Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning for higher educated refugees and migrants. A *VINCE* case study analysis.

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Learning throughout life is important for everyone, whether individuals, organisations, schools or institutions. Linking education or, to be more precise, learning to social participation, inclusion and career-opportunities, and the changes in prevailing attitudes on learning, are important themes that allow us to understand the current transition towards a lifelong learning society. This is all the more relevant if we analyse this transition on the personal level of higher educated refugees and migrants, integrating in a 'new' country.

The Erasmus+ project *Validation for inclusion of new citizens in Europe (VINCE)[2]* focuses on a key phenomenon that can be distinguished as change-maker in the transition of refugees/migrants to new careers in their new country: the process of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNIL). This case-study analysis investigates the phenomenon from both the top-down or system-perspective as well as the bottom-up or individual perspective. The system is analysed on country-level across Europe and the input from 11 interviews with staff members involved in the VNIL-process in several countries; the analysis of the individual level is based on 43 in-depth case studies of migrants and refugees. The main questions to be answered are how and to what extent is VNIL facilitated across countries in Europe and how is this accessible for the target group of higher educated refugees and migrants? The two groups are defined as *migrants within Europe* and *refugees coming from outside Europe*. Both groups are expected to undergo substantially the same VNIL-process and experience the same kind of impact on their learning-, career- and life-objectives in their new country. The objective of this analysis is to describe the state of the art of VNIL in HEIs for the target groups, to analyse good practices and to recommend how VNIL for refugees and migrants can be implemented effectively in Europe's HEIs.

VNIL is presented in its process-oriented framework, covering the roles and responsibilities of the main stakeholders: refugees/migrants, higher education institutes (HEIs) and employers. The aim of the framework is to show the potential of VNIL in dealing with a diversity of learning goals as a matchmaker between these main stakeholders. This will help in demonstrating how and where to set up interventions for strengthening VNIL as a matchmaker for the sake of creating time- and money-effective and tailored learning-strategies on a win-win-win-basis for all stakeholders. Isn't it after all – as stated by Paolo Freire in the 1970s – that learning above all is a personal ánd social process that makes sense '*because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing — of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't*.' (Freire, 2004, p. 15).

The phenomenon of VNIL

The phenomenon of Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNIL) is set against the background of the transition from the industrial age to 'the learning society' (UNESCO, 1996; WRR, 2013). In this transition, the function of education and training and the role of learning is a critical success factor for supporting and guiding the transformation of the social and political life into a participatory society in which the dissemination of knowledge and the provision of learning opportunities are important pillars (Gelpi, 1985; Hobsbawm, 1994; Delors, 2013). Such a 'learning society' can be defined as a society in which learning is considered important or valuable, where people are encouraged to continue to learn throughout their lives, and where the opportunity to participate in education and training is available to all.[3] The UNESCO International Commission on the Development of Education already in 1971 perceived the making of such a society as a major challenge:

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2 *See* Annex 1. Also: http://vince.eucen.eu.
3 www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues.

If learning involves all of one's life, in the sense of both time-span and diversity, and all of society, including its social and economic as well as its educational resources, then we must go even further than the necessary overhaul of 'educational systems' until we reach the stage of <u>a learning society</u>. For these are the true proportions of the challenge education will be facing in the future. (Faure, *et al.*, 1972, xxxiii).

In answering this challenge, it seems logical to step up to the role that VNIL can play in fostering the social and economic participation of all people, as VNIL can provide access to learning and help shape the learning that enhances people's career opportunities. VNIL is a process that, independent of a learning programme, focuses on recognising, valuing, validating, accrediting prior learning experiences from formal, non-formal and informal domains for the sake of and capitalising on and further developing personal competences. In this way, VNIL can function as a personalised and context-driven process, and is geared to connecting the various stakeholders during learning (acquisition) and formulating the contributions of the stakeholders involved in this process (participation). *Acquisition in participation* is key to VNIL since it builds upon personalised ownership of learning. VNIL therewith concerns learning processes which allow individual learners to allocate themselves an active role within the 'learning society' when it comes to achieving personal, civil and/or social effects. Civil effect means achieving a learning outcome in the context of a qualification standard within the education system. Social effect is focused on results which are relevant to job profiles, targets, participation goals, or assignments. Personal impact may mean achieving empowerment, career and study orientation or personal development.

The VNIL-process

Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNIL) as an organising principle of lifelong learning reflects the change towards a learning society in which the individual learner has ánd can take more responsibilities for her[4] own, personal learning process (OECD, 2004; Duvekot, 2014). It also means that the individual learner changes the existing 'balance of power' in learning processes because she will be steering lifelong learning too with her portfolio. In this portfolio, the learning outcomes that she has achieved are documented together with the relevant evidence. In many cases the portfolio - containing evidence and reflection of personal learning achievements – might even encompasses an action plan for personal development. Such personalised portfolios create a new balance within learning as a process and contribute to the individual's social identity; above all, they show the road-map for personal development in the context of the organisation and the society.

The emphasis on learning outcomes is in line with the development of common structures of education and training across Europe and is associated with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (CEC, 2006a, 2006b). Thus, VNIL as such contributes to the removal of barriers for access to learning opportunities and for the mobility of labour between countries and between sectors. At national levels, learning outcomes are crucial for modernising qualification systems and frameworks, stimulating economic development and promoting social cohesion and citizenship. These goals are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Goals of VNIL (Duvekot, et al, 2007)

Individual	Stimulating ownership and self-investment in learning; demonstrating personal learning outcomes; building up a learning biography or portfolio.
Organisation	Building up competence management and facilitating employees' self-investment and articulation of competences; designing lifelong learning strategies in Human Resource Management.
VET/HE	Matching learning to real learning needs; offering learning-made-to-measure; focus on learning outcomes; facilitating lifelong learning strategies.
Civil Society	Activating citizenship; transparency of learning outcomes in the civil society; linkages with other perspectives (qualification, careers).
Macro-level	Concerns policies of governments and social partners and their responsibilities for creating favourable conditions for lifelong learning through laws and regulations.

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4 Let's be clear: whenever the reader encounters words like 'her' and 'she', (s)he may also read 'his, 'him' and 'he'.

Important preconditions for creating a learning society in which these goals can come to full bloom, are:

1. A transparent, output-oriented knowledge infrastructure.
2. Creating trust by (a) focusing on the already available quality-system based on the judgement of the existing assessment processes used by schools, colleges and universities and (b) prospective quality-management by introducing external peer-reviews on quality-issues for the future.
3. A transparently structured education sector, that allows a flexible flow of participants from one layer of sector to another, both intra- as well as inter-sectoral.
4. Universal, transparent and interchangeable procedures and reports on valued competences.
5. Close relations between educational institutions and their associates/partners (enterprises, government institutions, institutions in the field of (re)integration of unemployed into the labour market).
6. Creating possibilities for developing and executing individual tailored learning paths.
7. Facilities for financing flexible, tailor-made individual learning routes, such as an individual learning account.
8. Clear communication to citizens about the technical and financial arrangements for education and for VNIL.
9. An individual right for portfolio-assessment and career-advice, linked to a VNIL-process.

The starting point of VNIL is that initial training for a career no longer suffices. It is important to acknowledge that competences (knowledge, skills, attitude, aspirations) are constantly developing. This means recognizing that someone always and everywhere - consciously and unconsciously – learns through:

- *formal learning*, which occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to qualification or certification.
- *non-formal learning*, which is learning embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) but with an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.
- *informal learning*, which results from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification (Cedefop, 2009).

VNIL is a process that strengthens the role of the individual in shaping her lifelong learning. It can demonstrate the outcomes of learning in terms of profit (status, money), efficiency (time, customisation), and enjoyment. The learning-programme-independent nature of the assessment enhances the effects that VNIL can create for personal objectives in terms of qualifications, career development and personal meaning. In general, VNIL consists of five consecutive phases (Duvekot, 2016):

1. *Engagement* focuses on being aware that someone has already acquired many formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences that might be valuable. A person can exploit these competences through self-management. A wide range of aspirations may be achievable thanks to a person's experience, and can therefore be deployed to determine an individual learning objective. Such learning objectives range from activation in the person's private life, empowerment, personal development and career development in education and occupation to creating flexibility and mobility in order to access or move up the job market.
2. *Recognition and documentation* focus on identifying and organising individual learning experience and relating them to personal competences. The description of these competences acquired through paid and voluntary work, qualifications, leisure activities, etc. is recorded in a portfolio. The portfolio is supplemented with evidence backing this up, such as certificates, job reviews, references, documents, videos or pictures which substantiate the claim of possessing certain competences.
3. Under *assessment*, the content of a portfolio is assessed and evaluated. Assessors compare the competences of an individual with a selected yardstick that is used as a reference for the intended learning objective. Depending on the yardstick used, this comparison is used to draw up an advisory opinion on possible validation at personal, organisational, sectoral or national level in the form of certification, career advice or personal valuation. The advice is based on the output or learning outcomes to be validated, and presented by the individual at the assessment. This output is used as a basis for drawing up advice on how somebody can cash in on her development, and subsequent steps.
4. The *impact of* VNIL is focused on validating the assessment advice in terms of cashing in (direct impact), possibly in combination with designing specific learning packages and/or work packages (indirect impact). In the context of 'learning', a benefit could be the formal acquisition of exemptions or an entire qualification. In the context of 'work', it might involve being allocated a particular job, a promotion or a horizontal (same job level) or vertical (another job level) move. Finally, the benefit may also be something

more personal, such as creating a personal profile, self-empowerment, or a vision on personal development. Benefits may create direct or indirect effects. The difference can be described as a cashing-in effect or development-orientated effect.

5. The last phase entails *anchoring*, or structural implementation of VNIL in all areas of the individual's life. The results of an VNIL approach may have a structural effect on the personal and social organisation and orientation of all actors. At an individual level, the anchoring of VNIL is strongly related to the relevant context. Anchoring is also possible at an organisational level, especially if the organisation wants to be able to use VNIL structurally for specific purposes in the context of human resources and learning strategies.

Figure 2 presents the five phases of the VNIL-process as distinguished in the VINCE-project in their sequentiality. Making optimal use of the process requires going through the first three steps to reach direct impact in the 4th phase. For structurally anchoring the impact in the learner's context it is essential to embed VNIL in the processes of learning (VET, HE) and social systems (HRM, occupational). After completing a VNIL-process a learner might set-up a new VNIL-process with new learning objectives. This is how VNIL supports lifelong learning strategies that essentially are recurrent and enriching a person's experiences and activities in the learning society.

Figure 2. Phases of the VNIL-process (Duvekot, 2016)
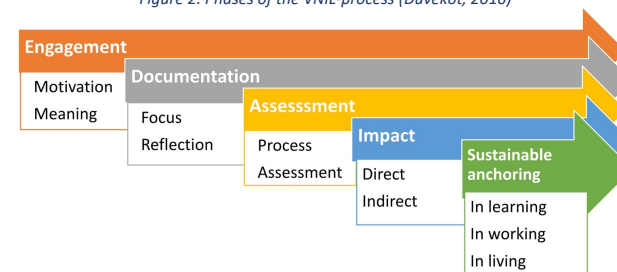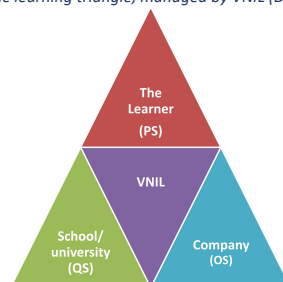

VNIL in 'the learning triangle'

The main assumptions underlying the VINCE-analysis on the interlinkage of VNIL in HEIs and participation of refugees/migrants in their new country are that:

1. VNIL puts people into a position where they realise that they already possess valuable learning experiences, which they can exploit to shape personalised learning.
2. Learning usually takes place in a variety of contexts, but is ultimately carried out by the learners themselves, in consciously or unconsciously created learning situations.
3. VNIL is about ownership of the value of one's learning experiences and the further development steps a learner can (co-)design for a variety of learning purposes: employability, social inclusion, empowerment, mobility, qualification, enjoyability, etc. VNIL supports this ownership by demonstrating personal value and ambition to the learner and by capacitating the experts in the learning and social systems to be able to facilitate and support the learners in their ambitions.
4. There is more to learning than just education, which implies that schools should be able to capitalise on learner's extracurricular learning experiences. This means, being aware of and able to afford the value of what someone already has learned and determining what can be learned next. This awareness is based on the acquisition of learning and participation in learning. Ideally, awareness, acquisition and participation are the successive stages that a person should go through to undergo personalised learning at a HEI.

The context for applying VNIL best for the purpose of integration of refugees and migrants is made up of the dialogues in a 'learning triangle' with three main actors: 'the learner' as *competence bearer with a personal competence standard (PS) or portfolio*, 'the employer/organisation' as *competence requester with occupational standards (OS)* and 'the school' as *competence enricher with qualification standards (QS)*. See figure 3 for these interlinked positions in the triangle. The last two actors might also fulfil each other's roles as 'requester' and 'enricher'. The connection between these actors when managing learner's demand for learning creates a

dialogue on how to match learning demand by making transparent which learning outcomes – with respect to the articulated learning objective of the learner - have already been achieved, what learning is still needed/demanded and how to fill-in a personalised learning strategy.

Figure 3. The learning triangle, managed by VNIL (Duvekot, 2016)

A learner's agency articulates the possibilities which, in principle, exist between the actors in this 'learning triangle'. This basically means that linking actors like refugees and migrants by VNIL for the sake of a personalized learning road in HE for the sake of integration in the new country, obliges everyone to be aware of the value of various stepping-stones in this process:

1. *Raising awareness* of the necessity and opportunities of lifelong learning for learners in any given context is at the heart of the process of validating personal (prior) learning experiences. Without this, learning will remain school- or company-steered and cannot effectively be based on individual talents and ambition.
2. *The portfolio* is introduced as the red thread in the process. The portfolio is designed and filled with personal 'value', its content is assessed, and an advice is added on how to reach out to qualification- and/or career-opportunities. The portfolio is subsequently enriched by further learning, tailored to personal learning needs, style and context. Finally, after successfully finalising the personalised learning trajectory, the entire process of validation, then, can become recurrent since the new learning or development results will be added to the original portfolio. This enriched portfolio might be the basis for new development steps and start a new VNIL process. This can be called the "portfolio-loop" (Duvekot, 2016).
3. *Self-assessment* is a crucial element because without this a learner can only partially become co-designer of her personal development. A learner needs to be focused on her own prior learning achievements before linking to a pre-set standard in learning or social processes. Self-assessment or -reflection aims at personal development, career-planning and/or creating flexibility and mobility of the learner. It adds value by providing the basis for learner-steered development and career-planning, stimulating self-reflection on personal development, supporting self-managed learning and acting and stimulating learners to document continuously their professional- and personal development.
4. *The role of the assessor* is vital for starting up personal development. Reliable assessment is the *bridge-builder in the learning triangle* between the PCP of the learner and specific development steps linked to QS's or OS's, advised by the assessor. An assessor has three main functions: (1) raising levels of achievement, (2) measuring this achievement reliably and (3) organising the assessment cost-effectively. Assessment is the judgement of evidence submitted for a specific purpose; it is therefore an act of measurement. It requires two things: evidence and a standard scale. (Ecclestone, 1994). Evidence is provided with the portfolio of the learner. The standard that will be met, depends on the specific learning objective. This means that the assessor has to be flexible with regard to the diversity of learning objectives in order to provide learner-oriented validation and/or valuation. Good quality and a high success-ratio of further development steps depend on a good assessor.
5. Regarding the *development-steps* one might say that, when following the personalised path of VNIL, lifelong learning is extended to a wider range of objectives from learning to certification/qualification and from learning to empowerment and employability. This calls for strong involvement of the learner herself and of stakeholders that are involved in establishing systems for validation like 'educationalists' and ministries but also employers and trade unions.

6. Proper *evaluation and feedback* are necessary to structurally anchor or embed the process into personal behaviour and in learning and social systems.

Analytical framework for VNIL in HEIs for refugees/migrants

The above described five phases of the VNIL-process form the analytical framework for this case-analysis: engagement, documentation, assessment, impact and sustainable anchoring. This five-phases framework differs from the usual phasing of VNIL-processes in Europe in four stages:

1. *Identification* of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning.
2. *Documentation* of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning.
3. *Assessment* of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning.
4. *Certification* of the results of the assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate. (Cedefop, 2015, p. 14)

The four phases are included in the analytical framework for the case-analysis of VNIL in Europe's HEIs for the target group of refugees/migrants. The added value of the wider phasing of the VINCE-project with the phase of 'sustainable anchoring' is that it broadens the focus of the analysis to two levels: the system-level and the individual level. The long(er)-term impact of VNIL in HEIs for the target groups is important for the analysis since certification in itself is valuable but only holds a short-term impact when the certificated migrant or refugee doesn't link it to more sustainable social and economic participation in the new country. The 5th phase therefore helps distinguishing the various ways in which VNIL can be anchored in all areas of individual lives and in supportive systems of HEIs and on the labour market.

The system-level is analysed in the country-analysis and the individual cases in a qualitative case-analysis based on interviews and desk-research with the target group and staff members of HEIs. The indicators for analysing the state of the art in Europe's HEIs when it comes to affording VNIL for refugees and migrants are explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

System analysis of VNIL in European HEIs

The country analysis is essentially a system analysis of the features of European HEIs operating VNIL within national domains for *learning* (qualification standards/frameworks, non-formal education), *working* (Human Resources Management systems, 3rd sector systems, occupational standards) and *living* (civil society standards, citizenship, 'Bildung', personal life). The input comes from 34 European countries in a total of 37 country-based reports. Belgium and the United Kingdom comprise two and three regional reports respectively. Next to these reports a total of 11 interviews with VNIL-staff members in various countries provide input for the analysis

The data-collection was structured in generic questions covering five categories:

A. The approach to VNIL on national and/or regional level as recorded in laws, creating a legal framework for opportunities of designing, applying and evaluating VNIL in the domains of learning, working and living.
B. VNIL offered in HEIs by affording the linkage of prior learning outcomes to qualifications by a process of identification, documentation, assessment and certification of.
C. VNIL offered on the labour market by social partners (employers, trade unions) for linking prior learning experiences to employability perspectives by means of facilitating the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of prior learning outcomes.
D. VNIL offered in the third sector for linking prior learning experiences to civil society perspectives by means of affording identification, documentation, assessment and certification of prior learning outcomes.
E. The funding of VNIL on national level and/or by NGOs or HEIs.

The data from the 37 European countries were grouped in five categories with 13 distinctive aspects. This grouping is shown in table 1. With respect to the data some remarks:

- Sources for this analysis are the country reports and 11 interviews with staff members involved in VNIL in these countries, both produced in the project. These reports are based on (1) the country reports of the Inventory of Non-formal and Informal Learning (Cedefop, 2017; web.ref. Cedefop). Data are also derived from OECD, national, sector and regional reports, produced by ministries, research institutes, social partners and/or regional authorities (Singh & Duvekot, 2013; Singh, 2015; Braňka, 2016; OECD, 2017)

- Some boxes might be empty due to a lack of information or unclear data.
- When validation in HEIs only encompasses identification and documentation of prior learning outcomes this generally means that only formal learning outcomes are addressed.
- Indicator 7 on 'certification' might entail partial or full certification.

Table 1. Country-analysis for VINCE (system-analysis)

Country	A National approach Policy			B Validation in HEIs Phases				C Labour market perspectives		D Third sector perspectives		E Funding VPL in HE	
	1 Nat.	2 Reg.	3 NO	4 Iden.	5 Doc.	6 Ass.	7 Cert.	8 YES	9 NO	10 YES	11 NO	12 Nat.	13 Sector/NGO's
AUSTRIA			X	X	X				X	X		X	
BELGIUM (NL)		X		X	X	X	X	X		X			X
BELGIUM (FR)		X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
BULGARIA			X	X	X				X			X	
CROATIA			X	X	X			X				X	
CYPRUS			X	X	X			X				X	X
CZECH REP.	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X
DENMARK	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
GERMANY		X		X	X			X		X		X	
ESTONIA			X	X	X			X				X	
SPAIN	X			X	X			X		X		X	
FINLAND	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X
FRANCE	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X
ICELAND	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
IRELAND			X	X	X			X				X	
ITALY	X			X	X			X		X		X	
GREECE		X						X				X	X
HUNGARY		X		X	X				X			X	
LATVIA	X			X	X			X		X		X	
LIECHTENSTEIN	X			X	X	X		X					
LITHUANIA			X	X	X	X			X			X	
LUXEMBOURG	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
MALTA	X			X	X			X				X	
NETHERLANDS	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
NORWAY	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X
POLAND	X			x	X			X				X	X
PORTUGAL	X			X	X			X		X			
ROMANIA	X			X	X				X			X	X
RUSSIA			X						X			X	
SLOVENIA			X	X	X				X			X	X
SLOVAKIA			X					X				X	
SWEDEN	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
SWITZERLAND		X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X
TURKEY	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	
UK ENGLAND & N-IRELAND		X		X	X	X		X				X	X
UK SCOTLAND		X		X	X			X		X			X
UK WALES	X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X
%	51.4	16.2	32.4	91.2	91.2	45.9	37.8	81.1	18.9	37.8	59.5	56.8	27.0

The country-analysis was carried out on the basis of a framework (see table 2) with four criteria leading to a classification of countries and their VNIL-application in HEIs:
1. The presence – or not – of a legal framework for HEIs to build a VNIL-policy on.
2. The scope of VNIL: integrating VNIL-procedure with a focus on formal, non-formal and/or informal learning.
3. The funding of VNIL by national arrangements, NGOs and/or the HE-sector itself.
4. The linkage of the short-term impact of VNIL for accessing HE-programmes with the longer-term impact of perspectives for employability on the labour market or in the third sector.

Table 2. Framework for system-analysis of VNIL-application in Europe's HEIs.

	National legal framework	VNIL capitalising on formal, non-formal and/or informal learning	Funding on national level and/or NGO/sector	Impact on education, labour market and third sector
1	Yes	Formal + non-formal + informal learning	National + NGO/sector	All three perspectives
2	Yes	Formal + non-formal OR informal learning	National OR NGO/sector	Two out of three
3	-	Formal	National	One out of three
4	-	-	-	-

The data from table 1 were interpreted according to the analytical framework and led to a grouping of 4 existing systems on country-level in which the five phases of the VNIL-process are applied, ranging from *broadly* applied to *marginally or none*:

Group 1 consists of countries having (1) a favourable legal framework for applying VNIL in education and public and private sectors, (2) operationalised VNIL in HEIs, able to take care of prior learning experiences of formal, non-formal AND informal nature, (3) funding available on nation AND sector and/or NGO levels and (4) opportunities for anchoring the outcomes of VNIL to all systems in HE, labour market AND third sector.

Group 2 consists of countries having (1) a favourable legal framework for applying VNIL in education and public and private sectors, (2) operationalised VNIL in HEIs, able to take care of prior learning experiences of formal and of non-formal OR informal nature, (3) funding available on national OR sector and/or NGO levels and (4) opportunities for anchoring the outcomes of VNIL to two of the systems in HE, labour market OR third sector.

Group 3 consists of countries having (1) a favourable legal framework for applying VNIL in education and public and private sectors, (2) operationalised VNIL in HEIs, able to take care of prior learning experiences of only a formal nature, (3) funding available only on national level and (4) opportunities for anchoring the outcomes of VNIL to only one of the systems in HE, labour market OR third sector.

Group 4 consists of countries having (1) no favourable legal framework, (2) not operationalised VNIL in HEIs, (3) no funding available whatsoever, and (4) no opportunities for anchoring the outcomes of VNIL to the systems in HE, labour market or third sector.

Visualized in a map of Europe (Figure 5) a geographical pattern can be seen:
- The countries in Group 1 are situated in the north and north-west of Europe: Scandinavia, Finland; the Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg), France and Switzerland (esp. French-speaking).
- Group 2 consists of countries spread across north-west, south and central Europe: Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.
- Group 3 is spread across the central, eastern and south-east parts of Europe: Austria, the Baltic States, Cyprus, Greece, Liechtenstein, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.
- Group 4 is located in eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Russia.

Figure 5. VNIL-application in HEIs in European countries in 2017

VINCE individual case studies of VNIL in HEIs for refugees and migrants

The template for collecting good practices of individual cases in which any kind of validation of the target group's prior learning experiences was part of the integration process in the new country, was structured according to the five phases of the validation process. (See annex 2 for the template) The template contains a number of guiding questions for each phase of the process:

1. The 1st section deals with the data in general: actors involved, and a typology of the VNIL-processes offered to the respondents.
2. On the 'awareness' of the value of personal skills and competences and how they might be used in the new country for access to HE and tailored HE.
3. On 'starting up' the validation-process by means of information on validation-opportunities.
4. On the 'documentation and support' given and/or self-help in this phase in preparing the personal portfolio.
5. On the 'assessment' process: the steps taken, the objectivity, the personal experience.
6. On the 'direct impact' of the assessment: access to, (partial) certification and/or tailored learning offers.
7. On the 'longer-term impact': linking the outcomes of VNIL and further learning in HE with labour market, third sector or personal opportunities.

A total of 43 individual cases from 8 European countries have been collected[5] and analysed. The countries reporting on individual cases are: Austria (7 cases), Denmark (3), France (6), Germany (5), Greece (5), Hungary (2), the Netherlands (10) and Norway (5). Thirteen more cases were collected with evidence from VNIL-professionals involved in the process of integration of refugees/migrants. This case-analysis however is only based on the 43 individual cases of higher educated refugees and migrants. The target groups of migrants and refugees experienced the VNIL-process more or less in the same manner, being individuals seeking recognition and accreditation for civil, social and/or personal perspectives in their new country.

1st indicator: origin

More than half of the respondents originates from Arab states: 14 from Syria and nine from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan and Tunisia. Nine cases originate from migrants within Europe (Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Germany, Kosovo, Romania) and 11 in total for Africa (Angola, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia) and Asia (Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Sri Lanka).[6]

		T	%
Origin of respondents	Asia	5	11,6
	Africa	6	14,0
	Arab states	23	53,3
	Europe	9	20,9

2nd indicator: typology of VNIL

A typology of the VNIL-services offered is based on questions in several categories in the questionnaire. This typology consists of the scope of recognising learning outcomes (formal, non-formal and informal) and the VNIL-services offered for getting access to VNIL (information and guidance, diagnostic tools, portfolio-training) and getting access to the HEI (language training, mentoring, additional competence capacitation, acculturation).

		T	%
Typology of VNIL offered in European HEIs to refugees/migrants	General information on VNIL and access to HE	41	95,3
	Access to VNIL:		
	- Information on VNIL	38	88,4
	- Focus on formal learning	41	95,3
	- Focus on formal and informal learning	29	67,4
	- Portfolio-template	29	67,4
	- Guidance on VNIL	30	69,8
	- Diagnostics (digital, self-assessment)	9	20,9
	- Portfolio-training	12	27,9
	Access to HE:		
	- Language training	26	60,5
	- Mentoring/tutoring/guidance	16	37,2
	- Acculturation	26	60,5
	- Preparatory competence development	8	18,6
	- Formative advice on (further) learning options	12	27,9
	- Tailored (flexible) learning options	12	27,9

Information-provision on VNIL for students is in general deemed crucial (Cedefop, 2017). In countries of category 1 with a developed VNIL-system and with HEIs willing and able to utilise VNIL in a wide sense, information-provision is geared at linking a migrant's or refugee's learning wish to the best fit in HE: information on VNIL on the one hand and on the tailored learning options [the programme (why), the content (what) and the form of learning (how and where)] on the other hand. In the other categories, information-provision is limited to the availability of VNIL-services corresponding with the category. Almost all HEIs provide some kind of information in general on the access to HE, with a side note that this information provision is 'coloured' strongly by the scope of VNIL and the willingness/possibilities of offering tailored learning programmes.

In Saeed's opinion it is very easy to obtain information about how to get your education recognized in Norway, and to find information about requirements for admission to studies. All information is also easily accessible online. [NO2]

X got guidance in Austria - most useful were his friends. People from official services didn't help him much, mostly because they couldn't give advice in English language, but also because the advice given wasn't useful or even harmful regarding his success at the assessment procedure. His friends and peer were a great help to him, but also general advice by the university was important, even though the university staff wasn't trained to give proper advice in English language, and they were not always as supportive as they could have been. [AU9]

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5 The number of individual cases might rise due to an open call for cases in the VINCE-network. This call lasts till the end of 2018.

6 See for the classification of countries in world regions: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/worldwide/regions-and-countries/.

Access to VNIL depends largely on the design of the VNIL-process: is it aimed at formal as well as non-formal and informal learning, is guidance available in the VNIL-process, are self-management of competences and a portfolio-training afforded?

Almost all HEIs provide information on their VNIL-supply and are able to validate formal learning outcomes. About 2/3 of the respondents was offered guidance in their VNIL-process and was offered diagnostical tools for self-assessment (SWOT-analysis, competence-diagnostics). Less than 1/3 had the option of a structured portfolio-training for preparing the portfolio-assessment. A portfolio-template was issued to 2/3 also. When only validating formal learning experiences the template is not necessary.

Access to HE is divided into options for integrating in HE-programmes (language and acculturation), guidance (mentoring and formative advice) and tailored learning options.

Language training (the new country's language) and some form of acculturation were offered to more than 60% of the respondents. These offers were in general part of a preparatory phase before entering the HE-programme itself. The same goes for the time invested in preparatory competence development to fill in specific gaps for the HE-programme to be entered, e.g. statistics, English; a small group of eight (18,6%) respondents got this offer. More than 1/3 had the assistance of a mentor or tutor and less than 30% was supported by a formative advice on their further learning and had the opportunity of entering a tailored programme in HE.

3rd indicator: prior situation of the refugee/migrant

The main background of the respondents is a combination of HE-qualification and related work experience on HE-level as input for a validation process at HE-levels in their new country (more than 50%). More than ¼ either has a background with a HE-qualification from the country of origin or work experience on HE-level. Less than 20% doesn't have a HE-qualification nor HE-level work experience but has the ambition and self-knowledge of reaching out to a HE-level.

Prior situation of refugee/migrant		T	%
	HE diploma + work experience	22	51,2
	HE + no work	7	16,3
	no HE + work	7	16,3
	no HE + no work	7	16,3

4th indicator: Awareness of personal value

Almost all respondents, especially the ones with an HE-qualification and HE-level work experiences are aware of the potential value of their prior non-formal and informal learning outcomes for linkage with HE-levels. More than 60% of the respondents were already aware of this before their VNIL-process whilst the rest (about 37%) became aware during or right after the VNIL-procedure at a HEI. Their conviction, however, was foremost based on their prior formal learning and less on their non-formal learning.

Besides teaching, Abadi has worked with management. To his opinion, he should be an attractive employee as quite many Danish companies employ English-speaking specialists. He wonders why the Employment Centre did not introduce him to such companies. [DK1]

Awareness of the value of personal learning experiences		T	%
	Before the process	27	62,8
	During	11	25,6
	After	5	11,6

5th indicator: motivation for integration

'Motivation' refers to the respondent's willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process. Almost 70% of the respondents was already motivated for integration by means of matching personal qualities with the demand for qualities in the new country. Due to their HE-level in their country of origin their motivation was targeted at HE-level. 16% became motivated during the VNIL-process and 14% based their motivation purely on the outcome of the VNIL-procedure and only thereafter linked their motivation to a more personalised motivation.

When he arrived in Austria Mohamed was 70% aware of his personal capacities but not sure how his capacities could be used for integration. The first important step for him was to learn the German language. [AU2]

Motivation for integration in the new country		T	%
	Fully self-motivated before VNIL	30	69,8
	Motivated during VNIL	7	16,3
	Fully steered by VNIL	6	14,0

6th indicator: objectives for integration

Although the focus of the respondents was on utilizing VNIL for access to HE, almost half of the respondents looked beyond HEIs and aimed at social and economic opportunities in their new country. VNIL in HE is therewith more a temporary phase in their personal plan for integration on the longer term.

Next to these objectives several respondents indicated that to them the validation and subsequent learning process also contributed to their integration because it helped them in making contacts with local organisations and people. In this way the integrative process is strengthened from both ways by HEIs and by the respondent's more private environment.

J. said that it would be very important to be open-minded to get in contact with people living here. He managed to get in contact with Germans after living here for three months. Making music (as a singer in bands) or cooking helped him very much to make new friends. [DE1]

Objective for integration with VNIL		T	%
	Entering HE	22	51,2
	Strengthening personal qualities	2	4,7
	Social & economic opportunities	19	44,2

7th indicator: awareness of the value of learning

For the majority of the respondents the awareness of the value of their prior learning experiences aimed at a one-dimensional objective for participation by means of reaching out to an HE-qualification for creating further perspectives for integration. This objective was furthermore strengthened by the intention of making clear by means of VNIL what the concrete prospect was of capitalizing on one's prior learning experiences in their new country. And linking this to a realistic option for qualifying and integrating.

The next step I want to take is to work in IT as a software manager. Of course, I will learn a lot in formal and informal ways. At the moment I don't want to follow any formal education other than my integration. [NL9]

Importance of learning in order to integrate in the new country		T	%
	Linkage with a specific objective (for participation)	25	58,1
	Self-review (what can I do?)	18	41,9

8th indicator: facilitation of VNIL

VNIL processes are strongly focused on information on the VNIL-process, explaining the ways of working of the VNIL at the HEI and on the guidance for VNIL. 17 of the respondents (39,5%) also got post-VNIL guidance in the form of a formative advice for further learning.

Facilitation of the VNIL-process *more answers possible		T	%
	Information on the VNIL-process	38	88,4
	Guidance during the process	30	69,8
	Assistance after the process	17	39,5
	No facilitation	4	9,3

There were tests available for assessing my competences, and skills for meeting the entry-requirements of the bachelor-programme in law. Knowledge-tests were offered and tests on learning style at university

level. My prior learning experiences were actually Dutch-based experiences. So, they were integrated in the overall testing if I could meet up to the standard of the bachelor-programme. [NL10]

9th indicator: funding of VNIL

More than half of the VNIL-procedures was funded by national governments or the EU. More than 30 % was financially supported by the HEI itself or by an NGO, like the University Assistance Fund in the Netherlands.

		T	%
Funding of the VNIL-process?	Process funded by government	17	39,5
	Process funded by HE or NGO	14	32,6
	Process funded by EU	6	14,0
	No answer	6	14,0

10th indicator: guidance in VNIL

The majority of the respondents documented prior learning experiences with assistance of a mentor or guide, either from the HEI or an NGO. About 1/3 has been taking care of the documentation themselves.

Jawad especially appreciated the guidance and support for documentation and to identify all the work experience and learning he could describe and document. "It was surprising for me to realize the relevance of all my work for the field of this study". [DK3]

The group-steered guidance was offered at the International Women's Centre in Den Helder, the Netherlands. Nine respondents took part in this training.

		T	%
Guidance in VNIL	Prior learning documented by learner	14	32,6
	Prior learning documented guided	29	67,4
* more answers possible	Prior learning documented in a group-steered process?	9	20.9

11th indicator: assessment

The indicator 'assessment' deals with different forms of assessment which all focus on the assessment of a person's learning experiences, whether acquired informally, formally, or non-formally. In all forms of assessment, the personal norm of valuation is always leading, while the social norms of valuation from qualification systems and job systems may possibly be used as frames of reference. Such an *assessment* firstly includes all types of self-assessment, such as self-examination and self-valuation. The next priority is linking what has been learned personally to the normative framework of an organisation or qualification, or a personally-set objective. Assessment then acquires the significance of assessment *of*, *for* or *as* learning: there is either a direct effect (cashing in on the outcome of the assessment) or a prospective effect, or continuity of learning through development and further development of a person in terms of set learning objectives:

*Assessment **of** Learning measures learner performance. Assessment **for** Learning provides feedback throughout the process. Assessment **as** Learning encompasses Assessment **for** Learning where the learner monitors their progress and reflects on their own learning.* (Bray en McClaskey, 2013, p.11)

summative outcomes

Summative outcomes of VNIL are geared at a retrospective valuation, meaning looking back into one's personal learning history and valuating it's worth set against an aspired learning objective.
60% of the summative outcomes was linked to a qualification standard in HE. A group of less than 30% used the VNIL-process for getting a better grip on a career-ambition and, with this objective clear, linked this outcome to summative-usage for getting exemptions and shortening the necessary HE-qualification for reaching out to their career-perspective. Such a combination of qualification and employability in general strengthens a respondent's agency for going through VNIL for access to HE (Duvekot, 2016).

Mirtcho had to face a particular problem with the assessment. He was aware of his capacities, although it has to be considered that he had no evidence of his previous education at the Agricultural Academy. ''I

had to prove my capacities. I had to be trusted by an employer even if I could not document my former education.'' [GR2]

		T	%
Assessment of learning: summative outcomes	Summative outcome qualification-oriented	26	60,5
	Summative outcome career-oriented	12	28,6
	Summative outcome for recognition	5	11,9

formative outcomes

Formative outcomes of VNIL are geared at a prospective valuation of one's learning biography, meaning looking forward into one's personal learning path and using the learner's history to design a tailored programme.
Almost 80% of the respondents received a formative advice, of which the majority was also getting an advice specifically oriented on learning opportunities. The majority of this group did expect a formative outcome.
The nature of the formative advice was for more than half of the respondents' group specifically tuned in to language learning for realizing a (more) tailored learning (48%) or working (11%). For smaller groups this was more than an advice for meeting general requirements of HE in their new country and was directly linked to the personal design of their tailored learning in HE (14%) or an occupation (16%).

Resumption of studies and recognition of prior learning office suggested him to start a validation process through a VAPP: Validating professional experience process. He agreed to redefine his project to become English teacher in France. An advisor will set up an appointment with him to advise him and to find a curriculum for next academic year. [FR4]

		T	%
Assessment for learning: formative outcomes of VNIL	A general formative advice is formulated	34	79,1
	The advice is linked to a learning objective	32	74,4
	The outcome was an expected outcome	31	72,1
	No outcome	9	20,9
* more answers possible	Formative outcome function-oriented	7	16,3
	Language-learning for qualification	21	48,8
	Formative outcome qualification-oriented	6	14,0
	Language-learning for a job	5	11,6
	No answer	4	9,3

reflective outcomes

Reflective outcomes of VNIL is a personally internalized reflection of the respondent on her VNIL-process. It entails a reflection on the process itself (the own role and responsibility in VNIL) and on the outcomes (personal awareness of prior learning and its value for further learning; personal ownership in terms of having a better grip on the what, how and why of the tailored learning ahead).
In this dual sense, almost 60% perceived the VNIL-process as a learning process in itself and more than half of the respondents' group became more self-aware of their strengths and personal ownership of the learning path ahead due to the VNIL-process. Also see indicator 12 for more insight in the kind of personal ownership of learning occurring.
Such reflective outcomes in general strengthen ownership of learning by transferring responsibility for success from others (HEI, employer, a.o.) to the learner. Consequently, the learner values the experience and the result of effort. When learners understand how to channel their interest and curiosity, they gain the ability to motivate themselves. When learners act on their interests and motivation, they begin to understand the power they possess to support their learning. When learners understand the relationship between effort, strategy, persistence and use of resources to meet learning challenges, they gain the power to control what they learn. And when learners begin to own their learning, they gain a prized possession to protect, build, and maintain for a lifetime. In other words, they create their learning independence. (Rickabaugh, 2012; Duvekot, 2017).

		T	%
Assessment as learning:	The assessment itself is experienced as a learning experience	25	58,1
	No answer	18	41,9
	I am aware of my skills	18	41,9

reflective outcomes of VNIL	I am aware of perspectives for integration	6	14,0
	I am empowered	2	4,6
	No reflection	17	39,5

12th indicator: articulation of ownership

In the light of the former indicator, the respondents' ownership occurring due to the VNIL-process can be interpreted as 'strong'. If a learner becomes aware of the value of her learning experiences for her pursuit of goals in life, she also might acknowledge full ownership, entailing the own responsibility for creating opportunities for participation or even co-design of her own learning and development process in life.

In the VNIL-process of the respondents this kind of ownership already occurred while documenting personal learning experiences for almost ¼ of the group. More than 2/3 became more empowered or intrinsically motivated for creating learning opportunities built on the value and acknowledgement of their prior learning. Only a small group of about 10% wasn't strengthened in their ownership by VNIL.

During the interview it became very clear for me, what I am able to do now and what is required by me to achieve theory and terminology. I realized that I missed the professional pre-understanding of pedagogic work and the reasons for acting professionally in the exact situation. [DK3]

Articulation of ownership	Ownership raised by documenting & presenting	T	%
		10	23,3
	The process strengthened empowerment	24	55,8
	Ownership was intrinsic	3	7,0
	Ownership still lacking	4	9,3
	No answer	2	4,7

13th indicator: ownership of learning

Ownership refers to the autonomy of the individual learner and her personal sense of owning her learning process. This includes both the preparation and implementation of this learning process, as well as achieving milestones in this process: these might be summative (qualifications, partial qualifications, formal validation of informal work, etc.), formative (shaping learning and career opportunities, etc.) or reflective (empowerment, shaping identity and becoming aware of personal values).

Whilst almost 40% of the respondents already felt their ownership of learning, the VNIL-process strengthened furthermore for almost half of the group (47%) this ownership in terms of empowerment.

For me the most important thing I learned during the assessment was not the outcome. For the first time, I was looking at my own future by focussing on what I wanted and not what others wanted for me. [NL1]

We might state in this respect that VNIL is a useful process for steering the respondent's empowerment with a focus on the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape one's life. This implies control over resources and decisions and focuses on the voice of the people when they start participating and negotiating with the other actors in the learning arena on the why, how and what of further learning (Narayan, 2005). Such empowerment challenges the existing education system and demands the design of learning-made-to-measure in different settings and for different purposes.

As a next step in their ownership of learning a majority of the respondents felt the VNIL-process called for full (65%) or partial (28%) responsibility for managing and following-up their participatory objectives in the new country through an HE-learning path.

For creating a sustainable lifelong learning attitude for staying tuned in to the competence-needs of their new country, the respondents only formulated this in confirming the importance of informal learning experiences (37%) or – more general – the necessity of staying on top of their personal capacities. Practicing lifelong learning however remained for half of the group an obscure activity.

I think I can do a lot of things here and I am in the right county. But there are so many barriers. It is not always easy to get what you want. E.g. I want to work as an interpreter here. But here in Germany there is a special training in certified school for interpreters. But as I get money for unemployed people (Hartz IV in German) I will not get any more money if I am a student. And there is no financial support for students (BaFög) if you visit such a school for interpreters. And I would get much money if I worked as an interpreter

without a certificate. But if I start studying English literature at the LMU I get financial support (BaFög). And then I hope that I can work as an interpreter because of my university certificate plus the languages I learned through my whole life. And: I studied English literature in Syria for three years and I don't want to throw this away. [DE6]*

1st ownership = personal empowerment	Ownership already before the process	T	%
		19	39,5
	Ownership during the process	20	47,4
	No ownership	5	13,2
2nd ownership = personal responsibility	I am fully responsible	28	65,8
	I am partly responsible	13	28,9
	I am not responsible	1	5,3
	No answer	1	5,3
3rd ownership = lifelong learning-attitude	Focus on informal learning	16	37,2
	Importance of own capacities	6	14,0
	No answer	21	48,8

14th indicator: co-design of learning

Co-design is the theme that defines the true nature of ownership of learning. Without an element of *co-design*, an individual can neither be a 'partner in learning', nor can there be any personalised learning (Duvekot, 2016). This is because unless the individual can participate in shaping and implementing the learning process, learning cannot be fully/partially tailored to the input and learning needs of the individual learner concerned. In this sense, *co-design* is the activating agent in utilising learning trajectories for objectives like integration and participation in a new country. Moreover, where *ownership* principally focuses on creating a sense of ownership of personal values and learning experiences, *co-design* creates a 'learning action plan' from these values and learning experiences, allowing the overall design of the respondent to be made in close consultation or even an open dialogue with the other *learning partners* (teachers/HEIs, employers/labour market a/o 3rd sector) involved in the selected learning process.

When considering this kind of co-designing learning almost half of the respondents became aware of the importance or even the necessity of learning and actively self-steered this awareness to creating a dialogue with the HEIs to establish a personalised learning trajectory that would meet the personal learning needs in terms of co-designing content, form and objective of the learning programme. The smaller half (41%) was steerable in co-designing the same dialogue.

In addition to starting at a Norwegian language course, she started volunteering as an event assistant at one of the universities in Oslo. Slowly she was expanding her network in her new homeland, and she managed to get a job as a research assistant at the Department of Journalism and Media studies at the university. [NO4]

Co-design (1): activated ownership of learning	Articulated lifelong learning attitude	T	%
		20	46,5
	No articulated lifelong learning attitude	14	32,6
	Unclear	9	20,9
Co-design (2): the learner perceives herself as 'partner in learning'	The learner actively seeks alliance with partners (schools, employers, etc.)	21	48,8
	The learner is steered in creating alliance	18	41,9
	The learner doesn't seek alliance	3	7,0
	No answer	1	2,3

15th indicator: actual impact of VNIL

When analyzing the real impact of VNIL for the respondents a division can be made between learning, working and personal impact. All forms of impact are linked to participatory objectives of the respondents in their new country.

Actual impact of VNIL	Impact is entering HE	T	%
		15	34,9
	Impact is expected to enter HE	4	9,3
	Impact is self-responsible for next step	2	4,7

Duvekot, Rosa & Duvekot, Ruud (2018). *Validation of non-formal and informal learning for higher educated refugees and migrants – A VINCE case studies Report*. Available at: https://vince.eucen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/VINCE_WP2_Op2-5_Final_19Oct18.pdf

Impact is entering other learning	5	11,6
Impact is getting a job	7	16,3
Impact is expected to get a job	4	9,3
No answer	6	14,0

The learning impact is about truly entering HE for the sake of getting a qualification that will help acquiring employment in a later stage. 1/3 of the cases really entered HE. With a small group (9%) expecting to do so after bridging activities like language learning and filling-in deficits in pre-education. Another small group (11%) entered other learning programmes at a VET-level.

Interesting is that a substantial group (16%) found a job due to the VNIL-process or expects to find a job (9%) quickly and only a small group (14%) couldn't answer the question on actual impact (yet).

And last but not least, a small group (4%) became self-responsible for the next step in their career, being entering HE or another kind of participatory step. Although small, this group represents an important cornerstone of the VNIL-process: becoming empowered and owner of one's learning for any purpose: civil, social or personal.

The potential application of this refugee meets the criteria, that are part of the profile of applicant who want to validate a Phd. He is lecturer and published papers in international magazine. The specific scheme that will be proposed to this applicant to validate his PhD. This scheme is available since 2008 at Université de Bretagne occidentale. Presentation of the procedure :
- *RPL and resumption of studies office studies the consistency of the request*
- *The manager of the doctoral school studies the pedagogical admissibility of the request, on the basis of a pre application form*
- *The applicant must write an application form explaining his or her experience with the help of a RPL counsellor and with the support of an expert (teacher, the owner of a Higher degree research)*
- *A jury assess the file and meet the applicant (the jury determines if knowledge and skills are acquired and if he has to provide an extra assessment*

[…] He is presently following French as a foreign language courses at University. We will organize him a meeting with the Vice rector for innovation and research at our University, to find a solution to give him access to a laboratory within University to continue his work and research. [FR5]

Cross-case analysis

The cross-case analysis of the country and individual case-studies yields more detailed information on (1) the VNIL-system in HEIs for migrants and refugees and (2) the impact of VNIL in HEIs on migrants and refugees.

System analysis

On the system-level the main analytical aspects of VNIL in HEIs are a favourable legal framework, funding and affordance of VNIL in practice and linkage with social perspectives on the labour market and/or in the third sector. In the European context, VNIL can result in a particular perspective of further learning or another participatory objective. This impact can be stronger the more favourable conditions are in place in HEIs.

The most favourable conditions are present in countries with (1) a favourable legal framework for applying VNIL in education and public and private sectors, (2) an operationalised system for VNIL in HEIs, able to take care of prior learning experiences of formal, non-formal and informal nature, (3) funding available on nation, sector and/or NGO levels and (4) opportunities for anchoring the outcomes of VNIL to the various competence-based systems in HE, labour market and third sector.

Four groups of European countries can be distinguished where the VNIL-process with regard to these conditions is optimally located, semi-optimal, marginal and absent. See figure 5 for this geographical division. In Europe therewith, favourable conditions are either in place (group 1) or partially in place and under construction (groups 2 and 3). A small group of countries where such conditions are still absent (group 4) should be able to follow the good practices in other countries when the time's ripe[7] for them to also design, implement and evaluate VNIL their learning and social systems.

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7   It goes without saying that for EU member states the time's actually already ripe since the challenge put forward by the Council of the European Union was to recommend all Member States to have in place, no later than in 2018, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to obtain a full or part qualification on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences (CEU, 2012).

Overlooking the evidence in the country-reports and the interviews with staff members and with regard to the grouping of the countries into four categories of countries, one can deduct that most favourable for utilising VNIL in HEIs seems to be:
- On national level, policies and legal frameworks supporting the VNIL-process need to be in place.
- The existence of a transparent national qualification system or framework in which also the HE-levels are described, is a precondition for the setting-up of accessible VNIL-processes.
- Active information-provision and raising awareness of the value of people's informal and non-formal learning experiences pay off when linking these experiences to obtaining civil, social or personal impact.
- Offering counselling and guidance to target groups with difficulties in accessing HEIs.
- Assessment-services are crucial in VNIL-processes. Summative assessment is generally executed, although formative assessment or reflective assessment (by means of self-assessment) is also possible in case of designing further learning trajectories.
- For all services offered, professionalising staff members is important, not only for methodological expertise but especially for creating an open mind towards and awareness of the value of informally and non-formally acquired learning outcomes that might be assessed as equivalent to formal learning outcomes in HE-programmes.
- In terms of funding, initiatives are mostly government-funded but there is also evidence of NGOs and HEIs investing in VNIL-processes for specific target groups.

Individual analysis

On the level of individual refugees and migrants the main analytical aspects are agency, information and guidance, the VNIL-process phases and ownership. The individual case-analysis demonstrates that:
- The characteristics of policy development not only show the slowness of implementation of policies in practice, but also that an open dialogue is conducive to the activation of the individual learner.
- In general, refugees and migrants are hesitant in accessing VNIL-processes at first, but once informed, guided and reflective on their learning experiences, they clearly become empowered and engaged.
- Information provision on the potential benefits of VNIL is crucial for the agency of the target groups. They feel informally valued whenever they are helped in demonstrating their prior learning and working experiences. They feel 'listened to' and are more encouraged to engage in participative actions in their new country.
- The target groups of refugees and migrants profit likewise from VNIL in terms of psychology (empowerment, self-esteem), educational attainment (exemptions, -if available – tailored learning) and career-perspectives (clarity about social opportunities, tuning in to the best fit in personal experiences + HE-qualification + career-options).
- The target groups experience the same difficulties in formulating and proving their prior learning experiences as other students to be enrolled in HE. A main aspect in this difficulty is the dominant learning paradigm in which people were educated and disciplined. Like most European students, refugees and migrants were educated in a *monological* education system in which the teacher is the knowledge-bearer and the pupil/student has to listen to the teacher's voice.
- Individual learners who took time to reflect on their own learning experiences strengthened their position in the dialogue on further learning with the HEI and/or employer. In most individual cases, the dialogue, in accordance with Paolo Freire's humanising vision, operated as a 'gap-closer' between the refugees/migrants and portfolio-trainer/teacher/employer; in this way, they managed to build a bridge to a personalised follow-up programme in one or more areas of life.
- Competences demonstrated by prior learning experiences – to be proven in the assessment - fill and colour the dialogue in the learning triangle for all stakeholders involved.
- The portfolio is the carrier of the VNIL process. Guidance or mentoring in the documentation phase is clearly beneficial for the refugees/migrants.
- With the creation of a transparent portfolio of personal, prior learning experiences, the ownership of (lifelong) learning starts for the individual learner. By articulating one's learning achievements and reflecting on the value of them, by self-assessing one's strengths and weaknesses (SWOT) on that basis, self-efficacy becomes one of the motors for turning this retrospective ownership of learning into a dialogue for activating prospective learning.
- The supportive and facilitative role of NGOs is manifest, not only in funding VNIL but also in providing information, guidance of refugees and migrants for VNIL in HEIs. NGOs also play a stimulating role in

building up affordance of VNIL in HEIs for refugees and migrants. They do this by networking and lobbying. Therewith they can play a decisive role in convincing HEIs to afford VNIL-facilities for the target groups.

- The return on investment of a structured portfolio-training for preparation of a VNIL-procedure is beneficial for the target groups. The same goes for language training and bridging courses (acculturation and additional competence development for solving knowledge deficits).
- Assessment helps to connect the stakeholders in the learning triangle. This effect occurs in all the three forms of assessment that are analysed in the cases: *assessment of*, *for* and *as* learning, resp. summative, formative and reflective assessment.
- There is a real dynamic space between the system (top-down) and the process (bottom-up), but depending on the intended learning objective, results are always obtained for different stakeholders. If the system is in control, due to an *inside-out approach*, it is mainly the organisation and 'the school' who benefit from it; in the case of the process being prioritised in an *outside-in approach*, then the learner benefits.

Conclusions

VNIL is acknowledged for opening learning opportunities for refugees and migrants by recognising and valuing what they have learned so far in their lives. The objective of this analysis was answering the questions of how and to what extent VNIL is facilitated in HEIs across Europe and how this is accessible for the target group of higher educated refugees/migrants. The approach was by drawing on cross-case analyses of system and individual levels to describe the state of the art of VNIL in HEIs for the target groups, to analyse good practices and to recommend how VNIL for refugees and migrants can be implemented effectively across Europe's HEIs. These conclusions are drawn from the information provided in the country cases as well as the individual cases. These conclusions focus on the topics of information and guidance, roles and responsibilities, objectives and impact, and professionalism and quality assurance of VNIL in HEIs for refugees and migrants.

Information and guidance
The crucial role of information provision and guidance in the VNIL-process comes to the fore when analysing not only the interviews with the migrants and refugees but also the interviews of the VNIL-staff members in HEIs. The role of information provision on VNIL-processes for accessing HE and thereafter the availability of counselling and guidance services plays an important role in the utilisation of VNIL by the target groups. Information and guidance are the functions that are the so-called 'front-office' for having people's prior learning experiences recognised on HE-levels. The reflection of the interviewed VNIL-staff members in this case-study research states that in order to fill in information provision and guidance properly, these staff members not only need to be well-trained in guidance and counselling people but also need to be able to overlook the whole process of VNIL including the further learning programming. This expertise is extended to the responsibility of providing adequate information and raising awareness of the potential value of one's learning achievements in accessing HE. Furthermore, these staff members perceive VNIL as an open process that depends largely on the internal policy for (1) facilitating VNIL not only for formal learning but also for non-formal and informal learning experiences, (2) the ability to create an open dialogue between someone with personal learning experiences and the HEI with structured and static qualification standards. It's like being able to really listen to the individual experiences and embed these prior experiences in a flexible learning programme, tailored to the individual's learning biography and corresponding learning style.

Roles and responsibilities
The responsibilities of stakeholders and actors in VNIL are linked to specific purposes for engaging in VNIL-processes. In table 3 the differences between the stakeholders in the learning triangle can be explained by pointing out their respective roles and responsibilities. The table shows the main objectives for each stakeholder as shown in the country cases in their linkage with specific responsibilities. Many objectives can occur in the same instance in a specific national or sector context, especially since the true impact of VNIL lies in the combination of certification, strengthening one's self-esteem and the articulation of the competence-needs of learners. In this way, all stakeholders cooperate within a VNIL-process in a holistic way by interlinking each other's objectives and responsibilities.
Important is creating impact of VNIL on the individual level. This entails giving a voice to the learner. This works out best if the learner can get a good grip on social or economic perspectives with the assistance of the VNIL-process. Creating perspective is, next to good-quality guidance and assessment, a critical success factor of VNIL in HEIs. The individual cases in this analysis demonstrate this by being able to link refugees and migrants with

HE-level competences by means of their informal and non-formal learning experiences not just to a qualification but moreover to finding a job and staying employable therewith, being able to integrate in another culture, empowering oneself in creating self-esteem and other impact and results from engaging in a VNIL-process.
This is also the context in which VNIL enables the learner's voice. This voice in its turn changes the nature of learning and challenges the learning system to design learning strategies for different societal purposes. In this sense, learning fits well into societal development as one of the so-called instrumental freedoms that contribute, directly or indirectly, to the overall freedom that people have to be able to live the way they would like to live (Sen, 1999). Nobel prize winner Amyarta Sen formulated that 'social opportunities', as one of the five instrumental freedoms, refer to the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on which influence the individual's substantive freedom to do, be or become that which people value. These facilities are not only for the sake of conducting private lives but also of great value for more effective participation in economic and social activities. Learning affects people's private as well their public lives. Therefore, it is vital for people to have access – or better instrumental freedom – to all forms and phases of learning to shape their own destiny. Crucial in this empowerment of the individual is the concept of VNIL which is not designed to highlight the lack of knowledge and skills but precisely the opposite – to take stock of existing knowledge and skills. Such 'taking stock' goes for all levels of education, not HE alone.

Table 3. Responsibilities & objectives in VNIL in HEIs for refugees and migrants

Actors	Objectives	Responsibilities
Refugees, migrants	- Strengthening self-esteem - Creating new or 2nd changes in life - Stimulating self-investment in learning - Getting access to the education system - Linking in to social or economic career opportunities	- Building up a learning biography, portfolio or any other form for documenting learning experiences - Agency: ambitions and learning objectives - Strength/weakness analysis (SWOT) - Completion of portfolio - Self-assessment
HEIs	- Accrediting prior learning outcomes for further learning (formally, informally and non-formally acquired) - Offering learning-made-to-measure - Innovation of education processes - Social engagement	- Open mind to formal, informal and non-formal learning - Focus on learning outcomes to be assessed irrespective of the learning environment - Facilitating lifelong learning strategies - VNIL information on procedures - Training of assessors, guides and counsellors - Assessment, incl. drafting advising on certification and/or career opportunities - Offering tools: portfolio-formats, portfolio-training - Flexible, tailored learning options
Organisation	- Building up competence management and facilitating self-management of competences - Formulating demand articulation of competences - Designing lifelong learning strategies in Human Resource Management	- Formulation of the mission of the organization - Inventory of organisation's skills needs - Strength/weakness analysis organisation - Competence-based job or occupational profiles
Civil society, NGOs	- Activating citizenship activities and volunteering - Filling in vacancies in the civil society - Facilitating target groups in their VNIL-process (information, guidance, training, solving deficits, funding)	- Creating transparency of the need for competences in the civil society - Offer linkages with other perspectives (qualification, careers)
National level	- Policies of governments and social partners and their responsibilities for creating favourable conditions for lifelong learning through laws and regulations and funding. - Specific, promoting VNIL and facilitation for the integration of 'newcomers' (refugees, migrants)	- Facilitating VNIL-processes by legislation and funding, opening (learning) centres - Bringing actors together - Raising awareness campaigns on the equivalence of informal, non-formal and formal learning - Focus on social and economic mobility (esp. labour, migrant workers) - Creating qualification structures or frameworks - Quality-assurance of VNIL

Objectives & impact

VNIL is not only a process underpinning lifelong learning strategies but also an organising principle for designing such strategies. Evidence comes from a variety of research projects across the globe, supporting the vision that society is in transition to an open 'learning society' in which the need for a good balance of power between the main stakeholders in lifelong learning - individuals, organisations and HEIs - is reshaped. The main features of this transition can be reflected on five levels with each their own impact and linkage to VNIL. The countries in this analysis are represented in one or more of these levels as shown in table 4.

In the column 'geography' only the main drivers of VNIL in HEIs are listed. This doesn't mean however that other rationales are not in place too.

The objectives and impact of VNIL in HEIs are tied in with the four main rationales for integrating VNIL in a specific national, sector or regional context: educational, employability, HRD and lifelong learning. The educational rationale in which obtaining exemptions for a partial or a full qualification prevails in most countries and regions. Next to that economically motivated usage of VNIL on HE-levels that takes care of competence recognition and employability for career motives is a clear runner-up as main driver. The more socially engaged VNIL is in fewer countries apparent but it's a strong driver for governments to face the challenge of dealing with competent but unqualified or underqualified target groups in society. VNIL for participative aims in the third or volunteering sector or the civil society is least practiced; only in the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries where it is utilised for recognising indigenous values of minority groups or for strengthening the quality in volunteering and civil society activities, there is a clear focus on this level for practicing VNIL in HEIs.

Table 4 - Levels, impact and geography of VNIL in HEIs

Level	Impact	Geography: main drivers
Economic	Getting and/or keeping a job (employability), battling skills mismatch, investing in human potential.	Scandinavia, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, France, Switzerland; Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom.
Social	Aiming at motivation, self-management of competences and personal development (empowerment), redress for past inequalities, re-integration in social life, integration of migrants/refugees	Scandinavia, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, France, Switzerland; Portugal, Spain.
Educational	Aiming at qualification, updating, upgrading or portfolio-enrichment by means of creating output-oriented standards focusing on learning outcomes and tailored learning made to measure.	The countries of Group 1 and 2 with VNIL in HEIs, able to take care of prior learning experiences of formal and of non-formal and/or informal nature

The countries in group 3 have VNIL only bale to take care of prior learning experiences of formal nature |
| Participation | The civil society, aiming at social activation, voluntary activities, social awareness and citizenship (activating citizenship). | Netherlands, Scandinavian countries |
| Political | Authorities and social partners (employers, trade unions) are responsible for organising the match between these levels by means of legislation, regulations, labour agreements, fiscal policy, training funds, etc. | All European countries |

Source: Duvekot, 2017; enriched with data from the VINCE-project.

Professionalism and quality assurance

The expertise of VNIL staff (portfolio guides, advisors and assessors) is very important in achieving maximum awareness of the value of personal learning experiences when refugees/migrants reach out to HE-levels. Their instrumental expertise equals the importance of them in creating motivation and ambition for accessing/applying VNIL in HEIs. Furthermore, the quality assurance of a VNIL-system depends on the clear formulation of what the expertise of VNIL-staff entails, how this expertise is learned and maintained and how

staff-members are embedded and accepted in qualification systems and systems of human resources management systems on the labour market and in the third sector.

These conclusions on professionalism and quality assurance show that the VNIL-process comes into its own and enables refugee's and migrant's agency to acquire HE-levels in their new country because VNIL is afforded by (1) the awareness of HEIs of the value of prior personal learning experiences and (2) affording this awareness by professionalising HEIS staff members in the various VNIL metiers of information provision, guidance, assessment and VNIL-management.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations or challenges to anchoring VNIL in HEIs for refugees and migrants can be formulated when overlooking the conclusions based on the information provided in the country cases and the individual cases.

From policy to practice

Moving from policy to practice is imperative to creating a more inclusive HEI. VNIL is recognisable as a key component for the individual´s possibility to manage shifts in modern life in terms of lifelong learning and career-guidance. This is also the case for refugees and migrants trying to build up a career in a new country. To make VNIL a core element in integration/participation in the new country, the individual needs information, guidance and counselling, emphasising both learning and work perspectives in order to secure longer term relevance and value for the individual.

Strengthening VNIL-practice entails upscaling the investment in raising-awareness of the value of prior learning experiences, information-provision on VNIL-services offered (information, guidance, assessment) and strengthening the linkage of national qualification standards and occupational standards and coordination between national stakeholders and HEIs. To fulfil this upscaling, the main questions an HEI needs to be able to answer are:

- How to move from exclusive to inclusive VNIL arrangements for the target groups of refugees and migrants?
- How to support and serve the learner in VNIL-processes (identification, documentation, assessment and certification, longer-term impact)?
- How to understand the usefulness of VNIL seen from the learner's perspective?
- How to understand the biography and career development from the individual perspective?
- Which are the professional roles to be filled-in?

The key question however remains: how to improve VNIL practices in HEIs with the learner – in this case the migrant and refugee - at the centre?

Raising awareness and information provision

The awareness of the value of a VNIL-approach in HEIs focused on learner needs and taking account of the value of not only formal but also informal and non-formal learning results depends on the consensus among all actors in VNIL-processes. Such consensus can be initiated by any of the actors. The actors can support awareness and consensus. In some cases, they can also initiate legislation and regulations (including financial regulations) by supplying information. Moreover, any actor can help strengthen information-provision to the target groups by reaching out to them directly or indirectly to their representatives/spokesmen in their new country. Information-provision also implies being able to present case-studies of successful initiating VNIL in HEIs and offering role models for refugees and migrants.

The learner's voice

Critical aspect in all approaches of HEIs is the importance of engaging designated target groups by making VNIL a personalised approach. People need to be able to articulate their learning experiences, identify their personal competences and link these competences to perspectives and roles in society. The learner's voice is therewith more than the need of people to have their voices listened to but also need to articulate their own voice.

Such a learner's voice – articulated and listened to – is normally hard to hear in formal processes of certification and employability because the parameters of education- and labour-systems for inclusion are hard to calibrate with the individual needs; least of all when it comes to managing an open dialogue between the formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences of a learner as input and the criteria of a qualification or an occupational standard as output of the VNIL-process.

The learner's voice highlights the need for ownership of learners and the ensuing inclusion of their preferences and possibilities – regarding settings, time, cost, progression – in the formulation of VNIL-strategies and the execution of VNIL-processes in HEIs. Good quality of guidance and assessment of the learner is essential in the VNIL-process for including such individual ownership of learning experiences. The Institute for Personalized Learning in Wisconsin, USA advocates in its educational services for schools and educators that:

The greatest gift to learners is to give them the tools, insights, and understanding necessary to be in charge of their own learning and lives. When learners understand how to channel their interest and curiosity, they gain the ability to motivate themselves. When learners begin to own their learning, they gain a prized possession to protect, build, and maintain for a lifetime. (Rickabaugh, 2012)

Successfully applying VNIL holds in this way a promise of creating social and/or economic perspective for people that can be linked to their intrinsic values and agency. Bray and McClaskey (2015) perceive such personalisation as the next development in the learning system based on the engaged, self-managing, learning individual operating in a supportive network, all within the modern, learning society. The offer of a shortened, self-steered and flexible learning path for obtaining HE-levels is in this respect more than formalising personal learning experiences; it's more an offer of personal empowerment in terms of strengthening life skills, incl. literacy and numeracy, and social participation in the learning society.

Professionalisation of HEIs staff and research programmes
The expertise of portfolio guides, counsellors, advisors and assessors is very important in achieving maximum awareness of the value of personal learning, and creating motivation and ambition for VNIL and learning/social opportunities in HEIs ánd society. HEIs should therefore invest in the creation and maintenance of occupational standards for VNIL information-providers, -guides, -assessors and -managers. Even more, these standards should be linked to internal human resource management systems in HEIs and offer the chance for career-paths in HEIs for VNIL-professionals.
Next to career-paths in VNIL-professionalisms, HEIs could also invest in research-programmes for VNIL in educational, social and economic domains. Research is needed into the added value of VNIL, among other things focused on its economic, financial and social effects. Furthermore, an archive should be built up of examples of good practice in VNIL on individual, organisation and system levels. If these examples demonstrate the value of investing in VNIL for obtaining (HE-)educational levels, this will spread a strong positive message. This return on investment in the VNIL needs to be analysed on the levels of material and immaterial benefits. Research into the practical 'ups and downs' of VNIL and its follow-up projects is also an enriching factor for HEIs learning programmes, let alone that you may expect academics to be curious about the value that newcomers bring with them to their new country. Isn't that so?

Demand articulation for perspective
When achieving a specific outcome of VNIL for HE-competent refugees and migrants, it is a critical success factor to offer actual social or economic perspective. Sector-based and regional VNIL-practices present successes (Singh, 2015), especially if involved organisations/companies ensure that their formulation of demands for functions and activities on HE-levels is transparent. This strategy works especially well when focusing on tackling skills gaps or offering further learning paths.

Further learning options
As a follow-up on VNIL-processes, tailored, further learning options need to be offered by HEIs. These options need to be flexible in order to boost people's desire to keep on learning. The VNIL approach benefits from optimising other forms of learning: other learning environments and forms of learning must be formulated and/or utilised more effectively, since the outcome of a VNIL-process also shows which learning environment and/or form of learning is best for an individual. This could include (combinations of) on work-based learning, mentoring/tutoring, self-steered learning, distance learning, and so on.

The dialogue on validation and learning
An open dialogue on validation and learning between the individual and the learning and/or working systems can be effective when the co-makership of the individual in shaping her own future is truly accepted and afforded (Duvekot, 2017). The subsequent open dialogue is able to connect - retrospectively - the learning history of higher educated refugees and migrants with - prospectively - what they still need to learn in their new

country. VNIL can be a strong guiding vision ánd tool in this by affording such an open dialogical process of validation and learning between the learner and the teacher/employer:

1. In the validation process, the testing (summative) and advisory (formative) functions of validation in the dialogue between (the portfolio of) the learner and the (qualification standards of the) teacher and/or the (occupational standards of the) employer are used to recognize, value and accredit learning outcomes. The learner is assisted in this process by test forms that are product- or process-oriented. Process-oriented means that learning outcomes are assessed integrated and interlinked, whereas in product-oriented validation this is based on the value of the learning outcome in itself.
2. The learning process aims at offering learning that cannot (yet) be realized through validation or of which the learner believes that this learning is desirable. This process is personalized in terms of content, form and meaning. The learner can have a say in the design of the personal learning trajectory within the framework of the study program. This goes as well for refugees and migrants as for any other learner.

Final remarks

The main conclusion of this case-study research is that VNIL still has a long way to go before it is embedded all over Europe's HEIs. Good practices from Danish, Dutch, French and Norwegian HEIs demonstrate that much is possible in affording refugees and migrants when they need or want to access HE. Offering VNIL as an open gateway for linking a person's formally, informally and non-formally acquired competences to a HE-programme is one of the critical success factors in these practices. Furthermore, offering the remaining competences to be acquired after the assessment in a tailored and flexible learning path is the other critical success factor. Both critical success factors depend strongly upon the willingness and the ability to recognise the competences acquired 'outside of academia'; that's more a matter of ambassadorship of committed VNIL-staff in HEIs, open mindedness and embracement of the dialogue of validation and learning than of assessment-methodology or interview-techniques.

Looking at VNIL from every perspective, it can be stated that the VNIL process really comes into its own and helps enabling more personalised learning if there is an open dialogue and individual ownership of learning is permitted. The grouping of countries in four existing systems on country-level in which the five phases of the VNIL-process are applied ranging from *broadly* applied to *marginally or none*, might be helpful in locating good practices from universities capable or prepared to design and implement VNIL to its full potential for the sake of assisting refugees and migrants to reach out to a HE-level and integrate in their new country. At least in all case studies, in various degrees, VNIL had its impact on the design and implementation of lifelong learning and, moreover, a genuine impact on personalising the learning taking place after the VNIL process. After all, individual ownership of learning can clearly be enhanced by VNIL through (1) raising the awareness of the value of prior, personal learning experiences and (2) grounding further (lifelong) learning on personal design and meaning.

Least of all, this analysis gives credits to Paolo Freire's statement in the 1970s that learning needs to be addressed as a developmental and dialogical process of 'action-reflection-praxis' of ánd by people (i.e. teachers ánd learners). It should be an anti-depository process, contrasting the traditional 'banking-system' (Freire, 1970). Such processes of dialogical validation and learning suit every learner, inclusive of refugees and migrant with prior learning experiences. With 'banking' Freire meant a process in which knowledge is directly transferred to learners with the teacher as the sole distributor of knowledge and the learner as the passive receiver of this knowledge. Instead of 'banking' the ground floor for learning can better be 'portfolio-ing', in which learning is based on personal, prior learning experiences and the self-management of recurring learning processes. Moreover, the role of the teacher can also be filled in by a manager or team leader on the work floor. In this way VNIL adds value by making the learning process the object of learning, with the learner and teacher (or manager) as 'partners in learning', openly debating the design and implementation of the learning needed or desired on the level of the learner, teacher and manager.

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Annex 1: The VINCE project

VINCE is an ERASMUS+ co-funded project, under the Support for policy reform sub-programme (action: *Social inclusion through education, training and youth*). The project started in January 2017 and runs till December 2019.

The VINCE project addresses the objective of fostering the inclusion of higher educated migrants and refugees, while preventing and combating discriminatory practices. This general objective is more specifically tuned-in to aspects like assessing knowledge and validating prior learning of newly arrived migrants/refugees, enhancing access to quality and inclusive mainstream education and training with a focus on the needs of disadvantaged learners, and facilitating the acquisition of the language of instruction for newly arrived migrants.
The project aims at enhancing relations between HEIs and higher educated refugees/migrants and strengthen trust and communication between staff-members from HEIs and the project's target group on the above-mentioned aspects that are supplied across Europe by several HEIs. The project's process and output reach out to a wide group of HEIs staff-members that will allow them to learn from real situations and transfer these experiences into their own HEI.

The VINCE-partnership is composed of HEIs, VET providers, NGOs, associations/European-wide networks and a national Quality Assurance Agency. The partners represent 10 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway and Slovenia. Together they cover a wide variety and range of individual and institutional experiences and expertise that enriches the project's perspectives and facilitates a comprehensive approach to answering the questions concerning VNIL in HEIs for higher educated refugees and migrants.

The output of the project:
- A peer learning seminar with 11 different countries and different sectors. An analysis and a graphic of the barriers and mitigating factors for learning that migrants encounter emerged from this seminar
- A set of 37 country profiles, explaining the current state of implementation of VNIL in HE level in these countries
- A set of templates of 5 different guidelines to help university staff to work with newcomers and a glossary. These templates have been translated up to 13 different languages
- An online platform, useful to university staff, policy makers and also newcomer students looking for help on how to proceed
- A prototype generic structure of professional training course for VNIL professionals (for publication in December 2018)
- A set of policy recommendations addressed to decision makers at policy level to bring about a more efficient validation system to place (under development now)
- A VINCE VPL Prize that will be awarded to the best transferable case study submitted

http://vince.eucen.eu

Annex 2: the analysis grid for data collection

T2.2 – Identification of good practices
This is the template for collecting good practices of individual cases in which any kind of validation of people's prior learning experiences was part of the integration process in their new country. The template is structured according to the steps of the validation process. It contains a number of guiding questions for each phase of the process. You are advised to follow the phases as described in this template.

> *N.B.: this template is just a guide for the interviews; be flexible and adaptive to the context in which you are conducting interviews. As long as you are able to produce a report of the interview in which you can address each section of the template, you're free to use the template as you like. The questions really are only a guide to collect the data we need to describe and analyse the positioning of newcomers in their new country and the power of VPL in this process.*
> *The report should be between two and 3 pages (minimum 1200, maximum 2000 words). For each section you have between 200-300 words.*

Guidance
a. The template is a guiding tool for as an interviewer. You can stick to the questions, but you can also – if the interview permits this – perform a more flexible interview in which you at least ask the main question (in bold before each the questions in each section) of each section in combination with some of the other questions to fill in the report with rich information.
b. For each interview: you need to provide a preliminary short description of who the person is – age, sex, country of origin, how long in the country – very brief and soft but just to put the experience into context. Sometimes it better to ask this at the end rather than at the beginning – its less threatening and gives a chance to develop confidence before asking. Or maybe if the counsellor/volunteer already knows it then it doesn't have to be asked at all but could be inserted by the person guiding the process.
c. Be careful about the language – newcomers, especially if they are still in the early stages of the process, are almost certainly not (yet) familiar with the professional language of HE so be careful to avoid professional jargon: for example, 'competences', 'personal capacities' and 'capacity-building' or 'personal-steered goal'– who is likely to know what these terms mean? If they have gone through the whole process, they might understand but if they are still in the early stages it's doubtful.
d. You can ask the interviewee permission to record the interview and fill in the individual case study later. **But:** be aware that this might be a bit threatening for the interviewee; so, if you ask this, make sure you have a clear picture of the atmosphere in which the interview takes place!
e. You can directly write down the answers to the questions. But, make sure you manage the interview with one of your colleagues, since it's hard work to ask questions, be attentive and write down the answers.
f. If you come across a newcomer who still hasn't gone through the whole VPL-process but is for instance waiting for the outcome of the assessment, you still might do the interview, but make sure you ask if you can find out later (by phone or through other means to hear about the findings. If the latter isn't possible, make sure you can write a report that provides vital information on the process-steps that did take place.
g. Be aware that you sometimes might need to rephrase a question to get an answer of when the interviewee doesn't understand the question. It can also happen that you must keep on asking questions when you feel that there is more to say about a topic.
h. If you feel the need, be free to ask extra questions; but make sure you make this clear when writing the report.
i. Always explain at the start of the interviewee that we will anonymise the report on the interview for the project. But keep hold of the contact details yourself because we might invite some of the interviewees to the final conference of the project.
j. If you interview persons 'from the system' (assessors, guiders, etc.) you can ask the same questions but then you will have to focus on their expertise and specific role in the process; this might need some rephrasing of the questions. Also make sure you fill in the two extra sections in the interview template.
k. The report on the interview has to follow the rhythm of the sections and the questions. It has to be a narrative, journalistic report on the interviewee's experiences in the field of testing/validating/assessing and what this meant for the interviewee. Be aware that other readers will read your report as well on the website, etc.

I – Preparation

Before the interview, write down a preliminary short description of who the person is – age, sex, country of origin, how long in the country – very brief and soft but just to put the experience into context. If it's not possible to prepare this before the interview, make sure you get this information at the end of the interview.

1. Data on the interviewee and the context: age, sex, country of origin, how long in the country?
2. Data on the context: HE-domain, etc.

II - Awareness

It is important to make clear to the interviewee that these questions are about the self-awareness of one's personal capacities and about the way that this self-knowledge was part of the integration-process.

How did you become aware of your personal skills and competences and how they might be used in your new country?
3. Were you fully aware of your personal capacities (skills, competences, knowledge) when you arrived here?
4. Did you know how your capacities could be used for integrating in your new country?
5. Did you have a clear idea about the need for learning to find a job?
6. Were you guided in using your capacities for purposes of learning and working in your (new) country?
7. Were you informed on opportunities for testing/validating your capacities?

III - Starting up

The questions on the starting phase are about the way in which the interviewee was given a chance to make clear what his/her capacities were.

How did you learn about the opportunities to get recognition of your skills and competences?
8. Were you offered a form of testing or validating your capacities?
9. What was the actual offer for testing or validating?
10. Did the testing or validating include an assessment of your prior learning experiences?
11. What was your own opinion on this testing or validating?
12. Did you have any expectation of the outcomes of the testing/validating?
13. Did you trust the testing/validating?
14. Did you feel the testing/validating was performed in a respectful way to you personally?
15. Did the testing/validating really focused on your personal interest?

IV – Documentation and support

The questions on documenting and support are focused on the ways that the interviewee tried to get a good grip on his/her personal capacities and how he/she collected documents (or evidence of capacity). Support offered to the interviewee is vital for the process; so make sure you get a clear picture of the support and guidance offered. Also make sure you ask especially about the informal and non-formal experiences that the interviewee maybe used in this phase.

How easy/difficult was it to get together evidence of your learning? What help did you get?
16. Was there guidance when you started documenting your personal learning experiences?
17. How easy/difficult was it to get together evidence of your learning? What help did you get?

18. What was your focus in documenting: formal learning, work experience, or also voluntary work, hobbies, personal strengths? Maybe also other personal spheres of capacity-building?
19. What kind of material did you use for the documentation?
20. Did you arrange your experiences in a kind of portfolio?
21. How did your portfolio look like?
22. Was it hard to do the documentation of your capacities and experiences?
23. Did you also construct new documentation if you failed to have the originals with you? How did you do this?
24. Did you ask friends and family to reflect on your documentation?
25. Did you do a kind of self-assessment yourself before the assessment? How and with whose support?
26. How were you prepared for the testing/validating? You got written instruction, you tested the assessment-interview with someone (who?), etc.

V - Assessment

Assessment is about the actual testing or validating of the personal capacities. It is about (1) the dialogue between the interviewee and the assessor (or examiner, etc.) and (2) the focus in the assessment (from the start already focused on HE, or specific work, or was it an open assessment with no pre-judgement?)

What was your experience of the actual assessment? What made it a good - or not so good - experience?
27. How did you prepare for the assessment?
28. Did you feel that the assessment was really about getting grip on your personal capacities?
29. Were you informed on the way the assessment was going to take place?
30. Was the assessment based on an intake or pre-judgement on where to link your capacities to?
31. Or was it an open assessment, geared at finding out where your capacities could be utilized best?
32. How was the assessment performed (from begin to end)?
33. Did the assessor make you feel comfortable? Was he/she supportive?
34. In which language was the assessment?
35. Did you have insight in the standard that was used or – more in general - the direction of the assessment?
36. Would you prepare for this kind of assessment differently when you got a new chance to do it?

VI – Impact

Impact has both summative and formative outcomes: explaining to the interviewee what the actual value of his/her capacities in the new country are. And also more formative, opportunities for learning and/or working are presented.

What happened afterwards – where did it take you? – good or not so good results?
37. What was in general the outcome of the assessment?
38. Were you happy/satisfied with the outcome? (why yes or no?)
39. Was there a direct result, in terms of access to a qualification, a voluntary job or paid work?
40. Did you got an offer for further guidance for taking further steps in learning or working?
41. Did you get an assessment-report or any other kind of statement on your capacities?
42. Did you agree with the next steps you were offered for learning and working?
43. Or did you have to do your best to have the chance to fill-in a more personal-steered goal? To do what you always wanted to do in learning or working?

VII - Impact on the longer term [if applicable, this section only needs to be addressed when the validation-process took place more than a year ago!!!!]

It is important to ask also about what really happened [about a year later] after the testing/validating. This phase needs to be investigated from the perspective of the interviewee!

Now that you had a lot of time to reflect on your validation-process, what was the impact on the longer term for you?

44. How are doing now? Which steps did you really take after the testing/validating?
45. Do you still use your personal documentation and update it with new experiences?
46. What happened in the field of learning?
47. What happened in the field of working?
48. Are you more aware of the power of being clear on your own personal strengths and weaknesses?
49. What happened in your personal life? Was this documenting and testing of your personal capacities a life-changer for you? If yes or no, in what way?

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SPECIAL SECTION ONLY FOR VALIDATION PROFESSIONALS

In the case your case study concerns a validation professional, please complete also the two sections below.

VIII – Assessors profile and training needs

These questions are meant to find out more about the assessors' profile and their training needs.

How did you become an assessor? What are your training needs?

50. How did you become an assessor? (E.g. voluntary choice, expertise, mindset, etc.)
51. How were you prepared for becoming an assessor?
52. What are your main training needs?
53. What do you think would support your role in validating prior learning of refugees and migrants?

IX – policy context

These questions are meant to know more about the policy context and the existence or lack of a policy support.

Is the policy context supportive?

54. Do local/national policies facilitate your work?
55. Are the right policies in place to help the access of refugees and newcomers to the VPL process?
56. What policies support the inclusion of refugees and newcomers into the VPL process? What policies undermine it?