



Ministry of Education and Science and Centre for Adult Education

**ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTING A SYSTEM FOR VALIDATION
OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN THE FORMER
YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Elaborated in cooperation with ETF

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List of abbreviations

AG	Advisory Group
CAE	Centre for Adult Education
CEDFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESA	Employment Services Agency
ETF	European Training Foundation
ET2020	Education and Training 2020 targets
EU	European Union
HR	Human Resources
LLL	Lifelong learning
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MQF	Macedonian Qualifications Framework
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

At the 34th meeting of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group (AG) on 3 February 2016, the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) was successfully referenced to the EQF. The country's EQF referencing report contains a chapter dedicated to Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL), which succinctly presents the place of VNFIL in the policy framework and the few relevant experiences developing in the country. The EQF AG 34 explicitly asked the country to report on progress in regard to VNFIL in the revised final version of the EQF Referencing report due upon inclusion of responses to the comments expressed by the EQF AG.

As a candidate for EU entry, the country should align policies, legislation and systems with the *acquis communautaire* of the EU. As well as embracing extensive modernisation and reform of the education system, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) has already taken concrete steps towards this objective, including the implementation of various European initiatives - including Europass mobility measures and development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

EU lifelong learning policies aspire to create a culture of learning with the objectives of promoting active citizenship and developing knowledge, skills and competences in order to enable learners to adapt to the demands of the new knowledge-based society and participate fully in social and economic life. The policies are intended to enhance employability, personal fulfilment and social inclusion by providing the people of Europe with essential tools for self-development and to help them to play an active part in modern society, including skills needed in the field of new technologies.

Co-operation between member states of the European Union has led to the development of reference tools to help learners and support national reforms by setting out recommendations and common principles including key competences for learners, quality assurance in higher education and VET, quality of mobility, lifelong guidance, the recognition of qualifications from abroad and the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). Under the Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning of 20 December 2012, Member States and other participating countries have agreed to put in place by 2018 validation arrangements allowing individuals to obtain a qualification or parts of a qualification on the basis of validated knowledge, skills and competences¹ and to report on these developments to the EQF Advisory Group EQF.

This Roadmap is intended to contribute to the implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on VNFIL, and to the wider national objectives of effective lifelong learning and deployment of relevant and suitable VNFIL services for the population. It

¹ Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, 20 December 2012

is intended to contribute to national reporting on the country's progress towards reaching the 2018 milestone according to the VNFIL Council Recommendation (2012), identifying priorities in line with national objectives and specificities, the roles, mandates and responsibilities of different actors involved and key milestones by which progress may be assessed.

The Roadmap has been prepared within the context of a country-led initiative of the Centre for Adult Education and the Ministry of Education and Science, supported by the European Training Foundation (ETF), building upon previous work undertaken in 2014/15 on development of a concept paper and action plan to support the development of non-formal adult education and informal learning in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia². This version of the roadmap reflects the comments and conclusions from the two workshops (5-6/10/2015 and 11-12/04/2016) with VNFIL stakeholders and international experts, organised with ETF support in Skopje. The first version of the Roadmap discussed at the second workshop (11-12/04/2016) was amended and the phasing and timeplan for VNFIL preparation and implementation were substantially restructured.

The recommendations set out in this concept paper included development of a system for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) as an incentive to encourage participation in non-formal learning. VNFIL is considered important as a means of upgrading the skills and qualifications of the country's citizens in line with the needs of economic and social development, and of creating improved opportunities for citizens in the labour market.

This Roadmap sets out a pathway for the country to develop and implement VNFIL policy and approaches that enable achievements in non-formal education and informal learning to be recognised, valued by users and certificated within the context of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It also provides a description of the concrete steps that the country will make towards meeting the 2018 target. The country is aware that creating the policies, institutional arrangements, systems and methodologies is a first step; and that making VNFIL a reality for all who would benefit from it will be a long-term process which will require sustained support in the years following the country's report to the EQF AG (2018).

1.2 Non-Formal and Informal Learning and the Validation concept

In the context of lifelong learning policies, it is common to distinguish between 'formal', 'non-formal' and 'informal' learning. These concepts, set out in the European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning³ have played a central part in EU developments in education and training in recent years. The mainstream programmes and qualifications offered within the education system by schools, colleges and

² Concept Paper for Non-Formal Adult Education and Informal Learning in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', elaborated in cooperation with the ETF, Ministry of Education and Science and the Centre for Adult Education, Skopje, March 2015. Adopted by the Minister of Education and Science (Oct 2015).

³ Commission Memorandum of 30 October 2000 on lifelong learning [SEC (2000) 1832 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

universities at primary, secondary and higher education level, including academic, general and vocational provision are regarded as “Formal Learning” whilst:

- Non-formal learning refers to planned learning activities involving some sort of learning support that are organised outside the formal education system, including most adult education and training provision (such as work-related training courses, online or distance learning or community based courses organised by civil society organisations);
- Informal learning refers to learning that is not organised or structured including skills and knowledge acquired either intentionally or unintentionally by individuals through life or work experience including experiential and self-learning.

An increasing emphasis on qualifications in national VET systems has led to - and reinforced - an already emerging trend towards defining qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and this has done much to open the way towards being able to recognise achievements gained through non-formal and informal learning as well as through participation in formal learning programmes. Assessment procedures for VET qualifications increasingly include arrangements for ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ (RPL), which enable candidates to have their prior learning (or achievements) validated to enable the award either of whole qualifications or credits towards the award of qualifications. The VNFIL concept creates opportunities for those following non-traditional learning routes to gain qualifications, which were previously only attainable by sequential progression through the education system.

While obtaining qualifications through pathways of the formal education system is important, lifelong and lifewide development for individual careers and choices implies alternative ways of learning and certificating learning outcomes. VNFIL implies a broader approach that goes beyond the awarding of credits towards qualifications of the formal education and training system. The full range of an individual’s knowledge, skills and competences goes far beyond what is learned at school, university or any other education or training institution and includes everything learned or developed in the course of work or life experiences. The possibility of obtaining official validation of such attainments reinforces the crucial importance to workforce development of in-company training and continuing professional development within a lifelong learning context and unlocks new opportunities for individual learners.

VNFIL initiatives in different European countries have included a variety of approaches to assessment and certification involving different procedures and levels of complexity although the underlying purpose, principles are methods are very often similar. The first edition of the European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning (2009)⁴ defined VNFIL as:

⁴ European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2009

‘The confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competencies) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification’.

The latest edition (2015)⁵ provides an extended definition as follows:

‘Validation is, first, about making visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals. This learning frequently takes place outside formal education and training – at home, in the workplace or through leisure time-activities – and is frequently overlooked and ignored. Validation is, second, about attributing value to the learning of individuals, irrespective of the context in which this learning took place. Going through validation helps a learner to ‘exchange’ the outcomes non-formal and informal learning for future learning or employment opportunities. The process must generate trust, notably by demonstrating that requirements of reliability, validity and quality assurance have been met. These elements of visibility and value will always have to be taken into account when designing validation arrangements, although in different ways and combinations’.

The Validation Guidelines (2015) note that VNFIL processes and procedures typically involve four stages – the IDENTIFICATION of the individual’s competences (i.e. learning outcomes) acquired through non-formal and informal learning, the DOCUMENTATION of the individual’s learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning together with supporting evidence, the ASSESSMENT of the individual’s learning outcomes through an evaluation of the evidence presented, and CERTIFICATION confirming the individual’s achievement of the learning outcomes in question.

However it should not be assumed that all candidates entering a VNFIL process will necessarily follow it all the way to certification. For some, the profiling and documenting of their skills and knowledge will be sufficient to meet the objective of presenting themselves more effectively to prospective employers. However the official recognition of achievements through certification is considered especially important in a society that has traditionally placed considerable weight on the possession of official documents and certificates to determine eligibility for employment or social benefits.

2 Aims and vision

2.1 Factors underlining the need for VNFIL

It is increasingly widely recognised in the country that the validation of learning outcomes - knowledge, skills and competences - acquired through non-formal and

⁵ European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP reference series 104 Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

informal learning can play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility, as well as increasing motivation for lifelong learning.

Factors underlining the country's need for VNFIL include

- A labour market in which there are high normal expectations and formal requirements for all employees to have the appropriate qualifications of the formal education system, without which the country's citizens find it extremely difficult to obtain employment;
- Need to improve the visibility and transparency of skills and competences of the labour force: employers complain of a lack of information about the actual skills and competences of job applicants;
- Need to support returning migrants to make visible and value the wide range of skills that they have acquired when working abroad;
- Low adult education participation rates in comparison with most EU countries, with very limited opportunities for employees to take part in continuing VET or continuing professional development (CPD);
- A lack of appropriate mechanisms for certificating skills acquired after leaving the formal education system;
- Legal and regulatory restricting those without completed basic education from qualifying for unemployment benefits or entering VET programmes;
- A large non-formal (and non-legal) "grey" economy in which people lacking formal qualifications and working outside the legally regulated labour market are able to acquire skills, which need to be valued and validated to support easier integration of this workforce in the formal economy.
- The population with low educational attainment and "early school leavers" needs motivating mechanisms – such as validation of skills - to return to lifelong learning and fight social and economic exclusion. Among the most severely affected are women, population in disadvantaged circumstances, youth.
- Social, cultural and economic barriers to the participation of low skilled adults in accelerated formal primary education programmes and an absence of recognised certification for non-formal "basic skills" programmes focused on literacy, numeracy and employability skills.

The country needs a better educated, trained and qualified workforce to meet its long-term economic and social development needs. It also needs to provide increased opportunities for its citizens to realise their ambitions to the limits of their abilities. There is a large part of the population that is denied this opportunity because of a lack of formal qualifications, despite having skills, knowledge and competences acquired through participation in non-formal learning programmes and through experiential learning acquired through employment and in life. Without recognised certificates and qualifications, they have little chance either of fulfilling their potential or of contributing to the country's development to the best of their potential.

These needs are already reflected in the emphasis now being placed on boosting adult learning opportunities in the country. However it is clear that creating learning

opportunities is not enough. Greater weight needs to be placed on policies acknowledging that many of the country's citizens have already acquired learning that is not certificated through formal qualifications but, if recognised, could create meet industry's needs for a better skilled and qualified workforce. In some cases the skills and competences in question were acquired abroad, in other cases by working in the non-formal (so-called 'grey' economy), and in others through their participation in community or family activities.

The continuing presence in the population of a large minority of poorly educated and low-skilled adults, especially in rural communities and among socially disadvantaged groups, whose lack of formal qualifications and basic skills contributes to their disadvantaged status in the labour market underlines the need to create new opportunities for adults to obtain official recognition of their employment-relevant achievements.

The introduction of the NQF is a potential catalyst for development of VNFIL. The NQF has the vision to be inclusive, encompassing all types of qualifications including those from the non-formal system and resulting from informal learning pathways. Further NQF development should promote emergence of new types of qualifications supporting development of basic skills, job-related and employability skills, extension of the skills and competences of qualified workers and continuing professional development.

2.2 Aims of validation of non-formal and informal learning

The main aim of the VNFIL system to be established is to enable every citizen who wishes to become better qualified to obtain a qualification (either vocational or general) by meeting the required standards and following valid, efficient and adapted procedures and methods. The latter should be applied rigorously to ensure that quality is not compromised.

Validation is intended to:

- Empower citizens by helping those with skills acquired through experiential learning to prove their value in the labour market and in society more generally;
- Contribute to a better matching between the supply and demand for vocational qualifications by providing enhanced access to certification;
- Support mobility of workers within the labour force, whilst enhancing their employability, career development and motivation to learn. Enhancing opportunities for both employed and self-employed persons;
- Satisfy the needs of employers, providing support to human resources development policies aimed at raising skill levels and enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises;

- Provide inclusiveness by widening access to the formal labour market for people disadvantaged because of a lack of formal qualifications and a consequent precarious work status;
- Raise the profile of alternative learning pathways leading to the acquisition of qualifications within lifelong learning;
- Contribute towards a more creative, inclusive and open society.

2.3 A Vision for VNFIL

The country's vision for adult learning and VNFIL emphasises its contribution to the economy, to society and to individuals. It should:

- Satisfy the needs and aspirations of individuals as well as meeting labour market demands and the perspectives of the education system;
- Embrace a range of individual and social purposes to help ensure an open, creative and inclusive society as well as meeting labour market needs. It should support both lifelong learning for persons of all ages and life-wide learning to meet a wide range of different interests and needs;
- Empower individuals through a learner-centred approach to develop the knowledge skills, and competences necessary to realise their aspirations and ambitions.

Such a vision goes far beyond the narrow and rather utilitarian focus of much of the current debate about adult learning which tends to focus on compensatory second chance primary and secondary education for early school leavers and vocational skills provision to meet labour market needs. It would involve a transformational change in attitudes to adult learning, recognising that qualifications of the formal education system are not the end of the story and that there is a need to recognise that people acquire most of their learning through employment and life.

This will require a shift towards a qualifications system that is more responsive to demands from the economy and the labour market, open to new qualifications including those that are not available through traditional education and training programmes and which meet the many and varied needs of different users.

2.4 Implications

VNFIL will provide adults with a means of proving their achievements to prospective employers as well as enabling them to transfer and progress within education and training. To achieve this, further investment will be required in the development of **standards** at different levels of achievement (i.e. qualification levels) in order to provide an objective basis for validating the prior achievements of individuals. There is also a need for a **credit system** that enables qualifications to be achieved on a step-by-step basis (recognising that individuals participating in a VNFIL process will often be more easily able to achieve part rather than full qualifications) and allowing the transfer of credits between different qualifications. New qualifications – and different

kinds of qualification/certificate – will be required to meet the full range of adult learning needs.

One of the principal reasons for scepticism about VNFIL is concern about **quality**. Traditional quality assurance mechanisms were based mainly on learning processes rather than outcomes although recent developments in the introduction of outcomes-based qualification standards has led to an approach in which there is a greater concern with the standardisation of assessment processes and results. A VNFIL system – as well as the introduction of more diverse learning processes (which may include distance learning and e-learning in particular) – should involve the development of appropriate quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the necessary quality and consistency in the awarding of certificates resulting from validation processes.

With appropriate quality assurance safeguards in place, the certificates awarded through VNFIL processes should be accorded **parity of esteem** with those awarded through the formal education system. Otherwise the value of the investment would be questionable. The notion that qualifications gained through both formal and non-formal learning are of equal worth should be promoted by all stakeholders, together with the principle that all types of learner (whether students, employed or unemployed adults, members of vulnerable groups etc.) are equally valued in society.

Above all it will be vital for the VNFIL system to be seen to deliver high quality assessment leading to certification highly valued both in the labour market and in the world of education and training. For this reason, it will be important to ensure that certain key principles are followed, including the following:

- The credibility of any certification system depends on fair and accurate assessment and effective quality assurance. The quality of VNFIL certification will depend on the quality of the assessment leading to its award.
- VNFIL assessment is the process of evaluating evidence of a candidate's achievements (knowledge, understanding and skills) against certification requirements. VNFIL assessment should be objective and *criterion-referenced*, with assessment judgements made against objective standards rather than based on subjective comparisons of the performance of different candidates. For an achievement to be validated, a sufficient *quantity* of appropriate *forms (or types)* of evidence should be gathered and evaluated. Occupational standards and the standards embodied in outcomes-based criterion-referenced vocational qualifications provide the benchmarks against which achievements should be judged. Also, additional concrete assessment standards with specific measurable criteria need to be developed.

Everyone should have access to *fair assessment*. VNFIL assessment should be designed to *optimise access* through a *flexible approach* that maximises the opportunities available to each candidate to demonstrate the necessary evidence through whatever appropriate means is available to the individual.

The individual is at the centre of VNFIL. As the benefits of VNFIL become widely known in the longer term, it is expected that strong individual demand will emerge,

with individuals actively looking for VNFIL opportunities. However, to create that demand, the system and its benefits should be widely and actively promoted. Extensive **awareness raising** and widely available **guidance services** will be a necessary pre-condition for the effective establishment of a working VNFIL system, and institutions providing VNFIL should take steps to make all relevant information readily available in the broader public domain. This will include basic information about VNFIL as an access route to qualifications and learning programmes, information about how to apply, who to contact for further information and support, as well as information about time lines for the VNFIL process and fees.

3 Situational and Gap analysis

Despite a long tradition of adult education and training provision dating back to Yugoslav times, the country's adult education and training system was adversely affected by budget constraints and instability in 1990s and early 2000s. As a result, opportunities for adult education participation and actual adult education participation rates are low comparison with the EU 28. The lack of a lifelong learning culture and a consequent qualifications deficit in the adult population are considered to be detrimental to economic development, a factor that exacerbates social exclusion and a handicap for individuals who are held back by a lack of relevant qualifications from the formal education system.

The Concept Paper for Non-Formal Adult Education and Informal Learning prepared in 2015 included an up-to-date analysis of the current situation in the country. The following paragraphs build on and extend the analysis in the context of the stated aim of introducing a VNFIL system within the EU-related 2018 deadline.

3.1 Place of VNFIL in the current Policy Framework

The current policy and legal framework includes provisions on the development of VNFIL. They are formulated in different laws, strategies, and in the Concept Paper on Non-formal Adult Education and Informal Learning in the Republic of Macedonia. The main legal and strategic documents⁶ containing references to VNFIL are presented in the Table below, showing that the country has opened-up to the concept of VNFIL and its specificities. However, the specific legislative-regulatory framework is not adjusted to allow generalised implementation of VNFIL services to their full potential.

Overview of the legal and strategic documents containing references to VNFIL⁷

Document	Approval / adoption year	Description
Law on Adult Education	2008	The Law arranges the organization, structure, financing and management of the adult education system as a part of a unified educational system of the Republic of Macedonia. Article 23 of the Law states that adults can demonstrate the

⁶ Information on the numbers and the dates of publishing the Official Gazettes of the Republic of Macedonia with the laws and other relevant documents on adult education is provided in the sub-chapter 2.3 Adult education.

⁷ Source: EQF Referencing Report, 11/01/2016, pg 99

		<p>knowledge, skills and abilities they have acquired, regardless of the way this acquisition is done, by passing exams.</p> <p>The exams are organized and delivered by the adult education provider which delivers the programme for gaining knowledge, skills and abilities, except the State matura exam, School matura exam and the Final exam in the secondary education.</p>
Law on NQF	2013	<p>Article 3 of the Law on NQF states that one of principles of the NQF is building a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Among the goals of the NQF, the Law stipulates: "To indicate the transfer and progression (horizontally and vertically) through and within all types of education and training (formal, non-formal and informal)".</p>
Adult Education Strategy	2010	<p>One of the activities for realization of the strategic goals of the Strategy is Development of system for recognition of knowledge, skills and competences.</p>
Strategy for Development of Vocational Education and Training in a Lifelong Learning Context 2013-2020	2013	<p>The VET strategy is structured in 4 key priorities, in which development of VNFIL finds a visible place.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Under the first priority (VET in the function of strengthening social cohesion and social inclusion): objective A7 focuses on "Establishing a system for VNFIL". Key milestones: by 2015 (feasibility and options of a VNFIL system); by 2018 (key mechanisms and procedures in place) and by 2020 (generalization of implementation). 2. Under the second priority (Attractive VET), the Strategy emphasizes the importance of VNFIL, in particular in objective B2 – "Building diversified and flexible pathways for learning and professional guidance".
National Programme for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2005 – 2015	2005	<p>A special chapter of this Programme is titled "Strategy for Adult Education in the Republic of Macedonia in the Context of Lifelong Learning" with 6 recommendations. One of the recommendations is Development of a system for recognition of prior learning.</p>
Concept Paper on Primary Education for Adults	2015	<p>In the Guidelines on implementation of the Concept paper, one of the proposed actions is to Develop a system of mechanisms and tools for verification (assessment) of previously acquired knowledge.</p>
Concept Paper on Non-formal Education and Informal Learning for Adults	2015	<p>VNFIL is mentioned throughout the Concept paper. The roadmap supporting implementation of the Concept paper includes an action aimed at developing and implementing a system for VNFIL by the deadline of 2018, under the priority objective: "Ensure that there is open and equal access to non-formal adult education for all".</p> <p>Acknowledging the importance of this objective, and the need to take effective measures in line with the VNFIL Recommendation (2012), the Centre for Adult Education continues cooperation with the European Training Foundation on developing a roadmap for implementing VNFIL, and on the procedural and methodological aspects of VNFIL. This VNFIL Roadmap is currently in elaboration.</p>

Further development and amendment of the legislation and bylaws will follow with the objective to support generalization of practices of VNFIL.

However an examination of definitions used in national legislation found that, although the definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning provided in the Laws on Adult Education (2008) and the NQF (2013) were broadly compatible with the official EU definitions, the definitions are not applied consistently across the whole body of the country's education legislation. For example the NQF Law implies that it is the issuing of a publicly recognised qualification certificate itself rather than the learning process followed that makes the learning (or education) formal rather than non-formal. This definition can be revisited as the country initiates reflections on further fine-tuning of NQF notions. One of the recommendations in the concept paper was to review and harmonise definitions in legal texts – in line with internationally accepted concepts.

3.2 Overview of Adult Learning Policy Provision

The government has sought to develop and implement a policy and legislative framework for adult education. The first strategic Programme for Adult Education was developed in 2006, setting out objectives for tackling the illiteracy problem and providing basic education, providing education to increase life opportunities and increase social cohesion, and ensuring that adults are able to acquire skills and knowledge that equip them to meet labour market needs and cope with social change. A specific Law on Adult Education was enacted in 2008 with the aim of providing for the first time a more comprehensive legal framework to support lifelong learning.

Under the provisions of the Law, a Council for Adult Education was established to provide overall strategic direction for development of adult education and a specialised institution - the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) – began its work in 2008. The CAE is expected to play a key role in developing and implementing the country's VNFIL system. Since its establishment the CAE has focused much of its efforts on measures to improve quality, including the verification of non-formal adult education programmes and support to the skills development of teachers through a national programme for training of trainers of adults.

Non-formal adult learning programmes may be verified by the CAE if they are:

- Short-term in duration;
- Based on occupational standards and an approved curriculum;
- Delivered in structured training conditions with both classroom-based and practical elements by organised providers within a regulated context including authorisation, quality assurance etc.;
- Certificated - which may provide a basis for inclusion in the NQF.

Programmes verified by the CAE are not part of the formal education system. These programmes are of short-term duration and open to all categories of adults over 15 years of age and the general public. Short courses for unemployed people organised at initiative of by the Employment Service Agency (ESA), for example, must be verified

by the CAE and the providers must be verified by the MoES. Non-formal education is not something that is easily standardised or regulated. However there is a need for robust quality assurance procedures providing a useful and commensurate degree of regulation if the learning outcomes are to be certificated (e.g. through VNFIL) and recognised within the NQF.

Verified programmes typically lead to:

- Qualifications/partial qualifications; or
- Knowledge, skills and competences related to social and occupational activities;

Personal development programmes (without assessment or national certificate) such as arts and leisure provision are not verified.

Verified programmes leading to certification may be included in the NQF and the inventory and analysis of existing qualifications produced within the country's EQF referencing process includes certificates from adult education programmes verified by the CAE.

Programmes for adults at higher education level should be regarded as an important aspect of the country's non-formal adult education system and some adult education courses offered by higher education institutions (up to NQF level 5) have been verified by the CAE. Non-formal higher education provision for adults includes:

- Non-formal courses open to all (e.g. language courses)
- Preparatory courses for higher education entrance examinations
- Professionally-oriented upgrading of already achieved qualifications
- Tailor-made provision for industry.

Non-formal programmes are widely provided by public education institutions – many vocational schools are providers of adult education courses and both public and private universities provide education and training for adults but there are also many other stakeholders providing adult education programmes. Significant providers include:

- Schools (primary, secondary/vocational);
- Higher education institutions;
- Private education and training providers (e.g. language schools, training centres of the Chamber of Crafts, Chamber of Commerce etc.);
- Open civic universities for lifelong learning (formerly known as workers' universities);
- Municipalities
- NGOs;
- Employers.

The Employment Services Agency (ESA) provides financial support for verified providers implementing training programmes organised in the frame of the Operational Plan for Active Labour Measures.

3.3 Opportunities and challenges for VNFIL

Strategic

The current state of the country's progress towards meeting the ET2020 benchmark of adult education participation remains significantly below the EU28 average but broadly in line with other countries in the region. The European Commission's 2013 Progress Report⁸ stated that *"The country continued to improve its performance in the areas where EU level benchmarks were set for 2020. In 2012, the country performed better than the EU average as regards early school leaving, and reduced the gap with the EU in other areas such as adult participation in lifelong learning and tertiary educational attainment."* Although serious problems remain to be addressed, there is increasing recognition that investment in human capital development is important for the country, and there is a growing will to eliminate remaining barriers that are holding back development in this area.

Meeting diverse needs

Non-formal education provision is developed by providers in ways that reflect a wide diversity of needs. Examples of the different types of adult learning provision that are currently available include:

- Basic education, literacy and basic skills provision for low-skilled adults and vulnerable groups;
- Job-related and re-qualification training for the unemployed;
- Employer-based training;
- Continuing professional development;
- Arts, music, leisure and personal fulfilment learning;
- Civic, democracy and community-based training.

Because it exists outside the confines of the formal education system, non-formal education can provide flexible responses to identified needs. Although there is no obligation for providers to submit their programmes for CAE verification, many adult education providers assume that verified programmes will be regarded by learners as more attractive than non-verified programmes because of a possibility that the certificates awarded will enjoy greater recognition. However verified adult education programmes still represent only a small proportion of the non-formal adult education programmes and courses on offer. For example basic skills and literacy courses organised by NGOs in many parts of the country are mostly not regulated by the CAE.

In practice the diversity of adult education programmes means that they can lead to very different types of outcomes. Adult learning needs are diverse and complex and require innovative and flexible solutions. Individuals often have very personal reasons

⁸ Commission Staff Working Document: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2013 Progress Report, Brussels, 16.10.2013 SWD(2013) 413 Final

for wanting to learn and very different opportunities for learning which can require the provision of different modes of learning at times to suit the individual according to each person's learning plan.

With the introduction of a VNFIL system, it may be assumed that demand will be stimulated for recognised certification to be provided for a wider range of adult learning provision than currently included in the NQF. In the future access to a qualification via VNFIL access should be reflected in the design and development of the certification, as well as in the authorisation (accreditation) of the qualification.

Businesses and VNFIL

Although employer-based adult training provision is mainly confined to larger companies, the Economic Chamber has suggested that it is growing. Currently about a quarter of the programmes verified by the CAE are employer-based. Employer-provided training is most common in the public sector (e.g. for teachers or health service employees)) and in large companies which have personnel and/or human resource development departments (e.g. industrial companies or banks) that have dedicated staff training centres. As in most countries, employees of SMEs have much lower opportunities to participate in organised learning and their learning is more likely to be entirely informal, acquired on-the-job. Support to employee training and development is among the services offered to companies by the Economic Chamber.

The non-recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the formal education system – often through organised in-company training combined with on-the-job learning – is a barrier to the employment and career opportunities of many individual adults as well as being an unnecessary waste of human resources for an economy that needs to increase its supply of skilled labour to achieve sustainable economic growth. The absence of validation mechanisms is damaging both to the achievement of individual aspirations and to the interests of the economy. It is understood that the Economic Chamber and many employers regard the lack of visibility on the actual skills and competences of job seekers is a major problem for companies recruiting staff.

There is considerable evidence that VNFIL will be welcomed by the main business organisations in the country and by many employers. One of the implications of this is that employer-based training and development is likely to become more and more linked with vocational qualifications provision and that the latter should increasingly take account of continuing training and development needs (including work-based learning) as well as those of the initial (school-based) vocational education provision. This has implications both for the development of qualifications provision and for company human resources development policies.

3.4 The problem of limited Adult Education Provision

Despite a long-standing adult education tradition, a lack of resources, reduced motivation of some employers to invest in the training and development of their employees and a weak emerging private sector in education and training adversely affected the participation of the adult population in lifelong learning.

A significant proportion of the population is still low-skilled and poorly qualified. This is especially a problem among the unemployed and among people from vulnerable and marginalised social groups. Legislation on primary and secondary education provides only for 'second chance' opportunities for adults to complete primary school qualifications, without which they are gravely disadvantaged in the labour market. VNFIL is not the solution for adults without education and skills – for such groups targeted training courses are the response.

Despite the obvious need, there is a shortage of providers in many areas. Adult education provision would be a lot more accessible if it were not so localised. It is not only a question of numbers, but also of how to support development of providers that are able to provide courses across the country. Although an important role in adult education was foreseen for municipalities in the Adult Education Law, most of them have not risen to challenges including that of taking over jurisdiction of the open civic universities for lifelong learning. Several of the latter have ceased working either because the appropriate municipality failed to take responsibility for them or they failed to transform themselves into private institutions, the only alternative survival route open to them. It may be concluded that the infrastructure of adult education providers and related institutions needs to be strengthened if VNFIL opportunities are to be made available in all parts of the country and for all social groups.

Guidance – essential for effective VNFIL

The absence of access to guidance and support could be an important inhibiting factor for those who could benefit from VNFIL and the NFAE Concept Paper recommended the development of relevant information and guidance services in all parts of the country. Without on-demand guidance, coupled with counselling and support, many adults are unaware of their full range of learning needs and of the opportunities open to them to participate in adult education activities. Better educated people are more likely to be users of adult education courses than those who are less well educated, mainly because returning to an education or training institution environment in later life often seems threatening to those with low levels of educational achievement.

This raises the question of how best to target and attract learners from all walks of life. The question of how to get through to low skilled people or vulnerable groups in remote communities is a much harder problem that needs to be tackled in more inventive ways, utilising local and community information channels.

Standards and assessment

VET qualification standards are increasingly based on occupational standards which provide a clear link with labour market needs as well as providing a basis for defining the learning outcomes and standards for VET qualifications. However occupational standards are still not available at all levels of VET qualification and there is a general lack of qualification standards in the country.

Standards provide a basis for judging whether defined learning outcomes have been met, thus facilitating validation on the basis of an objective evaluation of evidence presented by the candidate. Without standards the opportunities for VNFIL are greatly

limited, and it is considered that VNFIL can only be introduced where such standards exist.

The introduction of VNFIL also has implications for assessment systems. In this regard it should be noted that there is still no provision for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) or achievement in assessments for qualifications of the formal education system and the NQF. Still, there are some initial activities that are going on, concerning this issue. The programs for primary education for adults, based on key competences are in the process of development, and criteria for assessment of previous knowledge, skills and competences are in progress. Without standards, it will be extremely difficult either to recognise prior learning in qualifications assessments and this will make it harder to implement VNFIL. Without RPL, the only way for VNFIL candidates to be assessed will be by taking the same tests and examinations that are taken by regular students in the education and training system. This might be an option but it would not be a cost effective solution in all cases and could even deter potential VNFIL candidates from coming forward.

So there is the urge for additional concrete assessment standards with specific measurable criteria. These standards and criteria could be used in the assessment phase in the process of VNFIL.

Unitisation

An additional obstacle to the introduction of a VNFIL system is that, because the programmes and qualifications of the formal VET system as well as the general education system are not modular in structure, the possibility of recognising achievements less than a full qualification on the basis of module certification does not yet exist.

Most, if not all, existing qualifications are not structured in ways that lend themselves to part-certification. A credit-based system for recognising achievement of individual modules would make it much easier to recognise part-qualifications on the basis of VNFIL. To derive the full benefits of VNFIL, serious consideration should be paid to introducing modular structures for VET - and other - qualifications of the formal education system.

This is a crucial issue because of the high probability that the vast majority of VNFIL candidates will be able to demonstrate evidence of meeting some, but not all, of the learning outcomes required for award of a full qualification. Part qualifications – or individual modules – can often meet important labour market needs and those who are able to obtain recognition of such achievements have the possibility of accumulating additional credits over time that can lead to award of a full qualification.

Overall capacities

At the same time there is a general lack of capacity at different levels of the system to meet the challenges posed by an introduction of VNFIL. There will be a need for additional resources (personnel and financial) as well as an increased level of

expertise on the part of State institutions including both the MoES and the CAE. The country currently almost certainly lacks the numbers of experienced non-formal learning providers (public and private) that might be required to respond to any rapid expansion of demand. A strategy for developing non-formal adult education provision should therefore include a range of capacity building measures particularly targeted on the relevant State institutions and key stakeholders including social partners in order to support achievement of the required objectives.

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that key elements necessary for establishment and effective implementation of VNFIL in the country are not yet in place. It should also be recognised that it will take time for the relevant institutions to develop the necessary capacities for full and widespread implementation. Nevertheless each institution should aim to follow the main principles set out below through a phased introduction of practices, which will, in the long term comply with international good practice in the area of competence assessment.

4 Description of the system to be developed

4.1 Policy-related, legal and funding issues

The policy basis for developing and implementing VNFIL

The need for a VNFIL system is widely recognised and supported by stakeholders across the education and training system, and has recently been accepted as an important objective by policy makers, but that importance is not sufficiently acknowledged in all the official documents that constitute the country's education and training policy. Although introduction of a VNFIL system could have a significant impact on the employability of – and employment opportunities for – unemployed adults and could be regarded as a potentially useful active employment instrument, it is also not mentioned in any document relating to employment policy. This is because the concept has been embraced only relatively recently by policy makers. The need for VNFIL was, however, clearly articulated in the non-formal adult education concept paper which was adopted in 2015. This sets out the main policy-related framework within which a VNFIL system may be introduced.

The concept paper on non-formal adult education and informal learning (2015) noted the lack of any current provision for the recognition of prior learning within qualifications of the formal education system and argued that the non-recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the formal education system constitutes a serious barrier to the employment and career opportunities of individuals as well as being an unnecessary waste of human resources for an economy that needs to increase its supply of skilled labour. It concluded that the absence of a system for validating non-formal and informal learning is damaging both to the achievement of individual aspirations and to the interests of the economy and that a lack of validated information about the competences of job applicants is regarded by many employers as a major problem for companies recruiting staff.

The concept paper argued for further investment in the development of occupational standards at different qualification levels, introduction of a credit system that enables VET qualifications to be achieved on a step-by-step basis and facilitates transfer between different qualifications, and the development of new and different kinds of qualifications to meet the full range of adult learning needs. It also stressed the importance of rigorous quality assurance to boost the credibility of qualifications awarded through VNFIL and ensure that they are regarded as of equal value to those attained through formal education. It also recommended the strengthening of guidance and information systems to support learners and applicants.

The concept paper concluded that a VNFIL system should be developed, in line with the VNFIL Recommendation and the revised VNFIL Guidelines, including any legislation/regulations necessary for its implementation.

This VNFIL Roadmap has been developed in response to that recommendation. The current document is intended to elaborate a clear policy on VNFIL and set out a strategic approach to for development and implementation of a functioning VNFIL system.

The legal basis for developing and implementing VNFIL

The comprehensive regulatory-legislative framework to implement VNFIL is yet to be developed. Furthermore, as already noted, there are some inconsistencies and contradictions between the laws governing different sectors of the education system, i.e. the Laws on Primary and Secondary Education, on Vocational Education and Training, and on Higher Education. The 2008 Law on Adult Education represented a significant step towards putting adult education onto the map within the overall context of lifelong learning but there is a need to take account of the new reality of the NQF, for example by including provisions for VNFIL, a credit system allowing the accumulation of credits over time and the transfer of credits between different qualifications and the award of part-qualifications.

Educational legislation should be systematically reviewed and amended as a pre-condition for the introduction of VNFIL towards qualifications of the formal education system. One of the possibilities to be considered should be a new law on VNFIL, which would provide the necessary amendments to other legislation.

The introduction of VNFIL arrangements into qualifications of the formal general, vocational and higher education systems will require the review and amendment of a range of different regulations, by-laws and rulebooks. These would include, for example the various rules governing assessment, credits and quality assurance in different parts of the education system as well as those defining the responsibilities of different institutions.

For adult education there would be a need to review and amend the existing rulebooks and by-laws on the verification of adult education providers and of programmes to provide for VNFIL as a route to qualification. The introduction of VNFIL procedures underlines the need for greater co-ordination between the parallel

processes of institutional and programme verification and there is a need to precisely define the conditions for delivering and quality assuring VNFIL assessments.

There should also be further provision enacted through secondary legislation defining the responsibilities of different institutions within the validation process including explicit provision for the provision of guidance and support to potential VNFIL candidates.

Funding issues

Introduction of a VNFIL system has various resource implications and all new functions and responsibilities assigned to institutions will need to be paid for. However it is not just a question of cost, but also of who will pay?

It is assumed that the costs of VNFIL for many citizens seeking to improve their qualifications and employability in order to satisfy their personal ambitions will be met through charges to the individuals concerned.

In cases where the validation takes place at the behest of employers wishing to upgrade the qualifications of their employees, it may be expected that the costs might be fully or partially covered by the employers in question. It is hoped that the value of continuing professional development and the upgrading of the qualifications of employees will become recognised as a normal target for human resource investment by employers.

Recognising that the costs of validation will vary widely according to the skills and competences requiring validation, consideration should be given to a standard charging system in order to avoid the higher costs providing VNFIL for some qualifications being a deterrent to potential candidates. Indeed the question of subsidies to cover such charges should be considered in the case of qualifications for strategically important occupations in which there are identified shortages of qualified personnel, in order to encourage people with relevant skills to apply for validation.

The provision of VNFIL for registered unemployed persons – and particularly the long-term unemployed – should be included in the packages of active employment measures and other social policy measures funded by the State, recognising the potential value of validation in enhancing employability and as an alternative to meeting the costs of training (which may be unnecessary if the individual in question has already acquired some or all of the requisite skills through non-formal or informal learning).

Furthermore it should be recognised that the State already covers the cost of basic educational courses through accelerated educational programmes for those without completed primary education. VNFIL should be considered as a cost-effective way of meeting their needs in cases where there is demonstrable evidence that the requisite knowledge skills and competences have already been acquired through other means.

Stakeholders

The range of stakeholders with an interest in establishment of a working VNFIL system is diverse. It is also clear that, although the State - through the Ministry of Education

and Science (MoES) and its agency, the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) - has an interest in driving development of the system as part of its commitment to the EU accession process, the demand is not only coming from public institutions and policy makers but from other stakeholders as well.

Whilst the CAE is an executive body able to implement and support developments, an inclusive multi-stakeholder partnership approach is needed to harness the efforts of all relevant stakeholders – State and public administration, local government, social partner institutions, major employers, NGOs and community organisations, providers etc. – to ensure that policy objectives are agreed on a consensual basis and that strategic plans are effectively coordinated and implemented in an inter-connected way to ensure coherence and synergy across all the various parts of the system. Development and implementation of an effective VNFIL system will require cooperation between all relevant stakeholders – and all important stakeholders should indeed be involved in VNFIL system governance.

To provide broad stakeholder involvement and synergy with reforms in the qualification system, it is proposed that development of the VNFIL system should be steered by the VNFIL Steering Committee linked with NQF Board, established under the NQF Law, and that the Board should establish a Sub-Group with appropriate membership including business involvement to ensure that all aspects of the VNFIL system are properly discussed and agreed. The Board and its sub-group should be supported in this activity by the CAE.

The country's main business organisations including the Economic Chamber, the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Crafts are known to be strongly in favour of VNFIL and see this very much as a demand-led initiative. In this respect they are serving the needs of their affiliated companies which need to recruit, train and develop employees, but face the problems that job seekers' or employees' achievements are often not transparent and that information on CVs is often non-verified or inaccurate. Furthermore they usually know little about the learning outcomes achieved as a result of non-formal learning programmes or about the training provision or standards of other companies. There appears to be clear backing for the proposal from the business community.

Large companies with HR departments may also have interests beyond the information purposes potentially provided by VNFIL documentation and certification. Potentially they can play an important role in stimulating employee participation in continuing professional development (CPD) activities and by providing guidance and support to employees wishing to become better qualified through participation in a VNFIL process. An important VNFIL pilot project organised by the St Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje has enrolled a great many of its validation candidates on the basis of referrals from their employing companies. It may be expected that foreign-owned companies familiar with VNFIL practices in other countries might play a part in encouraging the adoption of VNFIL in the country.

The position of trade unions and their confederations is yet to be identified and explored. It will be important in the future to engage more effectively with the unions

to provide a stronger social partnership approach based on tripartite principles. More work is needed to inform their members on the opportunities that VNFIL represents for employees / workers. It is assumed that widespread awareness raising and the promotion of VNFIL benefits for employees and the unemployed will help to create a more active involvement of institutions representing employees.

On an individual basis it is clear that there are many employed and unemployed persons who would welcome certification through VNFIL mechanisms, both as a way of conferring official recognition on achievements that are not otherwise recognised, and as a way of providing additional status and added value to certificates and achievements from non-formal learning including employer-based training courses. Various professional associations should also be regarded as potential VNFIL stakeholders.

It may be expected that community-based NGOs should also play an important role in the system, particularly those that are working with disadvantaged groups that would benefit from the introduction of VNFIL, including low-skilled adults, people with uncompleted education, women returning to activity, people from remote rural areas and minority communities. For the unemployed, it will be important for the Employment Services Agency to play a leading role – as the institution, which will provide a first point of contact with the VNFIL system. The role of municipalities (which should be providing support to people in their localities) and other local bodies (such as the open universities for lifelong learning) should also not be underestimated.

Different institutions in the network would have different roles, which are described in the following sections of this Roadmap. Above all a cooperative approach based on creativity, innovation and dynamism will be needed to ensure that the system develops in an open, transparent and democratic way.

4.2 Governance, roles and responsibilities in the VNFIL system

Responsibilities for policy development, planning and coordination

The leading roles of the Ministry of Education and Science, responsible for the overall education system (general, vocational and higher education) and of the Centre for Adult Education (CAE), established as a catalyst for development and quality assurance of adult education and training in the country, should be noted. These are the institutions that should lead, manage and support VNFIL development and implementation. The MoES should have overall policy responsibility for VNFIL whilst the CAE will provide overall management of the development and implementation of the VNFIL system. VNFIL Steering Committee, through a special sub-group should steer the wider stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing VNFIL.

Management responsibilities should, however, be distinguished from the governance of the system. There is a crucial need to engage with the social partners and other key education and training system stakeholders if VNFIL is to become a reality. During the development phase of the VNFIL system there will be a need to involve a wide range

of different stakeholders in discussion and consultation about VNFIL arrangements and a multi-stakeholder commission should be established to provide a vehicle for such involvement.

An inclusive multi-stakeholder partnership approach should aim to harness the efforts of all relevant stakeholders – State and public administration, local government, social partner institutions, major employers, NGOs and community organisations, providers etc. – to ensure that policy objectives are agreed on a consensual basis and that plans are effectively coordinated and implemented in an inter-connected way to ensure coherence and synergy across all the various parts of the system.

It should be noted that many different organisations will need to be involved in different ways if the country is to have a functioning VNFIL system.

Responsibilities for VNFIL system implementation

As already noted, VNFIL processes and procedures typically involves four stages:

1. IDENTIFICATION of the individual's competences (i.e. learning outcomes) acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
2. DOCUMENTATION of the individual's learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning together with supporting evidence;
3. ASSESSMENT of the individual's learning outcomes through an evaluation of the evidence presented
4. CERTIFICATION confirming the individual's achievement of the learning outcomes in question.

Different institutions will need to be involved at each stage of the process.

The first stage of the process – IDENTIFICATION – is crucial because this is the stage at which potential VNFIL candidates will enter the system. Different users might need different access points. For example, the Employment Service Agency (ESA) could be a first contact point for unemployed people. However their remit and responsibilities do not allow them to become a general guidance agency for everyone in the country. Other organisations with potential roles at this initial stage in the VNFIL process include municipalities, open civic universities for lifelong learning (formerly 'workers' universities) and other locally-based institutions such as providers and NGOs. For employees in large enterprises, company personnel and HRD departments could also contribute by making potential VNFIL candidates among their employees aware of validation opportunities.

The essential point is that there should be a widespread availability of guidance and counselling services, without which it is unlikely that the groups targeted by the VNFIL system will come forward for validation. The necessary capacities should be developed within all the organisations involved at this stage together with the availability of essential information about standards and qualifications against which candidates' achievements may be profiled.

It is considered likely that the same institutions could also provide the second step in the validation process – DOCUMENTATION of the individual's achievement of required learning outcomes for validation. In the case of the ESA, it is acknowledged that, despite a lack of resources, its involvement in the second stage could be inevitable, and indeed represents a modest extension of its existing guidance services for unemployed people.

However it is possible that other organisations (like company HRD departments, municipalities and community organisations) might only act as a referral service, referring potential candidates for VNFIL on to other organisations that can provide the appropriate professional guidance services to complete the documentation process. This might mean referring candidates to adult education providers or other educational institutions where they can complete the documentation process. This underlines the need to establish good vocational and educational guidance services at local level.

For the third stage – ASSESSMENT – there must be comprehensive methodological guidance in place, defining the principles of VNFIL assessment and setting out the rules and procedures to be followed by VNFIL assessors.

VNFIL assessments should be conducted by competent assessors within institutions that have the capacity to carry out the validation of the documentary (and sometimes physical) evidence presented by the candidate against the assessment requirements for the qualification in question. In the absence of any dedicated VNFIL assessment institutions, the necessary competence in assessment currently resides only within education and training institutions that carry out assessments linked with learning processes followed within the education and training system. In this case assessment should be carried out by an established commission consisted of external assessors (teachers / trainers, specialists in the field, representatives from the institutions as CAE, MoES etc.)

All institutions providing validation should be verified as competent to do so. Competence in assessment exists mainly within education and training institutions but validation presents new challenges and there will be a need to develop their capacity to carry out VNFIL assessment within the context of new guidelines and methodological documents required to support the VNFIL assessment process. It should be noted that business organisations (Chamber of Commerce, Economic Chamber) are interested in becoming involved as VNFIL providers. This could be achieved either on the basis of their roles as verified adult education providers or on a partnership basis with other education and training providers.

The final stage in the VNFIL process – CERTIFICATION- must be carried out in line with the rules governing the issuing of qualification certificates. Certification should be provided to successful VNFIL candidates by the institution responsible for awarding the qualification in question according to the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The specifications of qualifications should include the requirements that need to be satisfied for the awarding of certificates for either full or partial qualifications.

Because the integrity of the VNFIL system will depend on rigorous QUALITY ASSURANCE, the institutions providing the assessment and certification should have clearly defined responsibilities for the implementation of appropriate internal quality assurance arrangements to ensure that VNFIL assessments are based on a correct understanding of the standards and related evidence requirements and that assessment decisions are consistent.

Systematic external quality assurance of VNFIL assessments is also required, through a sampling process. This should be carried out by the institutions responsible for assuring quality, namely the State Examinations Centre (for assessment) and (for non-formal programmes) the CAE. In cases where there is doubt about the quality of assessments carried out by VNFIL providers, the right to issue certificates should be suspended (pending rectification of deficiencies) or withdrawn.

4.3 Provision – the VNFIL process

It has already been noted that VNFIL involves a four-stage process and the working of the process at each of the four stages is described in the paragraphs below. The length and complexity of each stage may vary, depending on the organisation and focus of the VNFIL system that will be implemented, as well as on the profiles and needs of the candidates. The four stages enhance the inclusiveness of VNFIL, by offering different responses to different individuals' needs.

However it should be noted that not all candidates entering a VNFIL process will necessarily follow it through all four stages all the way to certification. For some, the profiling and documenting of their skills and knowledge will be sufficient to meet their needs but certification will be especially important for many in a society that has traditionally placed considerable weight on the possession of official documents and certificates to determine eligibility for employment or social benefits. Each candidate will have personal priorities and objectives - for some the only goal will be certification while others will have different purposes in seeking validation.

A review of documentation presented by VNFIL candidates could indeed lead to different outcomes:

- In cases where there is sufficient evidence that the assessment requirements for award of a whole or partial qualification have been met, the candidate may proceed directly to the certification stage. Because of the difficulties of assembling all the necessary evidence to prove that all requirements have been met, this is likely to happen only in a small minority of cases;
- In cases where some of the presented evidence is accepted but gaps are identified, the candidate may be advised that additional evidence is required, and that this will require the candidate to undergo further assessment and testing. This underlines the importance of providing on-demand testing to be made available for candidates who need it;
- In cases where it is evident that the candidate lacks the necessary skills or knowledge and is not yet ready to be assessed, the outcome of the assessment

process may be enrolment on a suitable course or referral to an appropriate provider able to provide the necessary training.

It is important, therefore, to emphasise the centrality of the needs of the individual and to recognise that the VNFIL process is not something that can be implemented in a rigid and inflexible way that is driven by bureaucratic procedures. It is there to serve individual candidates and to widen the opportunities open to them. Bearing this in mind, the following paragraphs set out a description of the working of the four-stage VNFIL process.

STAGE 1: IDENTIFICATION

The initial stage of the process involves identifying and profiling the individual's competences (i.e. learning outcomes) acquired through non-formal and informal learning. This should be done in a structured way, facilitated by an experienced mediator who can guide the individual through what can be quite a complicated process.

Especially until a VNFIL system is fully established and widely known, the vast majority of people will be completely unaware of the opportunities open to them. Moreover there will be only limited awareness among most of them about relevant qualifications and the learning outcomes on which they are based. Without encouragement, many potential VNFIL candidates will almost certainly assume that the only way to acquire the qualifications they need will be through participation in courses that they have neither the time nor the resources to attend. It can be predicted that most of them will not recognise that they already have relevant skills and knowledge that could be certificated and will have little idea about how to relate the skills and knowledge that they have to the requirements of relevant qualifications. Demand will only be created through extensive awareness raising and through guidance and support. In many cases this must start by stimulating an individual's initial interest in the idea of becoming better qualified. Only when the idea has been sown that there may be opportunities to be taken, will individuals start to think seriously about whether they already possess skills and knowledge that could be profiled – and if linked with a qualification – certificated.

The role of intermediary organisations including education and training providers, social partner institutions, employers and employment offices will thus be crucial in terms of facilitating individuals in the identification of their achievements and profiling their skills and knowledge against occupational standards and available qualifications through a sort of signposting process. The involvement of such intermediary organisations may range from being only a referral service (to other organisations, which will take responsibility for guiding VNFIL candidates through subsequent stages of the process to organisations to the provision of comprehensive support and delivery across all four stages. The role of ESA offices and career guidance services will almost certainly be limited to stages 1 and 2 while education and training providers might provide more comprehensive provision.

The first stage in the process is to provide an initial screening of the candidate. It should be remembered that, in principle VNFIL is voluntary and that learners need to

make decisions about whether or not to participate. Support, information and guidance should be provided to help learners decide whether to participate in RPL. Adults re-entering learning programmes may have been out of the system for some time, may not have had positive experiences of school, and may have had their confidence about learning undermined. Assessment may be daunting, and constructive support will be required.

CAE will play a central role in preparing relevant information and guidance packages, disseminating them to the relevant levels and partners, and in monitoring users' response and feedback.

Initial information provided will depend on the reasons each candidate has for being interested in VNFIL. For access to formal learning, candidates will need information about the entry requirements and the learning skills required to undertake and complete a programme. Candidates who wish to attain VNFIL certification will need advice focused on the module outcomes for which they are seeking recognition. Accurate, timely and clear information and advice on the process are critical so that learners can make an informed decision about whether to proceed with VNFIL, and what it will involve. This will include information on:

- which qualifications can be sought
- where to apply and get information on the process
- the time that the VNFIL process will take;
- the costs of VNFIL (where appropriate) and possible funding sources and mechanisms
- what VNFIL will involve;
- what prior learning can (and cannot) be recognised
- cases and examples that help candidates and partners and providers of VNFIL

The initial guidance and screening should be carried out by competent and specific guidance / counsellor, through a structured process including interview (s), supported completion of a questionnaire and a detailed examination of the competences/learning outcomes to be demonstrated, including the identification of the evidence of achievements that will be required. The process should also include working through the requirements to identify exactly what evidence (artefacts, documents, references, proofs of work experience etc.) that the candidate will be asked to provide. For the purpose of this phase, specific tools should be developed, like portfolio, some initial application templates, self-assessment tools etc.

As a result of the initial screening and guidance:

- the candidate will be aware of the requirements to be met for award of the qualification/module(s) in question;
- the learning outcomes for which the candidate is able to provide portfolio evidence will have been identified, guidance will have been provided to the

candidate on the documentation and other evidence that should he/she should provide and on the process to be followed in compiling the portfolio;

- the learning outcomes which have to be assessed through an alternative testing procedure will have been identified and the candidate will have been advised on the assessment processes to be followed;
- Any additional learning requirements for the candidate will also have been identified and the candidate will have been advised on the opportunities available.

It should be noted that not all candidates will wish to progress beyond this stage. It may be sufficient for some candidates to have their achievements profiled as a basis for improving their CVs or better presenting themselves to prospective employers.

STAGE 2: DOCUMENTATION

The second stage of the VNFIL process involves documenting the supporting evidence from non-formal and informal learning of the individual's achievement of the required learning outcomes.

Documentation of evidence can form a large part of VNFIL, and issues arising during the process need to be discussed with advisers who are experts in the subject content and in VNFIL documentation. As well as needing support to identify relevant prior learning experiences, candidates will require help to develop the skills necessary to reflect on those experiences, identify their knowledge and skills relating to the learning outcomes in question and identify and select appropriate evidence of their learning.

In order to be able to document VNFIL candidates' achievements against specific learning outcomes, the candidate and whoever is providing the support need to be aware of the standards that should be met, including any evaluative or performance criteria against and any specified minimum requirements governing either the forms of evidence or the quantity of evidence that are expected.

Verifiable evidence provided by candidates may include artefacts produced by candidates. In such cases there should be verifiable evidence that the artefact presented represents the candidate's own work or, in the case of something produced through teamwork, of the candidate's individual contribution to the finished product. The same principle applies in the case of any documents presented that have been written or otherwise prepared by the candidate. Video or other recorded evidence may also be included.

Other documentary evidence such as work references, payroll documents testifying the concrete work experience, other declarative statements provided by such people as present and former employers, teachers and trainers, work colleagues and other persons who can prove familiarity with the candidate's achievements should also be verifiable.

Documented evidence may also include certificates awarded following participation in non-formal learning activities or evidence of practical tests or written examinations that the candidate has passed.

It is the responsibility of the person providing the advice to check the extent to which the candidate is able to provide documented evidence against the requirements relating to each learning outcome in question. Where the evidence presented appears to fall short of meeting all the requirements, there may be a possibility of covering any missing bits of evidence by asking responsible persons familiar with the candidate's achievements if they are able to provide any additional evidence such as declarative statements supporting the candidate's claims.

If there is insufficient documented evidence, the candidate may be advised that he or she is not ready for VNFIL assessment. In such cases, the candidate should be referred to an appropriate training provider, able to help the candidate to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to enter the assessment process.

As with Stage 1, there may be candidates who choose not to progress beyond this stage, for instance in cases where they consider their portfolio of documented evidence sufficient to help them find a job.

STAGE 3: ASSESSMENT

The third stage of VNFIL involves assessing the individual's achievement of the recorded learning outcomes through an evaluation of the documented evidence presented.

Because experience of VNFIL assessment – and indeed of any kind of RPL – is lacking throughout the country's education and training system and because practices in the assessment of standards-based learning outcomes are relatively new, considerable support will be necessary for those involved in VNFIL assessment. Besides the provision of methodological guidance and capacity building measures, consideration should be given to the dissemination of good practice exemplars, from both home and abroad, to increase understanding of the most effective ways to carry out VNFIL assessment. This could be done through publication of a compendium of good practices though the development of a web-based resource, as well as through information-sharing and networking activities.

In parallel, the current debate on developing the VNFIL system supports other reflections on assessment, notably the notion of introduction of new quality-assured external assessment for all non-formal training programmes, independent from the training providers and involving representatives from the relevant sectors / branches. While this interaction and its implications are still in early stage of debate, there could be a positive interplay between the two domains (VNFIL and non-formal training).

In selecting the most appropriate assessment methods to use, VNFIL assessors should be guided by the principle that assessment must always be:

- *Valid* (in the sense of being an appropriate means of measuring what it is supposed to measure);
- *Reliable* (in the sense of being applied consistently by different assessors and in different contexts);
- *Practicable* (in the sense of being both cost effective and not too onerous either for institutions or for candidates).

Four main methods are usually employed in VNFIL systems employed to assess candidates' achievement:

- Portfolios of verifiable documented evidence. This evidence will have been assembled during Stage 2. Although it may be enough to meet the assessment requirements in full, in cases where the assessment requirements are only partly met, here will be a need for this method to be combined with one of the other assessment methods below;
- Tests and examinations – although often favoured as a means of testing cognitive skills and requiring VNFIL candidates to meet the same requirements as those in the formal education system, written examinations cannot be the only method used because the evidence gathered is largely of knowledge, and should be combined with testing of practical skills;
- Declarative methods - including interviews, presentations and debates which may be used as a supportive method in tandem with other methods of assessment and are familiar to many employers because of their links with recruitment and employee evaluation practices;
- Observation – of performance in real work activities, simulations and evidences extracted from work.

For the purposes of assessment, additional concrete assessment standards with specific measurable criteria need to be developed and generalised. Candidates are assessed against these standards/criteria should be met, in order to reach the certification phase and receive the final legal document.

The organisation providing the VNFIL assessment is responsible for ensuring that assessment procedures are applied correctly, that verifiable records are maintained of all VNFIL assessment decisions for quality assurance purposes, and that all persons involved in assessing candidates for qualifications are competent – whether they are teachers, trainers or instructors or persons who are not their employees (e.g. social partner representatives involved in the assessment process).

VNFIL assessors are responsible for assessing the work of candidates in line with the requirements of the qualification, submitting candidates' results for VNFIL certification and for recording and internally verifying assessment decisions, either that:

- There is sufficient evidence showing that the standards have been met for the candidate to pass the assessment; or

- The evidence is not sufficient, in which case the candidate should be provided with feedback and, after an opportunity to generate new or additional evidence or to participate in further learning activities or skills development, an opportunity for re-assessment.

On **assessment** the VNFIL Guidelines (2015) state: *“Many of the tools and methods used for assessing non-formal and informal learning will be based on, or similar to, those used in formal education and training. As validation is about capturing diverse individual learning experiences, assessment tools need to be designed to capture and assess the learning specific to each individual and the context in which this learning took place. This is different from formal learning where assessment tools can be applied across larger cohorts of students and where less priority is given to the particular needs of subgroups or individuals. The individual specificity of learning outcomes concerned may require more than one tool, for example, a combination of written tests and practical challenges. Tools will frequently need to apply practical demonstrations, simulations or gathering of evidence from past practices.”*⁹

STAGE 4: CERTIFICATION

It is assumed that VNFIL candidates will normally be seeking qualifications (or credits towards qualifications) that are included in the NQF, in line with the inclusion of all the main qualifications of the country’s education and training system in the NQF. In order to meet the requirements for award of a qualification or credit, the criteria and procedures applied must comply with those stipulated for the qualification in question, with the certification provided by the institution carrying out the assessment for the qualification in question under arrangements regulated by the appropriate authorities.

Of course it is possible that VNFIL may in some cases be linked with certificates and qualifications not included in the NQF – for example where there are arrangements for certifying specialised skills or continuing professional development achievements that are outside the coverage of the NQF, sometimes because the certification is not national in nature or because it applies to a small or very specific target group. However it is assumed that, in these cases as well, there will be standard criteria and procedures that will govern the certification process.

Unless the certification in question is uniquely available through a VNFIL process, the certificates should not normally be different from those awarded the qualifications to successful candidates who achieved the qualification through normal processes.

It should be noted that the VNFIL system will require the issuing of part qualification certificates for those validated only for achievement of learning outcomes that are less than a full qualification. It is expected that this will lead to consideration in the longer term of the need for modularisation of qualifications and the issuing of module certificates in particular.

⁹ Cedefop (2015), p 17-18

Quality assuring VNFIL

The integrity of the VNFIL system will depend on the rigor of the quality assurance arrangements that underpin it. Without rigorous quality assurance the certificates issued will have limited value and acceptability. In general the normal quality assurance arrangements for the assessment and awarding of qualifications should apply.

In principle assessments should be subject to both internal and external quality assurance procedures. The internal quality assurance of assessment decisions (usually known as internal verification) is the responsibility of the institutions providing the assessment themselves through a process in which VNFIL decisions are checked by persons from the institution who were not directly involved in the original assessment to ensure consistency in the interpretation of criteria and guidelines and the evaluation of evidence. External quality assurance (usually known as external verification) involves the independent checking of verifiable information regarding assessments carried out in different institutions on a sampling basis. This is the responsibility of the CAE and State Education Inspectorate. Decisions on the acceptability of different kinds and quantities of evidence should be based on guidelines setting out principles and minimum requirements and subject to external approval in order to ensure consistency.

Guidance and counselling provision

The need for supporting guidance and counselling has already been noted. Having decided to engage in a VNFIL process, candidates will need to make a number of important decisions during the VNFIL for which supporting information, advice and guidance should be provided. This will include general support and guidance throughout the VNFIL process to ensure that the candidate can progress from stage to stage with full awareness of what is involved, as well as guidance on specific documentation and assessment requirements:

- *VNFIL process*: timelines, procedures involved, available support, appeals, procedures; costs and financial support;
- *VNFIL assessment*: qualifications that can be attained; relevant skills and knowledge gained in the past, modules for which recognition may be appropriate, requirements of the assessment process and how best to approach it, kinds of evidence required, how evidence can be documented, organised and presented, how much evidence is required, quality and standards, limits to the amount of credit that can be awarded through VNFIL.

5 Developing the VNFIL System

5.1 Specific issues to be addressed

The VNFIL system to be developed and implemented should provide all adults who would benefit with a means of proving their achievements to prospective employers or enable them to transfer and progress within education and training. The VNFIL

system, when fully developed, should thus be aimed at the whole adult population. It should reflect all aspects of adult learning for which it is considered that individual citizens would benefit from VNFIL certification and it should offer the possibility of gaining either whole qualifications or credits representing partial qualifications.

The system should be developed and at least partially implemented by the milestone of the VNFIL Recommendation (country report to be presented in 2018) and there should be an objective of achieving implementation of a fully functioning VNFIL system by 2020/21. This means that efforts in the period 2016 to 2018 should be directed towards:

- VNFIL system development (i.e. creating a policy, legal and institutional infrastructure for the functioning of a VNFIL system supported by appropriate methodological guidance and procedures and capacity building measures directed at the stakeholders / partners involved;
- VNFIL system implementation in defined priority areas / sectors

VNFIL system development in the short and medium term should focus on arrangements for the awarding of full or partial qualifications in line with the terms of the NQF Law: all levels up to 5B, i.e. in general, vocational and non-degree level higher education. The possibility of extending VNFIL to cover other higher education qualifications should also be investigated in the medium-longer term.

It should be recognised that the introduction of VNFIL is a major step for a country, which hitherto has not provided any recognition of prior learning (RPL) in its education system. It is recognised that development of a fully functioning system will require extensive legislative changes, the development, piloting and implementation of appropriate validation tools and approaches, widespread promotion and public awareness raising and the development of institutional and human capacities necessary to turn the objective of establishing a VNFIL system into reality.

Noting that some important pre-conditions for VNFIL are still wholly or partially lacking, further investments will be required in education and training system development before VNFIL can be widely introduced including:

- Availability of a greater number of occupational standards forming the basis for defining the learning outcomes and qualification standards at different NQF levels that are needed to provide an objective basis for VNFIL assessment leading to the awarding of full or partial VET qualifications;
- New forms of assessment that allow for the recognition of prior learning and achievements, with systematic involvement of representatives from the relevant sectors / branches.
- A credit system based on modular qualification structures, enabling qualifications to be achieved on a step-by-step basis and allowing the transfer of credits between different qualifications;
- New and different kinds of qualification/certificate to meet adult learning and labour market needs that are not currently being met by qualifications of the formal education system, recognising that individuals will often have acquired

important skills and knowledge beyond those covered in initial VET that, if made transparent through VNFIL certification, would be valued by recruiters and employers;

- Development / generalisation of assessment standards with specific measurable criteria, against which candidates will be assessed, in order to reach the certification phase and receive the final legal document.
- Robust arrangements for quality assuring the assessment and certification of learning outcomes, regardless of how the learning was acquired;
- Universal availability of high quality guidance and counselling services for adult learners, with the aim of empowering them to take advantage of VNFIL opportunities.

A proper legal basis must additionally be established to allow prior achievements to be recognised towards qualifications of formal general, vocational or higher education, allow modular qualification structures as a basis for part-qualification certification and support credit accumulation and transfer. The need for VNFIL should be explicitly acknowledged and supported by consistent definitions in the various laws covering primary and secondary education, vocational education, adult education and higher education and all educational legislation should therefore be reviewed systematically and amended. A new law on VNFIL including necessary amendments to other legislation should be considered.

In turn the introduction of VNFIL arrangements into qualifications of the formal general, vocational and higher education systems will also require the review and amendment of a range of different regulations, by-laws and rulebooks including those governing assessment, credits and quality assurance in different parts of the education system as well as those defining the responsibilities of different institutions.

Whatever is done to create a basis for implementing a VNFIL system, substantial attitudinal shifts will be required to ensure that VNFIL certification is valued. It is expected that, with appropriate quality assurance safeguards in place, the certificates awarded through VNFIL should be accorded parity of esteem with those awarded through the formal education system. There is a need for conspicuous promotion of the messages that qualifications gained through both formal and non-formal learning are of equal worth and that all types of learner (whether students, employed or unemployed adults, members of vulnerable groups etc.) are equally valued in society.

A phased introduction on a step-by-step basis is therefore necessary, with the aim of creating and piloting VNFIL opportunities for identified target groups before a general introduction for the country's adult population. A general roll-out should follow after the necessary capacities have been developed and important pre-conditions (such as availability of guidance services, effective and robust quality assurance arrangements etc.) have been met.

The important priority target groups for initial VNFIL development, piloting and implementation in the period to 2020 are:

- Those without completed basic (primary) education;

- Persons without qualifications who have relevant skills and competences acquired outside the formal labour market (e.g. through family, community work or irregular employment);
- Unemployed persons and those (including women with families) wishing to return to the labour market following breaks from employment;
- Employees including those participating in on-the-job training and/or continuing professional development (CPD) for updating or career advancement purposes;
- Persons returning to the country who have acquired relevant skills and knowledge whilst living or working abroad.

It should not be forgotten that, in some of these cases, e.g. low skilled adults or the long-term unemployed, it will be necessary to provide special support including development of the necessary skills to participate in the VNFIL process.

5.2 A step-by step approach

To translate the vision into reality, the actions the vision should be based on an approach that is evidence-based, reflecting the analysis of needs analysis and justifications presented in this roadmap. There is so much to be done that a step-by-step approach (i.e. a phased introduction over time) is considered necessary, allowing for reflection and objective evaluation of achievements and experiences after the completion of each stage, before proceeding to the next.

The VNFIL Steering Committee linked with NQF Board, will have overall responsibility for leading the development of the VNFIL system and facilitate the active involvement of VNFIL stakeholders.

As already noted, there will be an inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement and involvement. A Sub-Group of the VNFIL Steering Committee will provide the most effective mechanism for this.

In addition, all opportunities for linking with various projects (e.g. IPA, EU Twinning, World Bank) that are assisting VET system and lifelong learning development should be investigated and possible sources of support identified. It is hoped that specific aspects of VNFIL system development may be supported in this way.

The VNFIL Steering Committee and its Sub-Group will oversee and monitor the VNFIL development and implementation process.

The proposed phases and priorities integrally reflect the discussion at the workshop of 11-12/04/2016 in Skopje, and in particular the steps discussed in detail with CAE in the same period.

The main phases in the VNFIL development path will include:

1. Initial development of VNFIL procedures (including add-ons to existing verification procedures, credit system, implementation and assessment

guidelines), to be implemented through appropriate partners institutions and monitored by the VNFIL Steering Committee supported by the CAE;

2. Pilot projects focused on introducing it first in selected priority areas. The initially identified priority areas for the first phase of introduction are:
 - Requalification for the long-term unemployed (i.e. VNFIL towards selected vocational qualifications);
 - Qualifications for those with uncompleted basic education (i.e. VNFIL towards primary education qualifications and/or basic skills qualifications);
 - Continuing professional development in selected areas.
3. Phased implementation. This will include:
 - Finalisation and revision of the VNFIL procedures and arrangements based on conclusions of the evaluation of the pilot projects, followed by national consultation of the proposed arrangements;
 - System-wide roll-out supported by large-scale capacity building, implementation of guidance and support networks and a nationwide publicity and marketing campaign.
 - Monitoring, progress review and continued improvement over time.

5.3 Milestones and activities

The following table sets out a list of the main activities (and key milestones) that are considered necessary for the implementation of the Road Map or VNFIL development and information:

No.	Activity	Milestone	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.	Preparatory stage Develop VNFIL system and procedures						
1.1	<u>Governance</u> Establish a VNFIL Steering Committee linked with the NQF Board to steer and monitor VNFIL development / implementation on the basis of an annual work plan Institutions represented: MoES (Chair + 1), CAE (2), VETC, State Examinations Centre), MoLSP, ESA, Economic Chamber, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Crafts, Trade Unions.....??	Established (by 09.2016) – continues on a permanent basis Established by MoES Secretariat provided by CAE	X	X	X	X	X

1.2	<u>Scope of the system</u> Define the scope of the VNFIL system, i.e. qualification types and levels to be included	By 12.2018 By MoES/VNFIL SC	X	X	X		
1.3	<u>Drafting of rules and procedures</u> Draft rules and procedures covering i) accreditation of institutions to implement VNFIL processes ii) Certification of the candidates ii) monitoring and quality assuring VNFIL provision	Draft rules and procedures 12.2018 Drafted by CAE/ MoES)	X	X	X		
1.4	<u>Drafting of supporting documents for VNFIL delivery</u> Draft methodological documents including guide for VNFIL providers on methods and approaches to be used in the 4 VNFIL stages: Identification, Documentation, Assessment, Certification	Draft guide and other documents by 12.2018, Drafted by CAE	X	X	X		
2.	Piloting stage Pilot the VNFIL system						
2.1	Develop and implement pilot projects (selected occupations / qualifications) for targeted groups at all 4 VNFIL stages	01-12.2019 MoES, MoLSP, CAE with selected sectors/providers				X	
2.2	Evaluate results of pilot projects and revise/finalise the draft rules, procedures guide	By 12.2019 CAE with VNFIL SC				X	
3.	Implementation stage Implement VNFIL on a country-wide basis						
3.1	<u>Legal and financial basis</u> Establish an appropriate legal and financial basis for VNFIL implementation i) Revise education and labour laws (through amendment of existing laws or drafting of a new one) to ensure VNFIL	Legal/financing basis for VNFIL in place by 12.2020 VNFIL SC, with MoES, CAE					X

	<p>compatibility, including definition of institutional roles and responsibilities and establishment of appropriate funding arrangements</p> <p>ii) Draft supporting regulations for VNFIL implementation</p>						X
3.2	<p><u>Develop/adapt qualifications to ensure accessibility via VNFIL</u></p> <p>Development/revision of qualifications</p> <p>i) Modularise the structures of existing qualifications to provide a basis for part certification</p> <p>ii) Where necessary, develop new standards and qualifications to meet potential demand from VNFIL candidates</p>	<p>Revision of qualification specifications and structures according to timetables of IPA and WB projects as well as VETC (ongoing process)</p> <p>NQF Board / Sector Committees</p>	X	X	X	X	X
3.3	<p><u>Capacity building</u></p> <p>Provide capacity building training and targeted institutional support to responsible institutions to support VNFIL implementation across all 4 stages of the VNFIL process</p>	<p>Supported by donor projects as well as MoES. CAE</p> <p>For leading institutions and providers, before pilot and during implementation</p>		X	X	X	X
3.4	<p><u>Public awareness</u></p> <p>Prepare a communications plan and implement a public awareness raising campaign about VNFIL opportunities and benefits</p>	<p>Communications plan drafted and stakeholder engagement activities started by 09.2016, on-going</p> <p>VNFIL SC, with MoES and CAE</p>	X	X	X	X	X
3.5	<p><u>Quality assurance of the VNFIL system</u></p> <p>i) Accredite VNFIL institutions</p> <p>ii) Monitoring VNFIL institutions and quality assure VNFIL processes</p> <p>iii) Monitoring, progress review and continued improvement of VNFIL system</p>	<p>Accreditation, quality assurance and monitoring systems in place by 12.2019</p> <p>Full implementation from 2020</p> <p>CAE, with MoES and Education</p>				X	X

		Inspectorate					
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Annex 1: Bibliography

Glossary

A glossary of 130 key terms used in the validation of non-formal and informal learning may be found at:

CEDEFOP, Terminology of European education and training policy – a selection of 130 key terms, 2nd edition, 2014. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary>

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Though not exhaustive, the following list of reference sources used in the preparation of this concept paper includes those considered most relevant to the country context and the content of the document.

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