregivers;
- *France Alzheimer Association*[94], VET provider for 20 years, proposes a training for informal caregivers taking care of a person affected by Alzheimer;
- The platform *France Digital University*, FUN[95], of the Ministry of Higher Education, suggested in 2015 the first online university course about Alzheimer;
- The Université Paris-Est Créteil Val de Marne proposes a training entiteled *Maladie d'Alzheimer et démences apparentées, du diagnostic précoce à la prise en charge* (Alzheimer and related Dementia diseases, from early diagnosis to effective management)[96];
- The training provider CEGOS[97] proposes a training of 21 hours about Alzheimer and related diseases together with a certificate based on the Decree from 8th December

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[93] See: http://www.cnsa.fr/compensation-de-la-perte-dautonomie/soutien-aux-aidants (2017-05-21)
[94] See: http://www.francealzheimer.org/la-formation-des-aidants-familiaux (2017-05-21)
[95] See: https://www.fun-mooc.fr (the mentioned content is not available anymore; 2017-05-21)
[96] See: http://medecine.u-pec.fr/formation-continue/certificats-du-et-diu/du-maladie-d-alzheimer-et-demences-apparentees-du-diagnostic-precoce-a-la-prise-en-charge-477132.kjsp (2017-05-21)
[97] See: http://www.cegos.fr/formation-alzheimer/p-20177472-2017.htm (2017-05-21)

2015, establishing a list of national guidelines for the further professional development of health care professionals between 2016 and 2018[98];

- The training provider CERF FORMATION proposes a training of 5 days and 35 hours about the most common neurodegenerative pathologies, together with a certificate.

Workshop participants in the field of VET consider TRACK a possible starting point for training for the three main diplomas requested by public financing bodies:

- *Diplôme d'Etat d'Accompagnant Educatif et Social*/State certificate for social and educational attendants (DEAES),
- *Assistant(e) de vie aux familles*/Family support assistant (ADVF),
- *Assistant(e) de vie*/Life assistant (ADVD).

The specificity of the professional branch diploma ADVD, addressing the employees directly hired by private households makes it especially relevant for TRACK.

TRACK appears as a relevant tool for the identification of competences and to improve the visibility of a professional profile. Thus, it could be a first step on a professionalisation pathway. Since TRACK cannot be considered a valid element for VAE if there is no clear correspondence to an already existing standard of competences at the RNCP, the *bilan de compétences* is regarded as the most immediate stage for a TRACK rollout.

> *"In principle, TRACK can be very useful to promote the recognition of the competences of informal carers, if an individualised support after TRACK is to be proposed to the informal carer in order to help him to create and implement a complete professionalising pathway, resulting in a certification, an employment. The success of TRACK will be possible within a comprehensive global and secure pathway"* (expert workshop France).

Policy and decision makers emphasized at the workshop that TRACK seems to be rather a tool enabling informal caregivers to be aware of their own competences. Regarding the total number of hours proposed for the training TRACK seems to be adapted to create a will to start a training and can either refer to a "positioning" or "professionalising" pathway. It was mentioned that the title and the objectives of the training should be defined more precisely.

In general, the programme is regarded as too short to provide professionalisation, since eligibility criteria linked to the VAE require at least three years of proven professional experience (employment contract). TRACK is however regarded as useful to value the acquired competences of informal caregivers. Therefore, policy and decision makers recommend to rather position TRACK as a "professionalisation" tool than a certification as such. Another possibility mentioned is the creation of a training on Alzheimer to be submitted and included in the RNCP.

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[98] See: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000031632884&categorieLien=id (2017-05-21)

Among the existing certificates in the field of care that are included in the RNCP, the *assistant(e) de vie* (Life assistant) ADVD, is regarded as most relevant. In depth analysis of the competences of other certificates are however required to clarify whether further correspondences exist and to which degree.

The following organisations were considered as likely to be interested in offering the TRACK training:

- Network of Associations of Alzheimer patients*;*
- Regional public administration (*Conseil regional)*;
- Federation of private household employers;
- Public employment services;
- Employee representative committee (of private enterprises);
- Retirement founds' organisations;
- Labour doctor;
- *Mission de Lutte contre le Décrochage Scolaire* (Mission for fight against school dropout) for people under 18 taking care of their grandparents;
- *L'Ecole de la 2e chance* (school of second chance);
- Institutions providing support for professional integration;

7. GERMANY

INTRODUCTION AND SHORT OVERVIEW

The Federal Statistical Office of Germany predicts an increase of people requiring long-term care, from 2.3 million in 2011 to 3.2 million in 2030. Besides, the number of German workforce will drastically diminished because of demographic shifts. Thus, as in most European countries, Germany is subject to a general shortage of staff in the long-term care sector, especially qualified workers for the elderly care sector (forquality.eu 2015d, 15f.).

Due to a shortage of health and care professionals there exist a lot of projects and initiatives in Germany that aim at qualifying low skilled care workers and care assistants for professional care. Many projects aim especially at qualifying migrants or women who want to (re-)enter the labour market for care. These projects and initiatives focus however often on specific training measures that offer on the job orientation or -training, shorter training periods for regulated care professions, guidance and support during the training etc.

Apart from a few exceptions, no legally binding regulations for the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning exist at present in Germany. There is no consistent validation system with well-established procedures and responsibilities in place. The only existing legally binding validation procedure is the so-called external exam (*Externenprüfung*), which is regulated at national level, but only provides access to an exam and not a validation and formal recognition of non-formal or informal learing.

It is however possible to recognise learning outcomes that have been acquired in another formal context and that have already been legitimated by passing an exam or receiving a certificate. Examples for such formal recognition are the recognition of vocational prior education (*Anrechnung beruflicher Vorbildung*) or the equity of examination certificates (*Gleichstellung von Prüfungszeugnissen*). Refugees and migrants can apply for a qualification analysis if they do not have all necessary documents available. In this context, their professional competences are validated based on working examples, a professional discussion or test working in an enterprise.

Because of the minor role that validation plays at present in Germany, good practices for the validation of competences acquired via non-formal or informal learning are seldom. There are however many good practice examples for qualifying low skilled care workers for higher care professions. Many of these projects could be potential cooperation partners for the rollout of the TRACK training and certificate. In this context, it must be taken into account that in Germany exist also many initiatives at regional and national level that could be a good starting point for collaboration with relevant stakeholders and enterprises.

Germany has installed a "dual" education and training system. Apprenticeships typically

combine on-the-job training and vocational college courses (Berufsschule) and lead to a formal qualification, legally required in many occupations. Many young people who leave school after completing compulsory (lower secondary) education take up an apprenticeship. The political and social actors are actively involved in the apprenticeship system and the effectiveness of the system contributes to the relatively low German rate of "NEET" (not in employment, education or training) (ibid., 120).

While until now, Germany's successful apprenticeship system did not call for an implementation of non-formal and informal learning validation, new challenges such as the demographic change and the need to integrate young people of migrant origin[99] in the apprenticeship system induce the social actors to integrate validation as a complementary element of the high-level vocational training system. The validation of non-formal and informal learning is also required for young people who drop out of university before they gain a degree or who are trapped in temporary and precarious jobs (ibid., 120f). Also the requirement to adopt the European Qualification Framework stimulated reforms in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system of Germany (Damesin et al. 2014, 119).

Germany has a well-developed welfare state (Sozialstaat) with a constitutional obligation to provide social welfare. People in need of care in Germany can receive benefits in cash and have recourse to informal care givers in their home (solely), or benefits in kind to get professional home care services, or a combination of both. Approximately two thirds of German citizens prefer to be cared for at home (forquality.eu 2015d, 4).

In 2015, the *First Act to Amend the Eleventh Book of the Social Code*, i.e. the *First Act to Strengthen Long-term Care*, came into force. It aims at offering greater support to families willing to provide care at home of their relatives, for example more day-care and short-term care opportunities. As the access to work in long-term care facilities will be made easier, it is expected that the number of additional caregivers will increase significantly (forquality.eu 2015d, 7).

Due to a shortage of health and care professionals there exist a lot of projects and initiatives in Germany that aim at qualifying low skilled care workers and care assistants for professional care. Many projects aim especially at qualifying migrants or women who want to (re-)enter the labour market for care. These projects and initiatives focus however quite often on specific training measures that offer on the job orientation or shorter training periods for regulated care professions. These projects normally do not foresee the validation of competences acquired via prior non-formal or informal learning, they could however also be of interest for informal carers who want to (re-)enter the labour market.

With the slogan "Good care is a human right", various actors from the elderly care sector have joined forces to form the alliance for Good Care. The aim of the alliance partners is to

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[99] In 2012, Gemany was among the first countries in Europe to implement the "blue card" system to admit skilled foreign workers from outside the EU. Furthermore, the government passed a law recognising foreign vocational qualifications. Though new migrants are often better educated than previously, many work in jobs beneath their qualifications (e.g. due to linguistic barriers) or lack school/academic qualification (Damesin et al. 2014, 121).

improve the situation of people in need of care and to support caregivers. To this end, they demand tailor-made services for people in need of care, more support and recognition for caring relatives, better wage and working conditions, and fair financing.[100]

As many (health and social) care professions in Germany are regulated professions and require a specific qualification, there are only a few professions left for informal caregivers who want to enter the labour market without additional training. For example, the profession *assistant – elderly care/personal assistance* (Helferin - Altenpflege/Persönliche Assistenz) is not legally regulated and does not require a specific training or education. Assistants in the field of elderly care/personal assistance are generally trained at the workplace.[101] Due to the low qualification level of this profession, the salary is however often also quite low.

The best option for a rollout of the TRACK training and certificate is a collaboration with vocational training providers in the field of care. The German project partner, WBS, offers for example several education and training measures in the field of elderly care which could be a good starting point for the rollout of TRACK in Germany, because they are based on legal requirements and result in a professional qualification of people who passed the training. In this context, the TRACK certificate could be recognised as prior learning. WBS has already indicated that it will recognise TRACK in the context of training offers for elderly care. Other training and education providers could be gained as cooperation partners. Especially VET providers who already offer training for formal carers could be interested in broadening the scope of their training offer and including the TRACK training for informal carers.

LEGAL SITUATION AND THE POLICY ON VALIDATION

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is regulated to a large extent by the **Vocational Training Act** (Berufsbildungsgesetz, BBiG) and the Crafts Code (Handwerksordnung).

The Vocational **Training Reform Act** (Berufsbildungsreformgesetz) of April 1st, 2005 merged and reformed the **Vocational Education Act and the Vocational Training Promotion Act** (Berufsbildungsförderungsgesetz) and increased the permeability between vocational preparation (Berufsvorbereitung[102]) and apprenticeship, and between full-time schooling and vocational training. The Vocational Training Reform Act also facilitated the access to testing for people without an apprenticeship (Damesin et al. 2014, 121).

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[100] Source: http://www.buendnis-fuer-gute-pflege.de/footer-menu/presse/ (2016-12-10)
[101] Source of information: BerufeNET website
https://berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de/berufenet/faces/index?path=null/kurzbeschreibung/zugangzurtaetigkeit&dkz=14641 (2016-12-10)
[102] *Berufsvorbereitung* is a year spent between leaving lower secondary school and starting an apprenticeship where young people improve their basic competences which often have not been acquired at school, but are needed to take up an apprenticeship (Damesin et al. 2014, 121).

Apart from a few exceptions, no legally binding regulations for the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning exist currently in Germany. This is due to the fact that there is no consistent validation system with well-established procedures and responsibilities in place (Bertelsmann 2015, 73). The only existing legally binding validation procedure is offered for the so-called **external exam** (*Externenprüfung*), which is legally regulated at national level, but only provides access to an exam and not a validation and formal recognition of non-formally or informally acquired competences as such (Bertelsmann 2015, 74).

Currently, it is only possible to recognise learning outcomes that have been acquired in another formal context and have already been legitimated by passing an exam or receiving a certificate. Examples for such formal recognition are the **recognition of vocational prior education** (*Anrechnung beruflicher Vorbildung*) or the equity of examination certificates (*Gleichstellung von Prüfungszeugnissen*) both covered by the Vocational Training Act (ibid., 72).

In April 2012, the **Recognition Act** (Act to improve the assessment and recognition of foreign professional qualifications/*Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Feststellung und Anerkennung im Ausland erworbener Berufsqualifikationen*) came into force and established a nationally standardized system of assessing foreign professional and vocational qualifications. While professional and vocational qualifications have been recognised quite seldom before the Act came into force and many migrants despite having acquired a formal qualification have been classified as unskilled and low-skilled in German statistics, the Act established a right for evaluating the equality of foreign professional and vocational qualifications in Germany (Bertelsmann 2015, 80). The Act comprised several laws and amendments to existing law and is based on the **EU Recognition Directive 2005/36/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, the Lisbon Agreement and others. It takes into account only occupations that are governed by federal law: around 600 occupations, including 84 regulated professions[103] (41 governed by specific laws and 43 are regulated occupations in the sense that a licence and possession of a master craftsman qualification are required) and approximately 510 non-regulated occupations (including about 330 dual training occupations and about 180 advanced training qualifications governed within the scope of the **Vocational Training Act** and the **Crafts and Trades Regulation Code**) (BMBF 2014, 27f).

The federal government presented this law as an instrument to secure the availability of skilled workers in Germany. Every federal state (*Bundesland*) had to implement the law and was responsible for developing standardised procedures and common implementation criteria for the responsible enforcement agencies (Damesin et al., 123).

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[103] „*Regulated professions are professions which can only be commenced or practised by individuals who have acquired specific professional qualifications as stipulated by relevant legal or administrative provisions. The exercising of such a profession includes use of the professional title, and this is restricted to individuals with specific professional qualifications in accordance with relevant legal or administrative provisions*" (BMBF 2014, 28).

The main principle established by the *Recognition Act* is the equivalency of foreign professional and vocational qualifications to German standards. Therefore, the responsible authorities assess the candidate's qualifications based on the equivalent occupation in Germany (Damesin et al., 123).

For persons interested in seeking recognition that are unable to provide all the necessary documentation (for example because the persons' country of origin was affected by war) the *Recognition Act* foresees other appropriate procedures, for example knowledge tests or skills analysis (which may take the form of specialist interviews or work samples). The prerequisite for recognition is, however, always a formal professional or vocational qualification (BMBF 2016, 43f).

The **Professional Qualifications Assessment Act** (Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz, BQFG) offered an independent evaluation system for foreign qualifications by providing new certificates that document the equality or partial recognition of foreign qualifications regarding a German reference profession (Bertelsmann 2015, 80).

The **Federal Government BQFG Amendment Act**, drawn up to meet the requirement to implement the EU stipulations in the Professional Qualifications Assessment Act and in German Industrial Code duly came into force on 18 January 2016. The Federal BQFG as amended is widely in accordance with the BQFG's of the federal states and offers a possible point of reference for the specific laws and ordinances issued by the Federal Government in which professional and occupational recognition is regulated.

POLICY AND LEGAL BACKGROUND FOR CARERS

Germany has a well-developed welfare state (*Sozialstaat*) which has a constitutional obligation to provide social welfare. People in need of care in Germany can therefore receive benefits in cash and have recourse to informal care givers in their home (solely), or benefits in kind to get professional home care services, or a combination of both. Approximately two thirds of German citizens prefer to be cared for at home (forquality.eu 2015d, 4).

The **Home and Institutional Care Act** (Pflege-Versicherungsgesetz) from 1994 represents the starting point of major reforms initiated by the government to improve the national health and long-term care system. It introduced long-term care (LTC) needs to the social insurance scheme, the main framework for social security in Germany. In 1995, the **Social Long-term Insurance** (Pflegeversicherung), LTCI, was put in place (forquality.eu 2015d, 5).

Since 2003, long-term care has operated under the **Geriatric Nursing Act** which has established basic regulations at the national level (Gospel et al. 2011, 20):

> *Under this, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Women, and Youth is responsible for regulating elderly care as a state licensed occupation. In addition, the Länder (federal states; translation by the author) have considerable influence and are responsible for the quantity and quality of training. Along with associations of employers, employee organizations, and others, they also regulate the basic curriculum and practical and theoretical elements of training (ibid.).*

In 2003, Germany standardized the vocational training for older workers by federal law. Thus, Länders no longer regulate the training themselves, they are only responsible for the Implementation of training (forquality.eu 2015d, 21).

There exist separate legal regulations for specific professions such as for example the **Care for the Elderly Act** (Altenpflegegesetz), the **Act on Nursing Care** (Krankenpflegegesetz), the **Act on Midwifery** (Hebammengesetz), the **Act on Technical Assistants in Medicine** (Gesetz über technische Assistenten in der Medizin), the **Emergency Paramedics Act** (Notfallsanitätergesetz), the **Masseur and Physiotherapist Act** (Masseur- und Physiotherapeutengesetz) etc. (Bertelsmann 2015, 73; BIBB 2015, 211).

In 2015, the **First Act to Amend the Eleventh Book of the Social Code**, i.e. the **First Act to Strengthen Long-term Care**, came into force. It aims at offering greater support to families willing to provide care at home of their relatives, for example more day-care and short-term care opportunities. As the access to work in long-term care facilities will be made easier, it is expected that the number of additional caregivers will increase significantly (forquality.eu 2015d, 7).

PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS

Currently, there exist two ways of validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning in Germany:

- **„de facto" recognition:** even it is not defined as this, the recognition of informal learning has already been practiced for a long time in enterprises, for example in the context of human resource development procedures such as performance interviews, observation, assessment sessions etc. Human resource and career development in enterprises are based to a large extent on the documentation and assessment of informal learning that has however not been transferred into certification formats eligible beyond the borders of the enterprise so far. While informally acquired competences are usually recognized within the enterprise, they do not play a comparable role in the recruitment process, where certificates are still the most important factor. Thus, the situation in Germany differs considerably from many other European countries where the validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences plays an important role in recruiting as well (Bertelsmann 2015, 72).
- **formal recognition**: formal recognition results in a binding eligibility regarding the education system (authorisation to access a course of education or an exam) or with regard to the employment system (access to a profession) (ibid.).

There are several procedures for the documentation of non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes that focus on different target groups, sectors or methodological approaches. From a methodological point of view test-based,

biographically-oriented and activity-oriented validation procedures can be differentiated. Regarding the labour market and employment related outcome of a procedure, a differentiation can be made between binding procedures (standardised, accepted in the labour market, legally binding or awarded by the chambers, e.g. external examination or collective agreements) and procedures that are not binding (do not result in a formal recognition, but provide orientation or motivation for users, e.g. competence passes or competence audit procedures) (Bertelsmann 2015, 75f).

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

The so-called external examination (*Externenprüfung*) targets 30,000 people per year and offers an individual, formal pathway for validating an employees' prior vocational learning thereby providing access to subsequent training courses (Damesin et al. 2014, 119).

This procedure does however not offer a formal recognition of competences. It only offers the right to participate in the final exam of a specific occupation without passing the foreseen perennial vocational education and training. Based on the Vocational Training Act, professional experience that can be demonstrated for a defined period of time is accepted as equivalent to the education and training time of the corresponding occupation. The working experience must be one and a half times more than the foreseen education period. As proof a documentation of the fulfilled tasks and a confirmation by the employer are required. The documents are examined and validated depending on the federal state, the occupation or trade and the sector, either by the **Chambers of Industry and Commerce** (Industrie- und Handelskammer, IHK) or by the **Chambers of Craft** (Handwerkskammer, HWK). The largest part of required competences should be covered by vocational practice. If there are any gaps regarding the formal requirements these can be closed by passing additional courses. The procedure results only in access to the final exam. Although work experience is recognised as corresponding to formal education, the practical part of the exam must be passed together with the theoretical part (Bertelsmann 2015, 76f).

In 2011, only 6.1 % of all final exams have been external exams. The largest part of external exams can be found in the domestic economy sector with almost half of all exams being external exams. In agriculture 9.1 %, in industry and trade 7.7 % and in the public sector 3.2 % of the exams are external (ibid., 77).

75.3 % of all external candidates are accepted based on their professional experience, the rest of the candidates have been accepted based on an education and training course that is equivalent to the education and training of the relevant occupation (ibid.).

Although external examination is considered very efficient in Germany, the external exams seem however not adequate to respond to the needs of those who face difficulties in participating in the **apprenticeship system** (*duales System*). For example, early school-leavers, migrants or low-qualified workers often face difficulties in using this approach (Damesin et al. 2014, 119f): Since there is a difference between the activities and tasks fulfilled in the working process and the occupational profile description, potential candidates often face the problem that they must pass courses to close these gaps. For the

mentioned target groups this requirement can represent a challenge. Also the exam itself is considered challenging for people who are not used to learning (Bertelsmann 2015, 79).

The procedure offers candidates wanting to have their on-the-job experience certified the possibility to enter the examination process. Upon successfully completing the process they receive the same certified qualification as those who have passed the exam at the end of an apprenticeship. The examination corresponds to the apprenticeship examination, and is based on the assumption that a large part of the necessary skills have been acquired through non-formal learning. Only full accreditation is possible (no recognition of parts or modules) (Damesin et al. 2014, 122).

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS ASSESSMENT BASED ON BQFG

As mentioned above the **Professional Qualifications Assessment** is besides the external examination the only legally regulated procedure that allows persons to receive a formal qualification without passing the foreseen education and training courses. Differently from the external exam, the *BQFG* offers the possibility of a concrete recognition of learning outcomes and not only access to an exam. In order to start a national equivalence decision procedure based on the *BQFG* it is however necessary to prove that formal qualifications have been acquired abroad, which means that this law does not cover non-formal and informal learning, but rather aims at the recognition of formal learning that took place outside of Germany (Bertelsmann 2015, 80f).

The *Recognition Act* faces however difficulties regarding the recognition of many professions, because it assumes that the vocational education and training system is based on a similar or the same institutional complexity as the German system with its dual system or the vocational schools. But many of the countries where the largest part of migrants come from have a less standardized vocational education (ibid., 81).

Besides this, there exist differences in the branches. For example, in health care and social care for the elderly there is no such profession-oriented or comparable vocational education and training available in many other countries. Therefore, competence assessment procedures are required that allow to validate the competences a person has acquired. So, for professions regulated at national level, § 14 of the *BQFG* foresees the possibility of a competence assessment.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research has funded the project **PROTOTYPING** that offers a tool for the chambers that can be used to analyse qualifications. In practice, however, competence assessment for non-regulated professions is applied only in a few cases, for example if refugees are not able to document their qualifications because they have no documents or if the authenticity of the presented certificates is doubtful. Most of the evaluations are based on the analysis of documents which lead to full or partial recognition. For assessment procedures that are not based on the BQFG, but on professional Acts (e.g. for health care and care for the elderly) no empirical data on the evaluation is available (ibid., 81f).

Although the *BQFG* aims at regulating the recognition of foreign formal qualifications, it offers as well the opportunity to recognize work experience when formal certificates are not available. The Act implicitly covers the requirements for the identification and assessment of work experience acquired abroad (ibid., 82f).

The *Recognition Act* and related instruments[104] refer on one hand to a possible approach in validating qualifications and competences that have so far not been recognized in Germany, on the other hand it gives rise to advantages for people who acquired qualifications abroad since they can have their non-formal and informal competences validated while people who acquired their qualifications and competences within Germany do not have this option (ibid., 82).

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

The collective agreements of some sectors (e.g. wholesale and international trade, mining, the metalwork and electrical industry, the chemical industry, construction, public sector administration) take into consideration informally via work experience acquired competences and places work experience on the same footing as formal vocational qualifications. The classification in collective agreements takes into consideration not only competence profiles that have been acquired via education and further education, but also results of non-formal and informal learning. Thus, activities in recognised apprenticeships that are based on non-formally and informally acquired competences of a person are upgraded. Professional experience is thus seen more or less on a par with vocational qualification and is taken into account when defining the salary (BMBF 2008, 52; Bertelsmann 2015, 83).

This procedure is of specific relevance for employees with little income and low formal qualification, because it offers the opportunity to recognise professional experience and to receive higher salaries (ibid.):

> *The situation (...), in which work experience is placed on an equal footing with BBiG (Berufsbildungsgesetz/Vocational Education Act; addition by the author) or HwO (Gesetz zur Ordnung des Handwerks/Crafts Code; addition by the author) occupations, applies almost universally in the lower salary groups of all sectors. In the construction industry this is linked with the idea of the minimum wage. For example, the allocation under the collective agreement for salary group I (worker, plant operator) requires no standard qualifications and for salary group II (skilled worker, machinist, driver), equivalent qualifications acquired in some other way are used in addition to formal qualifications with standard content (BMBF 2008, 52).*

Another example is the "collective agreement remuneration framework (ERA-TV)" of the metal and electrical industry in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, for which the classification under the collective agreement is not related to formal qualification but to

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[104] Such instruments are for example the national competence center for Foreign Skills Approval of the German Chamber of Industry and Trade (IHK-FOSA), the programme „integration through qualification (IQ)" and internet portals such as www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de or www.bq-portal.de (Bertelsmann 2015, 82)

the duties of the job. In this context, it is not relevant how the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities were acquired and key competences gain importance instead. They are recorded in the assessment levels efficiency, quality, flexibility, responsible behaviour, cooperation and leadership (BMBF 2008, 52).

This procedure puts, especially for the lower salary categories, informally acquired competences on a par with formal qualifications. However, the validation of informally acquired competences is in this approach not based on elaborated methodologies and instruments, but rather relies on the evaluation of the employees' skills and competences by the employer. This results in a certain degree of dependency on the employer and in some uncertainty regarding the status of a low qualified worker in case the employer changes. Furthermore, the validation procedure is here replaced by the conclusion that a person who successfully fulfilled a working task has acquired the necessary competences. The competence orientation promoted in European instruments such as the EQF or ECVET is in this approach replaced by a working task orientation which does not aim at documenting the competences of a person or the competences required to fulfil a certain task (Bertelsmann 2015, 84f).

According to an interview partner from Germany, the collective agreements are also important when it comes to the question of the implementation of higher qualification measures for care staff, since the institutions often receive budget only for staff that belongs to a certain collective agreement group and higher qualified staff requires another collective agreement group that is not covered by the available budget.

PARTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Partial qualifications are important elements for the development of a validation system for informally and non-formally acquired competences, since they provide qualification units below full qualifications and occupations. However, there are some caveats concerning the modularisation of training regulations in Germany, since partial qualifications are regarded as questioning the principle of (regulated) occupations and the dual system and the high level of vocational education (Bertelsmann 2015, 85).

There exist a few initiatives and trial scenarios that aim at the implementation of partial qualifications and education and training modules for certain target groups. From 2010 to 2013 for example, the **Federal Employment Agency** (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) tested in several districts the use of partial qualifications: low qualified people could acquire labour-market relevant and accumulate vocational competences that lead to a recognised vocational qualification. In this context, partial qualifications have been defined as distinct and supra-regional standardised units of a curriculum for a skilled occupation. Main characteristics of the partial qualifications were the orientation towards skilled occupations, the integration of quality assured competence assessment and the launch of structured and meaningful certificates. All together the partial qualifications had to cover

an occupational profile (ibid., 86).[105]

The certification procedure developed in the context of partial qualifications has been applied and evaluated in 10 Employment Agency districts for 500 persons. Guidelines addressing all persons involved in the realisation of further education measures based on the partial qualification concept have been developed and continuously further improved during the pilot phase. Three months after the end of the partial qualification measure 50 % of the participants were employed, after 9 months 66 %. Two third of the education providers think that the concept is ideal or very appropriate for the qualification of low qualified (Reiter, Weber 2013, 78).

The legal basis for this step-by-step modular vocational education approach which allows candidates to qualify for an apprenticeship certificate is the BBiG § 2 (ibid., 12).[106] The high acceptance of partial qualifications by enterprises and by the target group of low qualified people resulted in a transfer of the concept to other initiatives, for example the initiative „certification of partial qualifications" of the Chamber of Industry and Trade (IHK) where between 2013 and 2016 the certification of partial qualifications was tested and evaluated in the context of pilot projects. Partial qualifications are understood as „consistently structured units beneath the craft certificate (*Facharbeiterbrief*) that result in standardised certificates and are oriented on typical operative working and business processes (Bertelsmann 2015, 86f).

There exist at national level standardized and labour-market relevant education and training modules for 18 professions[107]. These education and training modules have been developed in programmes such as **JOBSTARTER CONNECT**[108]. It is foreseen to develop further education and training modules (ibid., 87).

The target group of these certified partial qualifications are low qualified unemployed people who are more than 25 years old and have little chances to pass a vocational education or further education measure (for example young adults without vocational qualification, persons returning to the labour force, older adults without or with outdated qualification). They can acquire labour-market relevant and accumulate vocational competences and receive a partial qualification which is already relevant for the labour market itself and thus supports an easier access to the labour market. For each occupation about four to six partial qualifications with a duration of 2-6 months (including company-

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[105] For more detailed information see the website of the Employment Agency:
https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/web/content/DE/Institutionen/Traeger/BeruflicheWeiterbildung/Detail/index.htm?dfContentId=L6019022DSTBAI826468 (2016-11-22)

[106] Also other models such as the so-called „Abschlussorientierte modulare Nachqualifizierung" (offered for example in Berlin und Hessen) use this approach. For more information see for example: http://www.bbz-berlin.de/uploads/brochures/Info%20Nachqualifizierung.pdf (2016-11-22) or https://www.hessen-agentur.de/img/downloads/804_Nachqualifizierung_An_und_Ungelernte_komplett.pdf (2016-11-22)

[107] For example, professions such as retail salesman, salesman, warehouse clerk, industrial mechanics, painters and varnishers, electronics technicians in the field of operating technology or in the field of energy and building technology, motor vehicle mechtronics, chemical technician etc. (Bertelsmann 2015, 87)

[108] For more detailed information see: http://www.jobstarter.de/connect (2016-11-22)

based qualification) have been specified. All partial qualifications that cover the whole occupational profile must be passed. For a formal qualification, it is necessary to pass also an external exam afterwards (Reiter, Weber 2013, 76).

Certification is done in two ways: partial qualifications are acquired directly based on a competence assessment done by the Chamber of Industry and Trade (*IHK-Zertifikat*); the indirect approach is to pass education and training measures and to receive a confirmation of participation (Bertelsmann 2015, 86ff).

In the second case the identification and documentation of the acquired competences is based on an individual competence assessment at the education and training provider. This competence assessment is done based on predefined rules of the Public Employment Agency. The education provider must be authorised to perform the qualification measures and the individual assessment of competences for the Agency (Reiter, Weber 2013, 77).

The certification system for partial qualifications is based on the accreditation of admission centres (for example, certification bodies, Chambers, sector associations) done by the **Deutsche Akkreditierungsstelle, DAkkS**[109]. The admission centres are responsible for the authorisation and monitoring of the education and training providers regarding the provision of qualification measures and the individual competence assessment (ibid.).

SKILLS AUDITS (KOMPETENZBILANZIERUNGEN)

There exist several different competence reporting tools and procedures in Germany, which are mainly used to raise awareness about a person's competence profiles. These tools and procedures are often dedicated to specific target groups such as migrants, refugees, low skilled workers etc.

A well-established competence reporting tool is the so-called **ProfilPASS**[110] that assists people in finding out what their strengths and competences are. With the help of an advisor, candidates discover their hidden competences and receive support in setting their goals. The ProfilPASS aims to prevent people from dropping out of training and education. It has been transferred to other European projects such as KISS: Know your interests – and show your skills.[111]

Similar tools are the **Qualipass** in Baden-Württemberg, the **Job Navigator** of the IG Metall or the **competence reporting tool of Nordrhein-Westfahlen**.

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[109] Since 1st of April 2012, the Deutsche Akkreditierungsstelle (DAkkS) is responsible for the accreditation and monitoring of the competent bodies authorized by the Employment Agency to conduct competence assessments and certifications. For more details see:
https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/web/content/DE/Institutionen/Traeger/AkkreditierungundZulassung/Detail/index.htm?dfContentId=L6019022DSTBAI524613 (2016-11-22)
[110] For more information see: http://www.profilpass.de/
[111] For more information see: http://www.profilpass-international.eu/

FINANCING

In Germany, there exists no public funding for recognition procedures and the state is not contributing any financial funding to the validation of informally acquired competences. There are also no public information and guidance services. This situation is due to the fact that in Germany the validation and recognition procedures are quite heterogeneous and that there is no comprehensive standardisation and quality assurance for validation and recognition procedures in place that could provide the basis for public funding (e.g. in the form of subsidies, student loans or similar). However, for some procedures such as the ProfilPASS an education voucher is offered: in case of unemployment or the danger of becoming unemployed the Employment Agencies can hand out an education voucher to persons who have a vocational qualification or three years of professional work experience. The voucher guarantees that the costs for the participation in a further education measure are covered by the Employment Agency (Bertelsmann 2015, 99).

The Chambers offer information, guidance and the validation of informally acquired competences in the context of the external examination which provides access to the final exam for the qualification free of charge. Candidates have however to pay an examination fee for the final exam (depending on the professional group the costs range between 200 and 450 €). Furthermore, there exists a broad range of preparation course offers. Candidates pay in case of the participation in such courses between 500 and 7.000 € depending on the course format and time (Bertelsmann 2015, 100).

Several of the competence passes are almost free of charge. For example, the Qualipass in Baden-Württemberg, the Job Navigator of the IG Metall or the competence reporting tool of Nordrhein-Westfahlen can be used free of charge on the internet. Printed versions are available for a small fee (e.g. 2,50 € for the Qualipass). Normally for these tools no guidance network exists and users must rely on themselves when using these instruments (ibid.).

With only a few exceptions candidates must pay for validation procedures in Germany from their private resources. There exists no funding for the participation in validation procedures. The state provides no financial incentives to improve one's individual competence profile by the validation of informally acquired competences (ibid., 102).

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, RESPONSIBILITIES, MAIN ACTORS

At present, there exists no standardised regular validation procedure with responsible institutions, transparent validation criteria and generally recognised results. The broad range of procedures contributes rather to confusion and uncertainty among potential candidates on the procedures and criteria and on the relevance of the validation results in the labour market. There are no standards for the procedures for validating informally acquired competences. Quality standards for these procedures have so far neither been

defined by law nor by the rules of the market demand (Bertelsmann 2015, 103).

No central institution has been installed so far to take over the responsibility for the coordination, quality assurance and information on the validation of informally acquired competences. At present these tasks are distributed between actors with different interests, for example private and non-profit education providers and associations (e.g. *Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, DIE*) or research institutes. These actors represent their own methodologies and approaches and there is no coordination between the different organisations. The procedures are either promoted commercially (e.g. the *ProfilPASS*), provide free access or depend on specific (legal) preconditions (e.g. *Externenprüfung*) (Bertelsmann 2015, 103f).

There is little reliable information available regarding the professionalisation and quality assurance of the procedures within the organisations. The procedures used for initial qualification in enterprises or the assessment of vocational experience by the Chambers in the context of the external exam offer no access for external evaluation. Currently, there exist no standards for the professionalisation of the involved staff within the organisations that are communicated beyond the border of the organisation and there is no transparency provided on the assessment procedures and applied criteria and no possibility to ask for verification of the results (Bertelsmann 2015, 104).

As the German system is based on the concept of an occupation (*Beruf*) it is quite difficult to transfer the concepts of the European Qualifications Framework (dealing e.g. with learning outcomes and the concept of skills, knowledge, competences) and the modular education and training approach to the German vocational education and training system.

In 2009, the German Qualifications Framework (DQR) was adopted based on the development of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The process of harmonising examination rules and certification contents within the DQR is however still ongoing. The DQR matrix supports individuals and companies in defining their pathways to validate continuous learning, but there exists some competition between the award of vocational qualifications and academic degrees which can be seen for example regarding the inclusion of high level vocational qualifications on levels 6, 7 and 8 of the DQF (level 7 and 8 are reserved for academic qualifications) (Damesin et al. 2014, 126).

Following Damesin et al. the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, the social partners and vocational education and training institutions keep in mind the so-called third pillar in education, the non-formal and informal learning, while reforming the existing system. They expect the transferability of non-formal and informal learning into the formal education system to increase progressively (ibid., 128).

Following the studies of Bertelsmann Stiftung and Dehnbostel et al. broad recognition of informal learning outcomes and their acceptance in the labour market will only be possible if the applied procedures ensure as well the quality and validity of the outcomes. The basis for this would be the establishment of one or more sector certification standards and a

central institution that protects and maintains this standard. The institutionalisation of the recognition of informal learning has not yet been put into practice successfully. The relevance of existing certificates for the labour market is to a large degree unclear. A few empirical data refer to the possibility that enterprises apply their own procedures for validating informal learning in human resources development, but attribute little value to certificates of external procedures (Bertelsmann 2015, 105).

> *In 2009, the standing committee of the ministries for culture and education of 16 federal states decided to increase the permeability between vocational training and higher education and to improve the access of qualified workers to higher education. For example, the platform "ways to study" was initiated by Federal Ministries, the Federal Employment Agency, the German Trade Union Federation (DGB), the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce and university organizations to promote formal higher education during the working career* (ibid., 124f).

In practice, however, validation of non-formal and informal learning do not play an important role for the higher education system in Germany (ibid.).

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE ON VALIDATION INITIATIVES

The 2016 **Report on Recognition Act** underlines the need for guidance on the recognition of foreign qualifications (BMBF 2016, 34) and the authors of a study done by the Bertelsmann Stiftung underline that the still underdeveloped recognition culture and the wide, but uncoordinated range of procedures seems to result in a great demand for orientation and information. There is little basic and practical information available that gives candidates an overview of their options. Also on internet, it is difficult to find relevant information on existing validation procedures for informally acquired competences and even relevant institutions such as the *Federal Ministry for Education and Research* (BMBF), the *Federal Institute for Vocational Education* (BIBB), the *German Chamber of Commerce and Industry* (DIHK) or the *Chamber of Crafts* (HWK) offer little concrete information for potential candidates on their websites (Bertelsmann 2015, 106f).

At present, there exist also only a few uncoordinated guidance offers. No comprehensive and at institutional level already established guidance system has been implemented so far in Germany. Existing guidance offers, which also offer information on the validation of informal and non-formal learning, relate already to specific procedures and organisations, for example: **Employment Agencies** offer in the context of profiling for unemployed or people who are in danger of becoming unemployed counselling on how the competence profile should be further developed. This is an obligatory measure for the reintegration into the labour market;

The **Chamber of Crafts** and **Chamber of Commerce and Industry** offer counselling prior to the external examination. During this counselling, it is clarified if a vocational experience can be taken into account and for which occupational profile;

ProfilPASS counselling: since the portfolio approach of the ProfilPASS is quite complicated and challenging and requires support for the target group, a commercial system of counsellors offers support in the portfolio development. Quality assurance is ensured by a personal certification of the ProfilPASS counsellors;

Counselling for migrants regarding the recognition of qualifications and competences is offered by different institutions in Germany, for example by the *Federal Agency of Migration and Refugees* (BAMF), the *Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs* (BMAS), the *Federal Ministry of Education and Research* (BMBF) and network „integration through qualification (IQ)", funded by the Employment Agency (Bertelsmann 2015, 108f).

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

The 2016 **Report on Recognition Act** underlines that even four years after the entry into force of the Act, the implementation of the recognition regulations still varies between the federal states, which applies particularly for the healthcare professions. The Report refers to the fact that more than 27,500 applications received for recognition as a doctor or registered general nurse have thus far been assessed based on differently implemented criteria and requirements (BMBF 2016, 35).

By the end of 2015, the BIBB Monitoring Team staged workshops for the staff at the federal state authorities which are responsible for recognition of doctors and registered general nurses that aimed at creating transparency by collecting the experiences of the competent bodies[112], by fostering networking and by emphasising opportunities for improvement and the challenges of setting up a cross-federal state assessment agency (BMBF 2016, 35f).

The **Central Office for Foreign Education** (ZAB) provides the federal states with a centre of excellence for the description and evaluation of foreign educational qualifications and their categorisation vis-à-vis the German educational system. The establishment of a central cross-federal state assessment agency for healthcare professions in 2016 represents another important step regarding the uniformity of administrative decisions and the use of synergy effects. During the three years of the pilot phase, the new assessment agency will be monitored by a working group comprising members from the Conference of Ministers of Health (GMK), the Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK)

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[112] The workshops showed that there is an absence of uniform criteria at various points within the recognition procedure, for example regarding application documentation where different requirements are applied in different federal states. Furthermore, evaluating the genuineness of documents represents a major challenge for the responsible competent bodies. The basis of evaluation differs substantially between federal states, as each competent body uses the curriculum of a university in their state as a comparison document and university curricula are not uniform across the country. Inconsistency regarding the check of the equivalence of foreign doctor qualifications is thus inherent within the system. Some bodies adopt a quantitative approach by simply comparing the number of hours spent on the subjects studied, while others check contents, taking the view that quantities alone are not meaningful enough. The evidence of language knowledge is also treated differently: While some states see the completion of the language test at level C1 as sufficient (this is deemed to constitute achievement of the B2 language certificate), other states require additional evidence of B2 (BMBF 2016, 36f).

and the ZAB (BMBF 2016, 39).

A top priority of the new assessment agency is to secure uniform implementation of the existing benchmarks for equivalence assessment in the medical professions and to develop a standardised set of instruments to evaluate qualifications, which will be agreed with the federal states. There will be standardised guidelines on the cooperation between the competent bodies and ZAB during the recognition (BMBF 2016, 41).

It is not yet clear to what extent the new assessment agency for health professions will evaluate informal learning acquired by work experience. According to the joint concept of the **GMK** (*Gesundheitsministerkonferenz der Länder* / Conference of the Ministers of Health) and **KMK** (*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder* / Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the federal states), the focus of the assessment will be on the comparison of the qualifications and identification of substantial differences. The assessment may also contain an indication of the possibility of compensation via professional experience (BMBF 2016, 42).

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR LOCAL INITIATIVES

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Due to a shortage of health and care professionals there exist a lot of projects and initiatives in Germany that aim at qualifying low skilled care workers and care assistants for professional care. Many projects aim especially at qualifying migrants or women who want to (re-)enter the labour market for care. These projects and initiatives focus however quite often on specific training measures that offer on the job orientation or shorter training periods for regulated care professions. Because of the minor role that validation plays currently, the projects do normally not foresee the validation of competences acquired via prior non-formal or informal learning.

Projects that aim at (higher) qualifying low skilled care workers can however also be of interest for informal carers who want to (re-)enter the labour market and could be potential cooperation opportunities for the TRACK project, for example:

Qualification in elderly care and nursing for unemployed

The *Fachdienst Integration* and the *Caritasverband Rhein-Mosel-Ahr* offer an opportunity for qualification for the unemployed with the project "Qualification in the elderly and nursing care" (Qualifizierung in der Alten- und Krankenpflege für Arbeitslose). During a qualification year, which is recognized as a pre-practical training for nursing and nursing care, the participants gain basic knowledge in the field of care and start afterwards a theoretical training. The project is funded by the European Social Fund, the Rhineland-

Palatinate and the job centres of the counties Mayen-Koblenz and Ahrweiler.[113]

Aufwärts! In der Pflege

"Aufwärts! In der Pflege" was developed in Limburg, Hessen, and offers low skilled assistants with work experience in the field of elderly care for several years the possibility to acquire a higher qualification. Candidates are trained theoretically and at the workplace. The period of training is shorter than normally required.[114]

Competence reporting and validation for refugees

Refugees and migrants can claim the recognition of the qualifications they acquired abroad. If they do not have all required documents available, refugees can apply for a qualification analysis (*Qualifikationsanalyse*). In this context, their competences are validated based on working examples, a professional discussion or test working in an enterprise.[115]

Assessment of professional language skills for carers

For the recognition of care qualifications acquired abroad carers must demonstrate that they have acquired the language knowledge that is required to work as an examined carer in Germany. The Federal State Niedersachsen offers for carers from abroad that do not have the required language knowledge at level B2 (*GERS*) an alternative for the examination of their professional language skills.[116]

There exist also several initiatives for skills identification and documentation of refugees in Germany.[117]

OVERVIEW AND RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCES OF INFORMAL CAREGIVERS
Cooperation for GOOD CARE (Bündnis für GUTE PFLEGE)

With the slogan "Good care is a human right", various actors from the elderly care sector have joined forces to form the alliance for Good Care. The aim of the alliance partners is to improve the situation of people in need of care and to support caregivers. To this end, they demand tailor-made services for people in need of care, more support and recognition for caring relatives, better wages and working conditions, and fair financing.[118]

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[113] Source: http://news.caritas-rhein-mosel-ahr.de/2016/07/02_quali-erfolg.htm (2016-11-22)

[114] Source: http://www.caritas-akademie-stvincenz.de/ausbildungsprojekte/unsere-angebote/aufwaerts-in-der-altenpflege (2016-11-22)

[115] Source: https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/qualifikationsanalyse.php (2016-11-22)

[116] Source: https://www.pflegekompetenz-hannover.de/anerkennung-ausl-berufsabschluesse/pflegefachsprachliche-kompetenzfeststellung.html (2016-11-22)

[117] For more details see: Ziegler, Müller-Riedlhuber 2016a and 2016b.

[118] Source: http://www.buendnis-fuer-gute-pflege.de/footer-menu/presse/ (2016-12-10)

TRACK CERTIFICATION PERSPECTIVES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

PROFESSIONS IN CAREGIVING TO WHICH TRACK CERTIFICATES COULD BE LINKED

As many care professions in Germany are regulated professions that require a specific qualification, there are only a few professions left that can be used by informal carers as an entry point into labour market without additional training needs.

The profession **Helferin - Altenpflege/Persönliche Assistenz** (assistant – elderly care / personal assistance) is not legally regulated and does not require a specific training or education. Assistants in the field of elderly care / personal assistance are generally trained at the workplace.[119] This means, that informal carers could work in this field when re-entering the labour market. Due to the low qualification level of this professions, the salary is however often also quite low. The project "Aufwärts! In der Pflege" which was developed in Hessen offers low skilled assistants working already for several years in the field of elderly care the possibility to acquire a higher qualification. Candidates are trained theoretically and at the workplace.[120]

The professions **AltenpflegerIn** (elderly care workers) and **AltenpflegehelferIn** (elderly care assistant) are legally regulated. Since there is a need for more skilled care workers in Germany the government supports special and shorter trainings for these professions. The profession **Betreuungskraft/AltagsbegleiterIn** (carer/daily life accompaniment) is a regulated profession that requires specific, but not very elaborated education and training.[121]

The German project partner, WBS, offers several education and training measures in the field of elderly care: **Staatlich anerkannte AltenpflegehelferIn** (state approved elderly care assistant), **AltenpflegerIn** (elderly care workers). Some of these are directly related to the care for Dementia patients (e.g. **Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI** (daily living assistant for Dementia patients); **Pflegehelfer/-in stationärer und ambulanter Dienst mit Zusatzqualifikation Alltagsbetreuerin für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI**). These education and training offers could be a good starting point for the rollout of the TRACK certificate in Germany, because they are based on legal requirements and result in a professional qualification of people who passed the training. The TRACK certificate could be recognised as prior learning in the context of these education and training offers. The project partner WBS has already indicated that such a recognition will be possible. Other training and education providers who offer education

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[119] Source of information: BerufeNET website
https://berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de/berufenet/faces/index?path=null/kurzbeschreibung/zugangzurtaetigkeit&dkz=14641 (2016-12-10)
[120] Source of information: http://www.caritas-akademie-stvincenz.de/ausbildungsprojekte/unsere-angebote/aufwaerts-in-der-altenpflege (2016-12-10)
[121] Source of information:
https://berufenet.arbeitsagentur.de/berufenet/faces/index?path=null/kurzbeschreibung/zugangzurtaetigkeit&dkz=9066&such=Betreuungskraft+%2F+Alltagsbegleiter%2Fin (2016-12-10)

and training in line with the legal requirements should be gained as partners for the rollout of TRACK. Especially VET providers who offer already training for formal carers could be interested in offering as well training for informal carers (TRACK blended learning) and recognise the certificate received after passing the training as prior learning that can be recognised as part of professional training offers for specific care professions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

As no comprehensive validation system is in place at present and many care professions are regulated, there exist only limited possibilities for the validation of competences that have been acquired non-formally or informally. However, at regional, federal state and national level a lot of initiatives aim at offering training and higher qualification to unskilled people (in particular special target groups such as migrants and refugees or women returning to the labour market) and to low skilled care workers to reduce the predicted shortage of care professionals.

For the TRACK project there exist several possibilities:
- Documenting the competence profile of TRACK in line with skills audit tools such as *ProfilPASS* or *Qualipass* to let informal carers take advantage of the documentation of their competences;
- Co-operating with selected initiatives and projects that aim at higher qualification of low skilled care workers at regional, federal state or national level (check possibilities);
- Linking the TRACK programme to already existing education and training offers for informal carers: TRACK blended learning can possibly be an alternative or additional offer to training offers requiring the presence of the informal carer (possible partners: Caritas, the Malteser, Red Cross, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund etc.);
- Co-operating with other international programmes that developed similar tools, guidelines and tasks (e.g. i-CARE) and distribute TRACK via their networks;
- Offering the TRACK training programme and certificate to awarding bodies and organisations concerned with the identification and documentation of competences of refugees and migrants, e.g. the IQ network for integration through qualification;
- Recognising the competences acquired during the TRACK training as prior learning for relevant WBS education and training offers or implementing them as part of the trainings (e.g. a kind of specialisation module);
- Co-operating with social insurances that expressed an interest in supporting informal care. The TRACK training and certification programme could be promoted as support for the daily life and as training that helps to raise the quality of home care;

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESULTS OF THE EXPERT WORKSHOP

In the expert workshop held in March 2017 three out of six informal caregivers and care

professionals thought that the target group of the TRACK project is rather small, because dementia is at present not important enough to offer specific training for it or because there is no labour market relevance of such a certificate. Five out of six participants think that distance learning via internet might be a challenge, because there are people without internet access and because informal caregivers are often seniors, who, in our times, still might face difficulties in applying this kind of training.

The participants emphasised the importance of mentors and the providence of information on the disease as most important for actors that could motivate informal caregivers to participate in the TRACK training. Also, the contact with peers has been emphasised as very important. Regarding the information on career options and labour market perspectives three out of six persons think that this is of less relevance for informal caregivers and that it is only a nice-to-have side-effect. Several participants referred to the importance of practical help and personal support for a concrete situation "here and now".

The informal and professional care experts can imagine that informal caregivers might be interested in becoming a professional caregiver, especially those persons who work as volunteers could be interested to further qualify for a payed position. Three out of four participants say that they can imagine to at least test the training once, two persons have a preference for face-to-face training instead of distance learning. As alternative pathways to enter the labour market volunteer work has been mentioned to be quite common.

Workshop participants think that caregivers can be addressed best via nursing or home assistance services or social stations in hospitals which could distribute the information directly to the target group. Furthermore, family doctors and other doctors are regarded as a good option to refer to the existence of the TRACK training.

VET providers see the TRACK learning platform as a kind of professional self-help group for capacity building (*Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe*) and for understanding the (professional) care process. Furthermore, providing support is very important and to inform on different phases of the disease and daily routine issues (such as for example guaranteeing a feeling of security). Theories and the reasons for the disease are regarded as less relevant for informal caregivers, whereas legal information is regarded as very important.

Blended learning has been recognised as a good option for the TRACK training since time and place of learning can be freely chosen by the trainees. Face-to-face sessions are on the other hand regarded as important for getting in personal contact.

From the point of view of the workshop participants private VET providers can only be motivated with financial benefits to implement the TRACK training offer. Preparation for a vocational training or profession could possibly be another motivational factor.

The workshop participants think, that the distribution of the programme will be challenging especially after the end of the project. Participants from the VET sector mentioned the necessity to find qualified and experienced professionals that can combine theory and

practice, have empathy for the informal caregivers and can answer their questions.

Regarding the implementation of TRACK into already existing training offers the experts refer to higher education offers such as "social work" and recommend a cooperation with universities, since the competences that are covered in the TRACK training are often missing in relevant study offers. Another participant refers to a former good practice example of so-called "*Lerninseln*" (teaching islands) in classes where care assistants for the elderly have been trained. Those "teaching islands" have always been dedicated to a specific theme such as Dementia. For this participant distance learning is a good approach for training in elderly care, since this method helps the trainees to learn self-reliance. The workshop participant also refers to the necessity to know the history of the patient to be able to work with him/her, e.g. singing can support the care work with patients who like singing.

Regarding the most appropriate professional profile and vocational training for the TRACK training, the workshop participants refer to *Alltagsbetreuer nach § 53c* (daily life assistant according to § 53c) and to the fact that the other two mentioned professions do not fit. *Altenpflegehelfer* (elderly care assistant) for example does not fit since it is based on a higher qualification than the other professions listed.

Policy and decision makers think that the TRACK programme will be of interest for informal caregivers if it is promoted in a good way and if it is known by a broader public, for example also young people, who care for their relatives. One participant emphasises that 6 weeks of training for informal caregivers is rather short and thinks that the information should always be kept available on the website. The use of the website is regarded as a good idea in this context. Two participants out of three emphasis the necessity of professional know-how of trainers/moderators to be able to communicate with informal caregivers, to explain them the content comprehensibly and to ensure a feeling of security (especially when it comes to older informal caregivers).

Policy and decision makers refer to self-help groups as interesting partners for distributing the TRACK training since they play an important role for informal caregivers, are often the first contact and know which people could need such training. This option would also offer the advantage of combining the TRACK distance learning with the personal support of the self-help group. In concrete, Ms Jung, a social worker at Halle and expert in the field is mentioned.

Policy and decision makers appreciate the flexibility of the TRACK offer and the mix of blended learning and face-to-face sessions. The latter is regarded as a crucial factor for the personal relation between trainers and informal caregivers. It is emphasised that TRACK should concentrate on daily life problems and the reality of informal caregivers. One participant especially appreciates the concept of TRACK which is based on profound considerations of what is needed by informal caregivers in their actual situation. Financing is however seen as a crucial issue.

Regarding the improvement of labour market and career chances two out of three policy and decision makers state that the labour market perspective is of less importance as there are already so many possibilities for continuing and further education. One participant thinks that the certificate could offer a professional perspective if it will be recognised. This participant envisions the TRACK training as part of other education and training offers which are not necessarily dedicated to elderly care, but could for example focus on continuing education in the field of nursing or emergency medical services. Two participants emphasise that the TRACK training is too small for providing a basis for official recognition.

The ProfilPass instrument is regarded as a good complement to the TRACK project as the recognition of the skills of informal carers is of the essence and the TRACK training can be regarded as a first step towards it. Additional steps must follow, if informal caregivers want to follow this pathway and an added value of the programme should be ensured.

Also, policy and decision makers think that *AltenpflegehelferIn* is too qualified and that a programme covering only 20 hours is more in line with the vocational profile of *AlltagsbegleiterIn*.

Overall, TRACK should emphasise primarily the acquired competences and the training of informal caregivers. As main challenges policy and decision makers see the promotion of the project to the public. It is recommended to cooperate with the Public Employment Agency in this context. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that the project does not focus on making profit, but on supporting and helping informal caregivers. This needs to be emphasised when the project is presented to training providers and other institutions. Other recommended cooperation partners are the Ministry for Health and at local level care organisations as they are in direct contact with informal caregivers and care recipients.

The representative of AWO mentioned that their clients would not be able to deal with an online training. Other workshop participants refer to younger people as a target group who could be interested in developing a future perspective. The idea to link TRACK to different occupations is appreciated.

Informal caregivers, care professionals, policy and decision makers as well as VET providers name the following organisations to be potentially interested in using or offering TRACK:
- Federal Ministry for Health;
- Public Employment Service (Bundesagentur für Arbeit);
- WBS (recognition/implementation of TRACK in existing education and training offers);
- VET providers in general, but private institutes more than public (interest in earning money with the programme);
- Regarding care providers, mental hospitals and the like: the aims of the TRACK projects must be made very clear to avoid the impression of competition;
- Discussion group for Alzheimer patients (Gesprächsgruppe für Alzheimer-Kranke);

- Relatives' group of Alzheimer/Dementia patients (Angehörigengruppe Demenz-/ Alzheimererkrankter);
- Counselling for Dementia, Riebeckstiftung (Beratung zu Demenz der Riebeckstiftung);
- Euro schools Halle (Euroschulen Halle);
- Christian Academy (Christiliche Akademie);
- Hospitals, especially geriatric hospitals (e.g. Gedächtnisambulanz)
- Hospital and polyclinic for psychiatry and psychotherapy (Klinik und Poliklinik für Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie) of Halle (contact: Dr. Tobias Wustmann);
- German Parity Welfare (Deutsche Paritätische Wohlfahrt)[122];
- Mathilde-Tholouk-House of the Diakonie in Halle (Mathilde-Tholuck-Haus der Diakonie Halle; contact: Ms. Sabine Götze);
- Public Health Department of Halle (contact: Ms Liebold);
- Workers' Welfare Association (Arbeiterwohlfahrt, AWO);

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[122] See: http://www.der-paritaetische.de/ (2017-05-21)

8. SPAIN

INTRODUCTION AND SHORT OVERVIEW

In Spain – as in other countries – validation of non-formal and informal learning is not covered by one comprehensive law, but several deal with different educational levels: one of the most important laws is the Decree 1224/2009 on the recognition of skills acquired through work experience; it codified that the Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Employment and the Autonomous Communities establish public calls (*convocatorias*) in order to accredit the professional competences of individuals who would like to have their skills recognised. The first joint call for validation took place in 2011 and was focusing on VET and professional qualifications; 75 % of accreditation targeted pre-primary education, care of dependent people, hospitality/catering and tourism, repair and maintenance of vehicles.

The Spanish care sector is characterised by large numbers of low-qualified workers and therefore is a priority within the Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning from 2012 as these workers could potentially benefit from validation (European Council 2012). In Spain, the care sector is more prominently involved in validation initiatives than in other countries. Some important reasons for using validation in the care sector are:

- Obtaining legally required qualifications;
- Compensating for skilled labour shortage;
- Providing a stepping stone towards a formal qualification for low-qualified workers or unemployed persons;
- Integrating migrants (esp. women) into the labour market (Cedefop 2016, 14).

Besides this, new regulations can also be an incentive to officially recognise non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences. In Galicia, an increase in applicants for the annually organised *convocatorias* (calls) for the recognition and accreditation of competences in care of dependent persons at home was observed as a new regulation was introduced requiring a minimum certification for people often working informally in the field (Damesin et al. 2014, 195). Also in Andalusia *convocatorias* (calls) for the recognition and accreditation of competences in care of dependent persons at home and in social institutions see more applicants than places are available, although these calls are made almost on a yearly basis.[123]

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[123] Information received during an interview with an expert from the Department of Education in Jaén.

LEGAL SITUATION AND THE POLICY ON VALIDATION

In Spain, there are several laws dealing with validation frameworks, that cover different education levels:

- Qualification and Vocational Training Act (2002) created the National System of Qualifications and VET: one of the aims of the national system is to evaluate and accredit occupational standards of individuals gained through work experience or non-formal learning;
- Employment Act (2003);
- Education Act (2006);
- Higher Education Act (2007);
- Royal Decree 34/2008 regulates professional certificates that are the instrument of formal accreditation of professional qualifications in the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications;
- Royal Decree 1224/2009 on the recognition of professional competences acquired through work experience;
- Royal Decree 861/2010 establishing the recognition of work experience in the form of university credits for obtaining an official degree (European Commission et al. 2014c, 3f.; forquality.eu 2015a, 14);
- Law 30/2015 regulates the Vocational Training System for Employment in the labour field and aims to promote accreditation processes of professional skills and competences acquired through non-formal training or work experience (European Commission et al. 2016b, 7).

One of the most important laws is the **Decree 1224/2009** on the recognition of skills acquired through work experience; it codified that the Ministry of Education together with the Ministry of Employment and the Autonomous Communities establish public calls (*convocatorias*) to accredit the professional competences of individuals who would like to have their skills recognised. The first joint call for validation took place in 2011 and was targeting VET and certificates of occupational standards.

Besides this, there are access exams to VET and university studies aimed at people who do not have the necessary qualifications; since the 1970s, people over 25 can access university upon satisfactory performance of 'over-25' access exams, but without a qualification in post-compulsory upper secondary education. Adults can also gain the diploma of compulsory secondary education and the baccalaureate diploma (post-compulsory upper secondary education) through examinations, without having undertaken the corresponding formal studies (European Commission et al. 2014c, 3; Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning et al. 2015, 338).

The topic of validation of non-formal and informal learning has been included in many official and institutional documents: Procedures of assessment and certification of professional skills acquired through work experience are included in the VET plans of

Autonomous Communities and institutional declarations for improving lifelong learning (European Commission et al. 2016b, 1).

The system of validation does not cover all levels of education. In the first joint call in 2011 75 % of accreditation targeted pre-primary education, care of dependent people, hospitality/catering and tourism, repair and maintenance of vehicles. The other 25 % were determined by each Community depending on the regional needs. Many people, especially women, who work in pre-primary education and care of dependent people do not hold official qualifications. Recognising their professional experience was therefore important to increase their opportunities on the labour market (European Commission et al. 2014c 6). An overview of the distribution of validations according to clusters of occupations from 2007 to 2016 shows that most validations are realised in the sociocultural and community services (82,091 altogether in ten years), in second place are validations in the health sector (10,500 validations), in third place hospitality and tourism (5,988; European Commission et al. 2016b, 21f.).

POLICY AND LEGAL BACKGROUND FOR CARERS

For a long time, Spain applied the "Mediterranean" model of social protection that relies a lot on families and relatives. Only in 2006 the **Law 39/2006 for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for People in a Situation of Dependency** was passed, that established the individual right of all citizens to access a broad range of services and support in situations of dependency. Social services are very decentralised in Spain and are an exclusive competence of the Communities; therefore, until the law from 2006 the development of social services was quite uneven across Spain.

The law creates a common framework and dependent persons are entitled to receive financial benefits. There are three types of financial benefits:
- financial assistance to access certain care services,
- financial assistance for informal caregivers (non-professional care), and
- financial assistance to hire personal caregivers.

The amount of the benefits depends on the degree of dependency and the economic situation of the individual; informal caregivers may receive training and benefit from rest periods. Available data show that more than 45 % of the financial assistance is going to family and non-professional care (forquality.eu 2015a, 5f.).

There are two main collective agreements that influence professional profiles, training programmes and pay mechanisms:
- Collective Agreement XIV on Care Centres and Services for People with Disabilities from August 2012, that defines guidelines to improve professional qualifications and training;

- Collective Agreement VI on Care Services for Dependent People and Development of Personal Autonomy from April 2012 that applies to companies and workplaces that provide services for dependent people; it seeks to regularise and maintain employment (ibid., 9).

For irregular and undeclared work these collective agreements do not apply and the black market is prevalent among foreign workers, especially among foreign women.

PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS

On the website of SEPE, the Public Employment Service in Spain, there is an online assistance service that consists of two questionnaires – one for professional experience and one for non-formal learning – that helps individuals to find out if they can apply for accreditation of non-formal learning or work experience.[124]

People who would like to participate in the recognition and validation procedure have to fulfil the following requirements:
- Having the Spanish nationality, having obtained the registration certificate of the community citizenship or the European Union citizen family card, or being the holder of a residence authorisation, or of residence and work in force in Spain, in the terms established in the immigration law of Spain;
- Being at least 18 years old at the moment of the registration, when it is about the competence units corresponding the qualifications of level I, and to be 20 years or older for levels II and III;
- Having work experience and/or non-formal training related to the professional competences that the person would like to accredit:
- ✓ In case of *work experience*: To justify, at least 3 years, with a minimum of 2,000 total worked hours, for the last 10 years passed before carrying out the official announcement. For competence units of level I, a two-year work experience with a minimum of 1,200 total worked hours, is required;
- ✓ In case *of non-formal training*: To justify, at least 300 hours, for the last 10 years passed before carrying out the official announcement. For competence units of level I, at least 200 hours will be required. In cases in which the learning modules associated to the competence unit that is hoped to be accredited considers a minor duration, the established hours in those learning modules should be accredited;[126]

If individuals do not comply with the requisites to apply for validation, e.g. they lack Spanish or EU nationality, do not possess a residence or work permit, or have not had professional experience or training in the last 10 years, they are informed that they do not meet the requirements for validation. If they meet the requirements, they are informed of the name

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[124] See: https://sede.sepe.gob.es/portalSedeEstaticos/flows/gestorContenidos?page=recexIndex (2016-06-07)
[126] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/ice_recAcr_ing.html (2016-06-17)

of the competence units (and the professional family) they could accredit. On the websites of the Ministry of Education[127] and SEPE there is information on where individuals can get more information in their Community.

The standards in place to support validation in VET are the competence units of the **National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications** (CNCP)[128]; they are used for VET diplomas and certificates of occupational standards. For the recognition of the competences, the evaluation looks at the professional performance (*realizaciones profesionales*), performance criteria (*criterios de realización*) and the professional context outlined in each of them. In higher education, universities as autonomous bodies decide on the modules and units that can be validated and they devise their own standards (European Commission et al. 2014c, 8).

The National Institute of Qualifications (*Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones* - INCUAL) was created in 1999. It is the technical instrument, endowed with capacity and independence, which supports the Spanish General Council of Vocational Education and Training[129] to attain the objectives of the National System for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (*Sistema Nacional de Cualificaciones y Formación Profesional* - SNCFP). The Qualification and Vocational Training Act (2002) confers on INCUAL the responsibility for defining, creating and updating the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (CNCP) and the corresponding **Modular Catalogue of Vocational Education and Training**.[130]

The CNCP consists of professional qualifications arranged in level of qualification and professional family. The 26 professional families which make up the CNCP have been created according to affinity criteria among the different professional competences. Each qualification has a general competence which defines briefly the workers' essential tasks and functions. Every qualification consists of competence units. The competence unit is the minimum set of professional competences which can be partially recognized and accredited. Every competence unit is linked to a learning module which describes the necessary learning to acquire that competence unit.

Competence units are divided into professional performances. They establish the expected behaviour of one person, i.e. the expected consequences or results of the activities performed by that person; they help to know whether one person in competent at a competence unit. Performance criteria express the acceptable level of one professional performance to meet the productive organisations targets, and they are a reference guide for the assessment of professional competences. The professional context is a guiding description of means of production, products and results of work, used or generated

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[127] See: http://www.todofp.es/acreditacion/ServletEligeIt?opcion=1 (2016-06-07)
[128] See: http://www.todofp.es/dctm/todofp/biblioteca/informes/catalogo-nacional-cualificaciones-junio-2014.pdf?documentId=0901e72b81c39c58 (2016-06-07)
[129] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/ice_consejoGeneral_ing.html (2016-06-17)
[130] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/ice_incual_ing.html (2016-06-17)

information, and any other analogue element considered to be necessary to set a professional performance.

The **Modular Catalogue of Vocational Education and Training** consists of all the learning modules. Each module is associated with one of the competence units which form a professional qualification. The Modular Catalogue provides a common reference for the integration of the vocational education and training offer to enable the capitalisation of learning and the promotion of lifelong learning. The Modular Catalogue of Vocational Education and Training promotes a quality vocational education and training (VET) offer, which is updated and appropriate for the different target groups, according to their expectations for professional promotion and personal development. Besides, the Catalogue meets the productive sectors demands for VET. The catalogue aims to increase competitiveness by reinforcing the working populations qualifications.[131]

People who would like to participate in the validation process have access to free and personal orientation by a professional counsellor, which can be provided by education and labour administrations, local authorities, social partners, chambers of commerce, and other public and private organisations. The organisations are provided with self-evaluation questionnaires that individuals can fill in to identify their professional competences to be validated. At the beginning of the process there are group meetings with candidates were general information about the validation process is delivered.

Once individuals are admitted to the validation process, they receive mandatory counselling: a professional counsellor supports the candidate with preparing and setting-up the evaluation process and developing his/her professional and educational history, by bringing together all relevant documents and describing the work experience of a person. Besides this, advice on the completion of the self-assessment questionnaire is also provided; the counsellor prepares a report on the candidate to the evaluation committee, where the counsellor reflects on the suitability of the applicant to participate in the process to pass the assessment phase, the justification of professional skills, and where appropriate on the training required to complete the unit of a competence that is to be evaluated. Afterwards an assessor is looking through all the documents and the report and assesses if the competences needed for a specific competence unit have been shown; there is usually an interview with the assessor and the candidate must answer several questions to show his/her knowledge. Also, practical demonstration could be used, like working with a dummy to show how to move an ill person. The practical tests are only conducted in a test environment, not in the actual workplace.

At the end of the evaluation process, the competent administration (in the case of Andalusia, the region of the Spanish TRACK partner: the Institute for Professional Qualifications) writes a report and explains to the individual different training options to acquire a professional certificate or VET qualification if the competence units accredited so

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[131] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/ice_catalogoWeb_ing.html (2016-11-30)

far are not enough to obtain a VET diploma or professional certificate directly. Usually a full professional qualification is recognised; if only some competence units were validated during the process, the candidates can take part in the *convocatorias* (calls) next year to complete their qualification (European Commission et al. 2014c, 6f.; Interview with Trinidad Rubio).

These validation procedures are quite often used in the care sector: For example, in Andalusia for two professional qualifications as regards "dependent people" called "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*" ("Social and health care for people at home") and "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*" ("Social and health care for people at social institutions") *convocatorias* (calls) for the recognition and accreditation of competences are organised on an approx. yearly basis. Each year 200 applicants can take part in the recognition and accreditation process for each professional qualification (400 in total) in the region of Andalusia. The procedures are listed in the **Royal Decree 1224/2009** and are used for all professional qualifications, i.e. the validation procedures are always the same, no matter which sector or qualification is being validated.

FINANCING

The Royal Decree 1224/2009 contains a specific budget for accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience: The Spanish central government has funded the validation process, although Communities are expected to provide partial funding in the future. By 2011, € 59 million have been invested by the central government; € 35 million have been invested in the training of counsellors and evaluators, the preparation of all supporting tools for distance VET, advertising and portals and websites. € 24 million have been transferred to the regions to evaluate approx. 60,000 candidates across the country (European Commission et al. 2014c, 13).

Due to austerity, the budget for accreditation has been the same in the last three years. In 2013, the central government approved approx. € 5.6 million to be distributed between the Autonomous Communities. This amount is supplemented by regional administration, but still the overall estimation is that the available funding is insufficient to meet the big demand from applicants (European Commission et a. 2016b, 18).

The estimated cost of validation per person is € 400. There are no tax incentives for firms to get involved in the validation process.

The costs to individuals differ among Communities: In some Communities individuals do not have to pay any fee (e.g. Andalusia, Asturias, Castile-Leon, Castile-La Manche), in other Communities they must pay admission fees; these fees usually vary between € 10 to € 30 per person (ibid., 15).

The main source of validation financing since 2007 has been the ESF. All calls for

accreditation of competences have been jointly funded between the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Employment and the ESF. In 2009 the Spanish government made a commitment to fund a new validation process for professional experience. The funding covered the production and updating of materials, training of guidance practitioners and assessors, and direct funding for candidates. In 2013, the government approved a budget of € 5.6 million for the recognition and accreditation of skills acquired through work experience; again, the main source of financing is the ESF (Cedefop 2016b, 30, 55).

Besides this, in 2013 some private initiatives were developed for large companies, such as *Mercadona* (food sector), *Ambuiberica* (sanitary sector), or associations of companies, such as *Confemadera* (furniture sector) who invested money for accrediting their own workers. These initiatives were developed in agreement with the public administration (ibid., 41).

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, RESPONSIBILITIES, MAIN ACTORS

Spain has developed a qualifications framework for lifelong learning, known as the Spanish Qualifications Framework (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones* - MECU). It is based on learning outcomes and aims to link and coordinate different education and training sub-systems (Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning et al. 2015, 336). The Spanish NQF will include qualifications acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning, as validation will be used to gain qualifications based on non-formal and informal learning. For higher education, there is a specific framework (Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education), that was approved in 2011, the four highest levels of the NQF will be connected to this HE Framework (European Commission et al. 2014c, 7). The **royal decree 22/2015132 on the introduction of MECU** is the legal basis for its implementation. It defines levels and level descriptors for referencing the MECU to the EQF levels. The decree was developed in consultation with main stakeholders and supervised by the national advisory bodies (Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning et al. 2015, 336). The draft referencing report of the MECU to the EQF was expected to be prepared by mid-2015, but the report is still not online at the portal on learning opportunities and qualifications in Europe[133].

Validation in Spain is mainly led by public authorities: The **Ministry of Education** is collecting data on beneficiaries, the Ministry of Education and the **Ministry of Employment** set up an inter-ministerial commission in 2011 to monitor and evaluate the validation process; the commission is formed by representatives of the **General Directorate of VET** (Ministry of Education) and SEPE (Ministry of Employment) and its mission is to monitor and assess the procedure for recognising skills acquired through work experience. The Public Employment Service, **SEPE**, is also responsible for registering the certification of the

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[132] See: https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2015/BOE-A-2015-11528-consolidado.pdf (2016-06-29)
[133] See: https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/documentation#documentation_73 (2017-04-25)

results of validation calls (European Commission et al. 2014c, 3f., 9).

The central government, together with the autonomous Communities is responsible for overseeing validation at all levels of the education system. The **National Institute of Education Assessment** (INEE)[134] along with the **National Agency of Assessment, Quality and Accreditation** (ANECA)[135] for universities are responsible for the assessment of the education system in the Ministry of Education.

With regard to VET, there are two sub-systems:
- Initial VET that is school-based and lies in the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Communities,
- National sub-system of vocational training for employment that is administered by the Ministry of Employment and the Communities.

The **General Council for VET** (*Consejo General de Formación Profesional*) is an advisor in the evaluation of the results of the validation process; the Communities are responsible for the validation process, including setting up the calls for assessment and accreditation, although the central government can also make calls at supra-Community level (European Commission et al. 2014c, 8).

Education and training providers are strongly involved in the accreditation process of professional competences acquired through work experience; two types of VET centres are involved in validation:
- Integrated vocational training centres develop integrated training activities aiming at young, active workers and unemployed to facilitate lifelong learning. They offer all types of vocational training, like IVET and CVET, that are referred to the National Catalogue of Occupational Standards.
- National Centres of Reference carry out innovative and experimental initiatives in vocational training and are specialised in 26 professional areas (*familias profesionales*) (ibid., 9f.).

The **private sector**, including trade unions and business organisations, takes part in developing legislation, as it is represented in the General Council for VET. The private sector is providing guidance to individuals regarding the validation calls and process. Validation is mainly led by the public administration, but trade unions and business organisations can request official announcements for specific sector needs. For example, in the Balearic Islands in 2011 the Foundation of Care and Support of Dependency and the Promotion of Personal Autonomy of the Balearic Island, as a regional organisation, promoted the validation process of all workers who wanted to be involved in this call (ibid., 11).

The responsibilities for validation are established by the Royal Decree 1224/2009, but also the Autonomous Communities may publish orders to regulate their own process. 9 out of

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[134] See: http://www.mecd.gob.es/inee/portada.html (2016-06-07)
[135] See: http://www.aneca.es/eng/ANECA (2016-06-07)

17 regions have their own regulations or legislation.

In the **Autonomous Communities** the most important actors are:

- **Department of Education** responsible for information on the validation calls and number of posts per call; training of advisors and assessors/evaluators; guidance to the candidates; assessment of skills and competences; quality assurance of the validation process.
- **Department of Employment** responsible for setting up the calls and carrying out the process in their territories.
- **Regional Council of VET** makes proposals for validations according to the economic sector and their needs; monitors and evaluates the validation process.
- **Third sector** makes proposals by sectors and economic interests; informs candidates and provides recognition opportunities (European Commission 2016b, 5f.).

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

As mentioned above, the Autonomous **Communities** are responsible for publishing the calls for validation of professional experience in their regional official newspapers. The Communities usually organise campaigns to inform the public, but also other organisations, like trade unions, have launched campaigns to inform on the validation of professional competences.

On a legal basis, the **Qualification and Vocational Training Act** (2002) established in Title III the aim and organisation of information and career guidance in the following articles 14 and 15:

- Article 14. Aim of the information and career guidance

In the framework of the National System for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training, the information and career guidance shall aim to:

1) Inform about the opportunities to access employment; the possibilities of acquisition, assessment and accreditation of competences and professional qualifications, and how to progress with them on a lifelong basis.

2) Inform and advise about the different educational offers and the possible educational paths to facilitate labour integration and reintegration, as well as professional mobility in the labour market.

- Article 15. Organisation of the information and career guidance

1) The services from education and labour administrations, the local administration and social agents, among others, shall be able to participate in information and career guidance, being the general administration of the state responsible for developing cooperation and coordination mechanisms among the entities concerned.

2) Public administrations information and career guidance services are responsible for providing information to the student of the educational system, to the families, to unemployed workers and to the society in general. Besides, the public administrations are responsible for putting at the social partners' disposal information about the

system which might serve as a guiding reference for collective bargaining, without prejudice to their independence.[136]

Besides the Communities, information is also provided at national level on the websites of the Ministry of Education, e.g. the TodoFP-Portal [137], or SEPE. People can also get information from centres for adult education, guidance departments in secondary and VET schools, integrated vocational training centres, centres of the public employment service (regional and national), municipalities, chambers of commerce, or trade unions and business organisations (European Commission et al. 2014c, 18).

People interested in validating their professional competences get free and personal orientation even before applying and being accepted in the validation process. The above-mentioned organisations have been given self-evaluation questionnaires that individuals can fill in to identify professional competences that can be validated. When they are admitted to the validation process, participants receive mandatory counselling by a professional counsellor. The counsellor gives advice for filling in the self-assessment questionnaire that collects information on principal and secondary professional activities which are an important basis for acquiring competence units. Besides this, there are also sources that help prepare applicants: the main tool is the "Handbook for validation candidates"[138], developed by INCUAL. The document presents information about the validation process and its main contents, like the role of the candidate and the benefits of validation, or stages of the procedure, evaluation, accreditation and registration (ibid., 18f.; European Commission et al. 2016b, 15).

Validation practitioners, who are responsible for guidance and/or evaluation, are secondary and/or VET teachers, trainers or professional experts, who must have experience of at least four years in the competence evaluated. They also must participate in a training course on validation and the procedure of assessment and certification; the duration of the course varies between 20 to 75 hours (European Commission et al. 2014c, 21; European Commission et al. 2016b, 16).

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EVALUATION

In Spain exists a general quality assurance framework for the whole education system. A quality assurance framework for VET is still under development. In the near future, the existing validation procedure in relation to assessment and accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience will be further improved (European Commission et al. 2014c, 19).

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[136] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/ice_informacionOrientacion_ing.html (2016-06-17)
[137] See: http://www.todofp.es (2016-06-07)
[138] See, available only in Spanish:
https://sede.sepe.gob.es/es/portaltrabaja/resources/pdf/formacion/recex/guia_persona_candidata.pdf (2017-02-28)

Considering quality assurance in VET in the education system, both, the **Ministry of Education** and the Regional Departments of Education of the Communities are involved. The Ministry of Education is responsible for:

- The enactment of basic standards which implement the constitutional right to education by establishing general rules for the educational system;
- Setting minimum standards for teaching centres; establishing the overall education programme, setting the minimum contents of education programmes, and regulating the validity of academic and occupational qualifications across Spain;
- Guaranteeing the right and obligation to know the Spanish language without impairing the right of those Autonomous Regions, with languages of their own, that may establish their own standards guaranteeing that individuals know and use their own linguistic heritage;

Additionally, the Communities are responsible for the regulatory development of the basic national standards and the regulation of the non-basic elements or aspects of the education system.[139]

Including non-formal and informal aspects of learning in the Spanish NQF is regarded as complex; including qualifications resulting from non-formal or informal learning uses recognition and validation processes widely implemented only in recent years (Unesco Institute of Lifelong Learning 2015, 338).

The inter-ministerial committee together with the Communities is developing the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan to check the quality, effectiveness and impact of the evaluation and accreditation of professional competences. Most of the Communities have quality assurance frameworks in place: some have a specific framework for the validation process, like Aragon, others assure the quality of the validation process within an existing general quality assurance framework, like the Basque Country (European Commission et al. 2014c, 19f.).

EXAMPLES OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR LOCAL INITIATIVES

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The **Servicios Sociales Integrados Grupo** (SSI, Integrated Social Services Group) is a non-profit cooperative of social care professionals in Bilbao. The cooperative model of the SSI Group is characterised by self-government, self-management, equal participation, collective property, communication and cooperation, and a decentralised human resource structure. Other essential values are personal growth, continuing training, the maintenance of professional standards, the support of social initiatives and the reinvestment of the benefits they accrue in society. Aims of the SSI Group are to respond

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[139] See http://www.eqavet.eu/gns/what-we-do/implementing-the-framework/spain.aspx (2016-06-07)

comprehensively to the social needs of socially vulnerable and dependent people in the Basque Country and to support informal carers to achieve formal qualifications and, in doing so, to increase the value of their work (Eurofound 2013, 39).

The SSI health care training centre aims at improving and enriching the professional competences of the people that make up SSI, transferring knowledge of empirical experience, generated over the years, and training actions designed to prepare professionals from other organisations and unemployed people. Besides this, also socio-educational and psychosocial support services for carers and/or family members of dependant people are delivered by SSI. SSI has advisory and assessment centres for the recognition of professional skills for vocational certificates in health and social care in the home for dependent people.[140]

OVERVIEW AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR VALIDATION IN (INFORMAL) CAREGIVING

The above-mentioned Dependency-law from 2006 puts emphasis on the importance of qualification and professionalisation of the workforce, as a means to develop employment in the sector. An important step would be to better define and delimitate different jobs and occupations in the care sector; this would help to better define necessary conditions to occupy the job, as well as the content in terms of training needed for the job.

To increase the number of potential care workers, the Spanish system of professional validation by experience could be used for informal caregivers: Each professional qualification is made up of a number of "competence units", normally two or three, each of them directly linked to a short training module (Eurofound 2013, 38). The TRACK training programme could be part of or linked to such a unit and partial certification for each unit is needed to get the overall professional qualification. At present, informal caregiving does not seem to be the focus of professional validation by experience, maybe TRACK could be a first step in this direction.

The regional awarding bodies evaluate and accredit professional competences, with the Spanish National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications as a reference. For all competence units but level 1, prior experience can be validated provided the person can prove a minimum of 2,000 working hours during a minimum of 3 years over the past 10 years. For level 1 competence units, a minimum of 1,200 working hours during a minimum of 2 years over the past 10 years are sufficient. Usually this work experience is validated by using labour contracts or other official documents from the employer. Persons who work as informal carers do not have these documents and therefore need to find other ways to show their work experience: People over 25 who have the required work experience but cannot duly justify it through the required documentation, are given the opportunity to supply other types of evidence and their case will then be evaluated by a special panel

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[140] See: http://www.grupossi.es/en/servicios/ (2016-06-17)

(Carer+ 2013, 91f., Interview with Trinidad Rubio).

The two above mentioned professional qualifications - "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*" and "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*" – include some similar tasks that informal carers also deliver on a regular basis. But still, the validation procedure is quite complicated and time-consuming and some requirements are needed that might not be available for informal carers, like three years of documented work/professional experience and 300 hours of non-formal learning that are needed for both qualifications (persons working in institutions get quite a lot of non-formal training, like cooking etc.): informal carers do not have that amount of non-formal learning and TRACK as such is too small a training programme to have a big impact (ibid.).

In 2011, the *convocatorias* (calls) for "care of dependent persons at home or in institutions" in Galicia [141] attracted a quantity of candidates (about 8,000) far above the offer of certifications (300), meaning that a selection had to be made. The level of applicants was boosted by a new regulation requiring, as of 2015, a minimum certification for people working – often informally – in this field. Certification is welcome and useful for those concerned (mainly women, frequently aged between 45 and 55 years, with 10 – 15 years of work experience; Damesin et al. 2014, 195). For Andalusia, it was also mentioned that calls for these two professional qualifications in the last years attracted a lot more candidates than places were available, so there seems to be great demand for certification of competences in this area.

In 2012, the *convocatorias* were extended to other qualifications, and now include industrial qualifications that are important, for example, for the Galician region with an industrial tradition. The objective is to extend them to occupations (often largely female) where training is mainly non-formal and where qualification levels are low. Recognition gives access to complementary training, including during the process itself, to gain the competence units necessary for a full qualification (ibid.).

TRACK CERTIFICATION PERSPECTIVES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Professional qualifications and the recognition of prior work experience and learning are regarded as important to solve the problem of lacking professionals in the field. Employers have difficulties finding professionals with knowledge and experience and think that these certificates can help to improve workers' qualifications (forquality.eu 2015a, 14).

The black economy is a problem in the community-based care and home-care sector in Spain. In this irregular labour market, in which mainly poorly qualified women, especially migrants, are active, the terms of employment and working conditions are unfavourable. The irregular labour market seems to increase during crisis periods because non-professional services are cheaper. This is a significant obstacle to the professionalisation of

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[141] Galicia is considered one of the leading regions with regard to validation of non-formal and informal learning.

the sector and the improvement of the terms of employment and working conditions for disadvantaged workers (Eurofound 2013, 19).

TRACK is taking migrant women and their needs into account, as they would especially benefit from getting acquired skills and competences recognised and therefore eventually be able to move out of the black economy. Still, validation procedures take a long time and are quite complicated; for people who are not used to dealing with public administrations it might be dispiriting. Also for people with language problems it is very difficult to get all the information needed and to understand what is required – so there is still some way to go, especially if migrant women should be able to profit from validation procedures.

PROFESSIONS IN CAREGIVING TO WHICH TRACK CERTIFICATES COULD BE LINKED

The most promising professional qualifications with regard to TRACK follow three qualifications that are part of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (CNCP):

- 'Social and health care of dependent people in social institutions' (*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*);[142]
- 'Social and health care at home' (*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*);[143]
- 'Health care auxiliary' (*Cuidados auxiliares sanitarios*);[144]

The first two can be found under the professional family 'Community and Socio-cultural services' (*Servicios Socioculturales y a la Comunidad*) at level 2 (intermediate Professional Qualification). These two professional qualifications were mentioned by the Ministry of Health and the Department of Education in Jaén during interviews as well as during the validation workshop in Jaén as the most promising professions with regard to care for dependent people. The last qualification is located under the professional family 'Health' *(Sanidad)* at level 2 and was mentioned during the validation workshop.

Other related qualifications are **Domestic Work** (level 1) and **Geriatric Assistant Nurse** (level 3), which are also included in the CNCP. There also exists an intermediate Vocational Training level (ISCED-3) on '**Care of Dependents**'. (Carer+ 2013, 90f.), but the above-mentioned qualifications were mentioned in interviews as the most promising ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Many validation initiatives in the care sector focus on the acquisition of a qualification either to meet new requirements or to support unqualified workers in obtaining qualifications and ensuring the quality of services. Validation activities in the care sector

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[142] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/BDC/SSC320_2.pdf (2016-11-30)
[143] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/Publicacion/SSC089_2OK.pdf (2016-11-30)
[144] See: https://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/BDC/SAN669_2.pdf (2017-04-20)

often focus on assessment and certification, based on officially recognised professional qualifications. This is particularly important for the achievement of a formal qualification; in the care sector, high quality requirements and regulations as well as the level of professionalisation and the need for skilled workers are reasons for this need for officially recognised qualifications. Validation can therefore be seen as connected to formalising vocation-specific skills or work-related competences for supporting employability and labour market mobility (Cedefop 2016, 49f.).

Validation of professional skills developed by informal carers dealing with Dementia patients apply the procedures established in the *Royal Decree 1224/2009* about the recognition of professional skills acquired through professional learning and non-formal training (*Real Decreto 1224/2009 sobre Reconocimiento de las competencias profesionales adquiridas por experiencia laboral y vías no formales de formación*). In order to evaluate skills acquired through the TRACK training, the relevant professional qualifications included in the CNCP could be used as a reference (standard); the following two dealing with dependent people were mentioned by the Ministry of Health with regard to possible connections to professional qualifications during an interview: "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*" (Social and health care for people at home) and "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*" (Social and health care for people at social institutions). Also during the interview with an expert from the Department of Education in Jaén these two professional qualifications were mentioned as the most promising ones for TRACK. During the validation workshop in Jaén, besides the two qualifications just mentioned, the professional qualification "*Cuidados auxiliares sanitarios*" (Health care auxiliary) was added and could also be a possibility for TRACK.

But, it is a very complicated procedure to include the TRACK programme within the training pathway of one of these three professional qualifications as they are included in the CNCP and the Modular Catalogue of VET; the design of their training programmes is linked to standards existing in the labour market, which are analysed, agreed and validated by experts and social partners of each sector and each professional qualification needs its own Royal Decree to come into force.

Still, the TRACK training programme is relevant since it can improve the skills of people working with dependent people and dealing with Dementia/Alzheimer patients on a regular basis. The TRACK training might be linked to the part of "professional performance" as in the relevant day-to-day tasks and routine, and so be particularly relevant.

It needs to be taken into consideration that if TRACK could be part of a training module or specialisation for competence units of the three above mentioned professional qualifications, there is still the number of years (3) of documented work experience needed and the 300 hours of non-formal learning that might be demoralising for informal caregivers. Therefore, these requirements might be too high for informal caregivers. A problem for informal caregivers is that most of them do not have legal contracts and therefore are not eligible to receive further education and training. Also, their work is not

recognised if they do not have an official contract, that means even if they have experience of working 3 years as an informal caregiver, this experience is not recognised if they cannot show any official contract; therefore, the route to recognising skills and competences acquired through informal care is quite difficult.

A more suitable way for informal caregivers could be if the completion of the TRACK training programme would be connected to the "skills dossier" ("*dossier de competencias*") as an indirect evidence of non-formal training enabling the acquisition of the skills to be evaluated. The skills dossier is a portfolio including a self-introduction, a CV, information about professional experience and training completed so far and a self-assessment; it is a central element of the validation process as the skills dossier "contains the whole professional information and evidences gathered by the candidate, as well as new evidences obtained during the validation procedure, structured in a systematic way to facilitate its analysis. As annex to this dossier, other documents can be included making up part of the personal record of the candidate.[145]"

Another possibility could be to create a specialist module for the "*Fichero de Especialidades Formativas*" (list of training specialities) where TRACK could be included. This list of training specialities sets out the SPEE-INEM (*Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal- Instituto Nacional de Empleo*) training provision. New courses may always be added following requests from organisations responding to labour market needs and those arising from studies. These requests are evaluated according to criteria such as training needs, technical assessments etc. by experts from the SPEE-INEM and the Autonomous Regions (Cedefop, ReferNet 2007, 54). Training specialisations are often "transversal" and so do not lead to a concrete "professional qualification", but include several competences common to different qualifications. There already exist specialisations dealing with Alzheimer of about 50-60 hours, so TRACK may have an option.

In Spain validation procedures are organised on regional level, where the awarding body, e.g. *the Institute for Professional Qualifications in Andalusia*, is preparing the calls. Therefore, to certify TRACK on a national level in Spain, the awarding bodies in each region need be contacted.

A possibility to validate the TRACK certificate on a regional level would be to get in contact with the Institute for Professional Qualifications in Andalusia (the awarding body of the region of the TRACK partner) and ask them to launch a special call with regard to validating competences of informal carers and those who participated in the TRACK programme. In order to launch such a special call it would be recommended to get in contact with the two big employers (*Clece*[146] and *Macrosad*[147]) in the care sector in Andalusia and also involve the trade union, CCOO, as special calls can be launched if both employer and employee organisations support such a call. This special call and the validation of competences

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[145] See: https://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/Acreditacion/MANUAL%20PROCEDIMIENTO.pdf page 22
[146] See: https://www.clece.es/en/about-us/ (2016-12-07)
[147] See: http://macrosad.es (2016-12-07)

acquired through informal care work and the TRACK programme could then be seen as an entry point to the three professional qualifications mentioned above – qualifications that are in high demand in Spain. But still, the TRACK training programme might be too small for such a call and connecting it to other small training programmes could be recommended. In the end, if such a call could be realised it would only lead to a certificate recognised on regional level, not on national level (like professional qualifications).

Altogether we can sum up that there are different routes for informal caregivers who have participated in the TRACK training programme:

- informal caregivers take part in the TRACK training programme and have no further interest in further education and training;
- informal caregivers take part in the TRACK training programme and have interest in further education and training:
  o They can start by including the competences gained through the TRACK training programme in the "skills dossier" ("*dossier de competencias*"). As mentioned above, the skills dossier is a portfolio including a self-introduction, a CV, information about professional experience and training completed so far and a self-assessment, and it is a central element of the validation process;
  o They can move on to more flexible training programmes, like the above mentioned specialisation on Alzheimer or other specialist modules in the "*Fichero de Especialidades Formativas*" (list of training specialities);
  o They can proceed with a full training pathway to the professional qualifications "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*" (Social and health care for people at home), "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*" (Social and health care for people at social institutions) or "*Cuidados auxiliares sanitarios"* (Health care auxiliary);
- Informal caregivers who are not interested in further education and training still benefit from the TRACK training programme as it brings together a lot of different information from key areas dealing with Dementia. Additionally, awareness-raising should not be underestimated: Informal caregivers often do not know how much knowledge and competence they have already acquired through their work and it is very important to acknowledge their experience and know-how;

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESULTS OF THE EXPERT WORKSHOP
In the local workshop was organised in Jaén in March 2017 the TRACK training was overall received very well. The following reasons why to participate in the TRACK training were mentioned by caregivers: Receive information about Dementia/Alzheimer's disease, receive a certificate showing that the caregiver is competent in the field of care for patients with Dementia/Alzheimer.
Caregivers thought that the best places to address informal caregivers would be the

Associations of Alzheimer's patients, community social services, city hall, or through health centers, including social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors etc. In order to support caregivers to participate in TRACK, caregivers mentioned "*information on professionals of this type and on training offers*; *information on potential employers; several modular training offers, including small, not too time-consuming learning units*".

Policy and decision makers stated that TRACK could contribute to improving the quality of care. From their point of view, the most important topics would be "*mobilization, personal treatment, how to face the situations*". Also, TRACK training could lead to participating in the formal labour market, e.g. after the informal caregiving has ended, through the validation of non-formal learning.

The following organisations were mentioned as possibly being interested in the TRACK training:
- Alzheimer's associations, e.g. The Andalusian federation of Alzheimer's;
- Social services;
- Private companies such as CLECE and MACROSAD, which are closest to people affected by the disease and caregivers.

VET providers estimated the TRACK learning platform as a very innovative approach as it combines face-to-face sessions and online learning and therefore is making the training more accessible. Also, it contributes to the quality of care at home by focusing on informal caregivers, a target group usually difficult to reach. They also stated that they would be interested in implementing the TRACK training as it would complement other, similar training programmes that already exist; therefore, it could be a module to one of these already existing programmes. Besides this, it could also be of interest as it was developed within a European project and therefore common content in several countries has been developed and is used which could also be an added value.

But VET providers also see challenges with regard to implementing TRACK within existing training offers: For example, it was mentioned that informal caregivers often work without a contract in Spain and therefore it is difficult for them to show and document their experience. Regarding validation and accreditation, it is however necessary to have a formal contract that shows for how long a person has been working as a caregiver. These requirements might be too high for informal caregivers.

Another difficulty that was mentioned during the workshop are the (lacking) digital skills of

informal caregivers: Many have little experience with online learning or learning platforms, so this could be a challenge; at the same time, it could be an added value if digital skills are being referred to as well during the TRACK training.

The following three qualifications that are part of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (CNCP) have been regarded as most promising for TRACK:

- 'Social and health care of dependent people in social institutions' (*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en instituciones sociales*)[148]
- 'Social and health care at home' (*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*)[149]
- 'Health care auxiliary' (*Cuidados auxiliares sanitarios*)[150]

The first two can be found under the professional family 'Community and Socio-cultural services' (*Servicios Socioculturales y a la Comunidad*) at level 2 (intermediate Professional Qualification). The last qualification is located under the professional family 'Health' *(Sanidad)* at level 2.

Other related qualifications are Domestic Work and Geriatric Assistant Nurse, which are also included in the CNCP. There also exists an intermediate Vocational Training level on 'Care of Dependents'. But the three above mentioned professional qualifications were identified as the most promising ones.

Policy and decision makers mentioned during the workshop that they would recommend to get in contact with the "Andalusian Institute of Professional Qualifications" that is responsible for validation in the region of Andalusia, as in Spain validation procedures are organised on regional level. Therefore, to certify TRACK on a national level in Spain, the awarding bodies in each region need be contacted.

Overall, the workshop participants agreed that the TRACK training programme is very relevant since it can improve the skills of people working with Dementia patients on a regular basis.

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[148] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/BDC/SSC320_2.pdf (2016-11-30)
[149] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/Publicacion/SSC089_2OK.pdf (2016-11-30)
[150] See: https://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/BDC/SAN669_2.pdf (2017-04-20)

9. TRACK COMPETENCE PROFILE – OVERLAP WITH NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

WHY DEAL WITH LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCE PROFILES

Occupational competence profiles normally offer an overview of knowledge, skills and competences that are required to fulfil professional tasks. Occupational competence profiles are often described in detail by national institutions, for example the Public Employment Services. The competences defined for a certain occupation can in most of the cases be acquired via (vocational) education and training. For regulated professions, specific qualifications are required to work in such a profession. As many social and health care professions are regulated, TRACK must at least to a certain degree be in line with the competence profiles and the required qualifications of those professions.

Overlaps between the TRACK competence profile and relevant care professions refer to the general possibility to work in this profession. Of course, the overall quantity of required competences, the specific qualification level required (academic, low skilled etc.) and the "weight" of a specific competence in the overall profile must be taken into consideration as well. However, a first overlap of the competence profile indicates that the vocational qualification requirements for this profession could show as well overlaps with the vocational education and training of the profession. If the learning outcomes of the TRACK training and the learning outcomes of the vocational education and training for this specific care profession overlap as well, the TRACK certificate can eventually be recognised as prior learning of the former. Cooperation with vocational education and training providers could support in this case the rollout of the TRACK certificate. Other important aspects that should be taken into consideration regarding the recognition of the TRACK certificate by other VET providers are the quality of the training, the reputation of the certifying institution and the relevance of the training content etc.

THE TRACK COMPETENCE PROFILE

Informal carers have acquired skills and competences through caregiving experience and by practicing care (informal learning). These skills and competences may differ from person to person and no common standard of skills and competences that informal caregivers of Alzheimer and Dementia patients should have acquired has been defined so far. Such a guideline could however help to improve the quality of informal care and the well-being of carers and patients. Furthermore, it could be the basis for education and training offered for informal caregivers. This standard could also help to define further education and training that must be passed by informal caregivers to become a specific care professional.

Informal carers who participate in the TRACK programme have acquired through experience skills and competences and may now acquire additional specific skills and competences, for which they can obtain a certificate. Thus, part of their competences will be made more explicit and better visible.

TRACK offers a blended training which combines online and face-to-face training sessions. The outcome of the training programme is described in learning outcomes that can be compared to the learning outcomes of other education and training offers. In addition, a knowledge, skills and attitudes profile of TRACK can be defined based on a keyword approach describing for each learning outcome related knowledge, skills and attitudes:

Table 3: Learning outcomes of TRACK and the TRACK competence profile

Learning outcomes acquired via the TRACK training programme	Knowledge, Skills, attitudes (TRACK competence profile)
To be able to identify the objectives, contents and planning of the training	Time planning skills; self-organisation skills;
To be able to define Alzheimer disease, including its stages of evolution	Knowledge of Alzheimer disease and stages of evolution
To be able to identify solutions to daily problems	Problem solving skills; Know different solutions for daily problems;
To be able to identify the available support and tools (financial, material and human) necessary for meeting the care recipients' needs	Knowledge of support measures and tools (financial, material, human); ability to understand the care recipient's needs; Information gathering skills; guidance and communication skills;
To be able to identify the various types of communication and choose an appropriate way of communicating with a care recipient affected by Alzheimer	Knowledge of different types of communication; Ability to apply different forms of communication; Ability to evaluate which communication approach is appropriate in a specific situation for Alzheimer patients; Communication skills;
To be able to identify key moments of the day when care recipients are available for exchange or activity	Social skills; Empathy; Know at what time of the day Alzheimer patients are most receptive for exchange and activity;
To be able to propose solutions to communication problems.	Problem solving skills; communication skills; Knowledge of conflict solution strategies; mediation competence;
To be able to identify his/her role and his/her limits as an informal caregiver	Ability for self-reflection; Self-care capability; Know about the possibilities and limits of the role of an informal caregiver;

Learning outcomes acquired via the TRACK training programme	Knowledge, Skills, attitudes (TRACK competence profile)
To be able to take a distance as regards difficult and stressful situations	Knowledge of methods and techniques for stress reduction; Self-reflection skills; Ability to cope with stress; Ability to cope with difficult situations; Ability to distance oneself from difficult and stressful situations
To be able to identify useful measures to facilitate the daily life	Knowledge of useful measures to facilitate the daily life of Dementia/Alzheimer patients; Ability to evaluate which measures are applicable in the daily life of a specific patient
To be able to identify the activities to maintain cognitive and motor functions	Knowledge of methods and techniques to maintain cognitive and motor functions; Ability to evaluate which activities are appropriate for a specific patient; Ability to motivate others
To be able to propose activities focused on autonomy	Knowledge of activities that support autonomy; Ability to evaluate which activities are appropriate for a specific patient; Ability to motivate others; Tenacity
To be able to identify good practices to support daily activities	Ability to evaluate which measures are applicable in the daily life of a specific patient; Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of measures to support the daily life of a patient
To be able to implement methods and techniques of stimulation	Knowledge of methods and techniques to stimulate Dementia/Alzheimer patients; Ability to evaluate which measures and techniques of stimulation are applicable for a specific patient; Ability to motivate others; Tenacity

Source: own representation based on learning outcome description of the TRACK training

OVERLAPS WITH EXSITING VET OFFERS AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

The TRACK training and certification approach can be regarded as a first step to define a general competence profile for informal carers of Alzheimer/Dementia patients (what kind of competences informal carers need to do their work well). A first rough draft of such a profile of required skills and competences can be created based on inputs from informal caregivers themselves, experts in the field of care (e.g. nurses, doctors and other professionals working with Alzheimer/Dementia patients) and VET curricula for competence profiles of care professions that could be used as "entry points" to the labour market by informal caregivers. The future perspective of this approach could be to define a common competence profile for informal caregivers at European level which serves as a

basis for education and training offers for informal carers and helps to ensure the quality of informal care:

**Figure 2:** Define the competences of informal caregivers
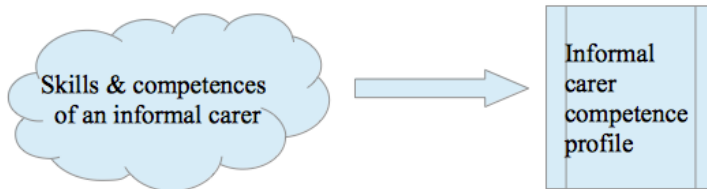
Source: own representation

 A competence profile defined for informal caregivers can also offer a basis for skills audit or assessment procedures at national level.

As a starting point for this long-term perspective the skills and competences covered by the TRACK programme and certificate take into consideration several already-existing professional profiles in the field of care that have been mentioned by experts in interviews and during the expert workshops as the most appropriate professions to enter the labour market for informal caregivers:

Figure 3: TRACK competences overlap with (VET offers for) professional profiles
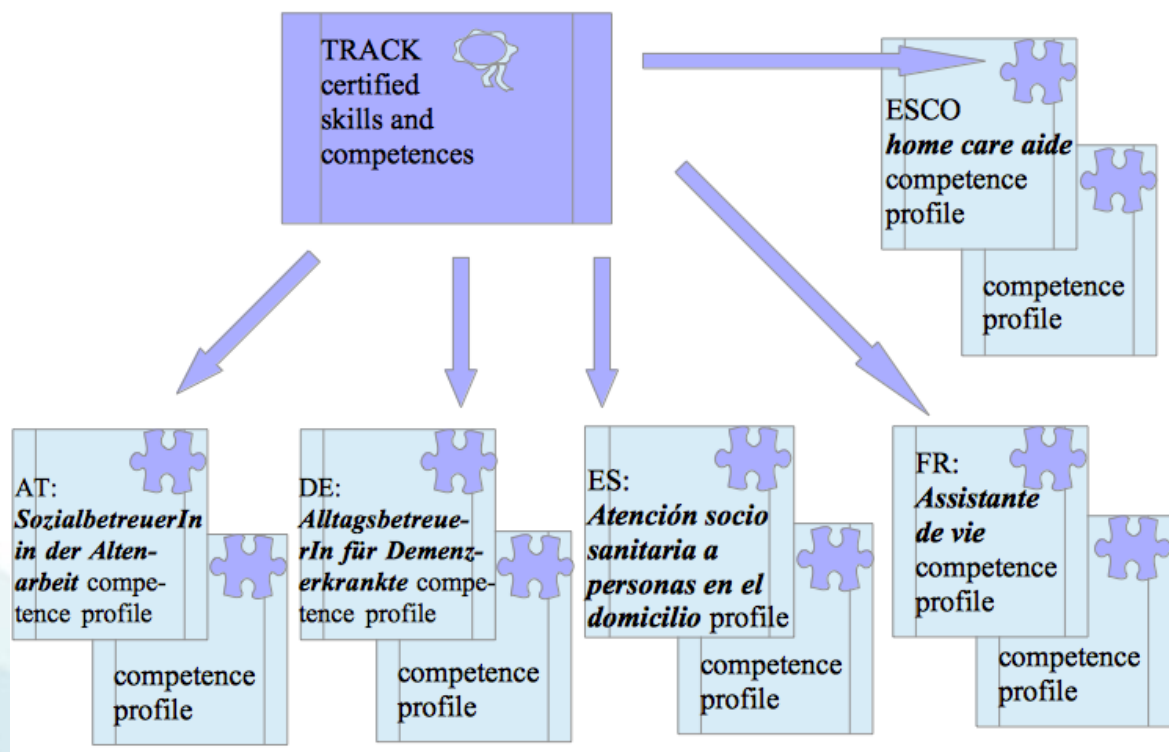
Source: own representation

WBS, a German online training provider and TRACK project partner, offers education and training for the **Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI** (daily life assistant for Dementia patients pursuant to § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI) and intends to recognise the competences acquired during the TRACK training for this qualification. The programme covers the following competences: self-care and caregiving, anatomy/ physiology and pathology, basic information on Dementia disorders/psychological disorders, ability to organise the daily life of care recipients, biographical work methods, first aid, nutrition management in elderly care, ability to act appropriately in daily nursing/ caring routines (see also Annex A, an example for the overlaps between the TRACK competence profile and this VET offer).

There are some overlaps with the TRACK learning outcomes and competences listed above. Both programmes cover, for example, the ability to act appropriately in daily caring routines, the awareness of self-care, the role of the caregiver, as well as basic information on Dementia disorders and the ability to organise the daily life of care recipients. It is therefore foreseen to offer the TRACK programme as part of the WBS programme and to recognise the TRACK certificate as prior learning for the WBS education and training offer for Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI.

Similarly, the **Assistant de vie**, which is linked to the ROME fiche "assistance auprès d'adultes" covers knowledge, skills and competences that overlap with competences covered by the TRACK training programme. As IPERIA offers (further) training and education for family assistants, TRACK certified informal carers could be informed of these overlaps and IPERIA could draft a pathway of further education and training offers for those informal caregivers who passed the TRACK training programme and which could in the end lead to the qualification *assistant(e) de vie*. Thus, the TRACK training programme could become a starting point for further education and an opportunity for informal carers to (re-)enter the labour market. In the long-term, informal carers could also consider having the competences they acquired (in at least three years of practical experience) validated via a VAE procedure.

However, professional competence profiles can also be very detailed: for example, the *Atención sociosanitaria a personas en el domicilio* brings together 32 pages of detailed descriptions, where:

- Units of competence (*unidades de competencia*) are divided into types of professions (*realizaciones profesionales*). They establish the behaviour expected and the consequences or results of the activities performed by that person and help to determine whether one is competent in a certain profession.
- ✓ Performance criteria (*criterios de realización*) express the level of acceptable performance in meeting productive organisational targets, and they are a reference guide for the assessment of professional competences.

- ✓ Professional context (*contexto profesional*) is a description of the means of production, products, results of work, any information used or generated, and any other analogue element deemed necessary for performing a job.
- • Every competence unit is linked to a learning module (*módulos formativos*) which describes the necessary training to acquire that competence unit and criteria for its evaluation (*criterios de evaluación*).[151]

Compared to these very specific descriptions in Spain, the qualification profile of *Pflegeassistenz* in Austria is rather short: it describes learning outcomes for graduates in seven different areas (e.g. principles of professional care, relationship and communication, and nursing interventions) and is only four pages long.[152] *SozialbetreuerIn in der Altenarbeit*, an occupational profile used by the Austrian Public Employment Service, includes information on the main tasks of the profession, its employment opportunities and (further) vocational education and training. The competence profile differentiates basic vocational, vocational and transversal skills and competences. It uses keywords, not learning outcomes to describe the competences.[153] Again, this information is – compared to the information in the Spanish professional qualification – rather short. Overlaps with TRACK skills and competences can however be found.

The TRACK project contributes to the dissemination of the competence profile of informal carers by promoting the profile at the national level (through partner websites and contacts) and the European level (e.g. through attempts of integrating the competence profile into ESCO and potential cooperation with ECC, i-CARE, DISCOVER or others).

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[151] See: http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/Publicacion/SSC089_2OK.pdf (2016-12-06)
[152] See „Anlage 4" in: https://rdb.manz.at/document/ris.c.BGBl__II_Nr__301_2016 (2016-12-06)
[153] See: http://www.ams.at/bis/bis/StammberufDetail.php?noteid=370 (2016-12-06)

10. SUMMARY AND ROADMAP FOR THE TRACK ROLLOUT

This study showed that the issue of certification and its rollout in the different partner countries is extremely complex and depends on many factors. There is no "one fit all solution" for all countries, but different approaches must be developed for each country. At this stage, only a series of recommendations can be made, based on what has been learned from our research and the discussion with experts. The different options must be evaluated and ranked by priorities based on an overall strategic concept defined by the project coordinator.

HOW TRACK SUPPORTS INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

The TRACK training programme and certificate will help informal carers by

- Supporting informal caregivers in their need for information and in their daily care routine by offering a training that is easy to use and to access and meets the requirements of the target group (blended learning approach, small learning units);
- Improving the quality of informal care by offering specific training for the care of Alzheimer/Dementia patients;
- Raising awareness for informal caregivers' contribution to care and for the competences they acquired in this context;
- Documenting competences and skills acquired by informal caregivers during the TRACK training;
- Raising informal caregivers' interest for (lifelong) learning by offering a small training tailored to their needs;
- Developing further education and career perspectives for informal caregivers by demonstrating existing overlaps of the TRACK competence profile with the competence profiles of specific care professions and related VET offers;
- Offering new vocational training and career perspectives for informal carers by collaborating with education and training providers who are willing to recognise the competences acquired during the TRACK training;
- Raising self-confidence and self-awareness of informal caregivers by supporting a transfer of acquired TRACK competences to existing skills audit tools such as *bilan de compétences* in France, *ProfilPASS* in Germany and *dossier de competencias* in Spain;
- Improving transferability and comparability of informal caregivers' competences by cooperating with national VET providers, caregiver associations, self-help groups, public institutions etc. and referring to overlaps of the TRACK competence profile with competence profiles of specific care professions in the partner countries and in ESCO;

HOW INFORMAL CARERS CAN USE THE TRACK CERTIFICATE

The following scenarios for usage of the TRACK certificate can be roughly distinguished:

- Option 1: caregiver receives a certificate for the TRACK training; in addition, he/she has the possibility to document all acquired care competences by using a national skills audit tool;
- Option 2: caregiver goes for further training:
  a) by doing a follow-up (TRACK) training for informal caregivers (he/she collects several certificates that can – under certain conditions – be recognised in validation procedures (especially in France and Spain) or by other education providers;
  b) by participating in a vocational training for a relevant care profession (some care professions show overlaps with the TRACK training and therefore the competences acquired in TRACK could be recognised);
- Option 3: caregiver uses the TRACK certificate to apply for recognition of prior learning at education and training providers who are TRACK partners and/or offer training for relevant care professions (reduction of training effort);
- Option 4: caregivers with long-term care experience may – under certain conditions – apply for official validation of his/her professional competences (especially in France and Spain), the TRACK training and information will offer basic information on this possibility;

ROADMAP FOR A ROLLOUT OF THE TRACK TRAINING AND CERTIFICATE

When starting a rollout of the TRACK training programme and certificate in the partner countries, it must be considered that some countries are more centralised, e.g. France, while in others, such as Spain or Germany, regions and municipalities are responsible for services in the care sector.

France is very centralised and the committee being the responsible awarding body only meets twice a year. This means, that for example implementing a new qualification will take a lot of time and effort and things can get delayed by bureaucracy. Due to the small scope of the TRACK training it will not be possible to position the resulting certificate as a full qualification. In the expert workshops, it was however stated that the TRACK training and certificate could be a starting point for further training for informal caregivers. It could either be used as self-assessment tool before starting a vocational training in the field of care. For example, in France, where IPERIA is offering a training for the *assistant(e) de vie* the TRACK training could be used as such a "preparational" tool for further vocational training. Or TRACK could – under certain circumstances – be recognised as a kind of preparation training for a full qualification in the field of social care, for example

in Germany, where WBS intends to recognise the TRACK certificate as part of the training for *Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs. 3 SGB XI*. In Germany, it is recommended to implement the TRACK training on one hand at regional level, for example in Halle, as the expert workshop delivered several potential cooperation partners for that region. The most interesting options in this field were a cooperation with the (regional) Public Employment Service or the AWO (Workers' Welfare Organisation) in Halle. A very promising option for the promotion and rollout of the TRACK certificate is cooperation with self-help groups, family doctors and "mobile" nurses, who normally are in direct contact with concerned persons and know their situation very well. On the other hand, the TRACK training and certificate could possibly be promoted at a national level, if for example the Ministry of Health or the public social security system would support the idea to offer a blended learning training for all informal carers.

In Spain, the regions are responsible and launch calls for validating non-formally and informally acquired skills and competences for professional qualifications that are in high demand in their area. If skills and competences are validated for professional qualifications, they are valid all over Spain, not just in the respective region. Special calls can also be launched in the regions, which then result in a regional certificate that is only valid in the specific region; these specific calls leading to regional certificates might also be a first step to further education and training for informal caregivers and should be considered for the rollout of the TRACK training and certificate. It has however to be taken into account that special calls can only be launched if both, employer and employee organisations support such a call. This means, that for a special call in Andalusia for example, TRACK would have to cooperate with trade unions and the two big companies in the field.

SHORT-TERM PERSPECTIVES

In all partner countries exist **skills audit tools** that are of different relevance for the public. In France and Spain, these audit tools are more important for competence documentation as for example in Germany and Austria where these tools are either not so well-known (Austria) or compete with similar tools and are limited to specific regions (Germany). However, in the expert workshops these tools were regarded as the most appropriate first step for the documentation of acquired skills and competences and a low threshold approach for becoming aware of one's professional competence profile. Therefore, it is recommended to either envisage a direct cooperation with institutions that are issuing these audit tools (*bilan de compétences* in France, *dossier de competencias* in Spain or the *ProfilPASS* in Germany) or to inform informal caregivers on the existence of such tools and how the TRACK competences can fit into these. In Spain, where the *dossier de competencias* is a central element of the validation process, the completion of the TRACK training programme could be connected to the *dossier de competencias* as an indirect evidence of non-formal training enabling the acquisition of the skills to be evaluated. The skills dossier is a portfolio including a self-introduction, a CV, information about professional experience, training completed so far and a self-assessment.

As empowerment is one of the main aims of the TRACK training, informal carers will be supported by making the competences they acquired visible already during the training and providing a summary afterwards. The TRACK training programme and certificate will give an **overview of competences** that have been acquired by a person who passed the training programme.

TRACK competences will **overlap** to a certain degree **with the competence profiles of** specific **existing care professions** in the piloting countries. In Germany, for example, where health and social care professions are highly regulated, there exist very few non-regulated professions, among those the above-mentioned *AlltagsbetreuerIn für Demenzkranke*. This profession can offer a kind of first "entry point" to the labour market for informal carers of Dementia/Alzheimer patients. Awareness for their own professional competences might motivate informal carers to (re-)enter the labour market and pass further vocational education and training or to apply for the validation and recognition of their competences in countries where solid validation systems exists (France and Spain). Therefore, the TRACK project offers also information on overlaps that exist between the competence profile of TRACK and the competence profiles of these specific care professions and relevant vocational education and training. Thus, TRACK can help informal caregivers to develop potential career and/or further (vocational) training and education perspectives in the field of care (see Annex A, German example for TRACK competence profile overlaps with a specific care profession and relevant VET).

Given the small number of training hours, it has been emphasised in the expert workshops that **validation as an official professional qualification is unlikely for TRACK**. For example, in Spain each professional qualification needs its own Royal Decree to enter force and adding content to the existing standards is a time-consuming and quite bureaucratic process that (if successful) might end with a complicated procedure that is not easy-to-use for informal carers. In France, the TRACK certificate covers not enough learning outcomes that could be a basis to apply for a VAE validation. However, existing vocational training offers for specific care professions (e.g. *assistant(e) de vie* in France or *Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI* in Germany) could recognize the competences acquired in the TRACK programme. During an interview with a Spanish expert, it was recommended to not just contact the awarding body but also to contact the big employers in the care sector in the region, as well as the trade union, in order to try to launch a specific call[154] that could validate the competences acquired through the TRACK training programme. Although a specific call and its validation would only lead to a regional certificate this might be a "first step" for informal caregivers to further education and training; as in Spain, there is a shortage of skilled care professionals, regular calls for validation for two professional qualifications, "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio*" and "*Atención socio sanitaria a personas dependientes en*

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[154] For more information about the possibility to set-up such a specific call see chapter 8, country report for Spain and Recommendations for implementation on national level.

instituciones sociales" ("Social and health care for people at home" and "Social and health care for people at social institutions"), are launched from which TRACK could benefit.

Another option for a short term rollout of the TRACK training and certificate in Spain is the "*Fichero de Especialidades Formativas*" (**list of training specialities**) sets out the SPEE-INEM (*Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal- Instituto Nacional de Empleo*) training provision. New courses may always be added following requests from organisations responding to labour market needs and those arising from studies. These requests are evaluated in accordance to criteria such as training needs, technical assessments etc. by experts from the SPEE-INEM and the Autonomous Regions. Training specialisations are often "transversal" and so do not lead to a concrete "professional qualification", but include several competences common to different qualifications. In Spain, there already exist specialisations dealing with Alzheimer of about 50-60 hours, so TRACK may be an option as well.

LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVES

In a long-term perspective, connecting the TRACK training programme (and possible follow-up programmes for Dementia care) to an **NQF** and therefore linking it to the EQF would be an important step for TRACK. This requires however a long-term strategy and the definition of pathways from TRACK training to relevant vocational training for professions covered in the NQF. In France, this could be a link of the TRACK certificate to vocational education and training of the *assistant(e) de vie*. In Spain, the launch of a specific call could be a first step towards a link to the NQF.

A future perspective could also be to create a more comprehensive **international training programme for informal carers** that covers, besides the core competences of the identified relevant care professions in each piloting country, specific skills and competences for the informal care of Dementia patients. The creation of such an international training programme could eventually be used to start partnerships with (other) big training providers. In this context, **ESCO** and the **input of professional care organisations** could be used to define a **basic competence profile for informal carers** at European level. In this case, the occupational profile of home care aide in ESCO should be refined in a way that national care qualifications such as *assistant(e) de vie*, *Atención socio sanitaria a personas en el domicilio, Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI* could be linked to this specific ESCO profile. The TRACK competences would partly overlap with all mentioned competence profiles and the ESCO profile. Training providers could use the profile as a basis for defining the learning outcomes of training offered to informal caregivers.

With regard to a link to existing (France, Spain) and planned (Austria, Germany) **national validation procedures**, it is recommended to keep in touch with **awarding bodies** in the partner countries to be informed on how the procedures work in practice and which new developments are planned and can possibly be used for the further implementation of

TRACK. In most countries, the Ministry of Health is responsible for or informed on validation procedures in the field of care, in others the central or regional government, municipality, local authorities or independent bodies must be addressed.

In general, existing qualifications or professional standards and related further training and education programmes offer the possibility to recognise the **TRACK training as a kind of preparation training**. As mentioned in one of the expert workshop the TRACK training could also be linked as a specialisation module or "add-on" to existing programmes e.g. for paramedics and similar professional groups dealing with Alzheimer and Dementia patients.

The best option to implement the TRACK training and certificate at national level seems to be the **link to already existing training and education** offers **in the field of care for informal and formal carers as well as other paramedical and social professions** that must deal with Dementia and Alzheimer patients. If the qualification for these professions can be acquired also via validation, TRACK could indirectly become a part of this validation process.

In the German expert workshop, it was mentioned that it might be difficult to motivate training and education providers not involved in the TRACK project to offer the TRACK training and certificate, if they do not see a clear financial benefit. Therefore, the **TRACK training** will be **offered free of charge in formats that are commonly used for distance learning** (moodle and access via web export interface) to every organisation interested in implementing it. Thus, education and training providers and other institutions will be able to receive and implement the distance learning lessons in four language versions (English, German, French and Spanish) and will only have to "invest" the organisational and technical infrastructure and staff that is needed for training support and mentoring. Furthermore, the training platform will be available also after the end of the project for everybody interested in using it and having internet access and a personal computer via the TRACK website.

Another option for the rollout of the TRACK programme at European level could be to **link TRACK to already existing European qualification offers**, such as the European Care Certificate (ECC), where TRACK could play the role of an entry training based on which carers could – if they like – move on to the ECC in a next step. In case this cooperation is considered as strategically promising, it must be clarified to what degree overlaps between BESCLO[156] (the core of the ECC) and the TRACK competences exist. Furthermore, it must be evaluated whether the assessment approach of TRACK and the ECC are "compatible" and support such a cooperation. During an interview with James Churchill from the ECC this question was raised and he was open to a possible future collaboration. As the ECC already exists in 20 countries, this could be a good opportunity for a rollout of the TRACK training. As international qualifications could be included into ESCO in the

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[156] See learning outcomes: http://www.eccertificate.eu/united-kingdom/menu-left/besclo.html (2016-11-30)

future and be linked to the EQF[158], a cooperation with the ECC, could also offer this perspective of being included indirectly into ESCO and the EQF.

Other European projects that could be recommended for cooperation are the I-CARE project and the ECVC project with its specific care focus and the DISCOVER and KEYFORA project which could be complementing TRACK.[159]

An advantage for the rollout of TRACK in other countries and with regard to international cooperation, will be that TRACK is offered as open access licence free of charge and that there will be some advice for trainers regarding the assessment criteria of the TRACK training.

PROMISING ROLLOUT PARTNERS

As the most promising rollout partners at national level the following organisations have been mentioned by the experts:
- Ministries of Education
- Public Employment Services
- Home care and welfare organisations
- Social insurances
- Trade unions
- Hospitals
- Family and labour doctors, home care nurses etc.
- Associations of Dementia/Alzheimer patients
- Counselling organisations for Dementia/the Alzheimer disease
- Self-aide, discussion and relative groups for Dementia and Alzheimer patients
- National, regional and local authorities involved in validation
- (Vocational) education and training providers for informal carers, carers and related paramedic and social professions
- Institutions providing support for professional integration
- Institutions providing support for young informal caregivers
  …

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[158] Information about ESCO based on a presentation received by Katrien van der Kuylen (ESCO Secretariat) in February 2016 and the ESCO website: https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home (2017-07-29).
[159] For more details see chapter 4.

ANNEX A – TRACK COMPETENCE OVERLAPS (EXAMPLE GERMANY)

Learning outcomes acquired via the TRACK training programme	TRACK knowledge, Skills, attitudes (competence profile)	Skill overlaps with BerufeNET competence profile	Skill overlaps with competences acquired via WBS training
To be able to identify the objectives, contents and planning of the training	Planning skills	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn*	*Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI*
	(Self-)organisation skills	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn*	*Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI*
To be able to define Alzheimer disease, including its stages of evolution	Knowledge of Alzheimer disease and stages of evolution		*Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI: Basic information on dementia disorders*
To be able to identify solutions to daily problems	Problem solving skills		
	Know different solutions for daily problems	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn: Support with daily living*	
To be able to identify the available support and tools (financial, material and human) necessary for meeting the care recipients' needs	Knowledge of support measures and tools (financial, material, human)	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn: support in daily living and preventive health care*	
	Ability to understand the care recipient's needs		
	Observation skills	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn*	
	Information gathering skills		
	Guidance skills	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn: pedagogical skills (advice/instruct and motivate people)*	
To be able to identify the various types of communication and choose an appropriate way of communicating with a care recipient affected by Alzheimer	Knowledge of different types of communication		
	Ability to evaluate which communication approach is appropriate in a specific situation for Alzheimer patients and act accordingly		*Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI: Ability to act appropirately in daily nursing/caring routines*

Learning outcomes acquired via the TRACK training programme	TRACK knowledge, Skills, attitudes (competence profile)	Skill overlaps with BerufeNET competence profile	Skill overlaps with competences acquired via WBS training
	Communication skills	*Betreuungskraft/Alltags begleiterIn: listening skills/understanding oral expressions and verbal skills*	
To be able to identify key moments of the day when care recipients are available for exchange or activity	Know at what time of the day Alzheimer patients are most receptive for exchange and activity		*Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI: Ability to arrange the daily routine of care recipients*
	Social skills and empathy		
To be able to propose solutions to communication problems.	Problem solving skills		
	Communication skills	*See above*	
	Knowledge of conflict solution strategies		
	Mediation competence		
To be able to identify his/her role and his/her limits as an informal caregiver	Ability for self-reflection		
	Self-care capability		*Alltagsbetreuer/in für Demenzerkrankte nach § 87b Abs.3 SGB XI: self-care and care giving*
	Know about the possibilities and limits of the role of an informal caregiver		

ANNEX B – GLOSSARY

Term	Definition	Source	Annotation
Assessment	*Process of appraising knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria (learning expectations, measurement of learning outcomes). Assessment is typically followed by certification.* *In the literature, 'assessment' generally refers to the appraisal of individuals whereas 'evaluation' is more frequently used to describe the appraisal of education and training methods or providers.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 28	*Assessment* is often used synonymously with *validation*, and is typically associated more with managerial discourse and theory than pedagogy and education
Certificate	*An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following assessment against a predefined standard.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 41	Result of certification.
Certification	*Process of issuing a certificate, diploma, or title formally attesting that a set of learning outcomes (knowledge, knowhow, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual has been assessed by a competent body against a predefined standard.* *Certification may validate the outcome of learning acquired in formal, non-formal, or informal settings.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 42	Result of a process of recognition.
Competences	*Ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development).* *or* *The proven ability to use knowledge, skills, and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 47.	Key term within validation and recognition of learning. In comparison to learning outcomes, the focus of competences is on the potential ability rather than on the necessity of being observable, assessable, and describable. Taxonomies such as ESCO aim to offer a common European description standard for competences. In ESCO competences are viewed as a common denominator for the description of qualifications and of professional profiles. There are, however, two different approaches to the description of competences used both in the labour market and education/training (the

Term	Definition	Source	Annotation
			first is more "key word"-oriented, the second one focuses on phrases).
Formal, Non-formal, Informal Learning	*formal learning occurs in an organised and structured environment (such as in an education or training institution). … It typically leads to certification.* *non-formal learning is still intended learning from the learner's point of view. It takes place in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning.* *informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family, or leisure. In most cases it is unintentional learning from the learner's point of view.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, pp. 99, 183 & 111	Informal and non-formal learning has become increasingly prominent in current European discourse. Validation is expected to make previously unrecognised competences gained through these types of learning visible (and thereby increase flexibility and mobility[160]). Despite this (and possibly as a consequence)… - **formal learning** (formally acquired competences) - **formal degrees** (certificates), and - **awarding institutions** … may be attributed increased importance.
Learning Outcomes	*Set of knowledge, skills, and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal.* *or* *Statements of what a learner knows, understands, and is able to do on completion of a learning process, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy. p. 164f.	Learning Outcomes are an important component of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). Learning Outcomes and Learning Outcome Units also play a significant role in ECVET (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training), where they are used to support the recognition and assessment of VET qualifications acquired by an individual. This term may be useful for any possible future classification of the Certified Professional within the EQF (even if it is sometimes used synonymously with competences).
Qualifications	*1. formal qualification:* *… the formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment process, determined by a competent body, related to a given standard* *… confers official recognition* *… can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade (OECD)*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 202	Due to the rapid change that occurs within working areas and the constant flux of job descriptions, qualification is no longer solely related to traditional job descriptions but also to other standards, some of which may have been recently developed.

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[160] This aim can be seen e.g. in following quote from a European network of course organisers in adult education: „The overall aim of validation is to make visible and value the full range of an individual's qualifications and competences, irrespective of where these have been acquired (i.e. be it in a formal, non-formal or informal setting)" (Grundtvig International Network of Course Organisers).

Term	Definition	Source	Annotation
	2. *Job requirements: knowledge, aptitudes, and skills required to perform specific tasks attached to a particular work position (ILO).* 3. *Qualifications follow an assessment and validation process that is organised by a competent body. They assess learning outcomes, which can be the result of formal training, non-formal or informal learning (e.g. learning on-the-job). The reputation of the awarding body determines how well a qualification is perceived, e.g. on the labour market (EQF recommendation).* *Qualifications are also awarded by international bodies and multinational companies in various countries in Europe and beyond.* *Some countries have included them in their NQFs, but not always at the same EQF level. These issues call for a coherent approach in referencing to the EQF by all countries to avoid confusion among employers and qualifications holders.* *A key challenge is to ensure that all qualifications in NQFs, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning, are trustworthy and meet basic quality requirements (EQF recommendation, 5)*		The *Certified Professional* is one such new standard and therefore a qualification. Climate-KIC and responsible partner organisations will be the competent bodies for the *Certified Professional* qualification. The EQF provides a common European reference and translation tool to facilitate the comparison of qualifications issued all over Europe. It consists of eight levels that are defined according to learning outcomes. Most European Member States have already linked the levels of their national qualifications to the eight common reference levels. Thus, the EQF supports the comparison and assessment of the level of knowledge, skills, and competences that a qualification holder has acquired. Qualifications that are related to the EQF will be indirectly included in ESCO. This will be achieved via the EQF portal, which will link to national qualifications databases. International qualifications that are not included in NQFs will be directly included in ESCO. The learning outcomes approach used in the EQF and ESCO should be coordinated (EQF recommendation, 8).
Recognition	*Formal recognition: process of granting official status to learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences) through:* 1. *validation of non-formal and informal learning* 2. *granting of equivalence, credit units or waivers* 3. *award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles).* *Social recognition: the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders.*	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 288	Process that leads to Certification. The *Certified Professional* will deal with: 1. validation of non-formal and informal learning (learning which has yet to be recognised via degrees, diplomas, certificates) 2. granting of equivalence, insofar as degrees (bachelor, master, PhD, …) are validated 3. award of qualifications (certificates, diplomas which have already been recognised via formal learning)
Validation/ Assessment standards	*Validation/Assessment standards act as the yardstick against which individuals are assessed; They are described as learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and*	www.nfche.gov.mt	Various methods through which standards can be set via a variety of different bodies: by educational institutions, by accrediting bodies, by

Term	Definition	Source	Annotation
	competences) an individual must have acquired and must be able to prove and demonstrate in order to receive a qualification.		practitioners within the sector. Validation involves measuring an individual's capabilities against a standard set of learning outcomes. The process by which this assessment is conducted, must be fair and transparent and ensure that every individual receives the appropriate judgment of his or her learning.[161]
Validation	Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes, knowledge, skills, or competences acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal, or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. Process consists of four phases: 1. identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual 2. documentation evidencing the individual's experiences 3. formal assessment of these experiences 4. certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification	Cedefop (2014): Terminology of European education and training policy, p. 202	Validation can be seen as synonymous to Assessment, but is more closely related to pre-defined validation standards and connected to educational and pedagogical discourse rather than to management.

Note: Validation, recognition and certification of competences are used rather synonymously within the European Commission and CEDEFOP papers. All of them lead to a "certificate". All of them define processes, where you need a proper set standard of required competences (often formulated as "learning outcomes"). All of them need a "competent body", who confirms, issues and grants the existence of competences and (part)qualifications. On the opposite side you have the individual, handing in documents, declarations, doing simulations, tests and examinations.

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[161] Source: http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-validation-of-informal-and-non-formal-learning-vinfl-occupational-standards/50659328/ (2016-12-22)

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