OECD Thematic Review
on Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

Country Background Report

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

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Introduction

Lifelong learning is not regulated by law in Iceland and has developed, according to needs and trends of the society and the open market, alongside the formal education system. Historically, validation of competences has always been built into the Icelandic school system, even though the current notion of it is rather recent. Professional experience has been regarded to be important and a vital part of vocational education and training. In fact, until rather recently, individuals who had been working in a particular trade for 10 years, could have their skills evaluated and even undergo a journeyman's certificate based on experience. As for academic education, placement exams have been used for validation in specific subjects for the purpose of shortening learning cycles or for recognition between schools. Provisions that allow upper secondary schools to evaluate individuals' skills and competences are built into the current legal framework, and the responsibility lies with each educational institutions. Similar rules apply to the higher education level. Admission requirements can take into account non-formal and informal education, based on assessment of general knowledge and maturity of applicants.

As lifelong learning, on-the-job training and education for personal development has become more common, there is a growing need for provisions to validate the outcome of it for the benefit of the individuals and the society and economy as a whole. A committee established by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 1998 set the initial policy for lifelong learning, including the importance of validation of competences. The work was continued with a group which is currently working on contribution to a new legal framework for lifelong learning and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Through the process of national policy making concerning lifelong learning, participation of all relevant stakeholders has been regarded of paramount importance. Representatives from federations of employers and trade unions have been involved in the policy making process, and occupational councils have been set up to ensure cooperation between education and industry. The emphasis on active cooperation

between education and industry led to the establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre in 2003 with the main objective of developing a system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. As outlined in the present report, the work of the Centre currently forms the backbone regarding the issue in Iceland.

Shorter learning cycles, more transparent education and training pathways and cost-effective individualised learning are some of the incentives for developing an effective system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Once in operation, the validation system is expected to contribute to reduced drop-out, improved access to education and training opportunities for the general public and increased economic growth by enhancing the educational level in Iceland.

1. Contextual factors

1.1. Demographic change

Icelandic society is in many ways different from other European countries regarding demographic changes. The population increase is considerably higher than in any other country in Europe, both due to natural growth as well as to increased number of immigrant workers. Population ageing is not an imminent problem but the issue will clearly become more important within a few decades. Normal age for retirement is 67 years but due to demands from the employment market, people often work longer. Early retirement has not been very common in Iceland. In order to sustain the country's rapid economic growth, it has been necessary to keep people active in the employment market longer and to import foreign labour.

Table 1. Population division by sex and age

31 December 2006	Total	%	Men	Women
Total	307.672	100,0	156.576	151.096
Aged 0-14	65.467	21,3	33.373	32.094
Aged 15-64	206.572	67,1	107.038	99.534
Aged 65 +	35.633	11,6	16.165	19.468

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006

Statistics Iceland issued a report about the country's demographics from 1996 to 2006, which shows population trends during the last decade. According to the report, population increase in Iceland has been higher than in any other country in Europe during the time in question. In 2005, the population increase was 2.2% rising up to 2.6% in 2006.

The steep increase in population in Iceland is mainly due to increased immigration. In 2006, the natural increase was 0.8% whereas net immigration was 1.8%. Consequently, there has been a large increase in the share of foreign nationals. Currently, 6.0% of Iceland's population are foreign nationals compared with 4.6% a year earlier. Only ten years ago the share of foreign citizens was below 2.0%. In recent years, men have been proportionally more numerous than women among foreign citizens. In 2006, 7.4% of all men in Iceland were foreign nationals as

compared with 4.7% of women. Prior to 2003 the trend was reverse. Thus in 2001, the proportion of men was 3.1% and of women 3.7%.

Table 2. Foreign nationals in Iceland

	Total number	% of population
1 December 1987	3.874	1,6
1 December 1997	5.635	2,1
1 December 2006	18.563	6,0

Source: Statistics Iceland 2006

The increase in population has happened in all except two of the country's seven regions. The increase has been most pronounced in the East where population increase was no less than 12.2%. The increase in this region is primarily due to the construction of a hydropower plant and an aluminium smelter in the area, which has required a number of immigrant workers to settle in the region. General population increase in the capital area is thus slightly lower than the national average. On the other hand, a notable increase in population was experienced in urban areas in the vicinity of the capital area. This was in particular true for towns in the Southwest where population increased by between 3.3% and 8.9%.[1]

The Icelandic nation is relatively young compared to other European nations, with a comparatively high proportion of young people, and people active in the labour market. In contrast with the development in other countries in Europe, the number of people between the age of 20 and 64, active in the labour market, has increased. The proportion was 59.7% in 2006 compared to 48.2% in 1961-1970. This is partly due to high birth rate in the fifties and sixties, but also to the increasing number of immigrants of that particular age group. Most of the foreign citizens living in Iceland are in their twenties or thirties, and there are practically no older foreign individuals living in the country. Children holding a foreign citizenship are also very few, or about 2% of children living in Iceland. This shows that the increased number of immigrants in their early years of employment has increased the number of people in employment in Iceland, and as a result, the number of people active on the labour market is higher than in other countries of Europe.

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[1] Statistics Iceland 2007

In two or three decades, a sudden change is foreseen, when people that are now (2007) 35-49 years old reach retirement age. Currently, 8.4% of Icelanders belong to the age group 65-79 years old, compared to 7.1% in the sixties.[2]

1.1.a) Recent demographic changes, which in the case of Iceland mainly regard immigration, have not caused any significant changes for the overall post-secondary education institutions in the country. Due to the age distribution of immigrant workers, not many of them come to Iceland to enrol in upper secondary education. The majority of foreign students in higher education in Iceland come to the country through international cooperation schemes and leave after their time of study.

Vocational education and training for immigrants is largely in the hands of the social partners, with the employer providing the training and the trade unions, and the social partners' collaborative training funds, participating in the cost of training. Immigrants are furthermore encouraged to participate in lifelong learning, especially in courses in the Icelandic language largely funded by the government. According to statistics by Mímir, which is a lifelong education centre owned by the Federation of Trade Unions, a great majority of participants in adult learning vocational courses are Icelandic, with the only exception of courses in the Icelandic language.

A rather notable change regarding learners' profiles at post-secondary level has to do with the distribution of age and sex at the higher education level. The number of women in higher education is higher than the number of men, and the number of people of all ages in higher education institutions has also increased. The reason for that has largely to do with general increased awareness of the importance of lifelong learning as well as with more learning opportunities offered at advanced levels of higher education.

Information regarding profiles such as ethnicity and socio-economic background of learners in post-secondary education institutions is not available, as it has been irrelevant due to the homogeneity of Icelandic society, but which might change, depending on the background of future immigrant groups.

1.1.b) A notable change in participation patterns in different sectors of education and training with respect to the demographic change has to do with increased number of

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[2] Statistics Iceland 2007.

immigrants in lifelong learning. The need for basic courses in Icelandic has grown with growing number of immigrants, and the number of participants has risen considerably. In fact, until a decade ago, the offer of these courses was very scarce, as the need was not present. Immigrant workers are also active in on-the-job training, or in training provided by the employer. Participation of immigrants in courses organised by the employer is fairly high in sectors, which require specific skills, such as the food sector, in particular in fish processing and other jobs in fish factories. Sectoral courses in tourism for immigrants are also becoming more common with the growing importance of tourism in the Icelandic economy.

As an ageing population is not currently a problem in Iceland, the contextual effects are not that imminent. The only notable change can much rather be connected with general awareness raising and changing skills demands on the labour market, such as increase use of ICT and demands for communication skills, cooperation skills and knowledge of foreign languages.

1.1.c) The authorities have not formulated a national policy on migration regarding high-skilled or low-skilled immigrants, in response to increased immigration. The only existing policy regarding immigrants that come to Iceland to work, according to the Directorate of Labour and the Directorate of Immigration, is that citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) have priority access to jobs in the Icelandic labour market. If an employer wants to hire an individual from outside the EEA, it can be done only as long as it proves to be impossible to employ an individual from within the EEA for the job in question.

1.1.d) Demographic changes have not affected admission policies at higher education level to any extent. The Act on Higher Education, no. 63 from 2006 makes general provisions for flexibility of course credit evaluation between institutions. Higher education institutions are also free to evaluate non-formal learning and professional experience acquired in Iceland or in other countries for admission purposes. Each higher education institution can set its own admission criteria for applicants that do not possess the matriculation diploma normally required. Evaluation is based on the criteria set by each institution which then evaluates each case on individual basis.

1.2. Internationalisation

Internationalisation is extremely important in the development of the Icelandic educational system. Participation in European action programmes for education and training has facilitated mobility of students and trainees, which also means that more flexibility is needed than before concerning recognition of education and training acquired in other countries.

The Act on Higher Education form 2006 stipulates that all organisation of study and arrangements of course credits has to be integrated into the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), and the newly adopted National Qualifications Framework for higher education focuses on learning outcomes in order to carry out evaluation of non-formal and informal learning which facilitates recognition of studies at the level of higher education, see 1.2.b.

Recognition of skills is more complicated in vocational education and training, as it is often connected to regulated professions. However, with increased immigration and import of workers, both skilled and unskilled, there are now provisions for recognition of qualifications and skills, as described in 1.2.a.

1.2.a) There are national policies and practices regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration of migrant population. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture facilitates the process for foreign citizens who want to apply for recognition of qualifications obtained in other countries. The recognition is only relevant for professions that are regulated in Iceland, such as the certified trades and other regulated professions. If an individual is qualified in an area that is not regulated in Iceland it is up to the company that he/she want to work for, whether it considers his/her qualifications of value for its purposes.

Icelandic authorities demand complete documentation on the individual's studies in order to evaluate foreign credentials in the regulated professions. This entails a complete school leaving certificate, along with its official translation in English or in a Scandinavian language, including information about content of the studies and its length in years, months or weeks; information about the rights which the study in question grants in the home country; information about in-company training if it forms a part of the study course, as well as information about any

working experience. The process of recognition depends on the profession in question, and also on whether the individual comes from a country within the EEA or outside it.[3]

Iceland participates in the Europass initiative, which facilitates evaluation of evaluate vocational training obtained in another EEA country into the regulated professions.

The Directorate of Labour (Vinnumálastofnun) has issued a policy aimed at Icelandic companies regarding admission of foreign workers, requiring companies to prioritise workers from the EEA countries for any labour, skilled or unskilled, over citizens from any third countries.[4]

As for the policy formulated by the social partners, the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (Samtök atvinnulífsins) maintains a strong policy for integration of foreign workers and stresses the importance of making it possible for immigrants to put their skills to good use for the good of the economy.

The Federation of Trade Unions (Alþýðusamband Íslands) has a strong educational policy regarding the possibilities for immigrants to become integrated into Icelandic society which claims that it is of vital importance for the economy that the competences of skilled workers, which have obtained their qualifications in their home country, be recognised in Iceland. The Federation is active in negotiating rights and wages for immigrants and play an important role in providing adequate learning provisions for skilled, as well as less skilled, immigrant workers.

1.2.b) The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has issued a National Qualifications Framework for higher education in keeping with the new Higher Education Act from 2006. The framework aims at focusing on learning outcomes in order to facilitate recognition between higher education institutions as well as between countries. By describing learning outcomes, the NQF also facilitates any comparison when it comes to admission on the grounds of recognition of non-formal and informal learning at higher education level. Evaluation thereof, as well as admission decisions, is still up to each higher education institution's own criteria.

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[3] Educational Gateway 2007
[4] Directorate of Labour 2007

As an important component in the internationalisation of higher education, higher education institutions are now required to calculate course content and work load according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to make cross-border comparison easier.

1.3. New Information Communication Technology (ICT)

1.3.a) The upper secondary school system is largely based on a module system and the national curricula have recently been transferred to electronic format. This makes it easier to update the curricula more efficiently and to keep track of the modularisation of learning.

1.3.b) New qualifications, that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies, are often related to specific systems and managed by relevant company representatives in Iceland. Courses are offered and organised by certified centres, according to pre-described standards and criteria, and the diploma awarded by the company in question. The large ICT multinational companies demand that those that sell and service their products, possess the adequate knowledge. In addition to having acquired the relevant diploma, the ICT instructors are certified for teaching specific solutions.

Some of the new qualifications known and provided by Icelandic companies in the field of ICT are:

- Certifications awarded by Microsoft
    - MCP (Microsoft Certified Professional)
    - MCTS (Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist)
    - MCSA (Microsoft Certified Systems Administrator)
    - MCSE (Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer)
    - MCAD (Microsoft Certified Applications Developer)
- Diplomas awarded by Red Hat Linux
    - RHCE (Red Hat Certified Engineer)
- Certifications provided by Cisco systems:
    - CCNP (Cisco Certified Network Professional)
    - CCSP (Cisco Certified Security Professional)
    - CCAI (Cisco Certified Academic Instructor)

- o CCDP (Cisco Certified Design Professional)
- o CCDA (Cisco Certified Design Associate)
- o CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Associate)
- Various certificates awarded by IBM.

There is clear evidence that companies in the ICT business require their employees to possess the relevant certificates that are provided by the major industries in the sector. ICT companies do not necessarily require their employees to have studied electronics as a profession if they possess the necessary certificate. There is also evidence that a combination of electronics studies and industry-specific certificates can be a wise choice for someone wanting to work in the ICT business. Companies want to provide tailor-made training to their staff that can thus provide certified and tailor-made service to the customer.

1.3.c) There are no national policies or practices of using e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes. The recognition of competences is applied at individual basis and there are currently no requirements of transferring records of learning outcomes to electronic databases.

The only attempt at using an e-portfolio to record learning outcomes is through promotion of the Europass initiative, which requires people to use the tools associated with Europass such as the European CV, the European language portfolio, the Europass and certificate supplement for vocational training and the diploma supplement for higher education.

1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage and skills mismatch

1.4.a) There is currently no specific legal framework, policy, programmes, or research, that address the issue of recognition of knowledge, skills, and competences through experience, nor any specific policies at regional level linking investments in human capital with economic developments.

1.4.b) There is currently a significant skills shortage in Iceland, which is especially conspicuous in the building industry, in the care sector and in the service sector, or particularly in services which do not require formal education and training. This

situation has been met by importing labour force from abroad, with the largest part of imported labour coming from Poland. According to the Directorate of Labour, this has created problems in the care sector in particular, as those are jobs that are difficult to carry out without knowledge in the Icelandic language.

The policy for meeting skills mismatch and skills shortage is to provide education and training, together with recognition of non-formal and informal learning in order to facilitate mobility between sectors. The regional employment offices run by the Directorate of Labour carry out the recognition process. However, this solution is not used much, with the current skills shortage, there simply are no people available to participate in the process.

1.4.c) Icelandic society is still relatively homogeneous, even though there is evidence that the social structure is somewhat changing because of increased number of immigrants. During the last years, unemployment has been between 1% and 4% and the number of imported labour force has gone up tremendously in the last five years, mainly due to specific building projects such as a new hydraulic power plant and aluminium smelter in the eastern fjords.

The only available numbers for low-income people and gini-co-efficiency are from 2003-2004, indicating that 10% of the population are categorised as being in risk of low income, mainly due to invalidism or impaired work capacity. Another indicator of income, the gini-co-efficiency rate, was 0,25 in 2004 for Iceland.[5]

1.4.d) There is no data that points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solving the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage with the purpose of driving economic development.

Even though this might be looked at in the next few years, the benefits are currently regarded more as being individual oriented, as a way for the individual for personal fulfilment and to find his or her way on the labour market.

1.4.e) No research has been carried out to find out if certain social groups would benefit most from recognition of their skills and competences. The only available data is in the service agreement between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

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[5] Statistics Iceland 2007.

and the Education and Training Service Centre, which mentions immigrant workers as a part of the target group.

1.4.f)   There is no data or research results that discuss issues to link the recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the non-formal and informal economies.

1.4.g)   Due to the shortage of labour force, recognition of experience in the labour market has always been practised in Iceland in an informal way, just to get enough people to work in various professions. This has been practised for a long time in the regulated professions, such as the traditional trades. For decades, tradesmen had the opportunity to undergo a journeyman's examination if they had worked in the trade for 10 years or more, based on their practical skills and experience, even though they had not had any formal education. This "10-year rule" has now been abandoned.

Apart from the trades, this has also been common practice when teachers are hired. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning which has been carried out so far according to the concept as used in the present report, has been carried out in the regulated professions and used as re-entry into the school system or to shorten learning cycles.

1.5. Social developments

1.5.a)   The newly evolved skills and competences needed to get by in the knowledge economy can be divided into two categories. On the one hand, there are practical skills related to survival in the changing economy, such as business skills, computer skills and the need for language competences, and on the other hand there are the "softer" skills such as communication and cooperation skills, often referred to as "life skills".

1.5.b)   There is not much data available for participants in leisure courses that have gone on to further learning or professional progression. The only project that can count in this respect is a project run by Mímir, which is a lifelong learning centre owned and managed by the Federation of Trade Unions. The project is called the Basic College (Grunnmenntaskólinn) and is a 300-hour course designed for people that have no formal education after compulsory school, but want to acquire enough

personal autonomy and belief, together with basic skills, to be able to proceed to further studies. A number of participants in this project have gone on to upper secondary school and even to university.

1.5.c)   No data exists that provides evidence that learning for leisure and personal development has contributed to democracy and citizenship, lower crime rates or better health.

1.6. Others

1.6.a)   The role of the social partners is an important contextual factor for Iceland, when it comes to driving the changes of institutional and technical arrangements concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Following the common wage agreements in the late 1990s, federations of employers and employees sealed their common understanding of the importance of education and training by establishing a tripartite cooperation forum, EDUCATE-Iceland in 1999, with the education system encompassing vocational upper secondary schools and the universities. This manifested a certain consensus, which was important at the time and contributed to easier cooperation and common understanding.

Through general wage agreements, federations of employers and employees have made the possibility of learning open to all. In addition, the social partners established educational funds for workers in all sectors, which pay directly for employees' education and training, both job-related training and certain leisure courses.

The collaborative effort of the social partners with the education system was also imminent when they formed a common policy to lower the school dropout-rate in Iceland and to heighten the educational level of the nation as a whole. The establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre in 2003 was in sense the culmination of the involvement of the social partners, as the defined role of the centre is to set up a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning, with the objective of recognising the real competences of people on the labour market, facilitating re-entry into the school system and shortening learning cycles. The social

partners have thus proved that their cooperative efforts can in fact drive institutional changes regarding the issue of validation.

1.6.b) The historical background of recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be traced back to the 1920s, with the assessment of work experience within the traditional trades. For decades, the so-called 10-year rule allowed individuals, with 10 years experience or more of working within a particular trade, to undergo the journeyman's examination without any formal schooling. The rule has now been abandoned and the importance of formal education is outweighing work experience in the dual system.

The systematic and organised approach towards the recognition of adults' skills and the apprehension of the importance of being able to validate non-formal learning for re-entry into the formal school system is a relatively recent notion.

There was a growing awareness of the importance of lifelong learning in all sectors around the late 1990s' when the government appointed a committee to make recommendations for increasing participation in lifelong learning and look for ways to develop short and transparent pathways of learning which would build on recognition of former learning and experiences. In order to raise awareness among the public, the government adapted recommendations from the European Union and celebrated a day for lifelong learning in 1996 and again in 1999. From the year 2000, the Ministry has organised an annual Week for Lifelong Learning in cooperation with the social partners and other stakeholders.

The latest developments concern a statement from the government regarding the importance of recognising prior learning in order to shorten learning cycles. In continuation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture made an agreement with the Education and Training Service Centre, established by the social partners in 2003, to develop means to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning. The Centre has thus been appointed as the official body for developing, piloting and implementing a national system for recognition of competences.

2. Description of institutional arrangements

2.1. Political and legal framework

2.1.a)   The Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for issues regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The national curricula, issued by the Ministry, provide a framework for validation of learning acquired outside the formal school system. With recent updates, all curricula are now outcome-based which replaces prescriptive methods with evaluation of the real competence of students at the end of the study. The updated curricula play an important part when it comes to validation of non-formal and informal learning, as the learning outcomes are used as basis and criteria for the validation.

Provisions are made, according to the Upper Secondary School Act from 1996, to assess people's knowledge and skills for entry into the formal education system, e.g. by placement tests. These allow individuals the possibility to demonstrate their ability in academic or vocational subjects. Further formulation and implementation is in the hands of each schoolmaster according to the law, and this provision is still the basis of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Thus, all pilot projects carried out under the current process of developing a system for validation of competences, are subject to cooperation with the upper secondary school system. A new Act on Upper Secondary Education is expected in 2008.

A system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is currently being developed. The Education and Training Service Centre, owned by the social partners and funded by the government, has been assigned to work on the development, piloting and implementation of the system in cooperation with relevant stakeholders. The developmental work is carried out mainly at upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary levels of training, with the important cooperation of the upper secondary schools as the lawful recognising bodies.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is currently developing a National Qualifications Framework for upper secondary education and this has the potential to provide an overriding framework for formal, non-formal and informal learning. A National Framework for Higher Education has already been developed, with the new Universities Act from 2006.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has recently (2007) written a new policy document "Education and Training 2010: The Development of Education Policy in Iceland in the Context of Europe" which details Iceland's position on the development of a new qualification framework. A working group was set up with the objective of looking at how validation of non-formal and informal learning could best serve Icelandic needs. The group issued a statement where it agrees that Iceland "should consider the benefits of introducing a system for recognition of competences in the country, while at the same time designing a system that builds on a shift of emphasis where personal skills are accredited with a standardised methodology"[6].

Under the revision of the Act on Upper Secondary Education, the Ministry of Education is considering a reference model for the National Qualifications Framework (which will parallel the European Qualifications Framework), that will involve writing descriptions of references for skills, knowledge and competences and identifying work methods, evaluation methods and quality references in non-formal learning.

The working group working under the auspices of the Ministry of Education has agreed that "a period of three years must be allowed for the preparation phase of the national framework. At the end of that period it should be possible to formally introduce the system and to provide the legislation, regulations/rules that will govern the work processes. At the same time the introduction of informal work rules and communication practices on which such systems are based should have been completed. The system is supposed to cover all learning, non-formal and formal and shall be adapted to corresponding systems in other countries. Continued development of the system shall be in co-operation with the university sector"[7]

As for the social partners, their policy regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning is represented through their involvement in various initiatives regarding the subject. Representatives from employers' and employees' organisations sit on various committees dealing with vocational education and training at all levels, such as the occupational councils, which serve as advisory committees for development of VET and on the Ministry's committee for lifelong learning. The

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[6] "Education and Training 2010: The Development of Education Policy in Iceland in the Context of Europe" (2007)
[7] Education and Training 2010: The Development of Education Policy in Iceland in the Context of Europe" (2007)

social partners have actively participated in setting up training centres for lifelong learning in various sectors as well as the Education and Training Service Centre, which is the official body for validation of real competences. The social partners' policy is also clearly depicted in their wage agreement by making lifelong learning an integrated part of workers' rights. Provisions are also made for the establishment of education and training funds that are currently managed by the social partners. These funds work closely with educational providers, trade unions and companies all over the country, providing grants for work-related training as well as learning for personal development.

The establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre in 2003 provided a structure for taking the development of recognition of non-formal and informal learning a step further, with the consent of relevant stakeholders. By signing a service agreement with the Education and Training Service Centre, the Ministry of Education set a clear policy regarding the importance of recognition of non-formal and informal learning which aims at developing a system for validating competences of individuals. The service agreement is the statement of the government regarding these issues. The initial agreement was made in 2003 and the first three years were used for benchmarking activities and development. The agreement was renewed in 2006 for other three years of piloting. After this period, the system for recognition of competences is expected to be fully operational in 2009.

2.1.b) Lifelong learning is not regulated by law in Iceland. The current legal framework on adult education can be found in an article of the law on Upper Secondary Education, dealing mainly with lifelong learning provided within the formal school system. Recognition of previous formal or non-formal learning or of training acquired in the work place, for entering formal education in Iceland is in the hands of each educational institution, both at upper secondary level according to the Upper Secondary School Act no. 80/1996 and higher education level according to the Higher Education Act no. 63/2006.

As regards regulatory framework concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning specifically, it can be found in the service agreement made between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Education and Training Service Centre, owned by the social partners.

2.1.c)   The service agreement between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Education and Training Service Centre laid the foundations for a framework regarding recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Iceland. The first agreement was made in 2003 for the first three years of operation, encompassing development and benchmarking activities, and the current one was signed in January 2006 for the next three years, in which the pilot and developmental phase takes place. The agreement is made between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture on behalf of the Icelandic authorities on one hand, and the Confederation of Employers and the Federation of Trade Unions on the other hand, but the social partners commonly run the Education and Training Service Centre, which is to carry out the aims and principles of the agreement.

The objective of the service agreement with the Education and Training Service Centre is to provide opportunities for education and training for people that have little or no formal education beyond compulsory school, with the aim of improving their position on the labour market.

The aims and principles laid down in the agreement to attain this objective are the following:

1. To improve education and training for people on the labour market all over the country, who have little or no formal education beyond compulsory school. Information will be gathered about the target group, support provided for educational providers in defining the education and training needs of the group and educational opportunities developed according to the needs defined.

2. To develop methods for evaluation of non-formal and informal learning and learning outcomes in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the social partners and educational providers, and to develop methods for validation of individuals' competences. The Education and Training Service Centre will cooperate with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in policy making, in developing a system and testing its implementation for people on the labour market who have little or no formal education, as well as for professional employees. The aims and objectives of recognition of competences are to shorten learning cycles, improve individuals' position on the labour market, and to develop a general

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framework of skills and competences. The Education and Training Service Centre shall also develop a learner portfolio in cooperation with educational providers and the authorities, which builds on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which the agreement terms in general "competences".

3. To develop methods for educational and career counselling for people on the labour market and apply professional knowledge with guidance and instruction.

4. To develop methods in adult education and vocational education and training with special regard to the needs of the target group.

5. To define the needs for individually targeted guidance and counselling for people on the labour market, who have little formal education, and to structure the subject and implementation of service agreements between the Education and Training Service Centre and the lifelong learning centres around the country and to define methods for evaluation of the tasks carried out.

6. To develop material for teaching Icelandic as a foreign language targeted at immigrant workers and to train teachers and trainers in its use.

7. To define rules for funding from the state treasury regarding courses organised according to curricula validated by the Education and Training Service Centre and certified by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for evaluation of course credits at upper secondary level. The main partners in this task are the lifelong learning centres around the country and the educational centres run by various industrial sectors.

8. To gather and provide information and to implement other projects relevant to the main objective of the service agreement, which the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture might assign to the Education and Training Service Centre.

2.1.d) The historical background in which the issue of validation has been taken up in the current context can be traced back a decade or so, with increased emphasis on lifelong learning which has led to issues concerning recognition of learning and skills required outside the traditional school system.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture appointed a committee in 1998, which should formulate a policy on lifelong learning. The committee produced

a report on recommendations and proposals for increasing participation in lifelong learning. One of the main arguments presented in the report concerns the need for a general policy for recognition of non-formal and informal learning which would allow adults to have their knowledge and experience validated e.g. for re-entry into the school system, for shortening formal learning cycles or for progress on the labour market. The social partners have also been an important driving force behind the formulation of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, by making the issue visible in public.

By formalising the cooperation between these key players through the establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre, there was consensus for developing methods for validation, and a formal structure to implement the project.

As for other initiatives that have been practiced in Iceland, there are examples of two databases that have been developed at governmental level to aid in the recognition of former learning.

Unemployment agencies maintain a national database of job seekers. Information in the database includes information about an individual's formal education, work experience, skills and other competences, such as language skills, business skills, management experience, driver's licence, computer skills, artistic talent and practical experience in industrial trades. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Directorate of Labour are responsible for labour issues in Iceland. Local unemployment agencies operated by the Department of Labour are charged with the task of providing information on available jobs, education and training to those seeking employment.

The Educational Gateway is a web-based environment for responding to the needs of students, teachers, schools, parents and others connected with education. The Educational Gateway includes a sub-site that deals with the validation and assessment of prior learning, where it is possible to find guidelines for self assessing prior vocational education. To begin with the guidelines will primarily benefit those seeking either to certify foreign vocational education and training or certify the vocational education obtained in Iceland for use abroad[8].

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[8] Educational Gateway at www.menntagatt.is

2.1.e)   The role of the government in the validation process is to provide the legal framework and to develop the national curricula, which the evaluation will be built on.   Cooperation between all relevant stakeholders is considered of paramount importance in the development of the validation system.

Within the current legal framework, all recognition of non-formal and informal learning is measured against criteria of the national curricula, which makes the upper secondary schools important and necessary in the validation process. The Upper Secondary School Act from 1996 provides the legal framework for the National Curriculum Guidelines, which state that:

> "Schoolmasters at upper secondary level are responsible for assessing and validating the student's previous education – both formal or non-formal. Non-formal education, in this context refers to the knowledge or skills that the individual has acquired through means other than formal education, such as privately run courses or experience gathered on the job market." (The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: National Curriculum Guidelines 2004).

In reviewing previous studies, schools are expected to ascertain whether the studies can equal the necessary formal studies usually required and whether a student has met the preconditions for completing upper secondary level studies. If there is any doubt whether previous studies can be validated, the student has a right to undergo placement examinations, both in academic and vocational subjects, in order to demonstrate his actual skills and knowledge.

As for the role of the social partners in the professional recognition, it will be to provide training in their sectoral training centres and to work with the government towards establishing the validation procedure through the Education and Training Service Centre.

2.1.f)   The Education and Training Service Centre is the main operational system specifically established to put the legal framework into practice. The centre was established by a collaborative effort by the Federation of Trade Unions and the Confederation of Employers. By reaching an agreement with the government regarding the objective of setting up a system for recognition of competences, the centre had secured its grounds. In 2003 it started preparations for a system of

recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Developmental work took place from 2003 to 2006, with pilot projects and benchmarking activities. In 2006 work on developing the system itself was initiated, and is currently going on with continued pilot projects. The objective of the work is to have a fully operational system in place in 2009.

2.1.g) Evaluation of how the system has or has not worked is carried out simultaneously as the system is being developed, but there has not been an overall evaluation of the system, as it is still in its evolving stage. First evaluation of the pilot phase of the system will be ready at the end of 2007.

2.1.h) From the establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre the centre has promoted its activities in annual assemblies and by distributing material relating to the work in process. The target groups for promoting the objectives and activities of the centre in the beginning were mainly policy makers, upper secondary schools, the social partners, training centres, the regional lifelong learning centres as well as other educational providers outside the formal school system.

As the work has developed, awareness-raising activities are increasingly aimed at the end-users of the system. The sectoral training centres for the regulated professions have advertised and tried to track down individuals that have dropped out of school and didn't finish their formal training. Those individuals that have been working and gained professional experience but did not finish school, now have the chance to undergo the validation process and even be granted their journeyman's' certificate.

2.2. Governance and the role of government

2.2.a) List of 'who does what' in providing non-formal and informal learning and recognising such learning outcomes.

Table 3. List of 'who does what' in providing non-formal and informal learning and recognising such learning outcomes

Who?	What?
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	Development of national qualifications framework. Issues national curricula used for setting criteria.

	Finances recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
Upper secondary schools	Schools at upper secondary level are the formal recognising bodies in the process of validation under current legislation.
	Recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the objective of shortening learning cycles or providing credits into the school system is in the hands of schoolmasters of upper secondary schools.
	Upper secondary schools work according to national curricula guidelines and are responsible for validating skills and competences against the learning outcome criteria of the curricula.
Higher education institutions	Recognition of non-formal and informal learning for the purpose of providing access to higher education.
	Validation is in the hands of each higher education institution.
Education and Training Service Centre	Develops the system of recognition of competences.
	Helps develop the assessment procedure.
	Quality assurance.
	Seeks cooperation with relevant stakeholders.
Sectoral training centres	Awareness-raising for target group.
	Carry out assessment in cooperation with the upper secondary schools and the Education and Training Service Centre.
	Coordinate validation activities in each respective sector.
Regional lifelong learning centres	Provide guidance and counselling for the target group.
	Awareness-raising.
	Carry out assessment in cooperation with the upper secondary schools and the Education and Training Service Centre.
	Coordinate validation activities.
Social partners	Participation in policy making.
	Participation in working groups and committees in the development of the system for validation.

2.2.b)   List of 'who does what' in providing formal learning and recognising such learning outcomes for comparative purposes.

Table 4. List of 'who does what' in providing formal learning and recognising such learning outcomes

Who?	What?
Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.	Provides national qualifications framework.
	Issues national curricula guidelines.
	Provides certifications for formal education.
Upper secondary schools, universities.	Provide education.

	Organise educational provisions according to legal framework.
	Carry out assessment and evaluation according to legal framework.
	Issue certificates.

2.2.c) The role of the government in the practice of recognition will be a shared responsibility model, as the system is developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Education, encompassing the formal school system, and the social partners, including both employers and employees' federations. The Education and Training Service Centre was established by the social partners that sought collaboration with the government to push through the organisation and implementation of a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

2.2.d) There are no inter-ministerial approaches to the issue of recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

2.3. Resources

2.3.a) The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture provides financing for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The policy behind the financing is twofold, to shorten learning cycles wherever possible and to facilitate re-entry into the school system for individuals that have dropped out of school. The benefits are better distribution of finances in the school system and the possibility of providing education, which is oriented towards the needs of the individual.

The budget provided by the Ministry of Education goes to the Education and Training Service Centre to the development and implementation of a system for recognition of competences. As the system is still being developed, the financial contribution is used for that purpose. The budget for the first years was allocated for everything needed for the process, e.g. for office and staff cost. A detailed breakdown of the budget was not made. The annual budget 2004/2005 was 14 – 14.5 million ISK a year, which at the current exchange rate converts into about 160.000 Euros. This budget was purely used for first development of the system and benchmarking activities.

2.3.b)   The system is currently in its pilot stage. The annual budget was allocated for development work and benchmarking activities 2003-2005 and on development and piloting 2006-2007, rather than actual implementation or validation procedures apart from pilot projects.

2.3.c)   The assessment and recognition process carried out so far is paid out of the budget provided by the government. During the initial development there was a discussion as to whether to let the individuals pay part of the assessment, but the idea was dismissed.

2.3.d)   There are no assessment centres apart from the Education and Training Service Centre that is working with the Ministry in developing the system for recognition of competences. The first task of the Centre, which was founded by the social partners, was to establish cooperation with relevant stakeholders, such as the upper secondary vocational schools, the regional lifelong learning centres, the sectoral training centres and professional associations. Because of current legal framework, the actual evaluation is implemented by assessors from the upper secondary schools. Cooperation with guidance counsellors in the assessment process is considered to be of great importance, and they have an active role in the assessment procedure.

2.4. Others

2.4.a)   Schools at upper secondary level are important in the process of validation. According to current legislation, recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the objective of shortening learning cycles or providing credits into the school system is in the hands of schoolmasters of upper secondary schools. They work according to the national curricula guidelines and are the main actor in validating skills and competences against the learning outcome criteria of the curricula.

The same goes for the higher education level. According to the legal framework for higher education, the access requirements are matriculation examination or equivalent. However, it is up to each university or institution to evaluate studies from other educational institutions, or to evaluate individuals' maturity, knowledge and competences for the purpose of admission, as long as the admission criteria complies with the quality criteria set by the National Qualifications

Framework for higher education. Admission on the grounds of validation of competences is not very common in the purely academic universities (4% of first year students 2002 and 2003), but quite frequent in some higher education institutions providing vocational education and training at tertiary level, such as in the University of Education (23% of first year students 2002 and 2003[9]).

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[9] Icelandic National Audit Office (2004)

3. Description of technical arrangements

3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework

3.1.a)   The original term that is officially used in Iceland for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is "Raunfaernimat". If translated back into English, this literally means "recognition of real competences". The implication of the term refers to the fact that apart from competences acquired in school, the individual has actual, real skills and competences, which are unique to his or her experience and have been accumulated through all kinds of training and real-life experience, be it in school, on the job or in informal settings.

3.1.b)   Recognition of non-formal and informal learning could benefit from a new National Qualifications Framework, which is currently being considered. The formal connection will be legalised with a forthcoming act on upper secondary education. The objective of a clearer linkage is to shorten learning cycles and focus on learning outcomes.

3.1.c)   The regulated professions are particularly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The need was initially identified with regard to the regulated professions, and the link can be facilitated with the new National Qualifications Framework for upper secondary level studies, which is currently being considered.

3.1.d)   Professional and vocational recognition is currently more linked to the developing validation system than academic qualification. Evaluation is more objective when it comes to vocational and professional skills and can be carried out with different assessment methods, whereas academic recognition is more subjective, and is mainly carried out with exams.

3.1.e)   Iceland is considering the benefits a National Qualification Framework system that is based on the guidelines of the European Qualifications Framework. The development of a system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning takes place in parallel, and the new NQF, could incorporate measures for facilitating validation. An NQF has already been developed for higher education level.

3.1.f)   No imminent threats have been identified with regard to recognition of non-formal and informal learning. However, some concerns were expressed on behalf of the formal school system in the beginning of the development work, such as that recognition of non-formal and informal learning could possibly undermine the value of formal vocational education and training.

All validation carried out so far has been targeted for specific groups selected as subject of the pilot projects. Specific criteria and arrangements for each pilot project have been discussed with all relevant stakeholders before starting the validation process. So in a sense, all barriers have been overcome by agreement with stakeholders before making the decision to carry out the validation.

3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

3.2.a)   The formal academic credit arrangement is based on the National Curriculum Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and implemented by the upper secondary schools, both academic and vocational. As for the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning which is being developed, credit validation is based on the same guidelines and assessment carried out according to national curricula.

During the pilot phase, a few individuals have gone through the assessment procedure with the objective of re-entering the school system and shortening their learning cycles after having worked in the sectors in question. The available data concerns participants in the sectoral pilot projects carried out. So far, of the 176 individuals that have completed the assessment procedure, a number of people have done so with the objective of counting credits towards entrance into the formal school system. Approximate numbers involve 12 individuals in the social care sectors who were evaluated against the criteria used for the line of study for assistant nurses; 11 individuals in the field of telecommunication electricity who entered studies at a vocational college; 16 individuals accumulated enough credits to be transferred to the mechanical line of study; 31 were evaluated in the same way for transfer into various lines of study in the construction sector and 14 individuals were assessed for entrance into the automotive lines of study.

3.2.b)   The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for credit arrangements and development of a credit system for non-formal and informal learning. Schools at upper secondary level are responsible for carrying out any assessment for credit accumulation. When it comes to recognition of non-formal and informal learning, the credit evaluation is based on decisions of the upper secondary schools according to current legislation (Upper Secondary School Act from 1996), but implementation of the validation system, which is being developed, will be in the hands of collaborative structures established by the social partners.

3.2.c)   At upper secondary level, credits are counted on the basis of the national curricula guidelines. When assessing the value of non-formal and informal learning, the upper secondary schools play a vital part in the process, as they are the evaluation bodies according to law. This means that all validation must be carried out in collaboration with the upper secondary school system.

At tertiary level, evaluated credits are counted according to the ECTS arrangement (European Credit Transfer System).

3.2.d)   The main incentive for individuals participating in the validation process is to gain credits to be able to finish their studies with focus on learning outcomes and their personal level of achievement. Individual empowerment, and the assurance of being able to achieve recognition, has also been identified as important incentives for participants. The incentive for credit providers is to shorten learning cycles and provide learning in a more cost-effective way.

A possible disincentive, which has been identified by stakeholders, is the possibility that individuals of the target group lack the self-esteem to embark on the recognition process.

3.2.e)   Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in the vocational education and training system through the apprentice system which requires students to alternate between school and work until the required amount of credits and work time has been attained.

3.2.f)   Criteria for integration of non-formal and informal learning in higher education are up to each higher education institution and based on the ECTS system. The main lines of study which count internship, or require some form of professional experience as credits towards a degree, are education for teachers at the University of Education and the University of Iceland, education and training for medical doctors and nurses at the University of Iceland, the diploma in journalism, guidance counselling education and the Masters degree in public administration (MPA) in the University of Iceland.

3.3. Assessment methods and procedures

The system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is currently under development, so all recognition of competences, which has been carried out, is a part of the pilot phase. The assessment methods and procedures described are therefore part of that process. A system for recognition of competences is expected to be fully operational in 2009.

3.3.a)   All assessment procedures carried out to date are a part of the pilot phase of the system of validation of competences that is under development. The Education and Training Service Centre is responsible for helping the authorities in the development of assessment procedures such as development of processes, quality assurance and training of assessors, whereas the actual validation is carried out by the upper secondary schools which are the legal evaluating bodies according to law. Similar approaches are used for all sectors during the pilot phase, and the timeframe allocated for the assessment is flexible depending on the time needed for the pilot projects of each sector.

3.3.b) Following is a description of the assessment arrangements, how assessment is carried out and what procedures and methods are used.

One of the most important things of the assessment method is that a guidance counsellor takes part all through the procedure, guiding the individual in identifying his or her real competences and recording them. For people with extensive work experience, recording one's real skills and competences can be a difficult task. Professional guidance is needed for analysing the situation and recognising real

competences. Final assessment or recognition is in the hands of various stakeholders, e.g. schools, educational providers and companies.

The validation procedure is divided into five steps:

1. **Information and feedback.**

   The individual should be able to take an informed decision regarding participation and to know his or her position all through the process. Before the validation process begins it is important to present its goals, the role of the assessor, possible results and the right of the individual in the process. Information provision and feedback are very important parts of the whole procedure.

2. **Documentation**

   The second step is for the individual to look back and document the experience and skills that the individual has acquired through previous jobs, studies and leisure time activities. The individual collects relevant information, e.g. from former employers, from job descriptions, diplomas, certificates, samples and projects. It is important to provide access to a counsellor during this process.

3. **Analysis**

   The third step is analysis of the individual's documented competences. This is done through an interview between the individual and the counsellor to analyse what are the real competences that the individual has recorded. The same counsellor follows the individual through these steps, to reach a common conclusion about:

   a) whether the competences are enough for the validation to take place.

   b) whether the competences fulfil the relevant criteria, in part or not at all. When the matching is clear, the validation process can be concluded by going straight to step 5. However, if some parts of the recorded experience need further confirmation, the procedure goes on through step 4. In this case, a joint decision must be made regarding:

c) how the individual can best demonstrate his or her skills, e.g. with confirmation from an employer, samples of projects or practical work, with an interview, or with an oral or written confirmation.

d) timeframe for the validation of real competences.

4. **Confirmation**

Once it is clear what competences are eligible for validation a confirmation process is needed. Confirmation of competences is done according to a confirmation plan accepted by the assessor and the counsellor. The competences are measured against standardised skills criteria. Any special needs of the individuals should be considered, e.g. flexible timeframe, using visual examples, technical confirmation, etc, all in the best interest of the individual and his or her best abilities to demonstrate his or her competences. For this purpose, alternative evaluation methods are often needed. Finally the assessor informs the individual of the conclusion of the validation. If the outcome fulfils the requirements made (e.g. if 50% achievement to acquire 5 as a grade is the prescribed requirement for the module) the individual receives a valid document to confirm validation of that part. If the outcome is unsatisfactory, the possibility is discussed whether the individual wants to acquire the necessary components that are missing, e.g. through education or on-the-job training, or to choose to repeat the confirmation process.

5. **Recognition of competences**

A study module is considered validated when it has been documented officially in the name of the individual as passed. It is important that the validation is accepted by relevant stakeholders and that they are well informed about the process of recognition of competences.

3.3.c) There is some overlap in management of academic standards, professional standards and occupational standards in Iceland. The management of academic standards is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and implementation in the hands of educational institutions. In addition to the Ministry's authority, professional and occupational standards are set by occupational councils, which are made up of representatives of stakeholders for each occupational group. The occupational

standards operate for all vocational education and training according to the Upper Secondary School Act from 1996.

3.3.d)   The issue has not been raised regarding how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes.

3.3.e)   The Education and Training Service Centre is responsible for developing methods of quality assurance of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The quality criteria are based on the European Qualifications Framework as well as on results from the pilot phase of the validation system.

3.4. Others

3.4.a)   The system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is currently under development, so all recognition of competences that has been carried out is a part of the pilot phase. The assessment methods and procedures described therefore belong to the development and pilot procedure. A working group has been set up by the Ministry of Education, which includes representatives of relevant stakeholders that participate in devising the system in collaboration with the Education and Training Service Centre according to results from the developmental phase and the pilot projects. A system for recognition of competences is estimated to be fully operational in 2009.

4. Stakeholder behaviour

4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders

4.1.a)   Following are stakeholder grids for the system for recognition of competences that is currently under development in Iceland.

Table 5. Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Provider of non-formal learning	Recogniser of non-formal learning	Types of recognition received	Regulator, quality assurance	Main users
All providers of non-formal learning	The schools (upper secondary vocational schools) are the recognising body.	Recognition needed for entrance into the school system, shorter learning cycles, or progress in the work place.	Education and Training Service Centre is the regulating body for the system of recognition of competences, taking care of quality assurance and ties with industry and school system.	All participants in non-formal learning wishing to achieve recognition of competences

Table 6. Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Types of skills gained by informal learning	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of recognition received	Regulatory body	Main user(s) (Specify)
All skills achieved by informal learning (e.g. ICT skills by using computers, literacy by reading books, numeracy, business protocol, etc.)	The schools (upper secondary vocational schools) are the recognising body.	Depending on the skills presented.	Education and Training Service Centre is the regulating body for the system of recognition of competences, taking care of quality assurance and ties with industry and school system.	All participants wishing to achieve recognition of competences achieved by informal learning.

4.2. Access

4.2.a)   Eligibility criteria for going through the recognition process have not been set, as the validation process is still under development. Those that have participated so far are individuals who are working in particular sectors that have been selected as target sectors for pilot projects, without having finished their professional studies. For higher education, the eligibility criteria for validation of competences are up to each higher education institution. Decisions are case specific and taken according to each individual case.

4.2.b)   Upper-secondary schools and higher education institutions can grant access for individuals that do not possess the necessary formal qualifications. According the Upper Secondary School Act from 1996 and the Higher Education Act from 2006, educational institutions can use recognition of non-formal and informal learning as admission policy for specific lines of study. If they decide to do so, criteria and evaluation is up to each educational institution. The validation system which is currently being developed tackles this from the other end, and aims at facilitating re-entry into the school system for people in the labour market and shortening learning cycles in general.

4.2.c)   The system for recognition of competences has not been publicised much, as it is still in its pilot phase. However, specific events and pilot projects have been advertised to raise awareness among the target groups.

Promotion of the ideology behind validation of competences, aimed at policy makers and practitioners, started in January 2003 with a seminar organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. In continuation, the Education and Training Service Centre initiated benchmarking activities and first development. This work was presented in the organisation's annual journal and annual assembly in 2004. As the work progressed, a brochure detailing the methodology, criteria and validation process was issued in 2006.

In order to reach the end-users, targeted advertisements have been put in newspapers to try to track down specific target groups, e.g. people, working in specific sectors, that have not finished their education or have dropped out. The goal of this promotion was to motivate these individuals to participate in the pilot project regarding recognition of competences in the sectors in question. As for promotion aimed at policy makers and practitioners in the field of education and training, the project has been promoted in conferences and seminars as well as in print, mainly in the annual journal published by the Education and Training Service Centre.

All information about the validation system can be accessed directly at the Education and Training Service Centre's office and webpage[10]. In addition, the collaborating partners can provide most information regarding the pilot process. These partners, located all around the country, are the nine regional lifelong learning

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[10] The webpage of the Education and Training Service Centre is at www.frae.is

centres, the vocational upper secondary schools, Mímir lifelong learning centre in the capital owned by the Federation of Trade Unions, and the sectoral training centres for the regulated professions.

4.3. Participation

4.3.a)   Around 176 individuals have completed the process of recognition of competences in 12 pilot projects, to date. The information available about those participants relate to their sector and occupation, but not to gender, age or societal status. Following is a list of the individuals that have completed the process, together with information about their occupation:

- 12 individuals at the psychiatric ward of Landspitali-University Hospital
- 22 unemployed people in the southwest peninsula of Iceland
- 11 individuals working as telecommunications electricians
- 10 immigrants working in various posts at Landspitali-University Hospital
- 19 employees in the banking sector
- 5 individuals in the hotel and catering sector
- 16 individuals in mechanics
- 60 individuals in projects in various branches of the construction and electrical sectors
- 21 individuals in the automotive sector

For the purpose of providing more detailed information about the development process of the system for recognition of competences and the participants in the process (organisations and individuals), here is a more detailed account of the twelve pilot projects, sectors and participants.

1. Psychiatric Ward of the Landspitali University Hospital – social care study line, 2004.

This was a joint project between the Education and Training Service Centre, Efling Trade Union, Landspitali University Hospital and Mímir lifelong learning centre, which was the project leader. The Education and Training Service Centre took care of coordination, registration of skills and counselling in the process of recognition. The aim of the project was to validate skills of specialised employees of

the psychiatric ward for entrance into the social care studies at Mímir lifelong education centre. Twelve individuals participated in the project, with the objective of validating their competences for shortening their learning cycle in social care. The participants had extensive educational backgrounds, which made this project special in many ways. After the validation process, the participants all finished the social care studies at Mímir lifelong learning centre and a part of the group went on to formal studies as assistant nurses at Ármúli Comprehensive College.

2. *Unemployed people in the Sudurnes region, 2004*.

Cooperation between the Sudurnes Regional Lifelong Learning Centre that was the project leader, the Education and Training Service Centre and the Sudurnes Comprehensive College. The Education and Training Service Centre took care of coordination, registration of skills and counselling in the process of recognition. The goal was to develop educational opportunities for unemployed people in the region, offer them a chance to undergo validation with the aim of strengthening their position on the labour market. Guidance counsellors met thirty individuals at the beginning of the validation process and then divided the group in two parts by age. Ten persons in the older group went on to write their skills portfolio with a counsellor from the lifelong learning centre and went on to complete the validation, whereas the younger group of 20 individuals worked with the college in exploring their options for further studies.

3. *Telecommunications electricians, 2004-2005*

Cooperation project involving Reykjavík Technical College, the Education and Training Service Centre, Starfsafl education and training fund, and Efling Trade Union and Siminn Telecom, but the last two led the project, which was part of collective agreement between the company and the trade union. The Education and Training Service Centre took care of coordination, registration of skills and counselling in the process of recognition. The aim of the project was to offer the chance of tailor-made on-the-job training for all workers at Síminn Telecom company, which would improve their work skills as well as provide opportunity for entering technical studies in their field. The validation process was applied to evaluate the knowledge and professional experience acquired by each employee. Twenty individuals showed an interest in the project, of which 11 sent the necessary material

for validation, 7 of those finished evaluation for 33 courses for a total of 72 course units and went on to study at Reykjavík Technical College.

4. Human resources at a multicultural workplace, 2005-2006

Project of Landspitali University Hospital, Efling Trade Union and the Education and Training Service Centre, which was supported with a grant from the Vocational Training Fund of the Directorate of Labour. The role of the Education and Training Service Centre in this project was to provide professional advice and prepare the methodology for analysis, the skills criteria, self evaluation forms and questionnaires to analyse the existing knowledge. This was a pilot project for groups of unskilled workers at the hospital that could serve in transferring knowledge and competences within the workplace and between workplaces. Individuals of different skills, backgrounds, from different countries and cultures were grouped together. The project started with 25 individuals, 10 of them were active during the process but only 7 handed in their portfolio as final result.

The objective of the project was threefold:

a.   to identify human resources and knowledge at the workplace and devise methods that facilitates knowledge sharing within the place of work

b.   to strengthen cooperation, communication and work culture between workers and enable them to develop and grow as employees

c.   to improve the service provided by using existing human resources and skills

5. Occupational Council for Pedagogy and Sport, 2005-2006

Project partners were the Education and Training Service Centre, the Occupational Council for Pedagogy and Sports, Borgarholtsskóli Comprehensive College and Mímir lifelong Learning Centre. The aim of the project was to identify skills criteria for validation leading to shorter study programme pathways in Pre-School Education and Primary and Lower Secondary Education and to develop a checklist based on curricula and course descriptions, which could be used for self-evaluation for individuals in specific courses and as preparation for validation interviews.

6. VOW (Value of work), 2005-2007

A Leonardo da Vinci pilot project coordinated by the Education and Training Service Centre. The European partners are SYNTHESIS Centre for Research and

Education Ltd. from Cyprus, The Danish Institute for Educational Training of Vocational Teachers, Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, The City of Malmö Centre of Validation and NIACE from the UK. Icelandic partners are Kaupthing bank, Landsbankinn bank, Glitnir bank, the Federaton of Icelandic Bank Employees, Kópavogur College and the Ministry of Education. The objective of the project is to develop methodology to facilitate recognition of competences in the workplace and also to apply the methodology to other sectors. Participation of relevant stakeholders is important to the project. The target group is bank employees who have not finished upper secondary education but have constantly updated their skills and competences through non-formal education and training. Nineteen employees participated and finished the pilot process, which included compiling a personal portfolio, self-evaluation, interviews, supervisor assessment and real skills performance.

7. *Training in the food and catering sector, 2006-2007*

Cooperation between the Educational Council of the Hotel and Catering Sectors and the Education and Training Service Centre, which takes care of specialised tasks and coordination of knowledge created during the project in order to facilitate knowledge transference to other sectors. General criteria and methods were identified and validation tools developed that could be applied for shortening individuals' vocational education and training cycles by using study portfolios. Quality criteria were also developed. Five individuals completed their portfolios. The Educational Council of the Hotel and Catering Sectors coordinated the project and took responsibility for occupational specific decisions.

8. *Sudurnes Construction, 2006*

Partners with the Education and Training Service Centre in the project were the Sudurnes Comprehensive College and the Sudurnes Regional Lifelong Learning Centre that was also the project leader. The Education and Training Service Centre took care of coordination, methodology, training of assessors and counselling in the process of recognition. The project aimed at motivating low-skilled workers in the construction sector to re-enter their studies and finish their journeyman's examination. Nineteen individuals participated in the interview and validation process, 13 of those went on to complete their technical studies in vocational colleges, 9 of them in carpentry, 2 in plumbing, 1 in the metal profession and 1 in house painting.

9. *"Good to Great" – Mechanics, 2005 – 2006*

A cooperation project between Idan-sectoral training centres, Borgarholtsskóli comprehensive College, Mímir lifelong learning centre which led the project and the Education and Training Service Centre which was responsible for coordination, methodology, training of assessors and counselling in the process of recognition. The aim of the project was to reach those individuals that have dropped out of mechanical studies, look at their position and motivate them to finish their technical studies. The process includes:

- identifying the size of the group and reach relevant individuals
- analyse the position of individuals and provide targeted counselling
- open pathways for these individuals to finish their studies

The project received over 40 enquiries whereof 22 showed real interest; 18 of those attended counselling sessions with a guidance counsellor of which 16 participated in validation in 104 courses that resulted in 241 evaluated course units.

10. *CREAC – Leonardo da Vinci project, 2006*

The CREAC-project (Cooperation for the Recognition, Evaluation and Accreditation of Competences) is a Leonardo da Vinci supported pilot project that aims at devising and testing methodology and processes for recognition of competences. European partners are Oviedo Chamber of Commerce which is the project leader, ENTENTE UK, Chambre de Métiers de Vaucluse of France and the Labour County Board of Södermanland in Sweden. The objective of the project is to develop validation of occupational skills in the field of economics, business and marketing.

11. *" Good to Great" – Construction, 2007*

Cooperation between Reykjavík Technical College, Idan sectoral training centres that is the project leader and the Education and Training Service Centre which took care of coordination, methodology, training of assessors and counselling in the process of recognition. The aim of the project was to reach those individuals that have dropped out of carpentry studies, assess their position and provide them with the opportunity of finishing their technical studies. The project received 93 enquiries and 84 came to the presentation meeting. Applications for participation in the validation process were 70, whereof 31 were selected for further recognition of competences. A total of 893 course units were evaluated in the projects. The group then enrolled in

studies at Reykjavík Technical College that devised a study plan in order to meet the requirements of the group with individual-based study schedules. The participants aim at finishing their journeyman's examination either in January 2008 or after the spring semester.

12. *"Good to Great" – Automotive industry, 2007*

Cooperation between Borgarholtsskóli Comprehensive College, Idan sectoral training centres, Mímir lifelong learning centre and the Education and Training Service Centre which took care of coordination, methodology, training of assessors and counselling in the process of recognition. The aim of the project was to reach those individuals that dropped out of their studies, find ways to evaluate the skills they have acquired on the labour market and encourage them to finish their technical study path. Enquiries were 50 and around the same number of people attended the presentation meeting. Applications were 36, whereof 22 were selected for further work. The group consists of 14 individuals that want to study car mechanics, 3 who want to learn car spraypainting and 4 interested in autobody building.

4.3.b) No survey is available regarding any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

4.3.c) Judging from the pilot projects carried out so far, evidence indicates that recognition of non-formal and informal learning can work as a pathway for individuals to get on the "learning leads to learning" and "training leads to training" track. However, this is more oriented towards individuals rather than to specific groups.

Definition of a "disadvantaged group" in this respect constitutes people that have dropped out of school or immigrants that are not working in their specific field, but does not necessarily have to do with socio-economic status.

4.4. Incentives and disincentives

4.4.a) There is evidence that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can function as a pathway to further studies or to shorten study periods. Of the twelve pilot projects that have been carried out, a number of individuals went back to school to finish their studies, e.g. individuals that had been working in the construction sector

without possessing the formal qualifications, or people that had been working in health care but lacked training courses, went on to become assistant nurses.

4.4.b)   No detailed case studies have been carried out as to what extent the actual length of studies was shortened by the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

4.4.c)   Written data is not available regarding return of investments for stakeholders for recognising non-formal and informal learning, or evidence that recognition of competences contributes to democracy and citizenship or other positive social outcomes, as such surveys have not been carried out formally.

4.4.d)   No fiscal incentives for employers related to the practice of recognition of non-formal and informal learning have been organised.

4.4.e)   The government has made statements about promoting lifelong learning for all and providing study opportunities for everyone. In this context, the government has made references to recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the sense of creating new opportunities and ensuring access for all individuals into the education system on their own terms. The policy behind this statement is to ensure equal opportunities for participation in the knowledge economy for people that have for some reason dropped out of school and wish to update their skills at any time.

4.4.f)   There is no apparent evidence of stigmatisation of qualifications issued by the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as opposed to qualifications from formal education. In Iceland, there is a firm belief in individual initiative and personal drive and autonomy. Individuals are encouraged to take responsibility of their own education and all education and training is considered to be positive. Another reason for this is the strong tradition for work and work ethics in Icelandic society. Young people are encouraged to work from an early age to gain experience from various sectors, and all validation of such experience is considered positive in the labour market. As the system of recognition of competences is developed, stigmatisation might or might not evolve, but is not apparent at the moment.

4.4.g) As the system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is still being developed, no specific schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements. However, some companies have been involved in pilot projects carried out to date, such as Siminn Telecom, various banks, and some departments of the University Hospital.

4.5. Others

4.5.a) The tripartite collaboration of the social partners with the education system, first with general discussions through various forums, through EDUCATE-Iceland, and then with the establishment of the Education and Training Service Centre is the result of collective agreements to tackle the issue of validation. This collaborative agreement is the main driving force behind institutional and technical arrangements concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

4.5.b) All relevant characteristics of stakeholder information are addressed in above components.

5. Case studies on benefits and barriers

A system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning is currently being developed in Iceland. The system has so far been piloted in a number of pilot projects and the available studies on benefits and barriers can be derived from evaluation of those projects carried out by the implementing body. Apart from that, validation has been carried out according to the policy of each educational institution, at upper secondary and tertiary levels. Following is an account of benefits and barriers identified so far. When no work has been carried out, either informally or formally, indication thereof is provided with the relevant category.

5.1. Economic benefits

5.1.a)   Benefits regarding shortening the formal education process and reducing direct costs of learning and opportunity costs for individuals are the main reasons for the policy of the Ministry of Education as far as financing recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The policy behind the financing is twofold, to shorten learning cycles wherever possible and to facilitate re-entry into the school system for individuals that have dropped out of school, based on evaluation of the real position of individuals within the school system.

During the current pilot phase of the system for validation of competences, a number of individuals that have undergone the validation process have continued into the vocational lines within the formal school system.

5.1.b)   There are no case studies to prove that by increasing visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, potential benefits for future economic gains will be enhanced.

5.1.c)   Case studies have not been carried out to support the view, that by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competences, allocation of human capital in organisations can be improved.

5.1.d)   There are no case studies that show that occupational mobility in particular can be increased with the purpose of reducing skills shortages or skills mismatch.

5.1.e)   Active use of potential labour force, in particular older workers and immigrants, has been used to aid economic growth, even though there are no specific case studies to support it, as these provisions are rather new.

5.1.f)   No case studies have been conducted to prove that specific measures to improve productivity of the current labour force supports economic growth.

5.2. Educational benefits

5.2.a)   The idea of altering the basic concept of the educational system from "terminal education" to "lifelong learning" has been developing since the late 1990s, but the situation has not been studied in particular.

5.2.b)   One of the main reasons behind the policy of developing a validation system is to be able to provide flexible personalised learning pathways, particularly with a view to preventing drop-out as well as facilitating re-entry into the school system on individual terms. The benefits of providing flexible and shortened learning pathways, have been supported with a lowered number of drop-out from upper secondary school. However, it is clear that increased provision of personalised learning pathways is one of several factors in the fight against early drop-out, even though it has proved to be important.

5.2.c)   Increasing the completion rates of upper secondary qualifications has been identified as one of the main factors in raising educational attainment levels. The fight against the relatively high percentage of drop-out from the school system started systematically in the late 1990s with identification of determining factors. Studies showed that those were in a sense different for Iceland from other countries, mainly due to the shortage of labour force. The benefits of the systematic cooperation between the school system and the social partners has resulted in a decreased number of drop-outs, which contributes to overall higher education attainment levels.

5.2.d)   A report on the development of education provisions and number of students at higher education level, issued by the National Audit Office in 2004, shows that

recognition of non-formal and informal learning has had its impact on admission rates at tertiary level as shown in table:

Table 7. Percentage of first-year student holding a matriculation examination, 2002 and 2003

Higher education institution	Number of first-year students	Matriculation exam or equivalent	Admitted on the basis of general knowledge
University of Iceland	5990	96%	4%
University of Akureyri	964	64%	36%
University of Education	1076	77%	23%
Technical University of Iceland	448	92%	8%
Iceland Academy of Arts	223	95%	5%
University of Reykjavík	1175	96%	4%
Bifrost School of Business	165	99%	1%
Hvanneyri Agricultural University	62	92%	8%
Hólar College	83	31%	69%

Source: Icelandic National Audit Office 2004

The table shows that admission on the basis of recognition of general knowledge and competences is quite high in the vocational higher education than in the academic ones, which is supported by the fact that participation rates of adult learners is also higher in the vocational universities. Even though the table supports the benefits of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to tertiary participation rates of adult learners, it is also necessary to remember the fact that general participation in higher education has also increased tremendously, and that the higher education level was under rapid development at the time, variables which have to be considered.

5.2.e)   There is a tradition in Iceland for flexible access to the teaching profession on the grounds of skills and competences. The main reason for this is shortage of teachers at primary and secondary levels of education. Therefore, the tendency is rather to reverse that development and to hire professional teachers whenever possible and to decrease the number of untrained teachers.

5.3. Social benefits

5.3.a)   Specific initiatives or studies have not been implemented for building social institutions to facilitate smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education, and for increasing socio-cultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included.

5.3.b)   Studies have not been made regarding whether validation of competences leads to better societal values (e.g. promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health and lower criminal rates, etc.

5.3.c)   There are no case studies to show that validation of competences enhances flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g. between VET and HE and from FE to HE, etc).

5.3.d)   There have not been specific provisions for building a stepping stone for prisoners to be re-integrated into society on the grounds of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. However, prisoners are offered to use the validation channels within the upper secondary schools to register for courses while they serve their time.

5.4. Personal benefits

5.4.a)   The benefits of empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn have not been studied systematically.

5.4.b)   Targeted provisions for developing the aspirations of those who have 'dropped out' to resume learning and to complete a qualification have been made through collaborative structures between education providers and the social partners. Case studies to carry out evaluation of the results have not been carried out.

5.4.c)   There are no studies regarding the issue of reducing stigma of qualifications associated with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

5.5. Others

5.5.a)   There are no known case studies of other benefits or barriers.

6. Conclusion

6.a)   The national goals set by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning are most closely associated with, are the following:

- To decrease the number of drop-out from upper secondary schools
- To facilitate re-entry into the school system on an individual basis
- To increase participation of the general public in education and training
- To improve access to education and training opportunities for the general public connected with the "Lifelong learning for all" strategy
- To increase national economic growth by enhancing the educational level
- To encourage people in ongoing participation in lifelong learning

6.b)   In order to put in operation the policy of "recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning" in Iceland, a number of steps are foreseen. The short-term strategy is to continue the development of the validation system, emphasising quality control and well organised implementation.

The mid-term strategy is to enhance cooperation with partners in the project, ensure consensus among all relevant stakeholders and keep them informed all through the process. This includes the formal school system, first the upper secondary schools, the regional lifelong learning centres, the sectoral training centres and professional associations, and in continuation, the higher education institutions.

The long-term strategy is following through the changes that the system will inevitably have and ensure smooth implementation and consistency with the overall policy of the educational authorities and the environment. Keeping the consensus among stakeholders and ensuring coherence with the educational and political arenas will probably be the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in this respect.

6.c)   The policy of lifelong learning for all is consistent with the overall policy of the educational authorities in Iceland, as the emphasis is on equal opportunities for everyone to acquire education at any time in their life. However, the notion of recognising all learning, non-formal and informal, is relatively recent. Education has traditionally been organised within the public sector, whereas organisation of lifelong

learning has in large part been organised by private institutions. In order to reach coherent results, quality criteria will be an important factor in guiding non-formal education providers, assessment centres and the authorities.

6.d)   The "Lifelong Learning for All" strategy is important at post-compulsory education level in Iceland. Lifelong learning is a global concept, covering all education that individuals receive in the course of their lives. All through post-compulsory education, from upper secondary level through adult education, effort is made to give everyone a choice of subjects and forms of instruction in accordance with their needs and wishes. The objective is to prepare individuals for life and work in a democratic society by offering them suitable opportunities to learn and develop individually. According to general educational policy, the main purpose of lifelong learning is to encourage equality of opportunity for education and training among individuals without regard to location, age, gender, occupation or previous education.

6.e)   In order to realise the "Open Learning Society" scenario, i.e. the society that provides learning opportunities to people any time in their life and gives value to any type of learning outcomes, a number of factors are important.

Education must be accessible for everyone, regardless of gender, age, race and socio-economic status, and when talking about education, it means both lifelong and life wide educational opportunities. Importance must be given to motivational factors and tackle hindrances. It is necessary to keep in mind that individuals differ and traditional education and methods do not suit everyone. People have different abilities and should be given an opportunity to realise their potential, be it in formal educational settings, non-formal education or on-the-job training. In this respect, the open learning society which represents the knowledge economy of our times, should stand for individualised learning, making use of new ideas for learning environment as well as of use of IT in learning, which enables people to acquire information and knowledge on an instant-demand basis anywhere. Basic skills such as literacy, numeracy, communication and life skills must not be forgotten in order to make it possible for each and everyone to realise their individual potential and capabilities. Last but not least, it is necessary to give value to all learning outcomes through recognition of non-formal and informal education.

Annex 1

1. Tables for the whole population

1.1. Introduction to the statistical tables

Distribution of financial resources invested in recognition of non-formal and informal learning is twofold. As the recognition process is legally the responsibility of each upper secondary school and higher education institution, the financial resources are a part of the budget of each school or institution, and not kept aside as separate budget. As no specific financial resources have been earmarked for this purpose, it is not possible to distinguish how much is actually used for recognition of non-formal and informal learning specifically within these institutions, as it is part of their defined role.

Similar is true for the participation rates. As recognition of non-formal and informal learning for shortening learning cycles or gaining access to formal education has until recently been in the hands of each educational institution, numbers are not readily available. In light of the emphasis of the present report, participation numbers refer to participation in the assessment procedure for validation of competences, carried out by the Education and Training Service Centre.

It is only from 2004, when the Education and Training Service Centre started the process of developing and piloting a system for validation of competences, that it became possible to distinguish the financial resources used for this purpose. Due to the fact that this report deals specifically with validation provisions, all statistics regarding budget and distribution of participants are for 2004-2006, which corresponds to the time which the system for validation of competences has been under development, as explained in the text of the report.

1.2.   Financial resources invested in recognition of non formal and informal learning.

Table W1 –Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning by source of funds			
Source of funds	**Year**	**Expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning**	**% of GDP**
Public	2004	14 m.	0,0000150
Public	2005	14,5 m.	0,0000142
Public	2006	15 m.	0,0000129
Total		43,5 m.	0,0000421

Sources: Education and Training Service Centre and Statistics Iceland

Table W2 – Total public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning

Year	Expenditure	% of all public expenditure	% of GDP
2004	14 m.	0,0000143	0,0000150
2005	14,5 m.	0,0000126	0,0000142
2006	15 m.	0,0000109	0,0000129

Sources: Education and Training Service Centre and Statistics Iceland

Table W3 – Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total public educational expenditure

Year	Level of public expenditure on education	Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning (%)	Public expenditure on all other educational activities (%)
2004	69,494 m.	0,201	99,799
2005	77,892 m.	0,208	99,792
2006	88,243 m.	0,216	99,784

Sources: Education and Training Service Centre and Statistics Iceland

Table W4 – Destination of public spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning

	Public expenditure (in local currency)	%
Buildings	-	-
Staff	-	-
Assessment, jury	-	-
Incentives (Ad campaigns etc)	-	-
Total	43,5 m.	100

Source: Education and Training Service Centre

Notes to Table W4:
The destination of public expenditure on recognition of non-formal and informal learning is not defined according to these categories.

Table W5 – Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning by level of government

Level of government	Expenditure (in local currency)	Year	%
Central	14 m.	2004	100
Central	14,5 m.	2005	100
Central	15 m.	2006	100
Regional	0		
Cities	0		

Total	43,5 m		100 each year

Source: Education and Training Service Centre

Notes to Table W5:
All public expenditure allocated to recognition of non-formal and informal learning comes from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, i.e. from centralised funding.

Table W6 – Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total educational expenditure (whether public or not)		
Year	**Expenditure on education**	**Expenditure on recognition (%)**	**Expenditure on all other educational activities (%)**
2004	76,394 m.	0,00018	99,99982
2005	85,430 m.	0,00017	99,99983
2006	96,528 m.	0,00016	99,99984

Sources: Education and Training Service Centre and Statistics Iceland

Table W7 – Destination of total spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning		
	Expenditure (in local currency)	**%**
Buildings	-	-
Staff	-	-
Assessment, jury	-	-
Incentives (Ad campaigns etc)	-	-
Total	*43,5 m.*	*100*

Source: Education and Training Service Centre

Notes to Table W7:
The destination of total spending on recognition of non-formal and informal learning is not defined according to these categories.

1.4. Characteristics of participants in the recognition process of non formal and informal learning

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Table W14 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by type of subject Year: 2004-2006		
Type of learning outcomes recognised	**Number of participants**	**%**
Assistant nurses	12	7
General vocational education programmes	22	13
Telecommunication electricians	11	6
Care sector – various	10	6
Banking	19	10
Hotel and catering	5	3
Mechanics	16	9
Construction and electrical sectors	60	34
Automotive sector	21	12
Total	**176**	**100**

Table W15 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by assessment method Year: 2004-2006

Assessment method	Frequency	%
Interview and competence evaluation with a guidance counsellor	111	63
Interviews with a guidance counsellor and evaluation carried out with competence portfolios	36	20
Mix of methods, carried out with a guidance counsellor; interviews, self-evaluation, competence portfolios, supervisor assessment and on-the-job real examples	19	11
Not specified in pilot project outcome	10	6
Total	**176**	**100**

Source: Education and Training Service Centre

Table W16 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by reason for undertaking a recognition process – Year: 2004-2006

Reason	Frequency	%
Personal reasons (better social status, personal development)	11	6
Education related reasons (going back to study, completing a qualification)	123	70
Job related reasons (better wages, job promotion, mapping out job-related competences)	29	17
Other undefined reasons	13	7
Total	**176**	**100**

Source: Education and Training Service Centre

Table W17 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by labour force status Year 2004-2006

Labour force status	Frequency of participants	Frequency in the LF group (16-64 outside ET)	Frequency in the LF group (16-64)	Frequency in the LF group (0-100)
Employed (total)	155	*not defined*	*not defined*	*not defined*
-- Part time				
-- Full time				
--Temporary				
--Permanent				
Unemployed	22	*not defined*	*not defined*	*not defined*
Not in the labour force, not retired	0			
Retired	0			
Total	**176**	**-**	**-**	**-**

Source: Education and Training Service Centre

Table W18 – Distribution of employed participants in the recognition process by occupational status – Year: 2004-2006				
Occupation (ISCO)	**Frequency of participants**	**Frequency in the ISCO group (16-64 outside ET)**	**Frequency in the ISCO group (16-64)**	**Frequency in the ISCO group (0-100)**
1. Legislators, senior officials and managers	0			
2. Professionals	0			
3. Technicians and associate professionals	0			
4. Clerks	19			
5. Service workers and shop and market sales workers	5			
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	0			
7. Craft and related trades workers	108			
8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers	0			
9. Elementary occupations	44			
0. Armed forces	0			
Total	**176**	*Total employed (16-64 outside ET)*	*Total employed (16-64)*	*Total employed (0-100)*

Source: Education and Training Service Centre and Statistics Iceland

Table W19 – Distribution of employed participants in the recognition process by industry Year: 2004-2006				
Industry (NACE)	**Frequency of participants**	**Frequency in the NACE group (16-64 outside ET)**	**Frequency in the NACE group (16-64)**	**Frequency in the NACE group (0-100)**
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing (A-B)	0			
Mining and quarrying (C)	0			
Manufacturing (D)	21			
Electricity, gas and water supply (E)	27			
Construction (F)	60			
Wholesale and retail trade, repairs (G)	0			
Hotels and restaurants (H)	5			
Transport, storage and communication (I)				
Financial intermediation (J)	19			
Real estate, renting and business activities (K)	0			
Public administration (L)	0			
Other services (M-Q)	44			
Total	**176**	*Total employed (16-64 outside ET)*	*Total employed (16-64)*	*Total employed (0-100)*

Source: Education and Training Service Centre and Statistics Iceland

Table W23 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by aggregated place of birth				
Place of Birth	**Frequency of participants**	**Frequency in the group (16-64 outside ET)**	**Frequency in the group (16-64)**	**Frequency in the group (0-100)**
National	167			
Foreigner	10			
Total	**176**			
Source: Education and Training Service Centre				

1.7. Recognition providers

W31 – Characteristics of recognition providers, delivering a formal recognition (qualification, certificate, credits, etc.) for formal non-formal and informal learning outcomes			
Type of firms	**Frequency of firms**	**Turnover**	**Market Share (%)**
Private firms involved in			
Of which: . with one person			
. for profit			
. not for profit			
Public institutions (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture)	1	N.A.	100
Trade Unions		N.A.	
Others (Please specify)			
Total	1	N.A.	100

6. Tables for future projections

6.1. Estimated proportion (%) of provision of formal and non-formal learning programmes at post-secondary education and training

Table FP1 – Proportion of provision of formal and non-formal learning programmes					
	10 years ago	*5 years ago*	*Now*	*5 years from now*	*10 years from now*
Formal learning programmes (public)	*90*	*85*	*80*	*78*	*70*
Non-formal learning programmes (private)	*10*	*15*	*20*	*22*	*30*
	100%	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*

6.2. Estimated proportion (%) of participation in formal and non-formal learning

Table FP2 – Proportion of participation in formal and non-formal learning programmes					
	10 years ago	*5 years ago*	*Now*	*5 years from now*	*10 years from now*
Participation in formal learning programmes	*70*	*60*	*60*	*55*	*50*
Participation in non-formal learning programmes	*30*	*40*	*40*	*45*	*50*
	100%	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*

6.3. Estimated proportion (%) of recognition of formal and non-formal learning

Table FP3 – Proportion of recognition of learning outcomes from formal and non-formal/informal learning opportunities					
	10 years ago	*5 years ago*	*Now*	*5 years from now*	*10 years from now*
Recognition of outcomes from formal learning opportunities	98	92	85	80	75
Recognition of outcomes from non-formal and informal learning opportunities	2	8	15	20	25
	100%	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*

Annex 2

2.1. Tables from Education at a Glance 2005

2.1.a – Participation in formal and/or non-formal education and training by educational attainment and gender

2.1.b – Participation in formal and/or non-formal and/or informal education and training, by educational attainment and gender

2.1.c - Participation of the labour force in non-formal job-related continuing education and training, by level of educational attainment

2.1.d - Participation in non-formal job-related continuing education and training, by employment status

2.1.e - Participation in non-formal job-related continuing education and training for the labour force, by age and gender

2.1.f - Participation in non-formal job-related continuing education and training, for the employed, by level of education attainment and industry

2.1.g - Participation in non-formal job-related continuing education and training for the employed, by occupation group

2.2. Tables from Education at a Glance 2006

2.2.a – Participant rate and expected number of hours in non-formal job-related education and training by level of educational attainment

2.2.b – Expected number of hours in non-formal job-related education and training for all levels of educational attainment, by gender

2.2.c – Expected number of hours in non-formal job-related education and training, by level of educational attainment

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