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PROPOSITIONS FOR A TYPOLOGY OF RECOGNITION SYSTEMS

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This document aims at proposing a typology or a set of typologies that will form part of the analytical framework underlying the assessment of policies for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It is intended that a revised version of this document will become a chapter of the International Synthesis Report on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning that will be prepared next year.

National Representatives are invited to comment on the findings and propositions contained in this paper and suggest ways forward, especially on the best way(s) to collect quantitative and qualitative data and organise them.

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PROPOSITIONS FOR A TYPOLOGY OF RECOGNITION¹ SYSTEMS²

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¹ Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

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1. Due to the striking absence of concrete quantitative data on recognition of non-formal and informal learning systems, this paper aims at proposing different possibilities for presenting the existing recognition systems and ways of mapping their different characteristics either by contrasting them with one another, or with other key lifelong learning variables such as participation in adult learning activities, attainment at the upper secondary education level or at the tertiary level, participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET), and qualifications distribution of the population. Starting from existing typologies and classifications, it proposes more comprehensive ways to describe existing systems with qualitative data and quantitative indicators wherever possible. The main objective is to trigger discussions and to receive feedback from the participants in the October 2007 meeting in Vienna in particular and, more generally, from those taking part in the OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Nevertheless, this paper may become a part of the final International Synthesis Report.

2. This document has been prepared for one of the sessions in the agenda of the Vienna meeting but it must be read in conjunction with another one prepared for the session on terms and concepts (EDU/EDPC(2007)24). In particular, the reader should be reminded that, in this context, individuals going through a recognition programme are called *participants* or *applicants*; *participants* because they participate in the programme and are involved in documenting their own skills, knowledge and competences; and *applicants* because they apply for a qualification that should be delivered after they have achieved learning outcomes to a certain set of standards.

3. Finally, this paper is still a work in progress and as a result few data are provided herein. Most of the characteristics, variables or components proposed below to add value to the knowledge base are difficult to find. Therefore, this paper is only meant to be used in the discussions of variables that are deemed of interest. Once the list of variables is decided, after the discussion has taken place among participating countries, then the tables will be filled in through a collaborative process between the Secretariat and the countries.

1. A Typology for What? Existing Work

4. Creating a typology is about comparing national systems. It is also mainly about understanding why such and such pilots and/or such and such programmes may have worked in a country and not in another. These differences may come from the country background in the sense that the result of a recognition programme may be governed by the conditions under which it operated. The general acceptance of qualifications that do not come from the formal learning system is the best example of a local tradition that may hinder the success of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

5. Several options to classify countries can be put forward in this attempt to provide a typology for recognition systems. The first one is a table provided in OECD (2007a) that groups qualifications systems from different countries (Section 1.1); there is also the different archetypes proposed by Feutrie (2007) (Section 1.2). Two studies by Duvekot *et al.* (2005 and 2007) complete this picture (Section 1.3 and 1.4).

1.1. OECD (2007a): A Typology of National Qualifications Systems

6. A good starting point could be to consider what OECD proposed as a typology for national qualifications systems (see Table 1). However, it is only a starting point as:

- Table 1 was built for a different purpose and is clearly incomplete in terms of analysing recognition systems;
- Table 1 was built in consultation with national experts and therefore is quite accurate but the situation may have changed in the meantime and it needs to be updated; and

- The information in Table 1 may be somewhat biased due to the fact that not all experiments or programmes were known to the experts when the table was built; it happens for instance when one of the ministries develops pilot programmes or implements them without everybody in the other ministries or institutions being necessarily aware.

Table 1. Typology of Qualifications Systems in Selected Countries³

Countries	Dual system ¹	QF ²	VET in school ³	Centralisation ⁴	LM ⁵	RPL ⁶	Credit system ⁷	Credentialist ⁸
Australia	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2
Belgium Flanders	3	2	1	1	2	4	3	2
Czech Republic	4	3	3	1	2	4	3	2
Germany	1	3	2	2.5	2	3	3	2
Denmark	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	2
Spain	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
Greece	2	3	3	4	2	4	4	2
Hungary	3	2	2	1	1	3	3	1
Italy	2	3.5	4	3	2	4	3	1
Ireland	3	1	3	1	3	4	3	2
Korea	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2
Mexico	3	3	1	1	4	2	3	1
Netherlands	2.5	2	1.5	2	3	2	2	2
Norway	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2
Scotland	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	1
Slovenia	4	3	2	1	1	2.5	3	2
Switzerland	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	1
United Kingdom	2	1	2	1	3	1	3	2

Legend: 1. This is definitely true for my country; 2. This is only partially true for my country; 3. There is only limited experience of this in my country; and 4. This is not present in my country.

General structural elements of national qualifications systems:

¹ Countries where the end of secondary education leads into an apprenticeship with shared responsibility for programmes between an educational institution and a firm. ² Countries with an explicit framework linking qualifications from different educational and occupational sectors. ³ Countries where a large proportion of a cohort engages in studies linked to a specific occupational area. ⁴ Countries where the qualifications system is unified throughout its regions and control lies with one main agency or with government. ⁵ Countries where entry to the labour market is regulated through qualification – most occupational sectors use this type of regulation. ⁶ Countries where there is a clear national programme or system for recognising non-formal or informal learning. ⁷ Unitised qualifications (large uptake) exist and units from different qualifications can be combined. ⁸ Credentials are essential for entry to the labour market or higher education and for further progress in work or study.

Source: OECD (2007a)

7. This typology is useful as recognition systems are clearly a component of a national qualifications system; as clearly indicated by the presence of the element called at that time “RPL” (Recognition of Prior Learning) in Table 1 (Column 6). In addition, several of the variables used to describe a qualifications system are of high relevance in the analysis of recognition systems.

8. The first one is whether the country is highly “credentialist” (Column 8) as it is often the case that recognition of non-formal and informal learning does not make any progress because institutions, recruiters and people in general are very attached to qualifications awarded by the formal system. The mere idea that people could get a qualification “equivalent” or “similar” to the one awarded in the formal system without suffering the “pain” of seating in a classroom for long hours is among the most often comments heard when reviewing countries. Credentialist countries may find this feature a major obstacle to the implementation of recognition systems and it would be useful to update column 8.

9. The existence of a qualifications framework (Column 2) is another major feature that informs about the feasibility of implementing a recognition system. A qualifications framework is neither a

³ Only the countries participating in the OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning are reported in Table 1.

necessary nor a sufficient condition but qualifications frameworks and recognition systems have in common the notion of learning outcomes – as opposed to input-based learning systems – and, as often when talking about qualifications framework, it is more a catalyst than anything else. (see Bjørnåvold, 2007).

10. The existence of a credit transfer system (Column 7) or any kind of system that allows the transfer of credits or the awarding of partial qualifications offers more possibilities for organising recognition of non-formal and informal learning. This is because the recognition process may not always lead to the awarding of a full qualification; and there are many instances where the existence of intermediary possibilities give flexibility to the system and offers the awarding institutions and the applicant an interesting way out when the applicant does not achieve all the required learning outcomes.

11. All the other components of a qualifications system have some relevance in the planning or the implementation of a system for recognising non-formal and informal learning.

1.2. Feutrie (2007): A Typology of Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Systems

12. A more specific alternative is the interesting typology of recognition of non-formal and informal learning systems proposed by Feutrie (2007). He proposes not to address the question of whether the learning takes place or not – which seems rather obvious – but rather to address the question about the best way(s) to assess and use the existing learning. The level of attention currently paid to non-formal and informal learning, at the enterprise level or elsewhere, varies significantly among the 27 European Union member states. This is true also beyond European borders despite the fact that, for instance, new technology and work methods have reached the workplace. There is evidence that workers have regularly acquired new skills and/or qualifications in order to manage new job functions, but the learning component of this evolution does not seem to surface.

13. Feutrie (2007) defines some archetypes and categorises them in six groups:

Group 1. Nothing in place in terms of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (ex: Greece)

14. Such a group is characterised by:

- Recent apparition of this preoccupation on the political agenda;
- There are conditions to meet, for instance definition of standards and references, or the need to overcome resistances;
- Level of feasibility to reach has to be defined.

Group 2. First attempts at recognising non-formal and informal learning can be witnessed (ex: Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta or Slovenia)

15. Such a group is characterised by:

- Global acceptance;
- Existence of recommendations, strategic papers, creation of pre-conditions for a global system;
- But no «system», no global arrangements, no systematic provisions;
- Experimentations, initiatives at different levels with no real convergence or initiatives concentrated on specific sectors;
- Resistance and obstacles;

- No piloting, no monitoring, no evaluation.

Group 3. Limited initiatives on recognition of non-formal and informal learning (ex: Austria or Germany)

16. Such a group is characterised by:

- No legal framework, federal regulations;
- Not yet really perceived as a need;
- Scepticism from social partners and difficulty of implementation because of the Dual system;
- Initiatives at early stage, mainly to offer «second chance» to non-qualified populations.

Group 4. Emerging arrangements for recognition of non-formal and informal learning (ex: Iceland, Italy or Spain)

17. Such a group is characterised by:

- National regulations or documentation, validation policies emerging as a priority;
- Increasing interest for validation;
- Creations of standards and references, but
- Low level of implementation (low awareness from learning and training institutions and stakeholders), limited experimentations;
- Needs for methodologies, trained staff;
- Few or limited (for instance to a category of population) impact, low level of demand.

Group 5. Bottom up approaches for recognition of non-formal and informal learning (ex: The Netherlands, Ireland or The UK)

18. Such a group is characterised by:

- Long tradition;
- General principles, but
- Dispersed initiatives and practice.

Group 6. Global systems of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (ex: Flemish Belgium, Denmark or Norway)

19. Such a group is characterised by:

- Existing general framework;
- But there are variations:
 - Implementation more or less at a starting point;
 - Limited results (mobilisation of institutions, impact on populations);
 - Large developments.

20. Feutrie (2007) concludes that “European countries move at different speeds. In some countries the citizens have the right to recognition of prior learning, in other countries the issue is not even placed on the agenda yet”.

1.3. Duvekot (2005): A Typology of Learning Culture and Validation of Prior Learning

21. Duvekot (2005) proposed a typology of learning culture. Table 2 summarises the main features of this learning system as identified in the study. It does not address directly the notion of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, but it describes interesting features of the different systems which necessarily have an impact on recognition systems.

22. The main drawback of this approach, for the OECD activity, is that non-European countries are missing. Nevertheless, it should be easy to open up the perspective and to add all the participating countries if this approach presents some interest.

Table 2. Europe’s Main Learning Culture

System	Characteristics	Countries
Dual System	Learning while working; social consensus; VET-levels	Austria, Germany, Switzerland
Mediterranean approach	Regional; flexible and implicit	Greece, Italy, Spain
North European Model	Government driven; regional; VET-levels	Denmark, Norway
Atlantic model	Demand driven, portfolio based vocational training	England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales
French system	Top-down; legislation; including higher education	Belgium, France
Low countries model	Supply-driven; shared responsibilities; bottom-up implementation	The Netherlands
East European Model	Top-down; in transition due to entering EU	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia

Source: adapted from Duvekot *et al.* (2005)

1.4. Duvekot (2007): A Typology

23. (To be provided)

1.5. Opening Up

24. In short, all these typologies are interesting and useful but they all have drawbacks. The main ones could be summarised as follows:

- They are not necessarily focused on recognition of non-formal and informal learning, with the notable exception of Feutrie (2007), even though they are relevant to a better analysis of recognition systems, by describing lifelong learning and education/training systems, mores and cultures;
- They do not rely enough on quantitative data or hard evidence;
- They do not include all the countries that are studied in the OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning; mainly because most were established in a European context.
- In this domain, things seem to evolve very fast and what was true a couple of years ago may not be so today. The interest in recognition programmes has immensely increased over the last couple of years and significant breakthroughs have been made. It is in tune with the rhetoric about lifelong learning and about the need for updating and improving people’s skills, knowledge

and competences; for the best possible use of human capital, especially in the workplace. Therefore, these descriptions of recognition systems need to be continuously updated.

- None of these typologies are bringing insight into the benefits of recognition programmes, which is a key piece of information for analysts and decision makers.
- In some instances, the categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, or the categories are too close and it is consequently difficult to classify a country as belonging in a group rather than in another.

25. In any case, recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still considered a work in progress and more needs to be done in this area even if these studies are excellent starting points, not only because they clarify the picture, but because they help to spot the missing elements that will enable stakeholders to reach a full understanding of the subject and to conduct a better analysis of the situation in this field. The next section proposes what the OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning should perhaps address in order to improve this understanding and the analysis of the situation. Also, as mentioned earlier, this activity should serve as a way of triggering discussions on this topic among participating countries.

2. Proposed Developments – Which Data for Which Analysis?

26. From the existing country background reports and the first review visits conducted in those countries, further work can definitely be done to deepen our knowledge of recognition systems and to try to analyse them in more detail by way of comparison. Among the variables, characteristics or components of recognition systems that should be addressed, it seems that the ones presented in Section 2 are key as a first step to build the knowledge base and advance the analysis.

2.1. Existence of a System

27. Based on Feutrie (2007), OECD (2007a), the country background reports and country notes available, Table 3 can be proposed for approval by the delegates. Classifying some of the countries has proven to be a very difficult task and Table 3 is presented only for the purpose of sparking discussions. The reader should definitely keep in mind that this is only a proposal.

Table 3. Existence of a Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning System

There is a system for recognising non-formal and informal learning in your country

	1 Definitely true	2 Partially true	3 Only limited experience	4 Not present	5 DK or NA
Australia					
Austria					
Belgium (Flanders)					
Canada					
Chile					
Czech Republic					
Denmark					
Germany					
Greece					
Hungary					
Iceland					
Ireland					
Italy					
Korea					
Malta					
Mexico					
Netherlands (The)					
Norway					
Slovenia					
South Africa					
Spain					
Switzerland					
United Kingdom (The)					
Note:					

28. In order to improve Table 3, several possibilities are offered:

- The number of columns could be increased in order to accommodate more categories – see Feutrie (2007) for an example with 6 categories – with the drawback pointed out above that the border line may become fuzzy if these categories are too precise;
- The columns could be characterised further. Instead of saying that “it is definitely true” that there is a recognition system in a country (Column 1 in Table 3), one could say that: “the proportion of the population that went through a recognition programme is above, say, 5% of the entire adult population” or “there is a legislative framework that entitles all individuals to have their non-formal and informal learning recognised...”

29. What immediately strikes the reader is that Column 3 in Table 3 (“only limited experience”) is the fullest of the five columns and that more than half of the countries (12/22) are either in Columns 3 or 4. Therefore, this table provides an obvious rationale for the OECD activity, which is not about describing existing programmes but more about analysing reasons why recognition programmes, despite being rather high on many national policy agendas, have not taken off on a large scale yet.

30. An interesting complement to Table 3 could be to have a historical description and to build a table with the first mention ever of recognition of non-formal and informal learning; whatever the context (see Table 4). The historical differences among the many countries would probably help understand why these countries are in different phases nowadays.

Table 4. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: the Historical Perspective

	First mention	First pilot Programme	First law	First discussion/agreement with social partners	First publication of a national rhetoric
Australia					
Austria					
Belgium (Flanders)					
Canada					
Chile					
Czech Republic					
Denmark					
Germany					
Greece					
Hungary					
Iceland					
Ireland					
Italy					
Korea					
Malta					
Mexico					
Netherlands (The)					
Norway					
Slovenia					
South Africa					
Spain					
Switzerland					
United Kingdom (The)					
<u>Note:</u>					

31. In addition to these broad systemic and historical perspectives, the rest of Section 2 explores the possibility of characterising recognition systems. Several variables are proposed for discussion about the feasibility and the value they carry in terms of analytical power and policy making.

2.3. Existence of Nationally Agreed Definitions: the Many Terms and Concepts

32. Many terms are in used in the field of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Even if the concepts behind the different terms are often quite similar, it could be interesting to list them all and try to identify possible differences in the way the issue is approached (see Table 5).

33. Another question would be whether there are nationally agreed definitions and whether they have currency among practitioners and for the public; or whether they only belong to the jargon of the experts.

Table 5. Glossary for the Different Forms of Learning and Recognition
(with examples provided)

	Name	Concepts
Australia	RPL	
Austria		
Belgium (Flanders)	RAS	
Canada	PLAR	
Chile		
Czech Republic		
Denmark		
Germany		
Greece		
Hungary		
Iceland		
Ireland	APL, APEL, RPL	
Italy		
Korea		
Malta		
Mexico		
Netherlands (The)		
Norway		
Slovenia		
South Africa		
Spain		
Switzerland		
United Kingdom (The)	APL, APEL	
Note:		

2.4. Number of Applicants/Participants

34. Interestingly enough, data related to the number of participants/applicants are scarce. However, the overall feeling is that, regardless of the quality of the recognition programmes that are on supply, the number of applicants remains rather small, even though it is increasing and sometimes quite rapidly.

35. In addition to being part of the main rationale for organising an OECD activity that intends to understand why the number of participants remains small, it is also the case that the number of participants is an appropriate way of describing recognition systems as it partly indicates its success. A high level of participation is a good indicator of whether a recognition programme meets the expectations of the individuals. For financial sponsors, it is a necessity as accountability is always one of the keys to sustained financing.

36. Table 6 goes back to 2004 but different time series can be collected. It is very unlikely that the time span will be very long since data started being collected only a few years ago, but some countries may be able to provide a better historical picture when it comes to numbers.

37. Table 6 is the typical example of a table that could be broken in as many dimensions as required: by gender, by age, by place of birth, place of residence... the most appropriate break down should be decided in coordination with all the participants but, again, the most appropriate breakdown may not be available or data may be fragmented (collected at a regional or enterprise level).

Table 6. Individual Participation in Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning
 Number of participants going through a recognition programme each year from 2004 to 2007 and yearly variation

	2004	+/-	2005	+/-	2006	+/-	2007	+/-
Australia								
Austria								
Belgium (Flanders)								
Canada								
Chile								
Czech Republic								
Denmark								
Germany								
Greece								
Hungary								
Iceland								
Ireland								
Italy								
Korea								
Malta								
Mexico								
Netherlands (The)								
Norway								
Slovenia								
South Africa								
Spain								
Switzerland								
United Kingdom (The)								
Note:								

38. Moving away from the individual perspective, one could think of the institutional level as the main obvious next step.

Table 7. Institutional Involvement in Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning
 Number of institutions organising recognition programmes each year from 2004 to 2007 and yearly variation

	2004	+/-	2005	+/-	2006	+/-	2007	+/-
Australia								
Austria								
Belgium (Flanders)								
Canada								
Chile								
Czech Republic								
Denmark								
Germany								
Greece								
Hungary								
Iceland								
Ireland								
Italy								
Korea								
Malta								
Mexico								
Netherlands (The)								
Norway								

Slovenia								
South Africa								
Spain								
Switzerland								
United Kingdom (The)								
Note:								

2.5. Cost of Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning

39. The individual cost – marginal and average – are key pieces of information to decide whether recognition of non-formal and informal learning is sustainable as opposed to, for instance, training (see EDU/EDPC(2007)24). Therefore, any indication about the cost of recognition of non-formal and informal learning would be crucial for a good analysis and adequate policy recommendations.

Table 8. Cost of Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning
 Entry cost: cost for the first individual that undertakes a recognition programme
 Marginal cost: or additional cost, cost for any additional applicant
 Average cost: cost of the programme divided by the number of applicants

	Entry cost (First applicant ever)	Marginal cost (Any additional applicant when cruising)	Average cost (ration: total cost/number of applicants)
Australia			
Austria			
Belgium (Flanders)			
Canada			
Chile			
Czech Republic			
Denmark			
Germany			
Greece			
Hungary			
Iceland			
Ireland			
Italy			
Korea			
Malta			
Mexico			
Netherlands (The)			
Norway			
Slovenia			
South Africa			
Spain			
Switzerland			
United Kingdom (The)			
Note:			

Source: proposed by the author; to be filled in once agreed upon

2.6. Success Rate

40. Many countries report the difficulty that may exist for a lot of individuals to document their skills, knowledge and competences. In addition, there may be some discrepancy between the skills, knowledge and competences that are documented and the level demanded for attaining a qualification. All in all, a good indicator of the relevance of recognition systems is given by the success rate; that is: out of all the applicants to a qualification through recognition of non-formal and informal learning, what proportion has actually been awarded a qualification (or several) (see Table 9). An alternative would be to provide the real numbers but a proportion (number of successful applicants divided by number of applicants) is more useful to assess the success of a programme/system.

Table 9. Success Rate or Qualification Attainment
Proportion of applicants that do get a qualification at the end of the recognition programme/process

	Proportion of Applicants that Achieve a Qualification (or Several)
Australia	
Austria	
Belgium (Flanders)	
Canada	
Chile	
Czech Republic	
Denmark	
Germany	
Greece	
Hungary	
Iceland	
Ireland	
Italy	
Korea	
Malta	
Mexico	
Netherlands (The)	
Norway	
Slovenia	
South Africa	
Spain	
Switzerland	
United Kingdom (The)	
Note:	

2.7. Existence of a Legal Framework or Social Partners Agreement

41. As often, there are two ways to deal with the implementation of recognition systems: a law or an agreement among social partners. A table could describe the choice made in each country and would help understand the situation. This piece of information could be broken down so that the over time evolution is visible (see Table 10). This table is partially redundant with the one describing the “Historical Perspective” (Table 4) but it is more useful in immediately identifying countries that have a legal framework.

Table 10. Legal Framework and/or Agreement among Social Partners (and Evolution)

	First law	Law currently used	First social partners agreement	Current social partners agreement
Australia				
Austria				
Belgium (Flanders)				
Canada				
Chile				
Czech Republic				
Denmark				
Germany				
Greece				
Hungary				
Iceland				
Ireland				
Italy				
Korea				
Malta				
Mexico				
Netherlands (The)				
Norway				
Slovenia				
South Africa				
Spain				
Switzerland				
United Kingdom (The)				
Note: - Countries should provide a date; or indicate "N/A" if there is no legal framework or no social partners agreement				

2.8. Step in the Implementation Phase

42. As a complement to Tables 4 and 10, recognition systems could be characterised more precisely as proposed in Table 11.

Table 11. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: from Local to Global, the Different Phases

	Initial steps			Scope		Approach	
	Only partial rhetoric	Intentions or recommendations	Pilot or projects	Local or sectoral	Global or national	Top bottom initiative (supply driven)	Bottom up initiatives (demand driven)
Australia							
Austria							
Belgium (Flanders)							
Canada							
Chile							
Czech Republic							
Denmark							
Germany							
Greece							
Hungary							
Iceland							
Ireland							
Italy							

Korea								
Malta								
Mexico								
Netherlands (The)								
Norway								
Slovenia								
South Africa								
Spain								
Switzerland								
United Kingdom (The)								
Note:								

43. In addition, the involvement of the different ministries could be a good indication of the general character of the approach in a particular country (see Table 12).

Table 12. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Ministries Involved (or Interested)

	Education	Labour, or employment	Health	Defence	Agriculture	Industry	Please provide	Please provide
Australia								
Austria								
Belgium (Flanders)								
Canada								
Chile								
Czech Republic								
Denmark								
Germany								
Greece								
Hungary								
Iceland								
Ireland								
Italy								
Korea								
Malta								
Mexico								
Netherlands (The)								
Norway								
Slovenia								
South Africa								
Spain								
Switzerland								
United Kingdom (The)								
Note:								

2.9. General Education or Vocational Education and Training?

44. A characteristic that seems to distinguish the different countries having set in motion recognition programmes is whether the full range of non-formal and informal learning activities can be recognised or whether only a fraction of this learning has value. Typically, countries tend to oppose the learning that

happens in the workplace or that has value in it to more general experiential learning. To this extent, it may be the case that recognition systems do reproduce the traditional opposition between academic general education and vocational education and training (see Table 13). An explicit mention of “all life experience” appears in the documents produced in some countries and this is an indication of the breadth of the scope for recognising non-formal and informal learning.

Table 13. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Workplace Experience or General Experience, or both
Does the System Recognise Experience as a Whole or Only Labour Market Experience?

	Workplace learning only	Non-vocational experience only	Both
Australia			
Austria			
Belgium (Flanders)			
Canada			
Chile			
Czech Republic			
Denmark			
Germany			
Greece			
Hungary			
Iceland			
Ireland			
Italy			
Korea			
Malta			
Mexico			
Netherlands (the)			
Norway			
Slovenia			
South Africa			
Spain			
Switzerland			
United Kingdom (the)			
Note:			

2.10. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning in the Tertiary Education System

45. In most countries under review, tertiary institutions (universities typically) have full autonomy and it may therefore be difficult to organise the data collection. Nevertheless, an indication of whether there are opportunities for getting exemptions through some kind of official recognition of non-formal and informal learning would be useful in assessing the situation in a particular country. Some may even deliver partial or full qualifications based on recognition of non-formal and informal learning. All this is presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Tertiary Education Systems
Exemption, partial of full qualifications

	Exemptions only	Partial qualification	Full qualification
Australia			
Austria			
Belgium (Flanders)			
Canada			
Chile			
Czech Republic			
Denmark			
Germany			
Greece			
Hungary			
Iceland			
Ireland			
Italy			
Korea			
Malta			
Mexico			
Netherlands (The)			
Norway			
Slovenia			
South Africa			
Spain			
Switzerland			
United Kingdom (The)			
Note:			

2.11. Benefit and Outcomes

46. What is lacking in many countries and many instances is the existence of evaluation programmes or data about the benefits and outcomes of recognition programmes; for individuals (wage, promotion, job mobility), the other actors (employers, recruiters) or both. If such data exist, even collected at a local level, for a particular programme or a pilot project, then it would be useful to know about them (see Table 15).

47. An additional valuable possibility would be to collect data about the social value/use of the qualifications delivered after a recognition programme (see Table 16). It would indicate the overall level of trust in qualifications achieved through a recognition programme in a particular country. It seems indeed that the relative importance of the formal system in the overall landscape, in terms of the number of qualifications achieved each year for instance, and in terms of trust and confidence, may remain an obstacle of recognition systems to make significant progress; this in terms of the number of participants for example.

48. Table 16 is somewhat redundant with the information provided in Column 8 of Table 1 (whether the country is “credentialist”) but only somewhat because “credentialism” refers to the belief that only formal qualifications have value. Here, the information that is sought is whether qualifications achieved after a recognition programme would have the same value as those achieved in the formal learning system.

Table 15. Outcomes and Benefits

	Benefits observed for individuals	Benefits observed for other actors (please provide)
Australia		
Austria		
Belgium (Flanders)		
Canada		
Chile		
Czech Republic		
Denmark		
Germany		
Greece		
Hungary		
Iceland		
Ireland		
Italy		
Korea		
Malta		
Mexico		
Netherlands (The)		
Norway		
Slovenia		
South Africa		
Spain		
Switzerland		
United Kingdom (The)		
Note:		

Table 16. Trust in Qualifications after a Recognition Programme

	Social value of a qualification achieved through a recognition programme	Social use of a qualification achieved through a recognition programme
Australia		
Austria		
Belgium (Flanders)		
Canada		
Chile		
Czech Republic		
Denmark		
Germany		
Greece		
Hungary		
Iceland		
Ireland		
Italy		
Korea		
Malta		
Mexico		
Netherlands (The)		
Norway		
Slovenia		
South Africa		

Spain		
Switzerland		
United Kingdom (The)		
Note:		

2.12. Other Relevant Data

49. Table 17 below is provided as a miscellaneous category in case specific data, which would have value for understanding recognition systems and their implementation, exist in the countries under review and do not fall into the previous category.

Table 17. Other Available Existing Quantitative Data

	Available Quantitative Data (please describe)	
Australia		
Austria		
Belgium (Flanders)		
Canada		
Chile		
Czech Republic		
Denmark		
Germany		
Greece		
Hungary		
Iceland		
Ireland		
Italy		
Korea		
Malta		
Mexico		
Netherlands (The)		
Norway		
Slovenia		
South Africa		
Spain		
Switzerland		
United Kingdom (The)		
Note:		

2.13. The Future of Recognition Systems

50. Inevitably, and this is clear from the review visits organised so far, the future of recognition systems will be an issue in many countries. This is because recognition systems are costly and the question of sustainability will have to be posed sooner or later. Oftentimes, it is felt that recognition programmes are set in motion thanks to the action of some very active individuals or groups that appear as visionary. If the issues of cost and sustainability, based on a correct evaluation of the outcomes, are not addressed, the system may collapse when these very active individuals or groups stop to promote the system.

51. Beyond the issue of sustainability, even if they function well, recognition systems often need some form of scaling up. Frequently, recognition of non-formal and informal learning starts from pilot projects and/or small scale programmes and the necessary conditions for a general access to recognition of non-formal and informal learning needs to be spelled out.

3. Next Steps

52. The obvious next steps are to:

- Consult with countries about the most useful and feasible tables for classifying recognition systems and organising the knowledge base being built thanks to this OECD activity; and
- Fill in the tables.

53. If sufficient quantitative data is available, an interesting way of learning about recognition systems and analysing them would be to map some of the variables against one another. That could be done in the next step, once all the data are collected and organised. Identifying patterns of behaviour helps understanding the issues. Mapping number-of-applicants against existing-benefits could have some explanatory power for the low take-up. If individual data exist, even on a small scale (pilot project(s) or a particular assessment centre), building a small statistical model to study the link between recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the situation afterward (employed, unemployed, out of the labour force) would also certainly inform about the value of such recognition programmes and systems. From the first visits organised in the participating countries, it is obvious that what is most striking as missing elements are: most recognition programmes are implemented on the basis of faith but there is little evidence about their value.

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