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**REPORT ON REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES ON THE CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES IN
ROMANIA**

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INTRODUCTION

If training plays a decisive role in transitions in the labor market, which are increasingly frequent because of the flexibilization of employment relationships, the certification of skills becomes the tool for transferring them from one place to another, thus strengthening the employability of workers.

The certification of skills also helps the emergence of tacit skills that can therefore facilitate job reintegration, through the process that allows to enhance the so-called training periods carried out outside the labor market. The skills acquired in non-formal contexts can represent a discriminating element for job placement. Therefore, having the possibility of being able to spend as professional skills training courses in contexts completely unrelated to formal circuits, means multiplying the possibilities of approaching the labor market of people.

The increase in the individual endowment of skills throughout the life course should not be understood only towards the specialized or advanced ones, but also to the urgency of developing basic or soft skills to the widest mass of people. Unfortunately, statistics tell us that young people of working age have a low level of language and numeral skills, while adults do not have digital skills for computer use.

In this paper we will first analyze the definition of competences, referring to the key competences for lifelong learning as per the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22 May 2018 together with the definition of certification of competences. Subsequently, we will deal with the regulatory origin in force in Romania together with the competent bodies for certification with an in-depth analysis of the individual phases of the certification procedure. Finally, the national models adopted in the country will be mentioned, the technological infrastructures identified in vocational training with a conclusion on the critical issues that have emerged and on any new proposals on the subject.



I. DEFINITION OF COMPETENCES

Defining what a competence is not always easy, and, since the task of the European Commission is to assess its possession, these difficulties can turn into procedural errors if its meaning is not clarified first. The 2015 Ministerial Guidelines implicitly adopt the definition of competence of the 2006 European Qualifications and Qualifications Framework, which introduces the tripartite division into knowledge, skills and competences (*knowledge, skill, competence*) and defines competence as a critical integration of the first two:

- Knowledge indicates the result of assimilation and information through learning. Knowledge is the set of facts, principles, theories, and practices, related to a field of study or work; Knowledge is described as theoretical and/or practical.
- Skills indicate the ability to apply knowledge and to use *know-how* to complete tasks and solve problems; skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive, and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual skill and the use of methods, materials, tools).
- Competencies indicate the proven ability to use personal, social and/or methodological knowledge, skills and abilities in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development; competences are described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

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If we want to translate it into simple terms, competence is something that we can attribute to someone by observing how he puts it into practice. We can see it by observing an activity that would not be possible to carry out without possessing this competence (for example, if I claim to know how to make excellent cakes, my statement is not enough, but the best thing is that someone observes me while I prepare one and then can taste what I have prepared).

For some years now, there has been an in-depth discussion at European level on the issue of the skills that individuals must acquire to guarantee their full development. This is a key theme, with cascading implications that affect the issues of training, education, and orientation to work and social well-being. The result of this long journey has been the identification of the 8 European key competences



(also called key citizenship competences) by the European Union, a path started in 2006 and deeply innovated in 2018. A complex process that has seen Parliament and the Commission work in synergy and that the Member States of the European Union are called to transpose, facilitating its acquisition by all citizens. The reference text that crystallizes and defines them is the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (with its European Framework of Reference Annex), approved by the European Parliament on 22 May 2018.

Therefore, the definition of competence then derives that of “key competences” which, according to the Recommendation of the European Council of 22 May 2018, are *“those that everyone needs for personal fulfillment and development, employability, social inclusion, a sustainable lifestyle, a fruitful life in peaceful societies, health-conscious life management and active citizenship. They develop from a lifelong learning perspective, from early childhood to adult life, through formal, non-formal and informal learning in all settings, including family, school, workplace, neighborhood, and other communities.”*

The Recommendation then proceeds to identify the European key competencies, which, as mentioned, turn out to be eight, not ordered hierarchically but to be considered all equal importance:

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1. Functional literacy competence;
2. Multilingual competence;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Personal, social and learning-to-learn competence;
6. Social and civic competence in citizenship;
7. Entrepreneurial competence;
8. Competence in cultural awareness and expression.



Let's analyze it and one by one:

1. In the list of eight competences identified by the Council for the European Union as fundamental for active citizenship and lifelong learning, the one that leads the way is Functional Literacy Competence.

The European Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 states: *“Functional alphabetical competence indicates the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions, both orally and in writing, using visual, sound and digital materials drawing on various disciplines and contexts. It involves the ability to communicate and relate effectively with others in an appropriate and creative way. Its development forms the basis for further learning and further language interaction. Depending on the context, functional literacy competence can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of school education and/or the official language of a country or region. Functional alphabetic competence therefore includes critical thinking and the ability to evaluate information and use it.”*

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Alphabetical competence is therefore not limited to knowing how to speak, read and write. It needs to be functional, that is, useful to understand others to communicate with them effectively.

It is not only knowing how to decode a message, but it is being able to understand the emotions that it conveys. And greater competence implies being able to recognize facts, opinions, and concepts in a more effective and creative way. This competence includes knowledge of reading and writing and understanding of written information, assuming knowledge of vocabulary, functional grammar, and language functions.

It also involves knowledge of the main types of verbal interaction, several literary and non-literary texts, the main features of different styles and registers of the language. People should then be able to modulate and adapt their communication according to the situation in which they find themselves. This competence includes the ability to distinguish and use different types of sources, to seek, collect and process information, to use aids, to formulate



and express arguments in a convincing and context-appropriate manner, both orally and in writing.

Due to its characteristics, functional literacy is of crucial importance, because it also serves to acquire other key competences. It would not be possible, in fact, to develop multilingual competence without having at least a basic level of competence in one's mother tongue. Similarly, being competent in other areas would be difficult without adequate linguistic proficiency.

Understanding others and knowing how to relate is the first step of citizenship. Learning to communicate with others is therefore the first objective at the base of civil coexistence.

2. The European Council has included communication in foreign languages – or multilingual competence – among the key competences. This is because communicating effectively with those who speak a different language from ours allows us to broaden our horizons and appreciate different cultures. *“Multilingual competence defines the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for the purpose of communicating.”* In principle, this competence shares core skills with functional literacy. It relies on the ability to understand, express, and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions in both oral and written form – oral comprehension, oral expression, reading comprehension and written expression – in an appropriate range of social and cultural contexts.

Language skills include a historical dimension and intercultural competences. The ability to mediate between different languages and media is also required. Multilingual competence may include the maintenance and further development of mother tongue skills or the acquisition of the official language or languages of a country. Communication in foreign languages requires knowledge of the vocabulary and functional grammar of different languages and awareness of the main types of verbal interaction and linguistic registers. But idioms are not disconnected from those who use them, so it is necessary to know social conventions, the cultural aspect, and the different languages.



The essential skills for this competence consist in the ability to:

- Understand oral messages;
- Initiate, sustain and end conversations;
- Read, understand and write texts.

People should be able to use language tools appropriately and learn languages in a formal, non-formal and informal way. A positive attitude involves appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as interest and curiosity in languages other than one's own and in intercultural communication.

The study of foreign languages is one of the fundamental points on which the interest of the European Commission is focused, which, in the 2017 meeting “Strengthening European identity through education and culture”, focused on education and culture.

“Being European citizens means preserving one's cultural identity, but it also means knowing how to relate and integrate with other cultures. In this, the learning of foreign languages is a priority, because the process of European integration cannot be separated from the acquisition of good language skills.”

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Today, however, knowledge of a second language is a real challenge, as about half of EU citizens speak and understand only their mother tongue. The objective that the Union has set for the various Member States is to improve language learning. And by 2025, all young Europeans completing secondary education will need to have a good knowledge of two languages in addition to their mother tongue (or mother tongues).

3. Among the eight key competences for lifelong learning, we find one that is divided into two distinct but interconnected headings:
 - Mathematical competence;
 - Competence in Science, Technology and Engineering.

Due to its importance, the level of literacy in these two disciplines is measured both every four years by the IEA TIMMS survey and every three years by the OECD PISA survey, which



evaluates them together with *Reading Literacy*. Many educational systems then monitor the evolution of the *mathematical literacy* of their students at various times of their educational path.

“Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking and understanding to solve a range of problems in everyday situations.”

It is based on the mastery of arithmetic-mathematical competence and involves the ability to and the willingness to use mathematical models of thought and presentation or formulas, models, constructs, graphs, diagrams.

“Competence in science refers to the ability to explain the world around us using the body of knowledge and methodologies, including observation and experimentation, to identify problems and draw conclusions that are based on empirical facts, and the willingness to do so.”

“Skills in technology and engineering are applications of such knowledge and methodologies to respond to the desires or needs felt by human beings.”

Competence in science, technology and engineering therefore allows us to understand the changes brought about by human activity and makes us aware of the individual responsibility that each of us citizens have towards society and the environment. This competence includes an attitude of critical evaluation and curiosity, an interest in ethical issues and attention to both safety and environmental sustainability, about scientific and technological progress in relation to the individual, family, community and issues of global dimension. Being competent in mathematics, science, technology, and engineering therefore means having acquired a mode of thinking that allows you to combine the order and rigor of mathematics with the curiosity and critical spirit of the scientific approach.



This mix of logic and intuition, rules to follow and creative thinking, awareness and sustainability allows us to contribute to the progress of society, at all levels, from the individual to the family, as citizens in proximity or globally.

4. Regarding digital education, the OECD believes that: *“Becoming digitally competent is essential to enable young people to participate effectively in a digitalized society and economy; Not engaging in these skills risks exacerbating the digital divide and perpetuating existing inequalities.”*

In a few lines, an aspect of crucial importance is clearly underlined, namely that digital competence can be a tool for equity and social redemption or, on the contrary, it can make the gap in the socio-economic fabric even clearer.

5. The European Union has defined Learning to Learn as: *“The ability to persevere in learning and to organize one's learning also through effective management of time and information.”*

You never stop learning, even as an adult. For this reason, the school must train children to know how to learn independently even when they are not at school or will no longer be in the classroom. It is therefore necessary to think in terms of *Lifelong Learning*, or lifelong learning and to cope with the goal of being able to learn new knowledge and skills permanently, it is necessary to be able to Learn to Learn.

According to the European Union, this competence includes:

- Awareness of one's own learning process and needs;
- Identification of available opportunities;
- The ability to face and overcome obstacles to learn effectively.

This is aimed at continuing lifelong learning, with a view to shared knowledge and learning as a socially shared process.

6. The Council of the European Union has included citizenship competence among the key competences for lifelong learning. In the European Framework of Reference, we find its definition: *“Competence in citizenship refers to the ability to act as responsible citizens and to*



participate fully in civic and social life, based on an understanding of social, economic, legal and political structures and concepts as well as global evolution and sustainability.”

For the European Union, *“the ability to engage effectively with others to achieve a common or public interest, such as the sustainable development of society, is indispensable. This requires critical thinking skills and integrated problem-solving skills, as well as the ability to develop arguments and participate constructively in community activities, as well as in decision-making at all levels, from local and national to European and international levels.”*

To be an active citizen requires the ability to access, critically interpret and interact with both traditional and new media, and to understand the role and functions of the media in democratic societies. Respect for human rights, the basis of democracy, is a prerequisite for a responsible and constructive attitude.

Furthermore, *“constructive participation includes supporting social and cultural diversity, gender equality and social cohesion, sustainable lifestyles, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, as well as a willingness to respect the privacy of others and to be environmentally responsible.”*

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7. The European Council Recommendation states that *“entrepreneurial competence refers to the ability to act based on ideas and opportunities and to transform them into values for others. It is based on creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, initiative and perseverance, as well as the ability to work collaboratively to plan and manage projects that have cultural, social or financial value.”*

Entrepreneurial competence therefore consists in:

- Being able to realize ideas to offer added value to society;
- Critically analyze the creative idea with a *view to problem solving*;
- Give life to projects that bring greater well-being to others, realizing them by cooperating with others.

Entrepreneurial competence therefore implies being able to look beyond, imagining new scenarios and perspectives. But it is not enough to have broad views; Doing business means



being able to define the times and methods to achieve the set goal. But in addition to peering into the distance, those who possess the entrepreneurial spirit must be able to look around them, paying attention to the objectives to be achieved and the people with whom and for whom to achieve them.

8. Competence in cultural awareness and expression is last on the list, but it is certainly no less important than the others. The 2018 Recommendation states that: *“Competence in cultural awareness and expression involves understanding and respecting how ideas and meanings are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and across a range of arts and other cultural forms. It presupposes a commitment to understand, develop and express one's ideas and sense of one's function or role in society in a range of ways and contexts.”*

This competence extends our ability to communicate with those around us, because literacy does not always allow us to easily convey complex concepts such as cultural identity. Knowing how to interpret and recognize all forms of cultural expression allows us to appreciate the essence of people both in small realities and in global society. This competence requires knowledge of local, national, regional, European, and global cultures and expressions – including their languages, expressive heritage and traditions – and cultural products. In addition, the Competence in Cultural Awareness and Expression is based on an understanding of how such expressions can influence each other and affect the ideas of individuals.



II. DEFINITION OF CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES

Vocational training for adults, supplemented by educational qualifications or degrees with national recognition and/or certificates of professional qualification, is an activity of general interest that forms part of the national system of vocational education and training and is governed by Article 192 of the Labor Code.

Vocational training shall ensure the necessary preparation for the acquisition of the minimum professional skills necessary to obtain a job, the acquisition of new skills and the development and certification of those already acquired in a way other than formal.

Professional skills are acquired through Formal, Non-Formal, or Informal modalities:

- Formal pathway means the completion of a program organized by a vocational training institution;
- Non-formal mode means the practice of specific activities directly at the workplace or in self-training;
- Informal pathway means non-institutionalized, unstructured, and unintentional vocational training modalities - unsystematic contact with different sources in the socio-educational, family, social or professional fields.

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Professional skills assessment and certification services represent the process by which interested persons can obtain a certificate of professional competence recognized in Romania and in the Member States of the European Union, for a qualification in which they demonstrate the necessary knowledge and skills, according to a professional standard. Certificates of professional competence have the same value as certificates of degree or qualification, obtained following a vocational training course.

Vocational skills assessment services are aimed at people who have experience in a field, but do not hold a certificate or certification of skills acquired by exercising their qualification/occupation.



Persons who wish to be assessed for the recognition of professional skills acquired in ways other than formal ones, based on an occupational standard of vocational training, apply to an Authorized Centre for their profession/qualification. The occupational standard is the document that describes the specific professional activities and tasks of professions in a professional area and the quality parameters associated with their successful fulfillment in accordance with the requirements of the labor market.



III. LEGAL ORIGIN IN FORCE IN ROMANIA

In Romania, there is a legal framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in relation to professional competences. A series of laws and decrees adopted in the early 2000s organized the validation of non-formal and informal learning independently of formal VET, allowing the validation of non-formal and informal learning to take place outside a formal curriculum.

The first important steps were taken with Law 253/2003, which expanded the tasks of the National Council for Adult Education (CNFPA) and referred to the certification of skills acquired through CVET, organized in non-formal and informal contexts. The following year, Government Law 76/2004 laid the foundations for the accreditation of validation centers and Order No 4543/468 of 2004 (supplemented by Order No 3329/81 of 23 February 2005) formed the basis for the assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning and the recognition of professional competences based on employment standards. According to the ordinance, the assessment should be voluntary, carried out in accordance with employment standards and independent of a formal vocational education and training framework.

With a recent reform in 2010, the National Qualifications Authority was established by merging the National Council for Adult Education (CNFPA) and the National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and the Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment (ACPART). Among its other responsibilities, the Authority coordinates the validation of professional competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings and is responsible for the accreditation of assessment centers. Each assessment Center specializes in specific professional competencies and may issue certain types of qualifications. The duration of accreditation for validation centers is 1-3 years, depending on their track record. The validation of professional competences is based on the assessment of separate units, but partial qualifications cannot be issued. The result for the candidate can be “competent” or “not yet competent”. Participants in validation procedures must pay participation fees that vary according to the number of competencies to be validated and the pricing policies of the validation centers.



The National Law on Education 1/2011 with successive amendments opened the education system and promoted the role of validation of non-formal and informal learning based on a learning outcomes approach. However, there are no targeted measures for a specific sector, except for the validation of learning outcomes acquired by teaching staff in non-formal and informal settings and the conversion of these learning outcomes into equivalent credits for teachers' CPD.

Below is an overview of the legislation in force in Romania on vocational training for adults:

- Government Ordinance No. 129/2000 on Vocational Education and Training for Adults;
- Government Decision No. 522/2003 for the approval of the Methodological Rules for the application of the provisions of Government Ordinance No. 129/2000 on vocational training for adults;
- Decision No 481/2015 amending and supplementing the methodological rules for the application of the provisions of Government Ordinance No 129/2000 on vocational training for adults, approved by Government Decision No 522/2003;
- Government Decision No 556/2011 on the organization, structure and functioning of the National Qualifications Authority;
- Government Decision No 780/2013 amending and supplementing Government Decision No 556/2011 on the organization and functioning of the National Qualifications Authority; Law No 200/2004 on the recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications for regulated professions in Romania.

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And a regulatory framework on the assessment and certification of professional skills:

- Instructions relating to the authorization of centers for the assessment and certification of professional competence, obtained by means other than formal;
- Minimum performance criteria for the authorization of centers for the assessment and certification of professional competences;



- Decision no. 210/26.06.2018 for the approval of the Procedure for the assessment and certification of experts in assessment and certification and their registration in the Register of experts in assessment and certification;
- Order number 3629/2018 concerning the approval of the Methodology for the determination of the evaluation and certification criteria and procedures of professional competence assessors, evaluators, evaluators and external evaluators;
- Decision no. 120/16.04.2019 concerning the modification of the instruction concerning the authorization of centers for the assessment and certification of professional competences, acquired in a non-formal manner;
- Decision no. 232/22.07.2019 for the approval of the Procedure relating to the audio-video surveillance of the evaluation processes carried out by the evaluation and certification centers of professional skills acquired in ways other than the formal ones;
- Decision no. 286/06.09.2019 for the modification of the procedure relating to the audio-video surveillance of the evaluation processes carried out by the evaluation and certification centers of professional skills acquired in ways other than the formal ones;
- The joint order of the Minister of Education and Research and the Minister of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family no. 4543/468/2004 for the approval of the Procedure for the evaluation and certification of professional skills achieved in ways other than formal - MO n.903/2004.



IV. CERTIFICATION BODIES

Non-formal learning in Romania is mainly conducted by educational institutions and the Education Center, public and private providers, governmental and non-governmental organizations, employee training programs organized by employers and cultural institutions. The certificates that can be obtained are certificates of professional qualification and certificates of completion. Assessment methods include self-assessment, direct observation, oral examination, written test, project-based assessment, simulation, or structured observation, reporting or evaluation by others.

The National Securities Authority (NCA), a public body with legal personality, a specialized body under the coordination of the Ministry of Education and Research (Resolution No 556/2011 on the organization, structure and functioning of the Romanian National Qualifications Authority) ensures the general framework for the achievement of continuing vocational training and the development of the qualifications necessary to support a competitive national human resource, able to function effectively in today's society and in a community of knowledge.

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The National Qualifications Authority, pursuant to art. 22 par. 1 of the ordinance, coordinates the authorization activity of vocational training institutions and vocational competence assessment centers, so that it takes place in a uniform manner throughout the territory. To be subject to authorization, VET providers, through channels other than formal ones (Vocational Competence Assessment Centre's), must fulfil several eligibility conditions that appear to have been developed so that as few centers as possible are eligible. A very important aspect to know is the fact that the Competence Assessment Centers, bodies authorized by the NCA for the certification of skills acquired in ways other than formal, are subject to additional conditions imposed by the Authority.

In the process of coordinating the authorization of centers for the assessment of competences acquired in a manner other than formal, the National Qualifications Authority, hereinafter referred to as NCA, shall make use of Competence Evaluators, internal evaluators and external evaluators,



hereinafter referred to as certification experts in the adult vocational training system. The quality of evaluator is obtained by participating in the selection for the achievement of the quality of evaluator of professional skills and subsequent registration in the National Register of assessors of professional skills. The centers of evaluation and certification of skills acquired in ways other than formal ones have the right to use only evaluators registered in the National Register of Evaluators. The assessment and certification procedures of assessment and certification experts are also organized and carried out by the NCA and involve several stages. The assessors of professional skills carry out their activities in accordance with the provisions of the "Procedure for the assessment and certification of professional skills achieved and with non-formal methods", approved by Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Research and the Minister of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family no. 4.543/468/2004, with subsequent amendments and additions, and with the provisions of the instructions on the authorization of centers for the assessment and certification of professional competences acquired in a manner other than formal, approved with determination by the President of the ANC. Professional competence assessors may be regularly assessed/monitored by internal evaluators, based on a decision of the ANC President.

The purpose of the evaluation process is represented by the issue of the Certificate of Professional Skills. The National Securities Authority (ANC), through authorized centers, prints and manages certificates of professional competence. Certificates of professional competence have national recognition and the regime of study documents. The qualifications of the national pre-university education system are official documents of the State, with a special regime, which certify the possession of a qualification, with or without a degree/final examination. The Occupational Competence Certificate is the equivalent of the Certificate of Professional Qualification, the only difference between the two is the method of obtaining it. The Certificate of Professional Skills is obtained through Assessment and is aimed as a service to people who know the job. The trade, in fact, either practice it or have practiced it but do not have a recognized qualification. While the Certificate of Professional Qualification is obtained because of long-term participation in a course and is aimed at those who want to learn a trade from scratch.



V. THE STAGES OF CERTIFICATION

We analyze the “Procedure for the evaluation and certification of professional skills achieved with non-formal methods” as per the Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Research and the Minister of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family n. 4.543/468/2004.

According to art.2 The National Qualifications Authority shall coordinate at national level the assessment and certification of professional competences acquired in a manner other than the formal manner.

Art.3 defines the Professional Skills Evaluator as “a specialist with recent work experience and/or coordination in the professions/qualifications for which he is appointed by the assessment Center to carry out assessments and who is certified by the National Qualifications Authority, based on the occupational standard”.

Art.4 defines the general criteria for certification bodies that carry out personnel certification, thus specifying the general criteria that a personnel certification body must comply with in order to be recognized nationally and internationally as competent and reliable to ensure the functioning of a personnel certification system, regardless of the sector concerned. In addition, it defines the certificate of competence as "that certificate issued on the basis of the rules of a certification system indicating the existence of adequate confidence that the entity in charge is competent to perform certain services. The certificate of competence shall contain the date of issue and the period of validity or expiry date."

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According to art.5, the validation process has the following characteristics:

- Must be voluntary;
- It must be carried out in accordance with established employment standards;
- The test of professional competence must be carried out by applying different assessment methods applied in different contexts and on different occasions;



- Evaluation must be independent of education and training, in the sense that it can take place outside an education or training program;
- The evaluation of each unit of competence must conclude with a result for the candidate "competent" or "*not yet competent*".

Authorization of assessment and certification centers

Under this procedure, the Authorization represents the process through which legal persons under public or private law, Romanian or foreign, who carry out assessment and certification of professional skills acquired by means other than formal, can issue certificates of professional competence with national recognition.

The authorization of centers for the assessment and certification of professional skills acquired by non-formal means, hereinafter referred to as centers, is carried out by the National Qualifications Authority.

Legal persons, Romanian or foreign, under public or private law, wishing to carry out activities of assessment and certification of professional competences obtained by means other than formal, supplemented by certificates of competence with national recognition, may apply for authorization.

Authorization is granted for occupations/qualifications for which there are occupational standards/vocational training standards, depending on the performance level of the center, as follows:

- For the duration of 1 year, for 1st level services;
- For a period of 2 years, for 2nd level services;
- For a period of 3 years, for 3rd level services.



The evaluation criteria of the centers shall consider the following elements:

- Resources -> the Centre shall have access to human resources and the material resources to enable evaluations to be carried out under the conditions of this procedure;
- Recent knowledge and experience-> the Centre's evaluators follow the evolution of occupations in their field and are constantly interested in their own professional development;
- Materials and documentation-> the center designs and produces suitable materials that allow the correct assessment of professional skills in accordance with occupational / professional training standards, for which it provides assessment services. These materials refer to assessment tools and materials to promote the system of assessment of professional skills acquired in ways other than formal;
- Management of evaluation processes-> the center respects the characteristics and principles of the assessment of professional competences, established in this procedure, in all evaluation processes carried out;
- Dissemination of information-> the center disseminates information and materials regarding the conditions for the assessment and certification of professional skills;
- Equal opportunities-> the center offers equal and non-discriminatory opportunities to all candidates who wish to be assessed for a certificate of professional competence;
- The appeal-> procedure the Centre has a transparent system that allows candidates to challenge the evaluation decision "not yet competent" concerning certain units of competence and to benefit from a new assessment for those units of competence, carried out by another evaluator;
- Record-keeping-> The Centre shall have a system for managing information resulting from the evaluation processes, as provided for in this procedure.

Each criterion is analyzed and evaluated based on the evidence produced by the center, for each of the following phases of the quality cycle: design, implementation, verification and improvement.



Each phase of each criterion is rated from 0 to 3. The score of the criterion is given by the lowest score obtained in the phases.

The performance level of the center is given by the minimum score attributed to the evaluation criteria.

The performance level of the center is established in two stages:

- Through self-assessment, by the center;
- Through evaluation by the National Qualifications Authority.

To obtain authorization, the following steps must be completed:

- Certification of professional skills assessors;
- Development of assessment tools;
- Test the evaluation tools in real working conditions, by each evaluator, carrying out a minimum number of 5 evaluation processes;
- Gather the evidence necessary to demonstrate compliance with the criteria;
- Draw up the list of evidence;
- Draw up the matrix for determining the level of performance;
- Drafting of the evaluation report;
- Submission of the application for authorization accompanied by the authorization dossier;
- Analysis of the authorization dossier;
- Resolution of the authorization request;
- Authorization to operate.

The National Qualifications Authority provides, upon request, methodological assistance for passing the authorization phases. The assessment of professional competence assessors for certification purposes shall be carried out by internal verifiers.



The authorization dossier required by art. 11 paragraph (1) letter h) includes:

- The act of incorporation;
- A declaration under the responsibility of the head of the institution that the institution is not economically impaired or has blocked accounts;
- The list of professions/qualifications for which authorization is sought;
- Proof of access to real working conditions and resources necessary for assessment (protocols signed with specialized units, in the case of organizations that do not carry out ongoing activities in the occupations for which they want authorization);
- Copies of certificates of competence of professional competence assessors;
- The self-assessment dossier, which includes the self-assessment matrix and the list of tests;
- Evaluation report;
- Proof of payment of the authorization fee.

Authorized centers have the following obligations:

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- Provide evaluation services, in compliance with the evaluation criteria;
- Treat candidates for evaluation without discrimination on grounds of sex, age, race, ethnic origin, political or religious affiliation;
- Adapt assessment methods to the needs of people with special needs;
- Ensure the confidentiality of data relating to the assessments carried out;
- Allow candidates access to their data;
- Make available to persons authorized to carry out control or monitoring all required information and documents relating to the evaluation activity.



Assessment and certification of professional skills acquired by other than formal means

Persons wishing to be assessed for the recognition of professional skills obtained by means other than formal ones, based on an occupational standard/vocational training standard, must apply to an authorized center for their occupation/qualification.

The assessment may be carried out for all units of competence within an employment/vocational training standard or only for one or more units of competence of that standard, depending on the request of the person concerned.

The process of assessment and certification of professional skills is divided into several phases, namely:

1. Registration of the candidate for the assessment of competences

Each applicant submits a written application to an authorized employment/qualification center for which he or she applies for assessment and certification. To assess the professional competences corresponding to an occupation/qualification, each candidate is assigned a professional skills assessor who is responsible for implementing the entire assessment process.

2. Assisting the candidate in completing the self-assessment

Before entering the actual evaluation process, the candidate analyzes, assisted by the professional skills assessor, his professional performance in relation to the content of the occupational / professional training standard. The vocational competence assessor shall explain and detail, on request, the content, and provisions of the occupational standard/vocational training standard.

3. Planning of the units of competence for which the candidate requests assessment

Depending on the outcome of the self-assessment, the professional competence assessor recommends that the applicant participate in the evaluation process for all or part of the standard or not participate in the evaluation process. The decision to enter the evaluation process rests with the candidate, who attaches to the submitted application the units of



competence for which he wishes to be assessed, from the list of units of competence of the standard made available to him by the professional competence evaluator.

4. Planning and organization of the evaluation process

The professional skills assessor presents to the candidate the assessment methods that will be used and establishes the timetable of the evaluation process in agreement with the candidate. The evaluation program shall be approved by the management of the center. Each center shall establish the concrete method of evaluation, so that the methods applied consistently lead to the demonstration of competence. It is mandatory that the written test and a method of practical demonstration of competence are part of any combination of methods chosen by the center of competence/assessor. The duration of the evaluation process is determined by each center according to the specificities and complexity of the occupation/qualification, not exceeding 30 days.

5. Analysis of tests and competency result

The competency tests produced by the candidate during the assessment are analyzed and judged by the professional competence assessor in relation to the requirements of the occupational standard/vocational training standard. The decision on the candidate's competence shall be determined for each unit of competence for which the candidate has been assessed. If, because of the assessment, the candidate is not satisfied with the decision "not yet competent", communicated to certain competent units, he has the right to appeal, which he submits to the assessment Center within 5 days from the date of communication of the decision. The Centre shall appoint another professional competence assessor who shall organize a new evaluation process for the units of competence under appeal.

6. Issuance of the certificate of competence

Persons declared competent following the assessment process shall receive a certificate of professional competence for the units of competence in which they have been declared competent. Persons declared competent for all units of competence specific to an occupation or qualification shall receive a certificate of professional competence accumulating all professional skills specific to that occupation or qualification in accordance with the



professional standard, respectively the vocational training standard. Certificates have the same value as degree certificates, respectively qualification certificates with national recognition, issued in the formal vocational training system.

Issuance, management, and storage of professional certificates of competency

The National Qualifications Authority prints and manages certificates of professional competence. Certificates of professional competence have national recognition and the regime of study documents.

The National Qualifications Agency issues to the centers, for a fee, based on a delivery-receipt report, the forms required for the attestation of professional skills.



VI. NATIONAL MODELS FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF COMPETENCES IN ROMANIA

Vocational training courses can be:

- Qualification;
- Initiation programs;
- Perfection or Specialization.

To be officially recognized, courses must be offered by an authorized training provider. Depending on the type of program and the way in which the vocational training is achieved, the authorized vocational training provider may issue the following types of certificates:

- Vocational qualification – for qualification or retraining courses and for apprenticeships on the job;
- Degree courses and stages as well as courses and stages of further education or specialization.

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In particular, in order to complete basic education, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research may approve the organization of “Second Chance” educational programs in order to promote primary education which, includes preparatory class and grades 1-4, for people who are 4 years older than the age of a certain grade and who, for various reasons, have not completed this level of education by the age of 14.

In addition, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, in cooperation with local public administration authorities, through school inspectorates, can organize “Second Chance” educational programs to promote secondary education for people who are 4 years older than the age corresponding to a given class and who, for various reasons, have not completed secondary education.



For people who are more than 3 years older than the age corresponding to a certain class, compulsory education can also be organized as part-time education, according to a methodology developed by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research. These types of programs are designed for the so-called at-risk population, i.e. they are aimed at people who have not attended school, young people who have dropped out of school or who have completed primary education but are not able to read or do basic arithmetic calculations at a satisfactory level.



VII. TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURES IDENTIFIED FOR CERTIFICATION

In the context of the internalization of organizations and the globalization of markets, the progress of digital technologies is manifested in the field of vocational training through various methodologies such as, for example, preparation for distance activities, training under the guidance of a distance trainer, development of individual skills in the use and capitalization of information, tele activities, etc.

The teaching media have been diversified over time: from the support of the paper course, to learning programs through television (live transmission or video recording), to interactive multimedia information in real time through the Internet.

The advantages of using new technologies in education are manifold. Examples include the reduction of time consumption, the possibility of adapting personal education programs, the possibility of rapid adaptation to changes and new knowledge in various fields, wide possibilities for interdisciplinary and non-interdisciplinary education, and finally the indispensable reduction in the costs of continuing training.

The most used IT resources for training activities are educational software products or applications that contain a teaching strategy and that are aimed directly at the learner helping him to acquire information or acquire skills through demonstrations, examples, explanations and simulations. Another type of resource for training activities is represented by electronic books (e-books), for which a significant progress is announced considering the low production costs compared to printed books, but above all, the reduction of paper consumption and, consequently, environmental protection. Along with educational software and e-books, multimedia educational applications (e.g. encyclopedias, multimedia dictionaries, etc.) also have an important factor in the training process.



The interconnection of computers has been reflected in the field of training by the possibility of communication and the joint use of resources, which, by encouraging the need for lifelong learning, has led to the development of web-based systems, also referred to as e-Learning platforms.

The evolution of these platforms is the consequence of the continuous increase in the capabilities and flexibility of new information technologies applicable in educational and vocational training moments.

The positive impact of training programs with ICT implementation in the training process has an indirect effect on the quality of life and the national economic level. Training programs using ICT tools in the teaching-learning-assessment process develop learners in the use of new digital technologies, skills that are essential for vocational training.



VIII. MODELS ALREADY IN USE, CRITICALITY AND ANY NEW PROPOSALS

In Romania, significant progress has been made in recent years in validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Although new legal and institutional frameworks have been created and several laws and decrees have been adopted, not all regulations have been implemented. Work still needs to be done to improve coherence between the validation of non-formal and informal learning and the national qualifications framework, as well as to establish stronger links between institutional actors responsible for non-formal and informal validation mechanisms and stakeholders in the fields of education, training, and employment.

One of the main challenges is to link the structures and stakeholders of vocational education and training (VET), higher education and the labor market in a more comprehensive framework. To this end, the National Qualifications Authority was established in 2011 to develop and implement a comprehensive NQF. This was adopted in Romania in 2013. Currently, it is not possible to acquire formal qualifications through the non-formal and informal learning validation system; The two systems are parallel and there is still no link between them. At this time, only non-formal and informal learning can be validated for level four or lower.

The authorization of assessment and certification centers for non-formal and informal learning started in Romania in 2004. According to the National Qualifications Authority (ANC), between 2004 and 2013, 146 assessment centers and 49.900 people were assessed and certified. The validation of skills acquired in informal and non-formal settings is gaining ground in Romania, with a significant increase in certified validation centers and beneficiaries. However, institutional capacity and the limited geographical coverage of assessment centers are challenges that still need to be addressed. These are the main factors hindering access to validation services for potential beneficiaries, in particular disadvantaged groups such as Roma, low-skilled workers or people living in rural areas. As many stakeholders have proposed under the new Education Act No 1/2011, this issue could be addressed efficiently by establishing a Community Lifelong Learning Centre as a local institution that



provides validation and advisory services according to specific local needs. This proposal has not yet been implemented. Another factor related to the low number of participants in validation services is the lack of information campaigns.

In general, integrated approaches between validation agencies and institutions responsible for advice and guidance should be adopted to improve access to validation procedures. The Ministry of Education is responsible for counselling services in schools and universities, while the Ministry of Labor oversees counselling services for the unemployed through its employment agencies. On the other hand, the National Qualifications Authority has taken over responsibility for the validation centers.



CONCLUSIONS

Market transitions require very important choices. Workers will increasingly experience periods of unemployment between jobs. It is therefore necessary to support people in these transitional phases, strengthening their skills and directing them towards the jobs of the future.

A decisive role in this context can be played by the certification of skills that focuses attention on the right of the individual to the certification of his skills and is part of a broad system logic that hinges on the identification of some and certain professional standards, to be correlated to a national repertoire of professions. Based on these standards, workers can have their skills acquired during their working lives recognized, which are made legible to positively address employment transitions within the labor market.

In conclusion, people have a wealth of skills to invest that constitutes added value for the labor market, for companies that will be able to let themselves be contaminated by the knowledge and skills of workers who enable and transversal. To restart with confidence and dynamism, companies need to be able to find skills and citizens to be able to see them recognized.



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