

Refine meeting session 1 and 2 – Friday morning (November 7)

Participants:

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The main purpose of these group sessions was to share experience from the point of view of the sector, in our case the point of view of people working in the vocational sector.

Suggested topics for discussion:

1. What is the legal framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the sector in each country represented?
2. What is the general policy framework?
3. What are the key issues for the sector in the countries?
4. What has been general experience of the testing of candidates in each country?
5. How do you think Refine can assist in addressing these issues?
6. How do you think we should work together as a sector in year 2?

Topic 1 and 2 seemed to be closely linked, so they have been discussed together.

France

Traditionally, in France diplomas and certifications have a high value. Since January 2002, they can be entirely obtained by accreditation of prior learning.

«... Any person involved in work is entitled to have his experience attainments accredited, mainly his professional ones in order to obtain a diploma or a vocational certificate... »

Social modernisation law, January 17th 2002

Every awarding body (ministries, universities...) has its own procedure to recognize and to validate skills (testing on the job, portfolio...). Thus people have a wide range of possibilities to get their skills accredited. However, achieving the whole diploma without any training courses remains an exception.

The best information about validation of skills in France provides from the following web sites:

<http://www.centre-info.fr/maq100901/anglais/accueil.htm>

go to: "training system", then "validation of skills"

<http://www.afpa.fr>

Italy

There is a national framework for vocational training, but each region has a different system. There is no unified system of recognition of certificates.

A law is being prepared, permitting people to get their skills certified in order to return to high school or vocational training centres at an advanced level (they will not have to start their training courses at the very beginning).

Estonia

Vocational training is under the authority of the government. There are too many students in universities, vocational training and “manual” work, in general does not seem to be attractive for young people. University degrees are highly valued.

For example, older teachers without a degree can now go to open universities to get a diploma, this system is free of charge.

There is no legal possibility for accreditation of non formal and informal learning.

Greece

There is no legal possibility for accreditation of non formal and informal learning.

Vocational training centres are accredited by the Ministry of Labour. Today, many unemployed university graduates come to the vocational training centres; there, accreditation of prior learning is possible in order to shorten training courses.

Lithuania

There is a legal basis for accreditation of non formal and informal learning. People having work experience can get their skills tested (for example at the Chamber of Industry and Commerce). The skills of the candidates are compared to the standards required by the certificate, and afterwards the candidate can follow training courses to achieve missing skills or theoretical knowledge.

Finland

Finland has a competence based qualification system, there are 700 job descriptions. The system has 3 levels of qualifications. Theoretically, all the diplomas can be acquired without formal training when candidates can prove (by testing or portfolio) that their skills fit to the standards (the principals seem to be the same as in France).

Portugal

There is a legal basis for recognition of non-formal learning. Candidates have to undergo testing to get their skills accredited by a formal certificate. Like in Lithuania, the skills of the candidates are compared to the standards required by the certificate, and afterwards the candidate can follow training courses to achieve missing skills or theoretical knowledge.

Topic 4: What has been general experience of the testing of candidates in each country?

The following key issues have been shared by nearly all the participants:

- Candidates find it difficult to evaluate themselves,
- this is especially difficult for people with low self esteem due to unemployment or virtually “no skills”.
- It is hard to understand the terminology (organisational skills, social skills – where are the borders?).
- European tools cannot be used without assistance (tutoring), existing guidelines are hard to understand for most of the candidates without university degree.

Suggestions: to use authentic assessment methodologies (on the job testing) whenever this is possible.

Topic 5: How do you think Refine can assist in addressing these issues?

Refine should include the issue “counselling and guidance”.

We also should interview enterprises to get some knowledge about their real needs (characteristics of tools, what kind of information could be useful...).

Topic 6: How do you think we should work together as a sector in year 2?

To continue to share experiences by mail (and maybe there could be a “Forum Vocational Training” on the Refine web side...).