

RESEARCH ON RECOGNITION AND
VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL
LEARNING IN EUROPEAN UNION,
WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY



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INTRODUCTION

Project [Youth Ambassadors of Non-Formal Learning \(YAMNFL\)](#) started its implementation in December 2019. The project aims at promoting participation in Non-Formal Learning (NFL) activities and the power of validation and recognition of competences acquired outside the formal education environment through an innovative methodology. Project took into consideration what has been done so far within this area, researched for best practices and successful stories, and got ready to go on the field to reinforce the importance of the NFL.

Project consortium is composed of EU, WB countries and Turkey.

There is eleven partners in total:

Društvo za razvijanje prostovoljnega dela Novo mesto (Novo mesto / **Slovenia**); The Future Now Association (Sofia / **Bulgaria**); Kosovo Center of Diplomacy (Prishtina / **Kosovo***); United Societies of Balkans (Thessaloniki / **Greece**); Youth 4 Society (Tirana / **Albania**); Center for Intercultural Dialogue (Kumanovo / **North Macedonia**); Asocijacija za demokratski prosperitet – ZID (ADP-ZID) (Podgorica / **Montenegro**); NGO IUVENTA (Šabac / **Serbia**); Turk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu (Istanbul / **Turkey**); TDM 2000 (Cagliari / **Italy**) led by Local democracy agency Mostar (Mostar, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**)

One of the specific objectives was to research, collect, analyze and spread existing best practices and policies in the field of validation and recognition of NFL. In that light, each organization, coordinated by the applicant, carried out a research and identified the current situation on the validation and recognition of Non Formal and Informal Learning in their country. The applicant also collected relevant European data. All of this was useful and used for creating this dedicated publication that will provide inspiration for the Young Ambassadors for their activities, especially the ones in partnership with different stakeholders.

Author's note:

During research, the unforeseeable scenario of Global Covid-19 Pandemic got us into worldwide lockdown. Basically, all of our planned activities switched into online. This specific situation highlighted whole new discoveries that we would be unaware in ordinary life circumstances. For e.g. researchers noticed specific patterns of behaviour within our Focus Groups. We stumble upon this massive trend of youngsters being disinterested in online NFL activities without doubting the quality of the Online NFL content directed towards young people. The problem was in reaching a quantity of targeted audience. In addition, due to technical reasons, youngsters living in rural areas that were already hard to reach were almost excluded from online NFL activities. Youngsters expressed their opinion that unfortunately Covid-19 had a great influence on NFL activities. They shared that due to the inability to organize activities with physical presence, and all activities being online, it is a burden for them to participate in such activities because they have many online responsibilities related to school. In the past, after finishing with their school curriculum, they had the chance to relax and have some fun while learning something new in NFE activities. And now they have a hard time

staying motivated in front of their computer screens. That being said we concluded research with a lot of recently discovered inputs.

DEFINITION OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING (NFL)

European Union (EU) defines NFL as:

“NFL is learning embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). The NFL is intentional from the learner’s point of view.

Comments:

- non-formal learning outcomes may be validated and may lead to certification;
- non-formal learning is sometimes described as semi structured learning.¹

Council of Europe (CoE) definition on NFL:

“Non-formal education refers to planned, structured programs and processes of personal and social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational curriculum. Non-formal education is what happens in places such as youth organizations, sports clubs and drama and community groups where young people meet, for example, to undertake projects together, play games, discuss, go camping, or make music and drama. Non-formal education achievements are usually difficult to certify, even if their social recognition is increasing. Non-formal education should also be:

- voluntary
- accessible to everyone (ideally)
- an organized process with educational objectives
- participatory
- learner-centered
- about learning life skills and preparing for active citizenship
- based on involving both individual and group learning with a collective approach
- holistic and process-oriented
- based on experience and action
- organized on the basis of the needs of the participants.

Formal, non-formal and informal education are complementary and mutually reinforcing elements of a lifelong learning process.”²

¹ "Terminology of European education - Cedefop - Europa EU."
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4117_en.pdf. Page 183,184

² "Definitions - Council of Europe." <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-youth-foundation/definitions>.

Common definition of both EU and CoE on NFL:

The glossary of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (Glossary defines some key terms relating to European youth policy and youth work. The list of topics or terms is not comprehensive and is under constant development, in line with changes in youth policy and inputs from experts cooperating with the EU-CoE youth partnership and EKCYP users) describes non-formal learning as follows:

"Non-formal learning is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways."³

INSIGHT INTO NATIONAL LAWS/STRATEGIES/PLANS REGULATING NFL

Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL)

ALBANIA

VNFIL is already part of both Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Law and Vocational Education and Training (VET) Law. National Employment and Skills Strategy and Action Plan 2020 (NESS) has identified a VNFIL as one of the priority measures.

Non-formal education is realized within separate courses (for typists, cosmetologists, dressmakers, etc.) and schools for learning foreign languages. They are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, if they last more than 6 months. Otherwise, they are under the responsibility of the Ministry of social welfare and youth. Courses for pre-qualification and additional qualification of workers with different vocational profiles are also organized. Persons older than 16 years can obtain their elementary education in special schools for adults, i.e. in classes for adult education, part-time schools, or, so called, evening schools.

The teaching process for adults is realized according to the curriculum for adults which is approved by the Minister of Education and Sport. The instruction includes classes from the fifth to the eighth grades. There are both comprehensive and vocational secondary schools and they last three years.

³ "The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP)." <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/knowledge/-ekcyp..>

The financial assets are provided from the State budget. Each municipality keeps files on illiterate persons and persons without complete elementary education. Special actions in order to offer complete elementary education to those who have exceeded the age for attending primary schools or have not completed all grades are being organized.

VNFIL is one of the priority measures in the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020. The recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through work experience and/or voluntary activities is a valuable tool to encourage people to pursue lifelong learning and for optimising the training costs.⁴

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Certification - the release of relevant documents on education confirms that the learning outcomes - knowledge, skills and abilities that a person has acquired through formal, non-formal or informal forms of education and learning checked and confirmed by the competent authority / authorities, in accordance with established criteria and standards .

After completion of formal adult education programs: primary and secondary education or their individual parts, and training and retraining, education and training, the participants are issued public documents - certificates and diplomas that have the same validity as certificates obtained during regular education, or public certificates valid on completed training programs.

The names, the form and content of public documents acquired in the adult education system are regulated by law and / or by-laws.

Adult education in a craft and related activities / unincorporated, as well as the issuance of (name, content and form) documents acquired by passing the master's exams are regulated by the regulations in the field of adult education and / or regulations on crafts / unincorporated businesses.

Participants of informal education programs, after completion of the program and verifying the knowledge, skills and abilities, organizer of education about issues certificate / certificate / other document that is not a public document. If after the end of the informal program was not checking the knowledge, skills and abilities, but it might issue certificates or other documents that do not have the status of public documents but from which it is evident that they were members of a particular program of informal education, and the acquisition of which knowledge, skills and abilities it was foreseen in the program.⁵

BULGARIA

There have not been any recent changes in terms of policies, strategies or laws relating to validation of non-formal and informal learning in Bulgaria since the 2016 Inventory. Bulgaria

⁴ "Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - EACEA.", https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-61_en.

⁵ "Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning | Eurydice." https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-11_en.

has made progress overall since 2012 towards the principles of the Council Recommendation as follows:

1. Validation arrangements currently exist in relation to general, vocational education and training and adult learning. They are linked to the national qualifications framework and are in line with the European Qualifications Framework.

2. Information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as on the relevant procedures, are available to individuals and organisations and are free of charge. Making more use of these services could however be encouraged. This depends, though, on the interest and motivation of people and organisations to get involved in validation.

3. Disadvantaged groups, including individuals who are unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, benefit from validation arrangements predominantly in general education e.g. the project 'New chance for success' (2014-2020) provides literacy courses as well as courses that include basic education classes.

4. For each registered unemployed person at the Local Office Directorate of the PES, labour mediators (advisors) carry out an informal skills assessment (i.e. based on the personal profile, interviews and individual tests, labour mediators identify competency gaps and prepare an individual action plan). The informal skills assessment could be used for the purposes of validation, however, the tools applied (assessment forms, interviews) should be developed in accordance with state educational standards

5. The validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by appropriate guidance and counselling and is readily accessible - for each person who has applied for a validation procedure an individual consultant shall be allocated who assists the candidate throughout the validation process. The consultant is responsible for the preparation, completion and delivery of a candidate's portfolio including personal information which is kept in the archives of the validation institution.

6. There are no explicit indicators related to quality assurance of validation. Ordinance No.2 stipulates that validation institutions have to put in place internal quality assurance systems for validation, however, further specifications are not provided. The same applies to the Vocational Education and Training Act (as amended in 2014), which obliges VET providers to establish internal quality assurance systems to ensure that the services provided correspond with the expectations and needs of society. The 'New opportunity for my future' (2013- 2015) project has made a valuable contribution to the development of internal quality assurance measures. For example, a 'Manual for vocational schools for validating non-formal and informal learning' was developed, including methodological guidelines and validation tools.

7. Legislative acts do not include specific provisions related to the development of the professional competences of staff involved in the validation process. Training is sometimes provided within specific projects (e.g. 'New opportunity for my future'), depending on the project aims.

8. In relation to vocational education and training, qualifications and parts of qualifications obtained through validation comply with state educational standards for VET (hereafter VET standards).

9. The use of European Union transparency tools, such as the Europass framework and Youthpass for documentation of learning outcomes is not very popular in Bulgaria

10. The Vocational Education and Training Act (as amended in 2014) allows learners to accumulate credits towards the acquisition of a vocational qualification. Credits can be transferred between qualifications in the same vocational area. For the moment, permeability between vocational education and higher education is not regulated.

An overall strength of the existing validation arrangements is the introduction of a systematic approach of validation in VET with clear allocation of responsibilities between public institutions and social partners. The introduction of validation arrangements in general education and adult learning is also an important achievement.

The existing validation arrangements may be improved through:

1. development and adoption of a consistent framework for the allocation of funds for validation e.g. the lack of financial resources negatively affects the sustainability of existing grassroots initiatives and impedes the launch of new ones;
2. development and adoption of indicators related to quality assurance of validation;
3. better cooperation with the private sector;
4. linking career guidance provided by PES and validation – for example, cooperation between the services may be encouraged (PES could be a referral for validation);
5. regulating the provision of training opportunities for validation practitioners e.g. through the update of VET standards, Bulgaria is gradually introducing the learning outcomes approach in curricula and assessment. Therefore, in the future, validation practitioners may have to take specialised training on learning outcomes-based assessment;
6. creating a uniform data collection system integrating data submitted by the different validation institutions e.g. VET schools, VET colleges as well as vocational education and training centres.⁶

GREECE

In Greece, there is currently no comprehensive national framework for VNFIL. A legal framework based on common principles for all formal adult education and training, has not

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https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Bulgaria.pdf

been in place yet and tools for documenting knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education and learning have not been developed systematically.

As a result, individuals do not have the right to request an assessment of their prior learning, no matter where and how competences have been required, in relation to the standards of an education and training programme (bottom-up approach).

On the other hand, in order to better understand the developments in the VNFIL in Greece, it is important to highlight the definitions used in the country, regarding non-formal learning, compared to the definition provided by the 2012 Council Recommendation for the validation of non-formal and informal learning because non-formal learning does not have the same definition in Greece compared to other countries.

In accordance with Greek legislation (law 3879/2010), non formal education includes:

1. Initial Vocational Training
2. Continuing Vocational Training
3. General Adult Education
4. The Apprenticeship Class, which is a fourth year after graduating from the vocational upper secondary school (EPAL).

In addition, the word certification (pistopoihsh) is mainly used across processes and national policy documents; it may regard documentation that attests that learning took place; but it does not necessarily imply validation because no actual assessment takes place.

Experts suggest that for validation another term should be used in Greek (epikirosi or egyropoisi tis mathisis than pistopoihsh), to imply assessment and equivalence in learning outcomes (Cedefop 2016, GR - update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning)

In this context, some processes of certification have been developed by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) (law 4115/2013) which has the authority to certify inputs and outputs of non-formal learning.

Thus, EOPPEP grants licenses to providers of non-formal education and training, (both initial and continuing) upon quality criteria and standards and provides certification of skills for the training staff and programmes.

EOPPEP also provides accreditation of occupational profiles and curricula standards in collaboration with the social partners. An occupational profile is defined as the job function and the required knowledge, skills and competences for exercising an occupation or specialisation.

Based upon accredited occupational profiles, EOPPEP is planning to develop standards and credits for modularised education and training curricula.⁷

ITALY

Law no. 92/2012 on the reform of the labour market provides an official definition of lifelong learning: “the term lifelong learning refers to all learning activities formally, non-formally and informally undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences in a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”.

Formal learning takes place in the education and training system, in universities and in the High level arts, music and dance education institutions (Afam) and leads to a certification or a vocational qualification, which can be obtained also through an apprenticeship.

Non-formal learning is an intentionally chosen learning that takes place outside the formal education and training system. It takes place in any organisation with educational and training purposes, also in voluntary bodies, national civil service organizations, organisations of the private social sector or enterprises.

Informal learning refers to activities carried out in every-day life, at work, at home and in leisure time, even without an intentional choice.

Furthermore, the same law foresees the establishment of a national public system for the certification of competences based on minimum service standards and uniform throughout the country.

‘Certifiable competences’ are a structured combination of knowledge and skills recognisable also as formative credits through a special procedure for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The certification of competences is defined as a public deed that ensures learning transparency and acknowledgment, consistently with the objectives set by the European Union. A certification, diploma or qualification formally attests that assessment and validation have been carried out by a public institution or an authorised subject.⁸

KOSOVO

Kosovo has developed a national regulatory framework which is in alignment and compliant with the Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL). The main policy and legal framework is in place and the secondary legislation is being developed. Therefore, implementation is expected to commence in 2019.

⁷ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-32_en

⁸ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/italia/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning_en

The regulatory framework covers both Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training Kosovo (VET), including both Initial VET (IVET) and Continuous VET (CVET), but not general education. Kosovo has prioritized the VET sector and continued with the development of further specific sub sector policies and bylaws. National authorities have tended to prioritize CVET to support individuals' entry to, or progress in, the labour market, given current high unemployment rates, e.g. 30.5 % in 2017 (Kosovo Statistics Agency, 2017).

Validation arrangements are linked to the Kosovo Qualifications Framework (KQF) and only qualifications approved and registered in the KQF can be awarded via validation of prior learning. Learning outcomes are the reference points for validation, enabling acquisition of partial or full qualifications through validation of prior learning.

There is synergy among validation arrangements and credit systems used in HE and VET: credits can be acquired both in VET and HE through the validation of prior learning.

Transparent quality assurance mechanisms are developed and in line with the existing quality assurance framework in VET. Validation can be implemented only by institutions accredited by regulatory bodies such as the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) or Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). To be authorised to administer validation, institutions need to meet specific criteria such as designated validation practitioners, internal quality assurance mechanisms, field-specific equipment etc.

The validation process consists of four stages: Identification, Documentation, Assessment and Certification of learning outcomes, supported by guidance and counselling by validation practitioners such as coordinators, mentors and internal and external assessors.

Social partners such as chambers of commerce were involved in the process of policy development for validation arrangements. However, involving employers in implementation and assessment in particular is challenging. Potentially, employers could be involved as external assessors in the assessment panel or they could allow the use of their premises for practical assessment of the intended learning outcomes.

Poor involvement of social partners and weak commitment of the government to release resources for additional NQA staff remain the greatest challenges for the efficient delivery of the process in the future.⁹

MONTENEGRO

Article 28 of the [Law on Adult Education](#), which relates to testing and demonstrating knowledge, stipulates that, in order to acquire a national professional qualification or key skills,

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https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Kosovo.pdf

adults can demonstrate, i.e. have their knowledge, skills and competences tested and confirmed, regardless of the manner in which they had been acquired, in accordance with a special regulation governing national professional qualifications.

This article of the Law provides opportunities to recognise non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills.

[Law on National Vocational Qualifications](#) allows individuals to acquire a nationally recognized professional qualification in different manners:

- by completing a module when a publicly valid educational programme is based on several occupational standards;
- by testing knowledge, skills and competences after completing an adult education programme in accordance with the Examination Catalogue;
- by testing of knowledge, skills and competences directly in accordance with the Examination Catalogue.

Educational programmes, whose completion leads to the acquisition of qualification of an education level, is based on several occupational standards. Professional qualification is based on a single occupational standard. If an educational programme is modularized, it is possible to acquire a professional qualification by completing a particular module based on the occupational standard. Thus, modularized vocational education programmes allow those who left education, adults who want to gradually acquire a level of education or students with special educational needs, to acquire a professional qualification for one part of the programme (module).

Professional qualification can also be acquired by undergoing testing after completing an education programme in accordance with the examination catalogue. The examination catalogue is prepared on the basis of occupational standards and qualification standards, and is adopted by the [National Council for Education](#). The examination catalogue includes: title of the professional qualification, conditions to be met by a person acquiring the professional qualification, the content of testing, difficulty level, method and criteria for testing, connection to formal education programme, credit points, educational profile and the level of education of members of the Examination Panel, conditions to be fulfilled by adult education organizer and other data of importance for the professional qualification. Professional qualification acquired in this manner is confirmed by certificate and enables the inclusion in the labour market.¹⁰

¹⁰ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-48_en

NORTH MACEDONIA

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Republic of North Macedonia, as a candidate country for EU membership, has made continuous and significant progress in the harmonization of its education system with the educational policies and standards of the European Union.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is indicated in the [Education Strategy 2018-2025](#) as one of the challenges, i.e. one of the measures of the Strategy is: Support in the process of establishment and operationalization of the system of validation results of non-formal and informal learning. The Strategy also stressed out that the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning in North Macedonia is in its embryonic phase, and establishment of a system for Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF) management and inclusion of stakeholders is yet another open issue. A comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges was adopted with the development of the [Roadmap for Further Development and Implementation of the MQF](#) (2016).

Overview of the legal and strategic documents containing references to VNFIL

The introduction of VNFIL in North Macedonia is directly related to the development of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework ([Македонска рамка на квалификации](#)) in the country, which is expected to bring benefits to citizens and support life-long learning.

Republic of North Macedonia has adopted a Roadmap for Implementing a System for VNFIL in 2016, following the adoption of a Concept Paper for Non-Formal Adult Education and Informal Learning in 2015. A Guidance Note on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) processes and Specifications for the Methodology package were developed in 2017, which are also considering the different EU institutional frameworks, VNFIL procedures and instruments. Further on, a training session for potential VNFIL assessors was carried out in December 2017, based on a defined handbook for assessment.¹¹

SERBIA

Adult education is organised as:

- formal education,
- non-formal education and
- informal learning.

Education and acquisition of qualifications is defined by the [Law on Adult Education](#) (SR) and the [Law on the Education System Foundations](#) (SR).

¹¹ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/content/youthwiki/64-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-former-vugoslav-republic-macedonia>

The Law on Adult Education defines non-formal education as "organized learning processes for adults based on special programs, for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, values, attitudes, abilities and skills that aim at personal development of adults, labour and employment and social activities" and informal learning as "the process of independent acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes, abilities and skills in everyday life, working and social environment".

The [Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development](#) adopted [bylaws](#) on non-formal education in 2015. Non-formal education is acquired through the system of Publicly Recognized Activity Organizers (PRAO), organizations that offer adult education programs. Primary and secondary schools as well as other organizations that meet the requirements prescribed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development can be PRAOs.

Following the completion of an adult education program, an individual can obtain a full completion certificate, a partial completion certificate or a programme certificate. The full completion certificate is obtained for achieving standard of professional competences and achieving qualifications standard. For partial achievement of standard of professional competence, the partial completion certificate is awarded. Upon completion of programs that do not lead to acquiring qualifications or professional competences a PRAO issues a programme.

[The Institute for Improvement of Education](#) (IIE) is conducting the assessment of programmes for achieving standard of professional competences and achieving qualifications standard. The Vocational Education and Training Centre within the IIE has developed qualifications standards in the following areas:

- Geodesy and Construction
- Geology, mining and metallurgy
- Economics, law and administration
- Electrical engineering
- Health and social care
- Mechanical engineering and metalworking
- Agriculture, production and food processing
- Traffic
- Textile and leatherwork
- Trade, catering and tourism
- Chemistry, non-metals and graphic arts
- Forestry and wood processing

Non-formal education is part of the National Qualifications Framework at following levels:

- 2nd level – completed basic education and vocational training up to one year, education for work up to two years, or non-formal education of adults for 120-360 hours of training

- 3rd level – completed secondary vocational education (three years) or non-formal education of adults lasting not less than 960 training hours
- 5th level - completed master or specialist education in duration of two years or one year and non-formal education of adults lasting not less than six months.¹²

SLOVENIA

Validation of non-formal and informal learning covers all levels of education.

There is no single framework for validation procedures and no single national institution undertaking validation. Instead, different tasks and roles are distributed among institutions involved in lifelong learning.

At the national government level, key responsibilities lie with the [Ministry of Education, Science and Sport](#) and the [Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities](#). The latter publishes occupational standards, verifies educational and training institutions and funds the National Examination Centres for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning. The [Slovenian Institute for Adult Education](#) provides training to assessors and advisors, and the [Institute for Vocational Education and Training](#) is responsible for the National Vocational Qualifications system, among other responsibilities. In addition, the [National Examinations Centre](#) develops assessment and validation methodologies and procedures for all types of qualifications.

As far as formal educational qualifications are concerned, an important step toward centralization of validation has been undertaken with the development of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework ([SQF](#)). This is a common framework that covers all levels of education.

Another relevant national framework is the system of [National Vocational Qualifications](#) that cover a broad range of sectors. This formalised system enables candidates to demonstrate their skills and knowledge for the effective performance of specific occupational tasks. These are assessed according to occupational standards defined at the national level. Successful candidates receive formal certificates which prove that their holders are competent in a specific vocation or in specific tasks.¹³

TURKEY

Recognition of previous learning (RPL) is the process of recognition according to a standard agreed on learning achievements obtained in the context of formal, non-formal and/or free

¹² https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-63_en

¹³ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-74_en

learning. In addition to schools, knowledge, and skills acquired outside of formal education in work and daily life can be among these learning achievements.

The RPL provides a large number of benefits to individuals and employers. In terms of individuals, it is the prominent benefit of this system that increases vocational development and mobility in the labor market, prevents repetition and waste of time, provides early graduation, reduces the cost of the learners, encourages learning, increases the motivation and self-confidence of the person. In terms of employers, it contributes to the elimination of the lack of skills and/or competencies in the workplace, to the reduction of the number of employees who spend out of the workplace for training and thus to the more efficient use of resources.

In Turkey, validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is mostly valid for the learning outcomes leading to vocational qualifications. The Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) plays quite a functional role in this regard. The validation system in Turkey has some unique characteristics by which it deviates from the VNFIL model described in the 2012 Recommendation.

VQA was established in 2006 to set up and operate the national vocational qualifications system (NVQS) which is quality-assured at the national level in compliance with the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework.

The NVQS defines the rules and activities in the preparation of NOS in professional and vocational fields, development and implementation of national qualifications, and related to authorisation, auditing, assessment and evaluation as well as certification. VQA carries out activities in compliance with the norms and principles accepted at European level, and implements plans that have been prepared accordingly.

Almost all of the activities in the NVQS are carried out by the stakeholders or through active participation of stakeholders and in cooperation with the state, employees and employers.

The main objectives of the NVQS are;

- (i) To cooperate with MoNE and CoHE in order to ensure that VET is provided in line with the national occupational standards, and thus to contribute to the quality assurance of VET by strengthening the relationship between education and employment,
- (ii) To determine vocational qualifications on the basis of national or international occupational standards and award those qualifications through quality-assured processes,
- (iii) To promote LLL by ensuring the recognition of prior learning that has been acquired through non-formal and informal learning.¹⁴

¹⁴ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-90_en

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF OUR PARTNERS REGARDING RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF NFL

Youth 4 Society (Y4S), ALBANIA

In Albania there is no specific law on non-formal education but as a topic it is affected in various national strategies for education for civil society like The Action Plan 2015-2020. Youth 4 Society develops all actions by working with non-formal education methods. In the activities we carry out within certain projects, the knowledge that participants receive is given through games, experiences, group work on a certain topic so that they do not see the coach or facilitator as a teacher who knows everything but feels free to express their opinion.

We think that if the Law existed it would certainly facilitate our work but it would also serve the participants as the certificate they receive in these activities that take place under NFL would be recognized if they applied for a job.

Working in the field of non-formal education in Albania has benefits but it is also a challenge.

Advantages are:

1. Improvement of knowledge of young people.
2. Encourage critical thinking.
3. Improve communication skills.

Disadvantages:

Young people may have knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through non-formal learning, but may not be formally certified and receive a qualification based on their learning experiences. The Youthpass system is used but national authorities do not provide an assessment scheme for competencies achieved by the NFL and qualifications cannot be obtained legally.

The Albanian government has currently made some steps in development policies for young people but we think that more needs to be done on the current Strategy that we also have as well on the recognition of certifications given by practices and activities that take place in the field of non-formal education.

Local democracy agency Mostar (LDA Mostar), BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Although in theory, non-formal education is intended for everyone who wants to learn and improve, it is primarily of great help to certain social groups, usually a group of people who are in some way marginalized. Therefore, we say that non-formal education is closely related to the concept of social equality, that is, giving equal opportunities to all. Nevertheless, there are differences in access to formal education for women and men, especially those coming from rural areas. Different treatment is reflected primarily in the field of education and employment, and it is non-formal education that aims to reduce this gap and help to achieve life and employment in urban and rural areas. Furthermore, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a general problem which is reflected in the fact that the education system is not adapted to the needs of the market. This problem is also reflected in the marginalization of non-formal adult education. Furthermore, some analyzes and research have pointed to problems in the field of non-formal education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: • a small percentage of diplomas and certificates issued by non-formal education organizations to their successful students; and which are recognized; • non-formal education is insufficiently developed to be able to meet the modern demands of the labor market; • strategic planning in non-formal education is insufficient, which is the cause of undefined and unplanned functioning.

What is important to emphasize is that in addition to formal education, our society needs a constant presence to promote non-formal or lifelong learning because it contributes to greater employment opportunities and competitiveness in the labor market and economic growth and improved living conditions.

The Future Now Association (TFN), BULGARIA

The NFL is partially defined in Bulgaria. We do not have any dedicated law that clearly defines it, but some legislation documents mention its concept mostly as opposition to formal education. The National Strategy for Lifelong Learning and the Law for Community Centers partially cover the topic, but not homogeneously and with fully presentation of the idea of the NFL, its advantages and the impact in creating empowerment opportunities for young people.

Bulgaria still faces the need for updating the regulatory framework in order to implement the NFL concept and encourage inclusion of different social groups in learning activities and this creates some gaps between legislation and the NFL activities that Bulgarian NGOs, including our organisation, are implementing in this direction. An example of this is the arrangement for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Young people can have the knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning, but cannot officially validate and obtain a qualification on the basis of those learning experiences. The system of Youthpass is used in Bulgaria but the national authorities do not offer a validation scheme on competences reached by NFL and qualifications cannot be legally obtained.

TFN has more practical experience with the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, which provides guidelines for ensuring that Bulgarian citizens can actively participate in a new global knowledge-based economy. The strategy aims to unify the efforts of all institutions and citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria with regard to creating the necessary conditions for and realising the process of lifelong learning. TFN promotes the strategy in its ongoing activities, aimed at motivating learners and creating a learning culture by providing counselling and guidance on lifelong learning at schools, universities and workplaces.

United Societies of Balkans (USB), GREECE

In the national framework of Greece, there is no comprehensive validation of non formal learning creating a place where a legal framework which is based on common principles for formal adult education and training has not been put forth yet. Moreover tools for documenting knowledge, skills and competences acquired through NFL have been developed in the legislation. Because of that, individuals who might have gained several skills and competences, do not have the right to request an assessment of their prior learning.

However, the terms in Greek are used differently and they don't have the same definition compared to other countries. Thus, in order to understand the development that has been made in the validation of NLF in Greece, it is important to point out how the definitions are used in Greece, compared to the definition of NFL provided by the 2012 Council Recommendation for the validation of non formal and informal learning. The word certification (*pistopoiisi* in Greek) is used generally for different processes and national policy documents that may regard documentation testifies that a learning process took place but there is no actual assessment of that process.

The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) is responsible for developing some processes of certification (using in Greek the words *epikirosi* or *egyropoiisi* that *pistopoiisi*) and has the authority to certify inputs and outputs of NFL.

As an organisation, United Societies of Balkans works on a daily basis with the local youth using different tools of NFL. The methods that are used are based on the principles and values that the EU has put regarding the non formal education and learning. During activities that are implemented, in the Erasmus+ and ESC frame, the organisation uses Youthpass as the main certification of the skills and competences that the participants have gained. Preferably, a national certification would be the best, in order to give to the youth documents that validate their skills and are able to use in the national labour market.

According to the abovementioned, it is obvious that the Greek framework lacks in the recognition of the NFL as a learning method, despite the efforts that the EU has put pointing out repeatedly the importance of lifelong learning, and especially NFL. The national stakeholders have to recognise that the NFL is an aspect of education and training, but only this; it is the guiding value for participation in the lifelong learning contexts. As the EU uses the Youthpass for the recognition of the gained competences during an activity – based on NLF

– the Greek legislation should create a certificate that validates the skills and competences that the individuals have gained and to make them recognisable.

TDM 2000, ITALY

In Italy there is no existing NFL Law clearly. There is a definition of Formal, Non Formal and Informal Learning in the Law 92/2012 which is a reform on the working system. With that it also started the process to create a National Qualification System to certify qualifications gained out from school. As it often happens in the Italian system, this had to be translated into different Regional Protocols, which are often different. This leads to a substantial uncertainty in how the system actually works, and in having it working better or worse in different regions, but in general, not leading to a massive comprehensive use by the users.

In general, there is no real recognition of the role of youth work and the figure of youth workers but there are several other figures and definitions contained in the law. All in all, the system would need a big reform on this topic which as for now has not been done yet.

TDM 2000 doesn't use NFL Law/Strategies, as it is not really recognized by the general public, if not maybe by some public offices. Working on the EU frameworks of competences and providing youth with tools to assess their competences and being able to explain them and "sell" them has been much more productive and useful. Already existing legislation concerning the NFL does not make our job any easier. It is not affected by the current national system at all, but more from the social recognition that non formal and informal learning have. If there was a clearly structured Law/Strategy, for sure we would be able to incorporate it in our work and in the activities we propose.

We need to work a lot in order to have a better recognition of Non Formal Learning from the social, economical and cultural point of view. It has changed a lot lately, but the political level is still not sufficient to provide a clear framework so that the Non Formal Learning and the competences acquired outside of the formal education system are clearly recognized by the society on multiple levels.

Kosovo Center of Diplomacy, KOSOVO

We were looking if we could find a report on the non-formal learning in Kosovo, but as far as we searched, we couldn't find anything. We know that the Ministry of Culture youth and sport, in the department of youth has these objectives about informal education:

1. Developing youth leadership skills through Non-Formal Education.
2. Recognition of social and institutional certification of Non-Formal Education
3. Support for Youth and Vocational Centers dealing with Non-Formal Education.
4. Stimulating social services through volunteer work and youth exchanges abroad.
5. Youth organizational and managerial capacity building.

Their strategy is to :

- Develop guidelines for the establishment and support of Youth / Vocational Centers with Municipalities and other partners.
- Provide funding and training for the leaders of Youth / Vocational Centers.
- Holding youth educational camps and their methodology of implementation: Sustainability of Youth / Vocational Centers and their networking.
- Providing courses, training for youth officers, municipal directorates and youth NGOs in Kosovo.
- Development of Non-Formal Education.

Asocijacija za demokratski prosperitet – ZID (ADP-ZID), MONTENEGRO

Unfortunately, the NFL Law does not exist in our country yet, but there is a Youth Law, as well as a Youth Strategy for the period 2017-2021. The youth strategy defines 6 key points. What is current for now is the new Law on Volunteering, which has yet to be adopted. During the previous year, a working group was formed to work on Amendments to the Law on Volunteering. The existing Law on Volunteering does not recognize volunteering if the activity is performed of one's own free will, but is recognized as a form of work practice.

ADP-Zid is an organization that has been dealing with young people since its inception. Of course, we worked in accordance with the Strategy for Youth when we were allowed to, but every day we look through our work to be active and current in the process of implementing the strategy. Regarding the Law about NFE, we can state that this is of course the biggest drawback.

ADP-Zid believes that every country that has young people, and everyone has the need to visit all the necessary laws and strategies that are important for the development of youth policy in the country. Only in this way can a great contribution be made, and on the other hand a large number of opportunities for young people. On the other hand, it is very important to involve young people in the process of creating the NFL Law because they are the best consumers of this style of learning and will contribute the most to the creation of the law.

Center for Intercultural Dialogue, NORTH MACEDONIA

The only strategy that mentions non-formal education in North Macedonia is the National Youth Strategy (2016-2025). To be more precise, in this strategy as one of the main objectives it is considered to be: “To adjust the legal framework of non-formal education in accordance with the nature of the youth sector and through the widespread application of EU standards”. Several measures are listed under this objective:

1. Extending the criteria for state-accredited providers of non-formal education by implementing the European recommendations and guidelines on the identification and accreditation of non-formal education, taking into consideration the particularities of the youth sector.

2. Accreditation of youth organisations and other civil society organisations that provide non-formal education.
3. Recognition, comparability and transfer of skills and knowledge by employing mechanisms similar to Europass.
4. Regular research into the social and economic influence of non-formal education.
5. Support for improving quality in the delivery of non-formal education.
6. Further promoting the concept of non-formal education amongst other social partners, particularly economic operators, in terms of recognising acquired skills and competences.

There is no law that defines non-formal learning in our country. The (newly enacted) Law on youth participation and youth policies mentions non-formal education in the part on youth workers - the definition on youth workers states that they support the personal and social development of young people through non-formal and informal learning.

Unfortunately, our organisation does not use the strategy in our daily work. The strategy only gives us directions for improving non-formal learning, and it doesn't make our job easier.

We would like to emphasize that there is not a law or strategy that defines non-formal learning in North Macedonia. However, if we did have such a law, and we definitely need one, there would be a lot of advantages. For example, the certificates on one hand, and skills and knowledge on the other, that are gained through non-formal learning processes will be recognized and equally validated as much as in the formal educational processes. It will give us more opportunities for personal and professional development. Moreover, methods that are used in non-formal learning could be combined in the formal education. If flexibility is allowed in the formal educational process it will give the best results.

It is certain that a completely new law is needed which would cover in detail non-formal education and lifelong learning. It is really important to have such a law, so we could have a more structured approach, we could be recognized and validated, we would have support by the Government etc.

NGO Iuventa, SERBIA

There is no specific law that refers only to NFE. In different Strategies related to Education, Law about youth, National Youth Strategy 2015-2025 NFE it is defined as an important part of lifelong learning. Youth work is recognised in the context of non-formal education, where recognition of competences acquired through youth work is underlined as essential for young people. Especially, the NYS recognises that competences acquired in non-formal education through youth work are important for the employability of young people, because these competences are precisely those that are appreciated by hiring employers.

By the adoption of the Law on Adult Education (Law on Adult Education (Official Gazette of RS, no. 55/20) a significant progress has been made in creating conditions for the recognition of learning acquired through non-formal education and informal learning.

Only thing is that the Law on Adult Education does not recognise the specificity of non-formal education programmes in the youth sector, which are not aimed at acquiring particular qualifications or professional training.

The National association of youth workers was founded in 2009, as a result of an initiative of civil society organizations, which implement youth work. They recognized the need for quality assurance of youth work programs, the need to standardize, professionalize and recognize youth work by youth, institutions which work with youth, the state and society as a whole.

Their main accomplishments:

- 3 vocational standards in the area of professional youth work (Youth Leader, Youth Worker and Specialist for Youth Work and Policy) developed.
- Participation in the core working group for creation of the Law on Youth in Serbia, where definition of youth work found its place.
- Standards for youth work programs and the mechanism for its implementation developed.
- Code of Ethics for Youth Workers developed and signed by all members; Council for Ethical Issues established.
- Non-formal education curricula for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers developed.
- Mechanism for validation of previously attained competencies in youth work developed.

From 1. January 2019 Youth work is officially recognized as a profession in Serbia. By recognizing the profession, youth work becomes valued and recognized, while on the other hand it can be more widely recognized and applied by relevant institutions, which is very important for the development of organizations that conduct youth work.

Društvo za razvijanje prostovoljnega dela Novo mesto (DRPDNM), SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, we have several acts, memorandum and Non-formal Education strategies. In 2000, the first measure that brought the recognition and evaluation of non-formal and informal acquired knowledge into practice was the establishment of a system of verification and certification of national vocational qualifications, was accepted. With the acceptance, many people got certificates with which they can prove their participation in NFE. In my daily work, there are a lot of things connected with Non-formal education and through it also with the strategy and laws.

For instance, at DRPDNM, we have training for future youth workers who – after they finish with the theoretical and practical learning – receive the certificate and they can write the

qualification into their CV, because it is officially recognized by the officials and are able to get a job in this work field. Every project that I am responsible for, relates to NFE, and in this way it is not only participants who are attending these projects and learning activities but am also I who needs to learn about different topics.

Because of NFE strategy, my job is easier in a sense that I can find the participants for all activities easier and there are more interests from people, especially youngsters, to get involved in different kinds of activities and projects we offer to them. For everyone involved is it utmost important that in the end they receive recognition for their involvement and that that recognition has some meaning beyond our organization. And that is also the biggest advantage of NFE strategy – recognition of activities, training, classes that someone took and received new knowledge.

Also, for learners it is great to be involved in NFE, because they do not only learn the theoretical part of the subject they enrolled into but they also have practical lessons and they learn about the subjects they want to know more. It is quite different from formal education where (in some cases you have practical lessons too), in order to pass, you must learn also about the things you have zero interests in. At the moment, the only disadvantage that I see is that not all training and classes in NFE are certified with/or as a part of/ national vocational qualification. Otherwise, in my personal opinion, NFE is very important for every individual because you learn a lot by entering different classes in which topics you are interested in, you meet new people, you expand your horizons and in the end see the world in a different way due to the fact that these activities help you grow on a personal and professional level. And sometimes, taking part in NFE and receiving a certificate can also be the reason someone will give you the job you dreamt of. And I am the perfect example for it.

Turk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu, TURKEY

“The non-formal education is defined in the National Education Basic Law no. 1739 (1739 sayılı Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu) includes any type of education and training that individuals would need throughout their lives. The aforesaid Law enables all private-public institutions to give non-formal education under the coordination of the MoE. Furthermore, the Non-Formal Education Institutions Bylaw (Yaygın Eğitim Kurumları Yönetmeliği) covers establishment, administrative, education, consultation, supervision and coordination activities of all courses to be opened with approval of Public Education Centres or in cooperation with Public Education Centres and Education Chambers or any other institution other than the special education institutions. Non-formal education services are regulated under three main sections as literacy courses, vocational and technical education and social and cultural courses. The target group includes the ones that have never been in the education system or the ones at any level of this system or the ones already out of the system. The institution that implements the non-formal education in the public most intensively is the MoE. Since all of these courses are modular, the participants, if they pass the exam at the end of the education, receive a certificate that is approved by the Ministry of National Education and valid in private and public institutions throughout Turkey.”

We have experienced employees and volunteers in this field, so we try to encourage young people by using these methods in training so that our activities are more permanent. We take care to use non-formal learning techniques in training, conferences, seminars and workshops where young people are concentrated among the participants.

Above mentioned legislation strengthens group work. It allows us to complete tasks faster and better.

Participants who participate in a project on the basis of non-formal learning, improve their ability to communicate positively, and their ability to question and express themselves. It enables us to be active and participatory rather than static or passive. Also individuals gain the ability to act together with the group. Bahadır Ülgen, one of the interviewees of the YAMNFL Project, mentioned that "There are important non-formal education concepts in NGO studies and education. Experiential learning is one of them. Because we enable the individual to learn by experience. This is very important for me. When we look at the last period, there is a lot of learning with game methods in formal education. Gamification is important, I think, it will gradually shift to digital. We saw the coronavirus pandemic process. Entrepreneurship is what we provide young people the most. We support that entrepreneurial spirit among young people by using non-formal education methods of their social contribution to become entrepreneurs. Young people finish their formal education and universities. But things such as how students are going to make them different after graduation, their involvement in the NGO, volunteering awareness, entrepreneurial skills, and active participation make them stand out. We also support the learning processes of young people through non-formal teaching methods."

When we look at all this information, non formal education law makes our job and activities easy and young people can notice how important it is for their development.

In Turkey there is no hierarchical order in non-formal education. For this reason, a person of all ages can develop his personal development through widespread education. In non-formal education, there are no restrictions on space. All people can get a lot of experience about all kinds of episodes. Enables to develop communication skills. It is also very effective in improving your self-confidence.

However, non-formal learning strategies in our country are mostly based on lifelong learning. In other words, handicraft is like enabling women to develop their hand skills and gain a profession. Therefore, a non-formal education method understood in Europe and the Balkans is not included in the constitution. The main purpose is to introduce and encourage this non-formal learning method. Only in this way, young people can develop themselves by using non-formal learning methods and reach more permanent information.

Students are aware of the importance of these social responsibility projects and volunteering in non-governmental organizations. However, some of the young people do the projects they participate voluntarily to write on their resumes, not to change something. Non-formal learning's main purpose should be explained to youth. Also most of the people don't know what

non-formal learning is even though they participate in a project or work on a job about it. Awareness about non-formal learning should be expanded.

YAMNFL QUESTIONNAIRES SUMMARY

The respondents of the [questionnaire](#) are young people aged 18 to 30, from 11 countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey. Respondents are young people who are high school students, students, employed, unemployed, as well as users of various youth programs that young people have.

The organizations participating in the project pointed out that they definitely need more support from the Government for programs related to youth and that only in this way can there be an increase in activities and content offered to young people. CSO is very dedicated and works hard for young people and all of them expect immense support from the Government, so that they can carry out their activities unhindered.

COVID 19 showed us that we all have to work in crisis situations, so the CSOs tried to make a full time for young people through various online activities, so that they would not have a feeling of anxiety. Below are answers to questions about non-formal education, as well as the participation of young people in the process of non-formal learning. It is important to point out that the questionnaire was made during the COVID process and we thank all the organizations that made an immeasurable contribution to answer as concisely as possible.

A total of 902 respondents responded to the survey.

a) Have you ever heard for non-formal education? If yes, what is non-formal education for you?

In Albania, the concept of non-formal education is very familiar to most respondents. For them, non-formal education is learning in a different way, through various activities that are performed outside the formal school system.

When we say smart from the street, it is usually about people who have come to gather knowledge through non-formal education, through learning new skills and acquiring new competencies. Learning through curricula and various programs, a young person receives a certificate that will mean something when looking for a job and potential employment.

In non-formal education, it is very important that it takes place naturally and spontaneously at work or during other activities.

This type of learning also provides a focus on community learning and this type of education builds individual capacities.

In Greece, most people have heard of non-formal education and define it as an alternative way of teaching and learning outside the education system. A more experienced way of learning

that uses more opportunities and tries to expand them or even helps all those in non-formal education to grow, develop social skills, learn by living and learning.

One of the respondents pointed out that he had an internship in an NGO that is active in the field of youth and is mostly active in the application of non-formal learning techniques. The intern respondent defines non-formal education as a voluntary activity of individuals who would like to develop new competencies in areas of self-interest. It mainly uses experiential learning methodologies.

One part of the respondents pointed out that for them non-formal education is an opportunity for young people to work together, collaborate, share ideas, lead a dialogue and exchange knowledge and experiences, including creativity. It is also important for them that this type of learning is not a formal education that comes from school, but education where they can express their opinion and where they feel freedom of speech.

In Serbia, all respondents have heard about the way of non-formal education and define it as an essential part of the development of every young person and as the most valuable resource that serves young people. Through this form of learning, young people become creative and innovative and essentially part of the development of each young person due to the different approach that NFE uses to solve problems in relation to formal education methods. Reproducing the information contained in books develops a kind of ability, while learning in an informal way gives the opportunity to learn in different ways, which are more interesting to young people.

Through non-formal education, young people learn freedom of expression, which means the right to life or the right to education, but the fact is that many young people grow up not knowing these basic things. In addition, non-formal education has a much broader role, teaches us to be tolerant, allows us to meet colleagues from different countries, helps to remove prejudices and conflicts, and leaves us with valuable knowledge as an essential characteristic.

Education is structured and planned that takes place outside the formal education system, where teachers / trainers / leaders guide participants through the learning process to achieve learning outcomes. The methods, tools and approaches used are based on participatory, active learning, focus on students, inclusion and accessibility, constructivist approach and holistic view of the person.

Young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina define non formal education in this way and most young people point out that this type of education for them is part of a practical experience that cannot be gained everywhere. A more effective form of learning, which is based on real situations and the acquired knowledge can be applied immediately, is something that describes non formal education. Any education outside the boundaries of formal education, which does not have the structure to be a seal of non-formal learning, which is very important.

Helping in the local community, organizing various actions and activities, adopting common conditions for the work of local government and youth is thus a form of non-formal education

for young people from Bosnia. Acquisition of competencies is something that is invaluable, and a number of respondents pointed out that the acquired competencies helped to select and enroll in the faculty.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that informal reading is a structured education with predetermined learning outcomes and time period of realization and strengthened lecturers for the area it covers. The difference from formal education is that local laws do not recognize a diploma as a qualification in the profession.

In Italy, the situation is somewhat different, when we talk about non-formal education and opinions about non-formal education are divided. One part of the respondents heard about this type of learning, while the other did not. Those familiar with the concept of non-formal learning define it as a new way of learning without classical methods. One of the respondents pointed out that he was a student of several E + projects and that this left a strong and convincing mark on non-formal education, through which he acquired a large number of competencies.

One of the respondents points out that he heard about NFE, but he had never deepened his environment before. Well, in his opinion, it is that brunch that is not based on the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, but as far as all those voluntary activities are concerned, whose teaching does not approach conventional methods.

For young people from Slovenia, non-formal education is a type of education that is more focused on the person and interests. It is a place where we not only get the knowledge and technique of a specific thing, but we also develop our persistence, values and way of thinking. It is a place where you can be creative and where you can find our talents.

Also, for young people from Slovenia, this is knowledge that someone specifically decides on, and not the one that the system has applied. Knowledge remains forever, which does not need to be learned by heart, but we learn it in various ways, through volunteering, and other various activities. Informal education for them includes various international exchanges, additional courses, training, seminars, travel.

Young people in Bulgaria have recognized the NFE as a holistic, colorful, multi-layered approach to learning, sharing and growing.

All activities outside the established formal system represent non-formal education. In some schools there are volunteer groups, which in various ways try to reach out to their peers to explain to them what informal education is and how important it is.

In Bulgaria, they point out that non-formal education is provided by institutions / organizations that are not part of the education system. Thus, non-formal education is not subject to the regulations and certificates of the official training curriculum. Non-formal education can help people develop skills in different directions - ie. To increase their professional capacity or their socialization skills, their creativity, ability for public dialogue, active citizenship.

Young people from North Macedonia say that non-formal education is education outside the school system, independent research on certain topics, etc. Non-formal education is learning by alternative methods that are not applied in schools or universities. NFL is crucial for a young person's development.

Non-formal education is both a form of lifelong learning and a way to expand knowledge in areas that really interest you. Any education on community life, human rights, sex education, gender rights or any other topic that is rarely discussed in formal education is a form of non-formal education for young people from North Macedonia.

Also, non-formal education is an educational process that uses non-formal tools and methods different from those used in schools and aims to develop skills and competencies that are not offered in the formal curriculum.

In Turkey, non-formal education has adopted a strategy where student attendance is not fully required. Non-formal education includes group work and information exchange. It consists of a collection of educational practices that are not covered by the formal system. It supports us to be confident individuals. We are satisfied with creative thinking.

One of the participants pointed out that "non-formal education", he experienced through personal experiences, such as regular work of 8 hours a day, in a relationship, being in a group of friends, living with a family with five members, etc. For him, NFE represents the ability to draw something from anything and everything you do, whether it is a lesson to be learned or an energy that you can gain, but it is gained precisely through experience outside the curricular institution.

In Kosovo, non-formal education refers to that as in other countries that takes place outside school. It is often used during the organization of various educations, which are essential for the community and the citizens of the community. It also refers to planned structured programs and processes of personal social education for young people designed to improve a range of skills outside of formal education.

Also, non-formal learning includes various structured learning situations that do not have a curriculum level, accreditation and certification associated with "formal learning".

In Montenegro, the term non-formal education is very well known and young people define it as an informal form of education offered outside school. What is very interesting is that high schools have been very busy in the development of non-formal education through the formation of volunteer clubs.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth has also contributed through the drafting of the Youth Strategy 2017-2020, then the Law on Youth, as well as the projects it supports each year through which they provide funds for projects related to youth.

b) What are the differences between non-formal and informal learning?

Young people from Albania point out that they know the difference between non-formal and informal learning and all define it as a type of structured learning performed on specific topics. For example, it includes training, workshops, seminars, etc. Non-formal education is not defined as formal or informal, it is a knowledge that is acquired through books, social media or digital media.

In Greece it is a little bit different. A large number of respondents were not informed about what is informal learning. They all relied to clarify what non-formal learning is for them and how it is acquired. They pointed out that the NFE requires professional support, setting learning objectives, monitoring structured methodologies and assessment processes. Informal learning comes by observing and thinking of almost all segments of life, pointed out a number of respondents and believes that informal learning is important in moments when we learn from everyday life practices.

In Serbia, young people point out that there is a certain order and structure when it comes to non-formal learning, while informal learning is more an experience of free learning that is carried out by simply engaging in various aspects of life, situations or interactions with people and things that matter. our interest in learning.

In Bosnia for youth, Non-formal education differs from informal education, because in most cases informal education is not conscious / intentional learning and is described as non-systematic learning in everyday life.

Non-formal education is acquired through online or real-world seminars, trainings and courses; while informal learning is what we learn in everyday life, like manners, the difference between good or bad, ethnic identity, etc.

In Italy, the situation is similar with young people. They equate informal education with non-formal education and see the difference in the following way.

Non-formal learning requires intentional effort that informal learning doesn't.

Regarding participation in mobility activities, in Albania more than half of the respondents took part. Some young people have extensive experience, so in the last 5 years they have participated in a large number of activities, then Erasmus + exchange, seminars, trainings and organized various activities. The exchanges in which they were young are the countries of the Western Balkans, Italy, Hungary, Moldova and many others.

In Greece, Almost all respondents pointed out that they were part of a youth mobility program as well as in activities, while one part of the respondents never participated and would like to be a part. A large number of respondents were part of the Erasmus + program.

In other countries, such as Serbia as well, a large number of young people took part in mobility programs, such as the organization of the Living Library, various seminars and events organized by the Novi Sad and the OPENS organization. A large number of young people have experienced the allures of training and seminars in other countries.

c) Is NFL defined by law in your country?

In Serbia, It is written and defined by law. In Italy, NFL is recognized but it is not enough for the working environment. In Montenegro, there is no Law on Non Formal Education, but through the Youth Strategy 2017-2020, and the Law on Youth, non-formal education is mentioned.

In other countries, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Kosovo, the respondent was not given concise answers as to whether or not a law existed.

d) Have you ever participated in the youth decision-making process? If yes, in which one?

In Albania, a third of young people took part in the decision-making process, through the youth council, then one of the respondents pointed out that he led the school team at the high school Olympics in the pilot school. They also participated in the implementation of the project, for strengthening young people, as well as in the innovation center in Tirana.

In Greece, a large number of young people did not participate in the decision-making process, a couple of respondents participated in the EU dialogue as a mediators. One of the respondents pointed out that he participated in the event of the European Youth Capital of Thessaloniki in 2014 and during discussions that were of crucial importance for young people across Europe.

In Serbia, young people have participated in the decision-making process depending on the political situation. One respondent points out that: "No, I have not. In general it is not easy to participate unless you decide to become a member of a political party. The current situation is that our National Parliament consists of only 1 person that is under 30, out of 250 seats. Yet, the age restriction to enter a representative body such as parliament, is 18. "

One part of the respondents points out that they were very active in student organizations and that in that way they contributed to participation and decision-making for young people.

Young people in Bosnia were very active in the decision-making process, so one of the participants was the president of the youth in the region of Herzegovina and the president of the Red Cross in Mostar and the HNK, and he was also part of many organizations and projects in my region. He also participated in the simulation of parliamentary decision-making.

A small number of young people from Italy participated in the decision-making process, but some of them participated in the Erasmus + program, while one of the respondents pointed out that he participated through local and national consultations in the decision-making process.

Slovenia is similar to Italy, so that young people, in addition to E + projects, also took part during student days in student parliaments, where they worked on the topic of student rights and the opportunities provided to them.

In Bulgaria, young people point out that they didn't have a chance to be part of decision-making process, while some respondents wrote that they participated in the University elections for class representative.

In North Macedonia, most young people participated in the decision-making process through NGOs, while some young people participated in the preparation of laws-proposals to regulate the secondary school structure.

One of the respondents pointed out that obvious corruption is happening when creating of youth policy, but children grow up knowing that the government is corrupt, but they simply do not know how to stop it. "

Young people from Kosovo are very active when it comes to the decision-making process, so they took part in the Boosting Transversal Skills (BOOTS) seminar organized in Struga, North Macedonia.

One of the respondents is a member of the Youth Council in his town and currently he is participating in a program called Changemakers by 4H Kosovo which aims to equip youth with the knowledge they need to make a change. This year, UNICEF helped and reached the voice of Kosovo youngsters about their needs and problems. Young people also participated in many meetings of the city council, which had to do with the youth decision making process.

Young people in Montenegro participated in the decision-making process through various parliaments in high schools and colleges, then in political parties and other organizations where permitted.

FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

YAMNFL focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards youth mobility.

Number of participants: up to 10 per focus group

Number of focus groups: at least 2-3 per country

Focus group element of the research should focus on the youth from the areas where they have a chance to be included in non-formal education and also youth with experience in activities, such as volunteering activities, trainings, youth exchanges...

young people from rural areas,

young especially marginalized,

the unemployed,

young people with low education,

young people who are involved in non-formal education,

List of Questions that we've discussed

1. Do you think for NFE is important age, gender, nationality?

2. What does NFE mean to you? Can you define?
3. Have you ever been a participant in an NFE program? If yes - in which one?
4. Do you know something about Youth Law / Strategy / Action Plan, as well as other documents related to youth?
5. Have you ever participated in the youth decision-making process? If yes, in which one?
6. Do you think that more support from the Government is needed to improve the status of young people and in the NFE sphere? If yes, what are the benefits of this, and what are the disadvantages?
7. Does NFE activities help you for your personal development. If yes, how? If not, why?
8. For you, why is it important to be involved in activities through non-formal education?

Based on these questions we made a summary of all the responses that we got. These opinions regarding the NFL will be used to create recommendations.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION - QUESTION 1 FOR FOCUS GROUPS - Do you think for NFE is important age, gender, nationality?

Most of the participants of YAMNFL focus groups (78%) think that age, gender and nationality is not important for the NFL. 28% of the targeted audience think that age, gender and nationality are important especially age and nationality in the context of possible language barriers.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION - QUESTION 3 FOR FOCUS GROUPS - Have you ever been a participant in an NFE program? If yes – in which one?

80% of the youngsters among focus groups were participants in various kinds of NFL activities. Only 20% of them didn't have any experience with NFL.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION - QUESTION 4 FOR FOCUS GROUPS - Do you know something about Youth Law / Strategy / Action Plan, as well as other documents related to youth?

It is a rather devastating fact that only 16% of the participants knew something about Youth Law / Strategies / Action Plans ..

SUMMARY CONCLUSION - QUESTION 5 FOR FOCUS GROUPS - Have you ever participated in the youth decision-making process? If yes, in which one?

Only 15 persons out of 25 focus groups took a part in the decision-making process.
Note: 1 focus group had approximately 10 participants.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION - QUESTION 6 FOR FOCUS GROUPS - Do you think that more support from the Government is needed to improve the status of young people and in the NFE sphere? If yes, what are the benefits of this, and what are the disadvantages?

All participants undoubtedly expressed that more financial support from the Government is needed in order to promote NFL activities.

Benefits:

- the inclusion of some form of non-formal education in the formal systems could work to popularize and develop NFE;
- including mentors from different fields of work in the learning process (as a NF method in a formal system) could introduce students to potential future professions and give them very valuable motivation
- the government could create campaigns with which to explain and promote NFE or encourage municipalities to be a driver of NFE in their local communities;
- the government should be supporting and financing NFE programs and trainers;
- experimenting with the educational system to tweak it, like NFE does, could greatly benefit it (taking the good examples and integrating them into FE);
- integrating the learning and practicing of soft skills in education is very important for the development of young people, so NFE could supplement that;
- NFL as a way to learn about responsibility in young people's lives (managing their time and their tasks, setting priorities, etc.).
- it will bring a lot of innovative ideas and maybe better social politics
- there could be many benefits including better chances for employability, reducing the number of young people who leave their homeland, overall better economy in country

Disadvantages:

- If the government would be more involved than that, the programs would be more formal and less free.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION - QUESTION 7 FOR FOCUS GROUPS - Does NFE activities help you for your personal development. If yes, how? If not, why?

Those who took a part in NFL and did have experience with it (see previous summary to question 3) answered - YES, NFL did help them to reach a higher level of personal development. For e.g. :

- Improving self-esteem
- Improving public speaking skills
- Improving social skills
- Realizing past mistakes based on what others share
- Realizing issues that exist in other nationalities but are rarely discussed publicly
- Forming new friendships
- Group cooperation
- Creating new contacts

- Knowing different people who come from another culture
- Think creatively
- Adapt to different cultures.
- Better chances for employability
- Flexibility, responsibility and the ability to work in a team to achieve common goals
- Communication and cooperation skills
- Accepting the differences and the uniqueness of each person
- Developing the intercultural dialogue
- Learning more about human rights and democracy
- Linguistic skills and improvement of their English
- Organizational skills and working in teams
- Management skills
- Crisis management
- Entrepreneurial skills and competencies
- Avoid racism attitudes and discrimination
- Traveling opportunities
- Exchange of experience
- Change of pace and point of view.

Focus Groups outcomes

Having in mind that we reached almost 250 young people by doing Focus Groups in 11 participating countries, It is evident that there are certain patterns in every single FG. Vast majority of youngsters have participated in some kind of NFL and they can easily define what does NFL mean. On that note all of them explained how the NFL helped them in their personal development.

However there has to be more done by solving some already existing misunderstandings and preconceived connotations related to NFL. 28% percent of FG participants think that the NFL is pre-required with nationality and age factors. They think that language barriers and age can deny access to NFL activities. That can be related to the fact that only 16% of examinees are familiar with Youth Laws/Strategies/Plans and other relevant documents. Youngsters are mainly excluded when it comes to decision-making processes with the relevant stakeholders. Only 15 persons out of 250 in total did have an opportunity to participate and contribute in creating Laws/Strategies/Plans. There is one thing that was unanimously answered: Government should provide more support to NFL providers and end-users.

CONCLUSION TOWARDS STAKEHOLDERS

All stakeholders, especially those dealing with youth and NFL, should pay more attention to the NFL and adopt policies that support this type of education. Governments should increase their budgets for youth, especially for projects in the field of non-formal education. That being said, we also believe that in order to raise awareness and importance of the NFL, a continuous financial incentive should be provided to NFE organizers, as well as more official recognition of quality NFE programs.

It is evident that in some countries in WBs there are still missing youth offices/councils. Their existence is an inevitable prerequisite in order to develop and maintain highly effective NFL programmes.

There should exist a condition when developing relevant documents related to this topic, that it must be given a chance for young persons to represent their views and opinions. Youth must have a say in this matter, because their unique standpoint will ensure that the policies and action plans will take us in the right direction. Currently, it seems that policies are influenced only by the voices of the few, perhaps those few that are directly in contact with the relevant government officials. Youth is not a uniform mass; different needs of diverse members of youth should be taken into account. Thus, the content of the youth policies should be discussed, enriched and approved by the majority of youth of different nationalities, genders, social classes, locations and other identity traits. Young persons should be convinced that their efforts in acquiring NFE are not in vain; this may be achieved if, for example, their NFE achievements are valued when they apply for a scholarship, a job etc., or if their current employer or formal education institution awards them with a (non-financial or financial) reward and recognition/praise.

There should be more coordination and unification in countries where there is more than one law/strategy/plan concerning the NFL. Governments should create more practical guidelines on how NFL can be better popularised among young people and adult learners; by funding support for organisations that work in the area of NFE; by information campaigns about recognition to different audiences – youth, adult learning organisations, business organisations and employers, CSO.

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