



# Training for Higher Education Validation Professionals

A Generic Structure for a Continuing  
Professional Development Course



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**Authors:** Carme Royo, Francesca Uras, Monica Hatle-Larssen, Yannis Kablan on behalf of the VINCE consortium

**Proof reader and final editor:** Pat Davies

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**VINCE consortium:** eucen (BE) | SOLIDAR (BE) | Université de Bretagne Occidentale (FR) |  
VIA University College (DK) | EC-VPL (NL) | NOKUT (NO) | Danube University Krems (AT) |  
CPZ (SI) | Ludwig-Maximilians University (DE) | Fachhochschule Burgenland (AT) |  
University of Pecs (HU) | IVC (NL) | Club for UNESCO of Piraeus and Islands (GR)

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## A. Introduction

In most EU countries, there is at present no clear structure or availability of focused courses for the training of HE staff (i.e. academic, administrative, counselling and guidance professionals and assessors/validators) in the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) and validation of prior learning (VPL)<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, there are many staff who have some experience in the policy and practice of VNIL and may have participated in some courses that include VNIL as part of their contents.

This proposed VINCE generic course is targeted at those who have some experience of VNIL in general but little or no experience working with migrants and newcomers in VNIL processes; it is not targeted at those who have no experience or training at all in this area.

The VINCE generic course is a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course designed to enable professionals working in HE to reflect on and improve their practice and the policy and procedures in their institution. It aims to give insights and ideas for organising staff training that aims to promote inclusive policy and practice in the validation of non-formal and informal learning in HE, especially focussed on migrants and newcomers. In particular, it is designed to allow them to focus on this relatively new group of learners who have similar needs to those of traditional candidates in a process of validation, but who also have some specific and different needs derived from their very different and often difficult situation and circumstances.

The course is generic in a way that makes it easily adaptable to any institutional, regional or national environment by using the tools, resources, guidelines, good practice examples and case studies that have been assembled and/or developed by the VINCE project partners. The resources to support the course delivery are in **Annex 1** and **Annex 2**. The tools and outputs of the project also constitute a package of relevant resource materials – these are listed and explained in Part C and **Annex 3**. Selected case studies, which are of special interest in the generic course are set out in **Annex 4**.

The generic course is based on the idea that effective CPD should include space for self-reflection and self-assessment as well as for peer group activities where sharing good practice, evaluating effectiveness, and action planning for change are important elements.

It is built around the 5 main stages of the validation process - Information, Identification, Documentation, Assessment, Validation - and resources are provided or suggested to accompany the training around each of these stages. It is envisaged that all participants, whatever their role in validation in their HEI, should engage with the issues arising in all of the 5 stages since there is a need for coherence and consistency throughout the process.

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<sup>1</sup> Since evidence of successful formal learning or relevant work experience and the supporting documentation are likely to be a significant problem for the newcomers we refer in this document to the validation of formal as well as non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) as part of a wider process of validation of prior learning (VPL).

The generic nature of the course structure offered here means that the person designing the detailed course for a specific group of participants can select the elements that are most appropriate and decide on the relative importance of each element in the course that will actually be delivered. The participants may need to spend more time and attention on the part of the process where they themselves play a more active role and they could come together around the issues relating to their own practice. For multi-professional teams (including external stakeholders where appropriate) it may be more interesting, effective and appropriate to work together as a team in the course. It is for the course leader to decide whether this requires separate programmes or whether a single programme could combine both, using group work to address this challenge and to organise different groupings around different issues.

This flexibility means that the duration of the course is also variable. It is important to bear in mind that reflection on practice and planning for change at the individual and/or organisational level requires time and will not be effective if it is rushed. However, the time required will depend on the experience of the participants in validation in general or in working with migrant groups (perhaps in other contexts), on the organisational context, and how important are the various elements of the course to the participants. In the reality of university life, it will also depend on other priorities for staff training and on the time available to staff to focus on this specific dimension.

For this reason, it is envisaged that the course could be delivered in one long(er) event or in several short(er) sessions over a period of weeks or in a blended format, depending on the institutional constraints and opportunities. Alternatively, the participants could come together at given intervals to review their improvement in certain elements.

## **Basic learning outcomes for the CPD participants**

- Understanding of the legal situation and educational background of the migrants and newcomers
- Understanding how lack of formal information and other possible barriers affect the validation process and how to overcome them
- Knowledge of methods, tools and resources (including people) for assessing documents presented by the candidates for VNIL
- Understanding of the tools assembled and developed by VINCE partners for:
  - assessing the needs of the candidates within the VNIL procedures
  - using the various guidelines with the candidates
- Insights into the ways in which candidates may experience the VNIL process and how it can be adapted to be more effective
- Understanding some of the best practices in other EU countries

## **B. Educational principles**

The key principles that underpin the generic CPD course proposed here are:

1. Culturally inclusive practice involves creating a learning space opened for everybody in the Higher Education Institution: academics, counsellors, administrative staff, professional validators and assessors to develop policy, procedures and practice.
2. Culturally inclusive practice for the HEI means adapting arrangements to meet the needs of the students and potential students in all their diversity.
3. For staff this means an awareness of their own cultural background, an interest in other cultures and an understanding of the impact that culture has on learning and learning outcomes.
4. CPD courses are most effective when they take a problem solving approach to course design and delivery rather than a didactic one. This means that:
  - Information is provided as a resource not as a long lecture
  - Time is given to sharing of best practice and of practice which ‘went wrong’
  - Time is given to participants to reflect on their own professional practice and that of their team
  - Time is given to reflect on appropriate institutional arrangements
  - Action planning to make changes is important to enable participants to think about how to implement their new ideas
5. Role models, for example staff who have successfully adapted their policy and practice, are an important feature of the training
6. It is important that the professionals should hear the voice of the ultimate target group - the migrants and newcomers. This can be done through involving them directly in the course in some way and/or through the use of cases studies.
7. VNIL is not usually carried out by one person – it involves academic, administrative and counselling staff, validators and assessors, and often external stakeholders from a particular profession or employment sector. Thus the CPD course should meet the individual needs of those in specific roles and positions in the process, and the collective needs of the team. There is therefore a value in bringing together professionals in the same sort of role so they can learn from each other but also in bringing together the different professionals in complete teams.

8. It is important to start from where the participants are in terms of their institutional position, of their understanding of the issues, of what they already know, and then build on that. This means that is important to understand the participants and mould the course to suit them rather than the other way around.
9. It is important to value what the participants already know and/or can do. For example, some may have no knowledge of educational qualifications in other countries but a good understanding of the legal situation of migrants and newcomers. In this case the participant should be invited to lead the explanation and discussion.



## **C. VINCE key resources: The Guidelines and the Country Profiles**

The VINCE project has developed two key resources for VNIL professionals:

- A set of guidelines in 5 major areas
- A set of 33 country profiles explaining the basic features of VNIL in HE, in relation to migrants and newcomers in all these countries/regions

### **The Guidelines**

The VINCE guidelines have been conceived as a set of FAQs, grouped in 5 different areas that are meant to serve as valuable tool for university staff dealing with validation, in order for them devise strategies and methods to better address the needs and characteristics of the particular potential type of candidate to validation: newcomers and refugees. HE teachers, validators, advisors and administrators can benefit from reading these guidelines as could prepare them for questions and worries that migrants and newcomers in general might have and may in some circumstances also be useful to the candidates. The titles of these 5 guidelines are:

- Welcome to Europe
- Welcome to this country
- Welcome to Higher Education in Europe
- Welcome to this institution
- Welcome to Validation

The Guidelines can become a key tool in the CPD training for HE teachers, validators, advisors and administrators.

The “Welcome to Validation” in particular is a very practical tool, very much focused to VNIL professionals with experience in these processes but little experience with migrants or newcomers. It gives a different perspective to the validation process and some tips on how to deal with candidates with special circumstances.

The direct link to the VINCE guidelines is <http://vince.eucen.eu/guidelines>

The guidelines are available in several languages and can be found in different formats, depending on how they will be used:

- Online, in English: if you are fluent in this language, the online guidelines are interactive and can be consulted in your mobile device, even while you are in the middle of a validation process

- In pdf format, in several languages: you can download and print the guideline you need in the language that suits you and give it to your candidate, so he/she can further consult it
- In Word format, in several languages: you can download it, adapt it to your needs, add/delete questions and make it yours. Afterwards, you can print it and share it with your colleagues or/and give it to your candidate, so he/she can further consult it

## **The Country Profiles**

Following an initial set of country profiles from the OBSERVAL-Net project<sup>2</sup>, VINCE has reviewed and expanded the existing country profiles as well as adapted the content to HE, focusing on regulations connected to migrants and refugees.

There are a total of 33 country profiles available that might be useful for those VNIL professionals with little or non-existing knowledge of legislation measures in their own country in terms of validation, validation at HE level and specific ruling for migrants/refugees.

You might want to print your own country profile and give it to your candidate, so he/she can further consult it and have the key point of formal arrangements at hand.

The direct link to the VINCE country profiles is <http://vince.eucen.eu/profiles>

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<sup>2</sup> [www.observal-net.eu](http://www.observal-net.eu)

## **D. Generic structure of the course**

The basic structure of this course follows the stages of validation (CEDEFOP, 2015) and includes questions for discussion and suggested resources to support the discussion.

The questions for discussion might seem quite similar under each heading but they require different kinds of responses and can be addressed in different ways using different methods and training exercises (e.g. brainstorming, role play, evaluation of case studies, involvement of role models and students).

There are eight different sections envisaged in the VINCE generic structure of the CPD training course:

- Preparation
- Introduction
- Stage 1: Information
- Stage 2: Identification
- Stage 3: Documentation
- Stage 4: Assessment
- Stage 5: Validation
- Action planning for participants

Before you start with your group of validation professionals, please read all the eight parts and plan how you will tackle each of them. This will help you to have a more focused and fruitful session.

## Preparation phase

Before the course starts, you should get in touch with the staff who will participate and request their collaboration preparing for the session in advance. Give them some time (a minimum of 2 weeks) to do this preparation, as there is quite a lot they could read and collect.

Suggested pre-course preparation for the participants:

- **Individual profiles:** each participant should prepare a one-page file which includes their role, experience, motivation, needs, expectations, possible input/contributions
- **Reading:** several areas could be covered, e.g. national or institutional regulations, European approach to migrants/newcomers, etc.
- **Reading:** an outline of institutional regulations (see especially under Assessment)
- **Reading the key resources** e.g. your own VINCE country profile, the VINCE guidelines or specific case studies
- **Evaluating** specific case studies
- **Collecting templates of documents** used in participants' institutions for the VNIL process (these will be discussed in groups in the course, for example)
- **Reading other VINCE tools and materials** e.g. commentary and case studies relevant to the topics addressed

## Introduction

The main objectives of this introduction are to make all participants known to each other, to share their expectations and motivations, and start tackling the specificities of working with migrants and newcomers.

### *Who are we?*

- Introduction and presentations from participants especially if they do not already know each other
- If they do know each other, brief introduction of what they want to get out of the course (see the individual profiles that they have written in the preparation phase of the training)
- Presentation of course programme and rationale

### *Who are the migrants or newcomers?*

- Specific groups e.g. from a particular country/region – what do we know about that: economic situation, conflict etc.
- Specific groups e.g. teachers in their former country – what do we know about that: the education system, the qualifications of teachers
- Where can we find out more?

### *Which are the organisations (associations, NGOs, etc.) that support newcomers at local level?*

- What kind of organisations help newcomers near you?
- Which types of stakeholders are these organisations?
- What kind of support can they offer? (e.g. employment, social aid, accommodation, etc.)
- Which education centres offer training for newcomers at local/regional level? What levels of education do they offer?

#### **Suggested resources:**

ENIC-NARIC<sup>3</sup> – what is it? how can we use this type of resource? Why it might be useful?  
NOKUT example: how do they work?

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.enic-naric.net>

### ***What are the rights and entitlements of your candidates?***

*Note: the legal status of the students is not directly relevant to the validation process but it may impact on their access to funding for the procedure, or support or language courses.*

- In relation to VNIL, access to HE, participation and support – where is this information and who is the person responsible?

#### **Suggested resources:**

See *Annex 1*, information sheet 1.2, on background to Lisbon Convention and information concerning migrants.

VINCE Guidelines “Welcome to Europe” and “Welcome to this country”. If your institution has a “Welcome guide” too, this is the right moment to use it: see what it includes, discuss with the group if they can think of any points that would be needed but are missing – would you add anything to our institution’s guidelines for newcomers? <https://vince.eucen.eu/guidelines/>

### ***What do we mean by validation?***

*Note: this might not be necessary if all the participants are working in the same institution, but if the participants are from different institutions or the group includes external stakeholders, we know that interpretations vary enormously even between institutions of the same type in the same countries – so it could be useful to make sure that everyone is talking about the same kind of procedure.*

#### **Suggested resources:**

Model diagrams in *Annex 1*.

Information sheet 1.3. VINCE Guidelines “Welcome to Validation” <https://vince.eucen.eu/guidelines/welcome-to-validation/> – present it and explain how it works and why it might be useful for them.

## Stage 1: Information

Giving information to candidates about what is possible and how to start the process. This is more than paper or on-line information – it involves a discussion about the general arrangements, the possibilities and the limits, and specific rules or regulations.

- How do we do things at the moment? – sharing of experience
- Is it inclusive for migrants, newcomers? – is there any evaluation or feedback from candidates? What do they say?
- How do others do it? – what can we learn from that?
- What should be added to make it better for them? – sharing of ideas
- What should be changed to make it better for them? – sharing of ideas
- What support do they need (e.g. language support)?
- Should other professionals be involved (e.g. legal advisor)? In what circumstances?

### Suggested resources:

Country profiles, case studies, real candidates invited to report their experience or to review information that is given out.

The VINCE guidelines on Europe, HE, etc. (see **section C** of this document and also the online full set of tools <https://vince.eucen.eu/guidelines/>) may be useful tools that could be given to the candidates as possible handouts or could be discussed with the candidates. It would be an introduction especially for those newcomers who have just arrived to our countries.

*Annex 4* contains a selection of case studies that could be useful. We suggest you use case study *4.1 (Norway, case 2)* in particular.

## Stage 2: Identification

This is a focussed conversation about the possibilities: the professional has to understand what the candidate already knows and can do, what s/he aspires to, and the professional and the candidate have to discuss what is possible in order to reach the goals. The final part of this discussion (or maybe the first part of the discussion in 3 below) is probably about what documentation the candidate has or has not, whether it is possible to obtain other documents, what might be an equivalent, how to get it verified, how it is possible to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in some other way (e.g. do a presentation, write a report, do a test). The candidates may need additional language support, coaching or other kinds of counselling and so it is important to identify the candidate's needs for the whole process so that s/he can be channelled into the most appropriate route through the VNIL system.

- How do we do things at the moment? – sharing of experience
- Is it inclusive for migrants, newcomers? – is there any evaluation or feedback from candidates? What do they say?
- How do others do it? – what can we learn from that?
- What should be added to make it better for them? – sharing of ideas
- What should be changed to make it better for them? – sharing of ideas
- What support do they need (e.g. language acquisition or mastering, writing skills, information about precise skills required for the jobs they seek, access to local job opportunities)?
- Should other professionals be involved (e.g. legal advisor, interpreter)? In what circumstances?
- What examples are there of alternatives to documentation?

The involvement of coaches and/or mentors (even retired or employed individuals who want to help) might be useful in the design and implementation of skills verification tools, for job readiness training. This would help to (a) identify an internship or job to fund the newcomers' studies, and also to (b) discuss and check if their skills can be transferable to a company/institution's needs in the host country. These coaches have to be experienced in the same field of activities of the newcomers so a peer mentoring approach can be developed.

### Suggested resources:

The model diagrams in *Annex 1* (1.3 and 1.4) may be particularly useful here.

*Annex 2* contains a suggested workshop activity (2.1) based on a real case example which is particularly relevant here; and an example of how applicants without documentation are moved through the validation arrangements under NOKUT (2.2).

*Annex 4* contains a selection of case studies that could be useful. We suggest you use the case studies *4.3 (Denmark, case 1)*, *4.4 (Netherlands, case 6)* and *4.2 (France, case 7)* in particular.



## Stage 3: Documentation

The third step is for the candidates to put together a portfolio of evidence to show that they have the knowledge, understanding and skills required and understand the criteria that will be used to assess them.

It is a complicated process involving range of different staff and one which is almost certainly not a straight linear process – there will almost certainly be a lot of movement backwards and forwards between stage 2 and 3

- What do we mean by a portfolio? Is everything really necessary?
- How do we do things at the moment? – sharing of experience
- Is it inclusive for migrants, newcomers? – is there any evaluation or feedback from candidates? What do they say?
- How do others do it? – what can we learn from that?
- What should be added to make it better for them? – sharing of ideas
- How can universities adapt or update their standard portfolio in order to work with newcomers? (e.g. many applicants handwrite their portfolio and the VNIL advisor can have difficulties understanding it).
- What should be changed to make it better for them? – sharing of ideas
- What support do they need (e.g. language support, portfolio development support)?
- How can other candidates help? How can students help?
- Can we get the candidates to help each other?

### Suggested resources:

Portfolio templates, case studies, people with experience, students, etc.

*Annex 4* contains a selection of case studies that could be useful. We suggest you use the case studies *4.5 (Netherlands, case 2)* and *4.6 (Greece, case 5)* in particular.

### Suggested activity:

Design a portfolio or template that can be filled out online and helps collecting clearer information from newcomers who have difficulties writing in the host country's language. Which would be the key points to be included? How would you explain each section to help users understand the way each section is expected to be filled in?

## Stage 4: Assessment

There are almost certainly national and institutional rules and regulations about how this should be done, which are quite complex. They vary in the degree of flexibility that is allowed and in the degree of institutional autonomy in the implementation; they may also vary according to the regulated professions (e.g. medicine, engineering, teaching). It could be interesting to ask participants to bring an outline of the regulations in their faculty or institution (if it is a mixed group) or the regulations which apply to their particular role in the assessment process or event (e.g. constraints or conditions on counsellors).

- How do we prepare candidates for assessment? – sharing of experience
- How do we actually assess – what methods? – sharing of experience
- Is it inclusive for migrants, newcomers? – is there any evaluation or feedback from candidates? What do they say?
- How do others do it? – what can we learn from that?
- What works and what doesn't work?
- How could we do it better? – sharing of ideas
- How can other candidates help? How can students (especially those who have already been through the process) help?
- How can members of juries/assessment panels be trained and briefed about migrants' specific needs? Should juries' composition be adapted? (e.g. number of members, background experience, etc.)

### Suggested resources:

*Annex 4* contains a selection of case studies that could be useful. We suggest you use the case studies *4.7 (Denmark, case 3)* and *4.8 (Austria, case 2)*, *4.9 (France, case 8)* in particular.

## Stage 5: Validation

The result of the assessment process is validation – formal recognition of the knowledge and skills that the candidate has demonstrated successfully. It may take different forms:

- a) A certificate or diploma of some kind
- b) The award of credits
- c) A formal statement authorising entry to a particular course
  - What are the possible outcomes of validation in our system?
  - What type of recommendations could the jury/assessment panel give? (e.g. intensive course or programme in the host country language or a university diploma? attending certain lectures as observer? acquiring additional experience in a company? writing a detailed report? etc.)
  - How well do these outcomes and recommendations 'work' for migrants and newcomers?
  - Is there a way that these could be changed/adapted?
  - How are they followed up?
  - Is there sufficient advice and guidance after the validation?

### Suggested resources:

The guidelines on 'Welcome to Validation' <https://vince.eucen.eu/guidelines/welcome-to-validation/>

*Annex 4* contains a selection of case studies that could be useful. We suggest you use the case studies *4.11 (France, case 2)* and *4.10 (Norway, case 1)* in particular.

## Action planning for participants

Once all the previous stages of the CPD have been completed, the course should include a phase of reflection on how to apply the knowledge and tools gathered in the course to real activities. As part of this reflection we propose a number of questions:

- What have I learned?
- How the learning can make me a better VNIL professional?
- From what I have learned, what can I use to improve my practice?
- Of the new tools I know now, which ones can I embed in my practice to facilitate the validation process for candidates?
- What do I need to work on/follow-up?
- Which other resources would be useful if they were available?
- What can I share with colleagues who have not participated in the CPD course?
- What can we do as a group to improve the policy and practice in our institution(s)?

Participants could also build into their planning a way of monitoring their own performance by taking note of successful stories, for example, in a diary. Or taking note of facts that they become aware of, for example: How is your new approach towards validation processes affecting candidates? How is it helping them? Do you receive positive feedback from the candidates with whom you work? Do you know if their positive experience encourages them to talk about validation with other potential candidates?

This self-analysis can help the participants to refine their approach and become more self-aware of possible obstacles or challenges. In this way, the validation professionals act as reflective practitioners who learn from their experience and can refine their practice throughout their careers.

## **Annex 1:**

### **Background information sheets**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.1 The Lisbon Recognition Convention
- 1.2 Asylum procedures and reception conditions
- 1.3 Initial steps towards integration for newcomers to a European country
- 1.4 Routes towards Labour Market integration for newcomers
- 1.5 Literature: Selected readings

## 1.1 The Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted by national representatives meeting in Lisbon on 8 - 11 April 1997. Most European countries have since ratified this Council of Europe/ UNESCO Convention – usually referred to as the Lisbon Convention.

Among the main points of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention are the following:

- Holders of qualifications issued in one country shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another country.
- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or more of the following consequences:
  - access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
  - The use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought;
  - In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market.
- All countries shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence.
- All countries shall provide information on the institutions and programmes they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.
- All countries shall appoint a national information centre, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons.
- All countries shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system within which it is issued.

[https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/lrc\\_EN.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/lrc_EN.asp)

The Welcome to Europe guide could be helpful here <https://vince.eucen.eu/guidelines/welcome-to-europe/>

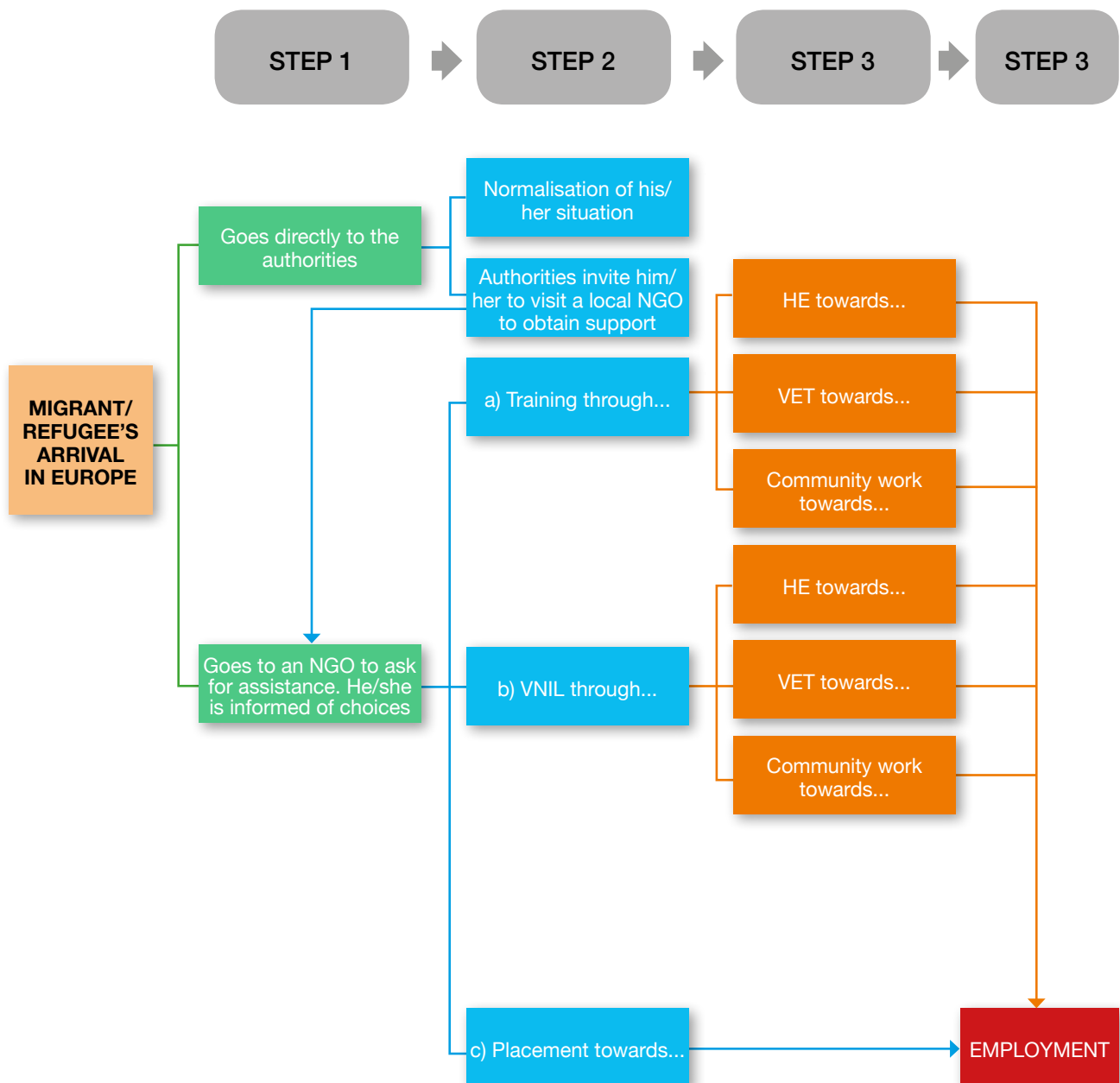
## 1.2 Asylum procedures and reception conditions in different European countries:

AIDA website (asylum information database) provides mapping and describes asylum procedures and reception conditions in different European countries <http://www.asylumineurope.org/>

We suggest consulting the AIDA website for detailed information. Below is a list of the countries for which information is available, and a link to the country report:

- AUSTRIA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/austria>
- BELGIUM: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/belgium>
- BULGARIA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/bulgaria>
- CROATIA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/croatia>
- CYPRUS: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/cyprus>
- FRANCE: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/france>
- GERMANY: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany>
- GREECE: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece>
- HUNGARY: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/hungary>
- IRELAND: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland>
- ITALY: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy>
- MALTA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/malta>
- NETHERLANDS: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/netherlands>
- POLAND: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/poland>
- PORTUGAL: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/portugal>
- ROMANIA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/romania>
- SERBIA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/serbia>
- SLOVENIA: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/slovenia>
- SPAIN: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/spain>
- SWEDEN: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/sweden>
- SWITZERLAND: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/switzerland>
- TURKEY: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey>
- UNITED KINGDOM: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/united-kingdom>

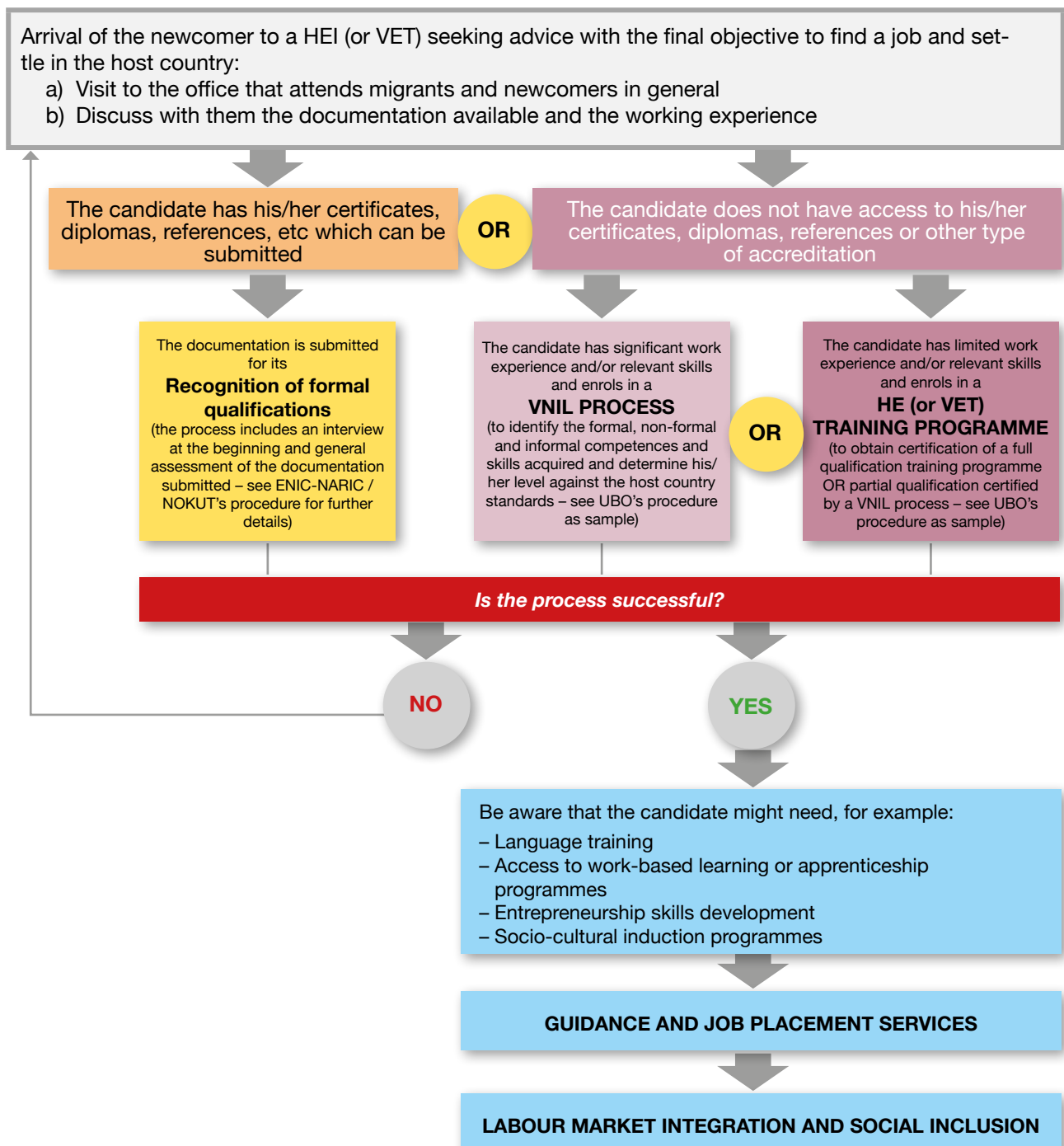
### 1.3 Initial steps towards integration for migrants and newcomers to a European country, through some kind of training (HE, VET, Community work) or a placement





## 1.4 Routes towards HE and Labour Market integration for newcomers

Note: This diagram is based on the ETF (2016) SP Qualifications diagram and has been modified by the VINCE consortium to reflect the relevance of HE in the integrative process of newcomers.



## 1.5 Literature: Selected readings

### Websites:

- **Cedefop:** the Cedefop portal for EU recommendations on Validation of non-formal and informal learning: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/da>
- **EU:** Information about legal framework and agreements among EU member states for asylum seekers: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/docs/ceas-fact-sheets/ceas\\_factsheet\\_da.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/docs/ceas-fact-sheets/ceas_factsheet_da.pdf)
- **European agenda on migration:** [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en)
- **ENIC-NARIC** (a joint initiative of the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO providing information on recognising academic and professional qualifications): <http://enic-naric.net/>
- **European Commission** - Inspiring practices: Higher Education helping newly arrived refugees - Recognition of skills, access to HE and Integration of Researchers [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/higher-education/doc/inspiring-practices-refugees-skills-recognition\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/higher-education/doc/inspiring-practices-refugees-skills-recognition_en.pdf)
- **Kiron:** <https://kiron.ngo/kiron-navigator/the-kiron-idea/>

### Official publications:

- **Council of Europe, Treaty Office;** Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region / Treaty no. 165: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165>
- **European University Association (EUA);** European Universities' Response to the Refugee Crisis (October 2015): <http://www.eua.be/Libraries/press/european-universities-response-to-the-refugee-crisis.pdf?sfvrsn=8>
- **2016 EP report on refugees:** social inclusion and integration into the labour market [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0204\\_EN.html?redirect](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0204_EN.html?redirect)
- **inHERE** – Higher Education supporting Refugees in Europe: <https://www.inhereproject.eu/>

### Tools:

- **European University Association (EUA);** Refugee's Welcome Map Campaign (February 2017): <http://www.eua.be/activities-services/news/newsitem/2017/02/06/newly-updated-eua-refugees-welcome-map-one-year-of-support-for-refugee-students-and-researchers>
- **EAR ENIC-NARIC Manual** <http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/>

### Articles:

- Royo C., *The challenge for migrants – Helping newcomers demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a new country*, within eucen Studies. eJournal of University Lifelong Learning. eucen Conference and Autumn Seminar 2018. Vol 2, No 1. © eucen Electronic Press, 2018. ISSN 2616-6674. [https://eucenstudies.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/05\\_Prof-BE\\_Royo\\_ED.pdf](https://eucenstudies.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/05_Prof-BE_Royo_ED.pdf)

## **Annex 2:**

### **Tools and templates**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 2.1 Practical workshop used with success in the VINCE project
- 2.2 NOKUT's Recognition Procedure for Persons without Verifiable Documentation
- 2.3 Some suggestions for preparing for the first interview with the candidate
- 2.4 Example of assessment form for adviser to examine a resumption of studies project
- 2.5 Université de Bretagne occidentale's portfolio template provided to applicants to apply for a validation of their professional and personal experience
- 2.6 Example of assessment form for VNIL advisors to examine and assess a Validation of professional and personal (non-formal and informal learning) of experiences application
- 2.7 Follow up sheet to share information on applicant within and outside university

## 2.1 Practical workshop used with success in the VINCE project

A case study (note that the source is not identified and the names have been changed so that the individuals cannot be identified) is provided for discussion. This could be useful as an activity in 'Stage 2 Identification' in the generic course.

Amal and Maher are a married couple from Syria who have come to your country as refugees. They are both eager to start their new life, and to continue with their professions.

### **Maher:**

- Has a 4-year Bachelor Degree in sociology
- Has worked for two years as an English teacher at an elementary school
- Has four years work experience as a social worker
- The only documentation she has of her education is the transcript for the first year of her degree in Arabic, the rest of the documentation is lost
- Since she is a refugee she does not give consent for you to contact the issuing institution or relevant national authorities about her degree/documentation
- Maher speaks Arabic and English

### **Amal:**

- Has a 2-year Associate Degree in Medical Laboratories
- Has never worked within his field of studies
- Has worked for ten years as a facility manager for different employers
- Has a copy of his Associate Degree Certificate in Arabic
- Has a copy of several job certificates, all in Arabic
- Amal only speaks Arabic

How would you assess their academic backgrounds, competences and experiences?

Share your own best practices and/or problems with the group.

Discuss how you would assess the cases.

Prepare a presentation (about 5 minutes) showing how you would assess them (one or multiple solutions are welcome) for the other participants.

## **2.2 NOKUT's Recognition Procedure for Persons without Verifiable Documentation (UVD-procedure)**

**This could be particularly useful for “Stage 2: Identification” in the generic course.**

This procedure is meant for applicants with foreign higher education qualifications (education at the level of university or university college) who cannot be granted general recognition due to missing, insufficient or unverifiable documentation. This procedure is directed at refugees and persons in a refugee-like situation. With this procedure, NOKUT attempts to fulfil Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

An applicant will be referred to the UVD-procedure if he/she has applied for general recognition with missing, insufficient or unverifiable documentation.

The UVD-procedure consists of five stages:

1. Application for recognition and referral to recognition procedure for persons without verifiable documentation.
2. Mapping of applicant's background by reconstructing the missing part of the documentation and assessment of result. Applicant is required to fill in a questionnaire and describe the courses as detailed as possible.
3. NOKUT's assessment/level placement of qualifications. NOKUT conducts preliminary interviews with each individual applicant, and assesses the level of the qualification on the assumption that the given information is correct.
4. Assessment by expert committee appointed by NOKUT. The committee consists of two academics and one representative from NOKUT. The aim is to substantiate that the person in question has completed a foreign programme of higher education studies.
5. Final assessment/NOKUT's decision on recognition. NOKUT uses the assessment made by the expert committee as a basis for a legally binding decision regarding recognition

For more information:

<https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/>

<https://www.nokut.no/en/foreign-education/Recognition-Procedure-for-Persons-without-Verifiable-Documentation/>

<https://www.nokut.no/en/foreign-education/qualifications-assessment-for-refugees/>

## 2.3 Suggested check list of points to prepare prior to the first interview with the candidate

This is a possible tool for “Stage 1: Information” of the generic course

- Obtain a CV
- Obtain a signed statement from the candidate of the type: “*I give my consent for ..... to process my personal data and documentation in connection with the assessment of my education*”
- Check the host country language level
- Ask for a diploma and evidence (or copy) by mail
- Find information about HE in the country of origin
- Find information about geopolitical context in the country of origin
- Find information about work culture and economy of middle East and Africa, for example the level of entrepreneurship and self-employment<sup>4</sup>
- Send to candidate:
  - a link to University website to identify training and curricula available
  - b link to VINCE guidelines
  - c a mail (in both languages host country language and in English) with a map of the University and the precise location of the appointment
- Prepare a form for keeping record of interviews
- Prepare a follow up sheet for each migrant to share information on applicant within and outside university

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<sup>4</sup> This kind of information can help to be aware that migrants cannot be expected to provide certain background information/ documents.

## 2.4 Example of assessment form for adviser to examine a project of resumption of studies

University staff must set up a list of criteria to assess the application of refugees and newcomers. It is recommended that this is shared with the candidate.

During interviews, advisors or other university staff members must underline the fact that resumption of studies is a real commitment and sometimes a long process.

Advisors must give a global overview of the options available for refugees. The first obvious question should be: does the training programme correspond to the applicant's field of activity or specialty available at the host University? But after this first question, VNIL advisors or other university staff members must examine different aspects of the refugee application:

- His or her motivation
- Consistency and coherence of the resumption of study project
- Financial feasibility of his or her resumption of studies project
- His or her future plans after programme completion and career plans

### Possible tool for discussion in Section 2 – Identification in generic course

#### ASSESSMENT FORM

**Applicant Name** ..... **Country of origin** .....

#### Proposed programme of study

<b>Grades</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Academic marks</i>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Academic distinctions</i></li> <li>• <i>Degrees obtained</i></li> <li>• <i>Language skills</i></li> <li>• <i>Previous experience (volunteer, work, etc.)</i></li> <li>• <i>Proposed programme of study</i></li> </ul>					
<i>Motivation/programme of study</i>					
<i>Skills expected to be attained</i> <i>Personal interest in programme of study (reason for choice, background in field)</i> <i>Future plans after programme completion</i> <i>Career plans</i>					
<i>Consistency and feasibility of the resumption of study project</i>					

## 2.5 Université de Bretagne occidentale's portfolio template provided to applicants to apply for a validation of their professional and personal experiences (based on French national regulations)

Validation of professional and personal experiences (non-formal and informal experience) - VAPP<sup>5</sup> - is the most adapted and flexible VNIL schemes existing in France for migrants applicants because of its flexibility, particularly when they have no evidence of their professional and educational background.

In the VAE (Validation of acquired experience) process, designed to obtain all or part of diploma (VAE), guidance is compulsory because this is a demanding and long process and applicants need to provide all evidence of their professional background (employment contracts, payslips, work certificates, etc.).

Normally, there is no such guidance included in the validation called VAPP. RPL advisors only have to help applicants to identify the best qualifications corresponding to their experience and to help them to identify the best solution regarding their projects. However, it seems necessary to provide guidance and support to refugees, especially if they do not have a good command in French, in order to clarify, formalise and generalise the formal and informal learning.

The following template is used by all the applicants starting a validation of professional and personal experience at the Université de Bretagne occidentale. **This is an example of a template** that could be used and adapted for migrants.

The aim of this portfolio is to give to candidates the possibility to build their evidence of prior learning.

This sample portfolio template is composed of three main parts, each corresponding to a different level of analysis:

- The candidate's background (education, professional and non-professional experience)
- A description of the candidate's activities: presentation and analysis of his/her knowledge linked to qualification being sought;
- An overview of knowledge/skills linked to the qualification being sought.

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<sup>5</sup> Validation of Professional and personal experiences: it allows a student to be enrolled at university and to follow a curriculum without having the required entry qualifications (diploma), by validating his/her professional experiences (employed or not), training courses followed, or any other personal experiences acquired outside a training system.



## PERSONAL INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS OF THE APPLICANT

**Qualification being sought: (exact name and heading of the curriculum and year):**

.....  
(e.g. 3rd year Bachelor Degree in Accounting and Finance)

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Male</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Female</b> Surname: ..... Name: ..... Usual name: .....	Photo
---	-------

Date of birth: ..... Place of birth: .....

Nationality: .....

Address: .....

Cell phone number: ..... Fixed line phone number: .....

E-mail address: .....

### Personal/Professional situation:

☐ Professional activity

- Position or type of job: ..... from: (date) .....
- Type of contract (fixed term contract, permanent contract...), part time job, full time job:

.....

☐ Job seeker

- Employment agency registration: .....
- Do you get an allowance or benefit?
  - ☐ No allowance
  - ☐ Unemployment benefit
  - ☐ Other situation .....

## **SECTION I – Covering letter**

*Please prepare and attach a covering letter 2 or 3 pages-long. Please, insert the date and your signature, and describe in detail the following aspects:*

- *Your professional aims by explaining reasons that leads to your project of validation of prior learning*
- *Which elements in your academic background, professional or personal experience allow you to follow the diploma/curriculum*
- *You can add a summary of your academic background (Lifelong long learning, initial training, continuing education), of your professional background and of personal interest, activities, etc.*

## SECTION II- Educational and academic background

### II.1- DIPLOMA/qualifications

Level	Diploma	Subjects	Educational institution (Name/place/ country)	Year	Year completed	
					Yes	No
High school						
High school diploma						
2 years degree						
3 or 4 years degree						
PhD						

Highest level of education achieved: .....

Year: .....

Work placements or internships in companies:

Name of the training	length	Educational institution (Name/place/country)	Field of activity	Content and goals

## **II.2- Continuing professional development**

If you took part in short courses, organised study visits, work placements, work-based learning, skills training, or other activities that did not lead to a certificate or diploma but were important in your personal and professional development, validation can help you get recognition for this 'non-formal learning'. Please indicate training followed throughout your career, whatever the length. Follow the example given as model.

<b>Name of the training</b> <b>Name of the training institution</b> <b>Year/length</b>	<b>Goals and programme outline</b>
<u>Example:</u> <b>Manage a team</b> CNAM Paris 2013 – 14hours	<u>Example:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the roles of leader, manager and supervisor, and the differences between them</li> <li>• build a team and manage team performance</li> <li>• delegate effectively</li> <li>• conduct basic appraisals</li> <li>• use effective communication and active listening skill</li> <li>• give and receive constructive feedback.</li> </ul>

## SECTION III- PROFESSIONAL AND/OR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

### III.1- PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

Please list the jobs and positions that you have held in your professional life (start from the most recent position). Follow the example given as model.

<b>Position</b> <b>Kind of job</b> <b>Company – Location</b> <b>Year – Length</b> <b>Type of contract</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
<u>Example:</u> <b>Head of department</b>	<u>Example:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting budgets</li> <li>• Translating strategic goals</li> <li>• Proposing departmental changes</li> <li>• Managing staff</li> <li>• Conducting research</li> <li>• Adhering to statutory compliance</li> <li>• Managing resources</li> <li>• Attending and hosting meetings</li> </ul>

### III.2- PERSONAL INTERESTS AND NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL ACTIVITIES

**If you have taken part in voluntary activities, paid or unpaid** (for example in trade unions or NGOs), **or you have an individual interest** that you have pursued (e.g. motor mechanics, ancient history, crafts) then you have learned from those experiences and validation can help you to get recognition for this 'informal learning'.

Please list in this table your personal interest and informal activities

NB: these activities must be related and linked to the qualification being sought

<b>Type of activity</b> <b>Context</b> <b>Year</b> <b>Amount of time</b>	<b>Tasks and responsibilities</b>
<u>Example:</u> Volunteer in NGO for young people 2014-6 1 day per week	<u>Example:</u> Organising and managing activities indoors and outdoors for groups of young people

### **III.3- DESCRIBING IN DETAILS YOUR ACTIVITIES (PROFESSIONAL AND NON PROFESSIONAL)**

*In the following tables, applicants must detail any educational programmes that they have followed, and any professional or non-professional experience they have, linked to the qualification being sought*

*For each job or non-professional activity, candidates are required to write an introduction describing the working environment or activity context, followed by described details in an organised and well-structured way (2 or 3 pages-long) tasks and missions achieved.*

*Please use the 1st person singular = I.*

*Questions the candidate must ask him/herself:*

- *What was the content of my task?*
- *In which context?*
- *How?*
- *What was my approach?*
- *What tools did I use?*
- *Whom did I collaborate with?*

## FIRST ACTIVITY

Please **duplicate this page as many times as you may need** to make visible each of your experiences linked to the qualification being sought.

### Introduction:

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Type of job/Position	
Company/Institution (name and place)	
Period of time (Year/month)	
Length	
Type of contract (fixed term contract, permanent contract...), part time job, full time job	
Main tasks and responsibilities (list in detail achieved tasks and missions, then develop each point carefully)	



## SECTION IV- SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

### IV.1- Skills and competences

Please use the following table to make a list of skills and competences acquired throughout your professional life. Include all the skills and competences linked to the qualification being sought. Add as many rows as you need.

Field	Skills and competences

## 2.6 Example of Assessment Form

This sample template is for VNIL advisors to examine and assess an application for validation of professional and personal learning (non-formal and informal learning) and determine the admissibility and suitability of an application.

<b>Applicant</b>				
Mr or Ms (Birth name): .....				
Married name: .....				
First name: .....				
<b>Qualification being sought:</b> .....				

	Assessed aspect	Requirements	Assessment criteria	Yes/No
ASSESSING ADMINISTRATIVE ADMISSIBILITY	REGULATORY FRAMEWORK		20 years old at least Interrupted studies since 2 years at least	
ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF THE APPLICATION	EXPERIENCE	Prior professional experience or current role in the company	Do the skills described by the candidate seem an adequate match for the skills required by the qualification being sought?	
		Prior non-professional experience	Can the transferrable skills acquired in a non-professional context be used within the framework of the qualification being sought?	
		Training	Has the candidate undertaken training related to the qualification being sought? Are the copies of qualification certificates in the application?	
			Is the CV clear and detailed enough?	
	CAREER PLAN	Professional objectives	Are his/her professional objectives clearly defined?	
		Relevance	Is the candidate's career plan in line with the qualification being sought? Is the cover letter clear enough (trajectory, career plan)?	

Following the 1st interview with the candidate, if the application is accepted from an administrative point of view and his/her career plan is relevant, the VNIL advisor will send the full application to the pedagogical **supervisor who will state his/her opinion** on whether it is **ACCEPTED FROM A LEARNING PERSPECTIVE**: relevance of the application with regard to the objectives of the qualification.

## 2.7 Follow up sheet to share information on applicant within and outside universities

A key element to provide efficient support for migrants is proper coordination and information sharing among stakeholders. The follow up sheet shown below is a sample model that is recommended to be used in order to share information about each individual, initially within university but also outside the university, because the guidance and support that might be needed involves a wide range of different units and stakeholders (e.g. social assistants, pedagogical supervisor, VNIL advisors, mentors, NGOs) during all the guidance process. Adapt it to suit your needs and the national/institutions policies (specially GDPR compliance)

### FOLLOW UP SHEET

Applicant's Family Name: ..... First name: .....

Country of origin: .....

Date of birth: ..... / ..... / .....

Single ☐ Married ☐

Address: .....

Email address: .....

Phone number: .....

Arrival date in the host country: .....

Legal status:

☐ Asylum seeker

- Asylum seekers who after 6 months are still awaiting a decision on their claim
- Asylum seekers who 6 months after lodging an appeal are still awaiting a decision on the appeal

☐ Refugee status granted, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave to remain, their spouses, civil partners and children

How long is his/her resident permit valid (for refugees)?

Official host country language level:

☐ A1 ☐ A2 ☐ B1 ☐ B2 ☐ C1 ☐ C2

Estimated level in host country language:

☐ Non speaker ☐ Beginner ☐ Intermediate ☐ upper intermediate

Is she/he currently participating in a language course?

Does she/he speak other languages? Which? .....

Name of the  
advisor at  
university

**Guidance in Schemes to support employment outside University** (by association or employment agency, for example a specific vocational training and targeted professional training in a workplace setting). Is he/she currently employed?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Is he/she a job seeker or registered at a job centre? .....

### Status and activity at University

☐ Enrolled in language courses

☐ Enrolled in an intensive course in host country language course

☐ VNIL applicant

☐ Guest student or auditor<sup>6</sup>

### Academic background

<b>Overview of your highest achieved qualification General information about your education</b>	
<b>Period of study: Year started - Year completed</b>	
<b>Name of the awarded degree</b>	
<b>Educational institution, University</b>	
<b>Place and country</b>	

### Scope and level

<b>Nominal length of study</b>	
<b>Explanation of any delay or interruption of education</b>	
<b>What was the entrance requirement for this education?</b>	
<b>Does this education give access to further study?</b>	

<sup>6</sup> Guest students or auditors are allowed to attend lectures but not allowed to take part in exams, which means they cannot obtain ECTS credit points.

**Type of academic background evidences collected:**

- Copy of academic or HE degrees in the language of the country of origin
- Translation of degrees obtained by officially approved translators
- Transcript of records

**Professional background (task, employer, duration) .....**

**Professional project/future perspectives/reasons why he/she wants to enrol in higher education programmes .....**

- What are his/her professional goals?
- What sort of job would he/she like to do?
- What specific knowledge/technical requirement, training, etc. is needed to find the desired job?
- Does she/he plan to stay in host country in the long term?
- If not, to which country (in Europe or internationally) does he/she want to go?

**Type of professional background evidences collected**

- Training certificate signed and issued by a company
- Licences obtained (for example for working with children)
- References or letters from previous employers or supervisors
- Videos or pictures of work undertaken, which substantiate the claim of possessing certain competences
- Website references
- Social network posts and publications
- Payslips
- Comparability statement issued by ENIC NARIC

**ENIC NARIC issues comparability statement for qualifications obtained abroad to holders of foreign qualifications, comparatively evaluating such qualifications with the host country HE system**

**Member of relevant associations .....**

***Recommendations and decision from the host university following the interview with the applicant:***

- ☐ *Enrolment as student*
- ☐ *Language courses enrolment to improve level in host country language*
- ☐ *Bridging courses*
- ☐ *Selected to have the support of a mentor to define his or her project*
- ☐ *Recognition of prior learning*
- ☐ *Guest student or auditor*
- ☐ *The applicant project is not falling under the competency of Higher education*

## Annex 3:

### VINCE learning support materials

VINCE has developed a number of learning support materials. Some of these materials are a key part of the present CPD course – a description of them can be found in Part C. All these materials are described below:

- i. **Guidelines** on: Europe, the host country, HE in Europe, the host HEI – these 4 Guidelines are intended for the migrants and newcomers to help them understand the culture and HE system in general and the host country and HEI in particular. A 5<sup>th</sup> Guideline is intended more for the HE professionals involved in VNIL but also includes suggested responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from the migrants and newcomers – this one is particularly relevant to the CPD course.
- ii. **Country profiles** explaining the main features of VNIL in the country: a total of 33 country profiles are available at this link: <https://vince.eucen.eu/validation-in-europe/>. short analysis of the country reports showing the key features of each country is also available within Chapter 3 of the Commentary report of VINCE good practices (see below).
- iii. **Good practices**. The VINCE project has gathered 56 case studies portraying processes of validation that can be of direct interest for the VNIL of migrants and newcomers at HE level. Sometimes these cases are not exactly HE cases or not exactly cases of migrants, but their content is totally transferable.
- iv. **Commentary report** of VINCE good practices. This is a summary and analysis of the 43 case studies of good practice examples of individual validations collected in the VINCE project with indicators showing the key features of each. Each case study is also available at this link: <https://vince.eucen.eu/experiences/>
- v. **Glossary of terms**, to help refugees and newcomers understand the more academic and technical language used in validation contexts.
- vi. **Barriers and enablers diagram** for integration of migrants and newcomers in Europe – this is a diagram showing in a very brief format the main problems that a validation professional can face when working with migrants and newcomers.
- vii. **Real testimonies** – the project has collected real testimonies showing how validation has changed the life of migrants and newcomers. These testimonies can be an inspiration and motivation to validation professionals.

Note: All the case studies are GDPR compatible. They have all been approved for use in this context and where individuals are named the names have been changed to protect their identity.

## **Annex 4:**

### **Selected VINCE case studies**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 4.1 NORWAY. Case 2
- 4.2 FRANCE. Case 7
- 4.3 DENMARK. Case 1
- 4.4 NETHERLANDS. Case 6
- 4.5 NETHERLANDS. Case 2
- 4.6 GREECE. Case 5
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## 4.1 NORWAY. Case 2

Institution	NOKUT
Interviewed Person	Saeed (31-year-old). Male. Refugee from Sudan

### I – Preparation

Saeed (31) came to Norway as an asylum seeker in 2014. He received his residence permit after waiting for 8 months, and after another 7-month wait he settled in Oslo.

### II – Awareness

Saeed graduated from his university in Sudan in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Petroleum Engineering. He started studying Petroleum Engineering because his family advised him to do so. With such a degree, he would have good job opportunities, and the field was a prestigious field to work in.

With a degree in Petroleum Engineering he would have a good chance to get a job in the oil industry in Norway. But at the time of his arrival in Norway the oil industry was suffering from a depression, and there were layoffs in the industry.

Saeed had done well in his studies back in Sudan, but his heart was not in it. He therefore decided to do something different. He understood that he either had to start studying again, in a different field, or get into the job-market and see what he could do.

While he was waiting for his decision on residency, he was informed about requirements for studying in Norway. Higher education institutions in Norway has specific admission requirements regarding language. It is required to have a B1/B2- level in both Norwegian, and English.

While in transit, Saeed participated in the intro-programme for Norwegian language that consists of 250 hours of language training. He understood that he would need to know Norwegian in order to get a job. He also found out that since he had an education from a foreign country he would have to apply to NOKUT for general recognition of his Bachelor degree.

### III – Starting up

Saeed applied to NOKUT for recognition of his foreign higher education not long after he arrived in Norway. He looked at the NOKUT web page and found all the information he needed regarding documentation requirements. Three months after applying for recognition he received the decision stating that his education from Sudan was equivalent to 240 Norwegian credit points.

After finishing the intro-programme in Norwegian language, and after waiting for months for his residency permit, he was getting tired of not doing anything, and having to wait all the time. He

decided that if he wanted to move forward in his new country, he would have to work hard to get where he wanted.

The first step was to learn Norwegian. In just one year, he managed to go from an A1 level to a B1 level in Norwegian. All he did during this time was to attend Norwegian classes, study as much as possible on his own, and get into the work-life.

He understood that he would have to start at the bottom in the order to climb his way up in the job market. Therefore, in addition to his Norwegian lessons he had two part-time jobs. He wanted to start to build a network, and his philosophy was that if you can get one job, it would be easier to get the next job. He therefore did not care much about exactly what kind of job he could get; the most important was actually getting a job, and to be able to have a language training at the same time.

#### IV – Documentation and support

One of the jobs Saeed held was as a store assistant for a Norwegian outdoor clothing brand named Stormberg. This brand has a large focus on corporate social responsibility. One of the company's policies is to employ one refugee at every Stormberg store. This is to give refugees a possibility to get access to the Norwegian labour-market, to give them work experience and the possibility to do language training.

For ten months, Saeed worked at the Stormberg store, and he learned many new words in Norwegian, work-terminology. In addition, he got training in new ways of talking to people, other ways of talking than what he learned at the Norwegian classes.

What was completely new for him was how to write work applications in Norway. In Sudan, he was used to only submitting his curriculum vitae when applying for a job, and he also needed to have a recommendation by someone.

In Norwegian classes, they were taught how to write work-applications and the students were guided in what was important in an employment process.

At the Norwegian classes, Saeed heard about a case officer-training course. He called his supervisor at the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration and asked for more information about this training course. The requirement was a B1 level in Norwegian, and he would have to attend the training five days a week. Saeed had at the same time applied for admission to a Master's degree at a Norwegian HEI, and had been given a study offer. He decided that the case officer-training course would give him a job much sooner than the Master's degree, so he decided to do the training course.

The duration of the training course was three months of theory, and then the participants were given a two months long job-practice at a Norwegian company. Saeed wanted to do his practice at NOKUT, and went through a job interview. He worked for altogether four months as a trainee, and proved to be an asset due to his skills in Arabic. After the four-month long trainee period,

he was offered a six-month temporary position as a case officer in the Department of Foreign Education at NOKUT.

## VI – Impact

In Saeed's opinion it is important to learn the language of your new country if you want to integrate into the society, and get a job. When it comes to getting a job it is not just your language proficiency that will prove important, it is also important to think strategically about where you would like to work. You cannot expect to obtain the same job in your new country as the one you had in your old country. You will have to start at the bottom, and work yourself up the ladder. It is much more important to actually get a job in the beginning, than to pass on a job because it does not suit you.

The job-culture is different in different countries, and the best way to learn about it is to start working somewhere. The experience one gets from the work will be good for both language training, networking and integration.

In Saeed's opinion it is very easy to obtain information about how to get your education recognised in Norway, and to find information about requirements for admission to studies. All information is also easily accessible online.

Information regarding how to get a job, and about any employment schemes, is much harder to find. If you are motivated and willing to make an effort, it will be much easier. Getting that first job may prove difficult, but when you get it you will get a network, and then the next job will be much easier.

## 4.2 FRANCE. Case 7

Institution	Université de Bretagne occidentale (UBO)
Skills in French language	B2
Interviewed Person	A refugee from Syria. Male. He obtained a 2-years degree (technical diploma) in Economics and Business, specialised in accounting

### I – Preparation

#### **Origin and context of arrival in France**

Mr X is refugee from Syria, from Aleppo. He arrived in France on 27/07/2017

#### **Academic background**

He graduated from University of Aleppo and obtained a 2-years degree (technical diploma) in Economics and Business, specialised in accounting in 2012-2014.

He received an intermediate accounting certificate in 2014 from the University of Aleppo.

#### **Work experience**

From 2014 to 2015, he worked as sales assistant for import/export business in a construction and home insulation company in Aleppo.

When he arrived in Greece (in Thessaloniki), from 2016 to 2017 he worked as volunteer for Apostolic Church of Pentecost, translating from English to Arabic and vice versa during his stay at the Oreokastro Camp.

He offered services to refugees (for example, distribution of baby food).

He was hired as an employee and worked as translator for 5 months by IRC International Rescue Committee<sup>7</sup>).

He worked mainly with Americans, in this context he improved his English level.

<sup>7</sup> The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers lifesaving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war or disaster.

### **Next step and projects within University of Brest**

We first met him in 2018. During the first interview in January 2018 with the objective of resumption of studies and validation of prior learning, he provided all the copies of his certificates and diploma in both languages French and in English and explained his academic and professional background.

He also provided a comparability statement<sup>8</sup> delivered by ENIC NARIC that gave us reliable information about the last diploma he obtained in his country of origin.

After another interview, we defined with him the following project: first improve his level in French, so he followed French as foreign language course at the University (8 hours each week) and secondly register as a guest student (guest auditor)<sup>9</sup> at the Institute for Business Management to attend lectures in finance and accounting.

Being enrolled as a guest auditor and following lectures allowed him to evaluate the feasibility of his project. In fact, the methodology of accounting is the same in France as in Syria.

He also realised that 8 hours of 'French as a foreign language' were not enough to improve his French level and the lifelong learning unit identified for him the possibility to obtain funding to enrol at 'French for academic purposes' This is a university diploma<sup>10</sup> dedicated to non-French speaking students wishing to study a degree course at a French university, but who do not have the necessary French language requirements to attend university classes.

Mr X has now the support of two mentors<sup>11</sup> belonging to an association called EGEE (an officially recognised non-for-profit organisation). They are 2 retired executives who worked in public or private sector and after their professional career provide guidance and support to job seekers and young people. One of the mentors was the former Rector of the Université de Bretagne occidentale.

The mentors will give him advice to improve his CV, tips to prepare job interviews and support to find an internship in a chartered accountant's office. They are also helping him to prepare the the "Institute for Business Management (IAE)-Message Score"<sup>12</sup>

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8 Comparability statement is an official document that establishes a correspondence between a foreign qualification and a level of the French national qualifications framework and the European Qualifications Framework. This document is not mandatory and is not legally binding; it serves to facilitate the understanding of academic careers. The final decision in relation to an employment application or further study is made by the employer, the training institution or other administrative institution.

9 As a guest student or auditor, people are allowed to attend lectures and not allowed to take part in exams, which means they cannot acquire any ECTS credit points.

10 It is a unique teaching programme that combines specialised French language teaching with a wide variety of activities to encourage immersion and interaction with academia and the local population. Students who have successfully completed the course obtain the University diploma and DELF certification at B2 level. DELF B2 examination is based on level B2 of the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) <http://www.delfdalf.fr/level-b2-cefr-common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages.html>

11 The Université de Bretagne occidentale (UBO) has signed an agreement with an association of retired executives. They play the role of mentors for 7 refugees enrolled at UBO; they may help refugees with exploring careers, setting goals, developing contacts, and identifying resources.

12 As other self-positioning tests in management and administration, this can be an element of appreciation of the skills of a student

This test enables the candidates to be evaluated in four key areas: general, economic and managerial culture; comprehension and written expression in French; logical and numerical reasoning; and comprehension and written expression in English. This avoids a possible error in orientation and/or rejection on the basis of the skills required. Candidates are free to enrol in the “Score-IAE Message” but it is not a compulsory part of the application to join courses of the IAE.

## VI – Impact

Mr X had an appointment with pedagogical supervisors of the bachelor degree in finance and accounting and they both agreed that he should present his application for next academic year 2019/2020. He will send his application for admission into a third year of the bachelor degree in finance and accounting and will meet the University social assistant to get a grant to fund his studies.

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who wants to join a university course in management. This test can also be helpful to the orientation of students wishing to pursue a university degree in management. They can evaluate by themselves their skills in relation to the requirements of the University training.

## 4.3 DENMARK. Case 1

Institution	VIA University College
Interviewed Person	Jawad (42 years old). Male. Migrant from Lebanon

### I – Preparation

Jawad was born in Beirut. He spent his childhood in various European countries (France, Switzerland and Germany). He and his family came to Denmark when he was nine years old. Jawad is now 42 years old, he is married and he has two children. Jawad heard about the FIF<sup>13</sup> course from his wife who is an employee at the University College, VIA UC. When Jawad finalised the FIF preparation course for the Pedagogic Bachelor study, February 2017, he started immediately in the study programme.

### II - Awareness

Jawad did not complete secondary school because of problems with dyslexia, he tells. For many years, he has been working as an unskilled pedagogue in projects and temporary occupations, especially in relation to young people and adults. For 10 years, he has been involved in projects for young people with problems related to drugs and crime. Besides, he has some experience from marketing and with management. Whatever he has worked with, he has done it without formal qualifications.

Jawad chose the FIF course for the Pedagogue bachelor programme because of his interest for and his experience with this kind of work. It was an interesting course as it also increased his interest in inclusion issues as well as it provided a deeper understanding of Danish society.

### III - Starting up

Before starting the FIF course, Jawad had a slight knowledge about VNIL. At the course, he and the other students were well informed and guided through the legal framework and regulations for the VPL process.

Jawad especially appreciates the guidance and support for the documentation and for the identification of all the work experience and learning that he was able to describe and to document.

***“It was surprising for me to realise the relevance of all my work for the field of this study,*** Jawad explains.

<sup>13</sup> preparation course for entry to bachelor programmes

#### IV – Documentation and support

The support and guidance was especially directed towards the documentation for the elaboration of the motivated study application, as it is defined. Jawad recalls this guidance as ***“very respectful from enthusiastic teachers”***.

Besides this valuable support from the teachers, Jawad points to the common fruitful dialogue among the students to help each other reflect on prior learning and the relevance of it.

Jawad also stresses the importance of the teachers’ ability to guide each of them with an individual approach.

***We are all different individuals and the teachers were good to understand what I needed in order to identify my relevant competences”.***

#### V - Assessment

The assessment was carried out mainly through a 20-minute interview with the study counsellor and the director of the bachelor programme for the Pedagogic study.

In Jawad’s opinion, the purpose of the interview was mainly for the director to make sure that Jawad’s documentation together with the interview, was valid and trustworthy.

Jawad especially remembers the question: ***Why do you want to be a pedagogue?***

Two weeks earlier, Jawad had applied for a job within an Exit programme for young people involved in banditry. Students were recruited for volunteering in the Exit programme. At the recruitment interview, Jawad was asked to define his pedagogic profile. This was difficult and quite surprising for him as he was actually not able to do so. He explains that he had done lots of work within this pedagogic field but he had never reflected on his professional identity in terms of a certain profile!

Jawad benefited from this former negative experience and brought this open-mindedly into the assessment interview, which ended up being a fruitful dialogue.

***“During the interview, it became very clear for me, what I am able to do now and what is required by me to achieve in terms of theory and terminology. I realised that I missed the professional pre-understanding of pedagogic work and the reasons for acting professionally in the exact situation”.***

#### VI – Impact

It was a surprise for Jawad that he passed the admission criteria. After the assessment interview, he did not expect so.

While having been very enthusiastic during the preparation course, he felt that the assessment interview was more for control than for real interest in him as a potential student. Jawad describes the situation of being met by a more distanced approach than he had experienced during the course.

***I did not know what they were looking for. I did not know what they paid special attention to and why?***



Right now as Jawad has studied for the first year, he tells that he is not very satisfied with the study – which, he explains, has more to do with the didactics than the profession.

Jawad explains that the preparation course helped him become aware of his interest for the educational field. However, the study is still a challenge for him. He explains:

***"I knew the work but not the profession. It has become clear for me that the education is very broad as it covers so many target groups of the pedagogic profession".***

***"As the FIF course gave me a direction towards the educational field of the pedagogic profession, I did not realise that the education covered so many angles and perspectives, theory, teaching and assignments. The study is quite boring". At the FIF course, we discussed topics from various perspectives and we all had something to contribute.***

## 4.4 NETHERLANDS. Case 6

Institution	EC-VPL
Interviewed Person	Zinah (19 years old). Female. Refugee from Syria

### I – Preparation

Zinah (19) is from Syria. She has been living in the Netherlands for two years. Zinah moved here with her father, mother and three brothers.

***“I have a HAVO diploma<sup>14</sup> from Syria. I need to get my diploma valued. I am following a language course for the Dutch state exam. I am almost finished. I want to attend an adjustment school for a year in Utrecht. I will need permission of the UAF<sup>15</sup>”.***

### II – Awareness

***“I am following the competence training (VNIL<sup>16</sup>). I am almost finished. After the year in Utrecht I would like to go in the pharmaceutical industry. I want to become a pharmacist. The UAF have to give me permission entering the study. I need to prove I can do it. I need to do the intake test in Utrecht in March, but can only do that if the UAF gives me permission”.***

***“I have learned that I possess the following competences: I am independent, I am a go-getter, I am eager to learn, I take initiative, I am caring, reliable and punctual. I want to work on being less shy and standing up for myself. I will work on my mathematical skills; I have been studying by myself. I am also going to work on my English”.***

### III – Starting up

***“The VNIL training gives me a clear view of where I am now and how I must continue. I know what I want and hope that I can achieve it. I want to become a pharmaceutical assistant because my uncle had ALS<sup>17</sup> and my grandmother passed away because of cancer. That’s when the realisation came that there is no medicine for these two illnesses and that further research is necessary. I felt powerless and want to help make people better”.***

### IV – Documentation and support

***“It is uncertain on which level I will be able to continue my studies. If the UAF supports***

<sup>14</sup> Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs diploma

<sup>15</sup> University Assistance Fund.

<sup>16</sup> In NL this process would be called VPL but it has been changed for consistency with this publication

<sup>17</sup> amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

*me and I can follow the adjustment school I would be able to continue my studies at HBO (University of Applied Sciences), or even university if I pass the adjustment year”.*

#### V – Assessment

*“At the end of the VNIL” training I will have to do an assessment. By following the training, I have become more aware of my abilities and knowledge. I enjoyed the training and at times found it difficult. I have a better understanding of what I am good at, what I need to work on and how I can achieve my goal”.*

#### VI – Impact

*“Which step I take next is dependent on the decision of the UAF, their belief in me and my ability to achieve a place in the adjustment school. The trainer of the VNIL training programme can help by letting me discover which steps I need to take”.*

## 4.5 NETHERLANDS. Case 2

Institution	EC-VPL and IVC den Helder
Interviewed Person	Amer (19 years-old). Male. Refugee from Syria

### I – Preparation

Amer (19) comes from Damascus, Syria. He has lived in the Netherlands for two years. Three months ago, his mother came over from Syria to be reunited with her son. He was studying ICT in Syria for two years and he wants to continue his studies in the Netherlands.

### II – Awareness

When Amer came to the Netherlands he did not know anything about his personal capacities. In Syria, it is not common to speak about yourself in such a self-conscious way.

***“In Syria, it is really strange to tell people that you are flexible and positive, they will just laugh at you”.***

Amer has a very clear idea about the need for learning to find a job. When Amer was studying in Syria he already knew he wanted to study abroad one day. This was the only way to rise socially. In Syria, it is impossible to get an important function without having any connections. For Amer the highest purpose would have been having his own telecom shop, but he has bigger plans. The reason he had to leave Syria was of course horrible but he chose to go to the Netherlands very consciously and deliberately. He thought the options for education in the Netherlands were the most suitable to reach his goal.

When he arrived in Den Helder he rapidly learned Dutch and he started working for the IVC as translator. He was also so interested in the training that he wanted to participate and did the VNIL process.

### III – Starting up

During the VNIL process, the ‘Spreek je uit’<sup>18</sup> session he started to think about his own capacities. Finding ways to validate his capacities was hard at the beginning, especially for skills he developed in an informal or non-formal manner. The VNIL process ended with an assessment where he needed to present his outcomes. Amer was really surprised by some of the outcomes.

***“When I was young my computer broke and there was no one that could fix it. I thought by myself: why not do it myself? I never realised this way of thinking contains a lot of my strengths: solution-oriented thinking, determination and positive thinking.***

<sup>18</sup> “Speak Out” in Dutch.

He always thought these experiences were nothing more than mere pleasant side notes. But in the end, they taught him a lot about his character.

#### IV – Documentation and support

There was not only guidance available during the VNIL process but also afterwards. Amer has close ties with the IVC and he still works for them as a translator so whenever he needs help it is easy for him to reach one of the trainers. Nevertheless, Amer is pro-active in looking for help. After attending the training, he contacted the ROC<sup>19</sup> in Den Helder by himself and arranged an admission interview.

For documentation, he focussed first on formal learning. His mother (still at that time in Syria) sent him his diploma by email. As the VNIL process continued he realised he had a lot more to offer and became aware of his informal and non-formal learning. It was much harder to find proof for these skills. To prove his construction skills, he took 'before' and 'after' photos. In the end he built up his portfolio out of a mix between formal and informal learning.

#### V – Assessment

***"I was very nervous when I had to do my assessment. You have to present yourself and that can be scary sometimes. Also, because I had to do it in Dutch complicated it a bit more but in the end, it went very well".***

The outcomes of the assessment for Amer were clear. He wanted to continue studying and his mentor helped him by pointing out study possibilities. The VNIL process is always in a group but the outcomes are individual. During the assessment, the mentor looks at the goals the participants set for themselves and helps them to contact the right organisations and institutions to get them accomplished.

#### VI – Impact

Amer has (just like all other participants) used the VNIL process to gain more information on how to set his goals and how he could accomplish them within the Dutch society, with help of the IVC. Knowledge of the Dutch language is still one of the pitfalls for Amer.

***"I still need to work on my Dutch skills. During my translator activities for the IVC I learned a lot of Dutch. When I had to translate I had to ask often what a singular word meant and I remembered it. I want to attend more training at the IVC".***

Another part that is probably even more valuable is Amer's gain in self-confidence. It can be said that the initial modesty of self-worthwhile documenting turned into more positive self-esteem and in his case has even been empowering or identity-enhancing.

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19 Regionaal Opleidings Centrum

***“I was studying ICT at the university in Syria for two years, then the war started and I came to the Netherlands. My mother sent my diplomas by email and I went to the ROC to see what they could offer me. They first told me I could start MBO-3<sup>20</sup>, but I did not agree so I showed them my diploma and explained them my experiences and now they allowed me to go to MBO-4<sup>21</sup>. I started last week and compared to the rest I already know a lot. I am always the first to tell the answer when the teacher asks a question. When I finish MBO I<sup>22</sup> want to go to HE”.***

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20 Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs niveau 3

21 Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs niveau 4

22 Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs niveau 1

## 4.6 GREECE. Case 5

Institution	Club for UNESCO of Piraeus and Islands
Interviewed Person	Mirela (29 years-old). Female. Migrant from Albania

### I – Preparation

Mirela is 29 years old and she came from Albania three years ago. She is a graduate of the Academy of Arts, she is a professional pianist.

### II – Awareness

Mirela was aware of her capacities when she was entering Greece. She had been taking piano courses since she was a child. She graduated from a Music High School and the Academy of Arts of Albania. She used to give tuition privately since she was nineteen years old. She knew her capacities could be used for both integrating and working in the host country as a piano teacher.

### III – Starting up

One of the first steps Mirela took entering the host country was to learn the language. This is how she got contact with the Club for UNESCO and a group of migrants learning the Greek language. After Mirela had created strong bonds with the Club, she was offered voluntary work as a piano teacher in the frame of the Art and Cultural lessons of the Club and be guided by professional guidance counsellors for that.

### IV – Documentation and support

Counsellors and social workers advised Mirela to translate all her diplomas. Moreover she completed her portfolio with photos of the private piano courses to students and a letter of recommendation concerning her voluntary work at the Club for UNESCO.

### V – Assessment

Mirela was highly comfortable and supported during the procedure of the assessment. Moreover, the outcome was clear for her. She had a completed portfolio, she was aware of her capacities and she was determined to continue her career as a piano teacher.

### VI – Impact

Mirela was determined to take further steps in learning and working. Due to the fact she wanted to work with children, she is planning to attend seminars of child psychology. Currently, she is already giving two private piano lessons.

## 4.7 DENMARK. Case 3

Institution	VIA University College
Interviewed Person	Maria (32 years-old). Female. Newcomer from Romania

### I – Preparation

Maria, 32 years old is from Romania. After the FIF<sup>23</sup> preparation course, she started her Pedagogic study, September 2017. She has lived in Denmark with her husband for seven years. In Denmark, they have become parents to their daughter who is now three years old.

Originally, Maria and her husband did not plan to stay in Denmark. However, after her husband graduated from his education, they decided to stay. Maria did not have a job when the child was born. When the child started in the kindergarten, Maria went to the Language center to learn Danish. She did so for nine months. Then she got a job in the kindergarten, which meant that she had to stop the language course, as this is no longer free when having a formal employment. Maria tells that she got the job because of the support of her daughter's daycare assistant as Maria showed great interest in the childcare work. She started with a temporary employment of six months. During this employment, it became clear to Maria that the childcare profession was interesting for her.

As she had learned about the FIF Preparation course for migrants at VIA UC, she decided to apply for it. Maria is an accountant by profession from Romania. To practice this profession in Denmark, it would take two more years of study.

### II - Awareness

Talking about VPL and her competences for the pedagogic profession, Maria states that she was not at all aware of the competences she had for this profession. As an accountant, she had been working with facts and figures and she never felt that she was personally or emotionally involved in the work. As Maria reflects:

***“Working with accounting is a complete different world”. ” In my study for the new profession it is much more about providing the best you can”.***

Maria tells that she became aware of her interest and competences for the area when she became a mother herself. It made a great difference for her as she had the opportunity to work with children and to have colleagues as well. When talking about other competences, which Maria has become aware of, she says that:

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<sup>23</sup> preparation course for entry to bachelor programmes



***“Though childcare is also hard work, I really enjoy being together with the children, to observe them and to compare them with my own daughter”.***

Maria was encouraged by her colleagues to keep on working with the children and little by little, she decided to apply for education.

At the FIF Preparation course, the students were informed about the coming VNIL as part of the admission application to Pedagogic study. To apply for the admission those who have not passed their secondary education in recent years must ask for VPL. Part of VPL is the development of a so-called motivated application. For the development of this, Maria believes that she was well supported by a fruitful dialogue with the FIF teachers.

#### IV – Documentation and support

Maria highly appreciates her teachers’ support to help her make the documentation for the VPL.

***“I am not so good to reflect on who I am? I am not used to it from Romania. Here, we are more heading for education, work and family”. “As an adult, I knew that we do not have the opportunities for whatever you like”.***

Maria had one week to fulfill the required documentation. For this, she used a portfolio, produced and administered by the Ministry of Education. The portfolio is called My Competence portfolio.

For Maria, ***“it felt strange to reflect so much on myself”, “I was not used to it”***

#### V - Assessment

Part of the assessment phase was a self-assessment. Maria was asked some questions to which she had to grade her answer, like: How good are you at giving messages? If Maria graded her assessment below seven, she was given an assignment to describe how she would give a message in order to measure it to more than seven.

Maria recalls it as difficult and awkward to assess herself and she appreciates the good feedback the teacher gave her – ***“in a respectful way”***.

When reflecting on the assessment, Maria finds that there was quite a narrow focus on specific subject goals and admission criteria, and not so much focused on which experience Maria brought with her.

***“The teacher did not ask about my life in Romania – there was a strong focus on my time in Denmark”***

After the VPL, Maria waited three months for the reply of her application to the study. She tells that she did not expect anything. Hence, she was very happy when she received the positive message that her application was accepted.

## VI – Impact

During the preparation course and the VPL process, Maria talked a lot with her husband about education and about how the study influences ones' self-understanding and awareness.

Maria reflects on the change and she concludes that culture definitely plays a role. She characterizes the Danish culture as individual – with a strong focus on the individual, and she mentions equality, trust and respect as aspects of the culture she has met.

Having got the access to the study she wanted, it is important for Maria to say that:

***“I got the chance to prove what I can do so that I was not forced to make a living by cleaning”.***

***“I wish to demonstrate to other migrants like me that they can have a good chance in Denmark, if they want to”.***

## 4.8 AUSTRIA. Case 2

<b>Institution</b>	Fachhochschule Burgenland – University of Applied Sciences Burgenland (Austria)
<b>Study programmes</b>	Offer a range of bachelor, master and PhD programmes as well as bridging programmes and further education courses
<b>Skills in German language</b>	German language skills are necessary for admission for most study programmes
<b>Study fees</b>	There are no study fees at the Fachhochschule Burgenland for the bachelor and master courses. A fee may be applicable for other courses
<b>Interviewed Person</b>	28 years-old. Male. Asylum seeker from Afghanistan

### I. Preparation

On 16.7.2018 an asylum seeker (M.S., male) from Afghanistan was interviewed at the Fachhochschule Burgenland by Anne Kalaschek.

M.S. is 28 years old and originally from Afghanistan. He has been in Austria since 2016. His application for asylum has been rejected once; he appealed and was interviewed a second time at the beginning of July and is waiting to hear the outcome.

He originally comes from a village in the province of Laghman, about 200 km from Kabul. In 2000, he was sent by his family to live with an uncle in Kabul to get a better education. He graduated from high school in 2009. For financial reasons it was not possible for him to go to university. He started working in the IT industry part-time and attended a college where he learned IT and English as well. He had learned English at school but stated that this was not enough to be able to use the language for work.

After completing the course, he looked for a new job as he needed money. From 2010, he worked for NATO in Kabul translating from Pashto to English. However, people from his village began to criticise his work with the Americans, making it very dangerous for him and his family. He left this job and then worked for a transport company of NATO and was sent to Dubai for training for six months. Then he was moved to Kandahar and was a site manager for five NATO offices, mainly translating and supervising the offices. In 2013 he was once again warned about the danger of working with foreigners and decided to leave Afghanistan and finally arrived in Austria.

### II. Awareness

He is keen to study IT but realises that his lack of German is a problem. He is currently learning German but is not yet good enough to follow a university course.

### III. Documentation and support

He has his documents with him and seems to think that his Afghan high school diploma is sufficient to admit him to an Austrian university, although he has not actually started to formally apply yet (because of his weak German). He is not familiar with the concept of validation; he assumes his high school diploma will be accepted here.

### IV. Assessment

He highlighted the fact that learning the local language is very important but difficult for migrants. He also mentioned the difficulties of living in a new culture, appreciating the safety of living in Austria, the importance of education and how the Austrian government takes care of its citizens.

### V. Impact

The case study once again highlights the importance of learning the local language as quickly as possible. It also once again demonstrates that validation is not known amongst migrants in Austria.

## 4.9 FRANCE. Case 8

Institution	Université de Bretagne occidentale
Interviewed Person	A Syrian entrepreneur NGO recreation worker with children

### I – Preparation

#### Origin and context of arrival in France

He is a Syrian, 39 years old. He has a residency permit, a visa because he is the husband of a scientist in France. He has the status of 'relative of scientific migrants'.

He has been living in France since 2014 and is living with his wife who is telecommunication engineer and is in the 4th year of a PhD in biomedical engineering.

He has several years of work experience but no academic background, but he obtained Al Shahada Al Thanawiya (Secondary School Leaving Certificate), that allows him to enrol at French universities.

#### Professional background

He has several years of work experience working as:

- Sales and marketing manager in a bookshop, in Damas, in 1999
- CEO at an educational centre, 2006
- Strategic development manager in a company
- Founder of several associations and NGOs (in education and health, orphan support project), Egypt (Cairo), Turkey (Istanbul), 2012
- Founder and marketing manager (in charge of public relations) of a start-up: (marketing, projects selection). This start up is aiming at developing state of the art intelligent technologies for the benefit with special focus on teenage education. The team has good expertise in teaching methodologies, programming, hardware, robotics, artificial intelligence, data mining, and medical informatics.

Currently, the focus of the company is to use Educational Robotics to improve the educational and psychological status of refugee children<sup>24</sup>.

In 2017, in Brest, he followed a programme called: skills and French as foreign language, this programme helped him to define his project. He also did three working placement as sales agent

<sup>24</sup> The applicant is still consultant for this company and work with his partners thanks to teleworking.

at Leader Price (a supermarket), as a receptionist in a fitness centre, and a recreation worker within a city organisation.

Now he is following a 'French as foreign language' course at UBO.

## II - Starting up

He request for a resumption of studies in DUT GEA<sup>25</sup> 2 years degree in Management of companies and administration. However, on the basis of his experience, it would be more appropriate and efficient to register in vocational bachelor's in Management of business, because it is available as an apprenticeship, so he can work in a company at local level and develop his skills.

He met the person in charge of the vocational bachelor, who found his profile very interesting and with good experience and suggested that he apply for a validation of his personal and professional experiences (VAPP<sup>26</sup>)

Validation of Professional experience and non-formal learning: allows a student to be enrolled at university and to follow a curriculum without having the required entry qualifications (diploma), by validating his/her professional experiences (employed or not), training courses followed, or any other personal experiences acquired outside a training system.

## III – Documentation and support

He produced a PowerPoint of 11 pages in French, that presented his main skills and formal and informal learning acquired in the framework of work experiences as volunteer.

His presentation also included other evidence such as:

- Website links
- Social network references (twitter, facebook)
- Pictures
- Videos links on You tube
- Recommendation letters

## V - Assessment

- 10 minutes of presentation
- 15 minutes of discussion
- The jury (assessment panel) was composed of 9 members:
  - Chairman of the jury
  - Director of UBO technology institute

<sup>25</sup> Diplôme universitaire de technologie en gestion des entreprises et des administrations

<sup>26</sup> There are various forms of VNIL in France for different purposes and situations. VAPP is one of the simplest to use in relation to higher education, sometimes combined with the most general form called VAE.

- Deputy director of UBO technology institute in charge of vocational and apprenticeship programmes
- 3 managers of academic departments<sup>27</sup>
- 1 teacher
- The manager of resumption of studies and validation of prior learning at UBO
- The person in charge of the vocational bachelor by apprenticeship called Management of Business

The applicant was very motivated and felt comfortable during interviews with teachers before the jury, but presenting his experience in French was very difficult.

The decision of the jury was that the applicant was not allowed to register in the course.

They suggested that he apply for a bridging course, which is a 'French for academic purposes' university diploma (DU FOU) that is dedicated to non-French speaking students wishing to study a degree course at a French university, but who do not have the necessary French language skills for university classes. Registration fees for this diploma are 3650 euros.

The applicant reported that the main difficulty for him was the documentation and preparation phase. He had only one week to prepare his application file and collect all the evidence and had no support from an advisor to prepare his application.

He prepared his presentation with his wife, who can speak and write French. So effectively he documented his prior learning alone (without the support of a mentor or an advisor.)

## VI – Impact

He met again the person in charge of the department of Management of companies and administration at the UBO Institute of technology, who helped him to register as guest auditor<sup>28</sup> for a 2 year degree in Management of companies and administration.

Moreover, he sent an application to begin a training course outside UBO to become a Recreation worker, because he likes working with children and worked with children as a volunteer and in the framework of his company.

He is now following a course in a training centre called GRETA (a national network of public education centres for adults), in order to become an activity leader for children because his start up is strongly linked with development of pedagogical tools for children and he had the opportunity to work with children before.

<sup>27</sup> Managers from the departments of Mechanical engineering and production technology, Electrical engineering and industrial informatics, and Biological engineering

<sup>28</sup> As guest students or auditors people are allowed to attend lectures and not allowed to take part in exams which means they cannot acquire any ECTS credit points. As a guest auditor, you are permitted to use the University Library. The registration fee as guest auditor is 150€

## 4.10 NORWAY. Case 1

Institution	NOKUT
Interviewed Person	Ahmed (36 years-old). Male. Refugee from Kurdistan, Iraq

### I – Preparation

Ahmed (36 years-old when starting his validation process) is from Kurdistan, Iraq. He came to Norway in 2010 as an asylum seeker when he was 30 years old.

### II – Awareness

Ahmed had studied a B.A. degree in Sociology in Iraq, and graduated in 2004. After graduating he worked two years as a sociology teacher, and then for several years as a social worker for Handicap International in Iraq. He wanted to continue working within his field of study in Norway, and understood from the start that in order to be able to use his foreign education in Norway he would have to apply for general recognition of his education. Shortly upon arriving in Norway he applied for general recognition of his education to NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education).

### III – Starting up

When Ahmed first applied to NOKUT for recognition of his foreign higher education in 2010 he received a negative decision. Since Ahmed had undertaken his education in Iraq, NOKUT was not able to recognise his education via the ordinary recognition procedure. Since 2005 there exists a special recognition procedure where Norwegian higher education institutions are responsible for conducting a recognition procedure regarding the academic content of an educational programme.

Ahmed contacted the University of Oslo regarding recognition of his education, but the process ended in vain. He continued to contact NOKUT every fourth month in the hope that NOKUT eventually would be able to recognise his education.

Applicants who have their qualifications from a country where the political situation as of today makes it impossible to verify the education documents are not able to have their education recognised through the ordinary recognition procedure. In 2012 the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research gave NOKUT the task to develop an improved procedure for the recognition of higher education qualifications for persons who apply for general recognition, but whose applications are rejected because they have no possibility of documenting their qualifications, or of verifying them in a satisfactory manner.



This was done to ensure that persons would be better able to be acknowledged on the Norwegian labour market for their qualifications.

In 2013 Ahmed was contacted by NOKUT and asked if he wanted to participate in the new recognition procedure which he replied positively to.

#### IV – Documentation and support

Since he arrived in Norway in 2010 he had participated in the compulsory language course in Norwegian intended for asylum seekers, and he had completed the B1 level in Norwegian.

As a part of the recognition procedure, he was asked to fill out a questionnaire to reconstruct his education. After submitting the questionnaire, he was asked to come to NOKUT for a preliminary interview with his caseworker.

In this interview he was asked questions about his education, and given information about the UVD-process<sup>29</sup>.

#### V – Assessment

Ten years after he graduated, he was going to be tested in his knowledge. At first, he received a home assignment, and then he had an interview with two professors within his field of studies.

Since it was ten years ago he had been studying he started to look for books on sociology at the library, and he asked family and friends to send him books from back home.

At the interview, he felt that he could easily answer the questions. The two professionals made him feel comfortable and they had a good conversation touching upon sociological theories, and social trends in the Norwegian society. He felt that the interview went well, and that the professionals were pleased with his answers.

#### VI – Impact

The professionals wrote a positive report on Ahmed's competences in sociology. Based on this NOKUT sent Ahmed a positive decision where he was granted general recognition of his Bachelor degree in sociology from Iraq.

#### VII – Impact on longer term

***“Before I received the recognition I was constantly wondering if I was as valuable in Norway as I was in Iraq. The thought of going back to my homeland was always present. I applied for all kinds of jobs, from garbage collector to social worker. I wrote about 400 work applications without receiving a proper answer. When I thought about studying, I thought that I would have to start from scratch, and I did not want to say aloud that I had an education.”***

<sup>29</sup> Recognition Procedure for Persons without Verifiable Documentation (UVD- procedure). See annex 2.2. for full details.

***Now I feel that I am as valuable as before, and that Norway appreciates my background and effort. Now I do not think about going back home, I am happy about my work, and the future of my daughter is assured. After receiving my recognition, I chose only to apply for relevant jobs, I only wrote about 10 work applications, and was called in for four job interviews. I actually had to turn down two job offers! Now when I am thinking about studying I am only thinking about doing a Master's degree. Moreover, most importantly of all, I can shout out that I do have an education!***

***The Norwegian Directorate for Immigration gave me as a refugee a future in Norway, and the recognition from NOKUT gave me my past back in order to have a better future."***

## 4.11 FRANCE. Case 2

Institution	Université de Bretagne occidentale
Study Programme	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of a Master Degree in private law
Interviewed Person	Refugee lawyer from Central African Republic

### I – Preparation

#### **Origin and context of arrival in France**

Female

Date of birth: 14 January 1971

Country: Central African Republic

French speaking country

She fled from her country in 2013 because of the War, with support of French embassy and an international organisation that provide support to refugee lawyers.

#### **Academic background of the applicant:**

Masters' Degree with a focus on Business Law in Central African Republic. Then recognised by the Central African Republic Bar in 2007.

#### **Professional Background**

Lawyer in her country from 2007 to 2013

Regulated profession

A lawyer who has no evidence of her higher education qualification.

Her case is at the moment, the unique case of a refugee who has followed a validation procedure in UBO

#### **Next step and projects within UBO**

Her project is to register in 2nd year of a Master Degree in private law.

### II - Awareness

***“The National Council for the French Bar awarded me a certificate recognising my skills. I then decided to resume my studies and validate my experience in UBO and made an appointment in the office dedicated to the validation of prior learning and resumption of studies.”***

### III - Starting up

A first appointment with an advisor starts a **VAPP**<sup>30</sup> (Validating professional experience process).

VAPP allows a student to enrol at a University and follow a curriculum without having the required entry qualification (diploma), by validating professional experience (employed, or not), courses followed, or any other personal experiences acquired outside a training system.

Conditions for access to this validation process: 20 years old at least, and having interrupted studies for at least 2 years.

The different steps:

1. Guidance to define the project: meeting with REVA (office dedicated to validation of prior learning and resumption of studies) counsellor and submission of a VAPP portfolio
2. Testing or validating which includes an assessment of prior experience by a pedagogical committee
3. The final evaluation of the file by the pedagogical committee
4. Result: Allowed or not allowed to register  
**If agreement:** registration in courses  
**If refusal:** proposition of another effective possibility

The members of the pedagogical committee are teachers of the diploma in which the candidate wants to register

### IV – Documentation and support

***“I could provide documents about my professional experience: lawyer’s professional name tag, attestation of training period in my country and in France, and a press article. But I didn’t have any evidence or documents to prove my curricula and diploma (my academic background).”***

### V - Assessment

Assessment of the file was made by the pedagogical committee.

The candidate was not allowed to register in 2nd year of Master Degree.

The pedagogical committee ruled that: Her application does not meet the prerequisite to be enrolled in the Master, mainly because her studies were focussed on practice and not so much on theory, which is fundamental knowledge to access the 2nd year of Master degree.

The candidate was offered the option of registering in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Master Degree.

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<sup>30</sup> See footnote 24 for further reference.

## VI – Impact

The applicant gets an assessment report that sets out the decision of the pedagogical committee. She was satisfied with the outcome and will resume her studies next academic year, because of health problems.

She fled war in a context of violence, so her trauma and emotion resurface.



Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) is a powerful tool to give second chances to citizens. If this tool is used with newcomers, who are trying to settle down in our society, VNIL becomes an essential instrument to support these candidates. However, not all the validation professionals have the knowledge and preparation to help them. Especially because there is no formal training for validation professionals.

This document describes a generic structure of a Continuing Professional Development Course (CPDC) that aims to give the reader insights and ideas in organising staff training for validation professionals who are working with candidates from other countries, during their processes of adaptation to our society. The course structure has been designed so it can be adapted to any institutional, regional or national environment with flexible timing.

