



*National
Vocational
Qualifications*

*National vocational
qualifications system*



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA DELO, DRUŽINO,
SOCIALNE ZADEVE IN ENAKE MOŽNOSTI

Center
Republike Slovenije
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National vocational qualifications system

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Key to abbreviations

NVQ – National Vocational Qualifications

MDDSZ – Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

CPI – Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training

RIC – National Examination Centre

NRP – National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications

1

*Referencing
national
vocational
qualifications
to the Slovenian
qualifications
framework*



The Slovenian Qualifications Framework is a unified system of qualifications in Slovenia for the classification of qualifications into levels with regard to learning outcomes. The basis for the Slovenian Qualifications Framework is the Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act, which entered into force in 2016. The Slovenian Qualifications Framework defines three types of qualifications:

- **educational qualification**, demonstrated by a public document certifying *completion of education*,
- **vocational qualification**, demonstrated by an *NVQ certificate* issued in accordance with the regulations governing national vocational qualifications or another document certifying completion of a *training or continuing education programme*, issued in accordance with the regulations governing vocational, technical and higher education,
- **supplementary qualification**, regulated in the manner and according to the procedure prescribed by the Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act and demonstrated by a certificate issued in accordance with the Act, and intended to *supplement an individual's competences* at the level attained and in a specific professional field.

The publication focuses on vocational qualifications, which are demonstrated by a national vocational qualification (NVQ) certificate. The process of obtaining NVQs is regulated by the system of national vocational qualifications that was introduced in 2000 by the *National Vocational Qualifications Act*, the essential purpose of which is to facilitate the formal recognition of vocational qualifications irrespective of the manner or learning environments in which they were obtained.

History of the NVQ system

Until 1990, the Employment Relationships Act allowed companies to recognize work acquired competences. The companies assessed the qualifications of workers without the required vocational education with a special procedure determined in internal company regulations. The companies treated the recognized qualification and the formal professional education equally. The Employment Relationships Act and internal regulations also stipulated the conditions for the assessment (commission, monitoring, issuing of internal certificates, etc.). Workers were monitored and observed at work to assess their qualifications and to award them certificates of internal qualification at the appropriate level of complexity. This enabled the workers to get a promotion in line with newly acquired qualifications. The certificates were internal and valid only in companies where they had been acquired. They were not recognised or valid at the national or sectoral level.

In 1994, the Ministry responsible for Labour started a project for validation of non-formal learning, which included feasibility study as well as a proposal for systemic solution regarding the verification and validation of vocational qualifications, and its implementation in practice.

In 1999 (before the passing of a specific law governing this area) the Ministry responsible for Labour issued The Rules on the Procedure for Acquiring Vocational Qualifications, thus preparing grounds for the certification of vocational qualifications on the national level. The Rules and The Employment and Insurance Against Unemployment Act (1997) enabled the first implementation of the validation of non-formally acquired knowledge: the industrial workers who had become unemployed due to economic restructuring and had no formal qualifications, got the opportunity to validate their non-formally acquired knowledge and skills as well as knowledge acquired through training for the labour market. The Rules differentiated clearly between qualifications obtained through schooling and those obtained through validation.

In 1999 and 2000, a Phare MOCCA project was run as a joint initiative of the Ministry responsible for education and the Ministry responsible for labour. This project covered the modernisation of education programmes, the development of a certificate system and the assessment of quality in vocational education for young people and adults. Participation in the project provided the designers of the NVQ system important technical support in the preparation of the system. The CPI was the project lead and coordinator of the project. Studies conducted in this period included an evaluation of certification pilot projects, studies of the technical infrastructure of the certificate system, a study of models of implementation of verification and validation of vocational qualifications, and comparative reviews of certification arrangements in the EU. In this way, the foundations of the NVQ system were laid.

In 2000, the NVQ system was formally established with the adoption of the National Vocational Qualifications Act. In 2001 first national NVQ certificates were issued. »The fundamental aim of the NVQ system was certification of industrial workers with no formal qualifications. By aligning the national education system and policies with the European guidelines, the NVQ system has gradually taken over the role assigned by the European guidelines to verify and validate non-formal and informal learning. Following the model of the European guidelines, the high level of formalisation and institutionalisation of the NVQ system should also contribute to its reliability, and in this way help generate trust and confidence among all key stakeholders who recognise their own interest in the system« (A. Ivančič, 2013). Today the NVQ system represents the most established method for evaluation of the non-formal and informal learning.



*Occupational
standard –
created for the
labour market*

Occupations in the traditional sense no longer follow the dynamics of the labour market. Instead, they express the complexity of the tasks that workers are required to perform, something that is constantly changing in the labour sphere. Increasingly rapid economic development, in particular the development of new technologies and services, is causing the constant upgrading of existing occupations and the development of new ones – or the upgrading and development of the vocational qualifications necessary to perform an occupation or a set of tasks within a given occupation. The document that serves as a basis for the development of different pathways to vocational qualifications is known as the occupational standard.

The main advantage of the occupational standard is its ability to respond rapidly to the requirements of the labour market and of modern ways of organising work in enterprises and small business/service activities. When developing occupational standards at the CPI, we therefore involve the most progressive employers from the industrial sector and entities from the small business/services sector. By taking into account development trends in the sectors in question, they define current occupational standards and also help with the early identification of needs for new qualifications.

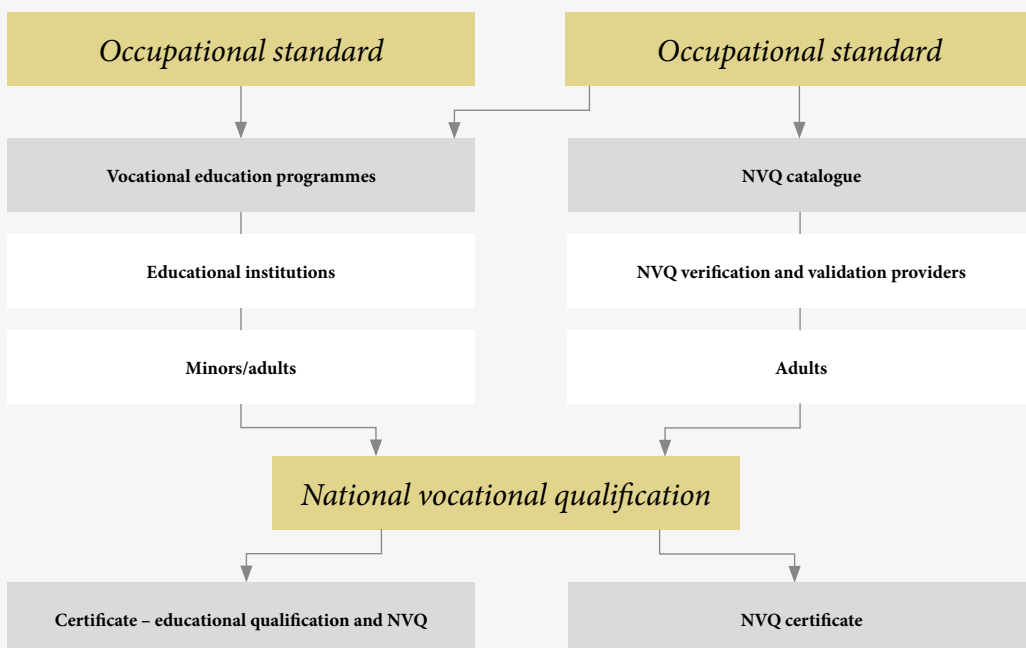
An important role in vocational qualifications is also played by key competences that shape an individual's professional growth and enable them to perform various roles in society. Key competences are indispensable, not only for individual's working life but also from the point of view of personal development, inclusion in the wider social environment and lifelong learning. With this in mind, on the basis of the needs of the labour market and taking into account European recommendations in this field, the CPI has prepared an analysis of key competences and a proposal for the range of key competences to be included in occupational standards.

3

*Different routes
to NVQs*



In Slovenia it is possible to achieve an NVQ either through the formal education system (vocational, technical and higher vocational education) or through the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (NVQ system). The Vocational Education and Training Act connects the two systems by determining that the occupational standard is the basis for both routes. Figure 1 (below) provides a more detailed illustration of the occupational standard as a basis for the education system and a basis for the NVQ system.



As may be seen from left-hand column, the basis for the design of education programmes in vocational, technical or higher vocational education is one or more occupational standards in the same or a related field and at the same level of difficulty. An education programme prepares candidates for one or more vocational qualifications that are tied to individual occupational standards in the programme. On completion of schooling, candidates receive a school certificate or diploma by which they obtain a vocational education qualification at a specific level.

The right-hand column shows that an individual occupational standard may also be the basis for the preparation of a catalogue (of vocational knowledge and skills) for the NVQ that enables candidates to obtain an NVQ certificate. An NVQ certificate enables candidates to demonstrate a formal level of professional competence to perform a specific occupation at a specific level of difficulty, but candidates do not obtain a vocational education qualification or level. Participation in the procedure to obtain an NVQ certificate does not require previous enrolment in an education programme. The NVQ system is aimed at adult candidates and allows the formal recognition of vocational qualifications regardless of the learning environment in which they were obtained.



4

*Main
stakeholders in
the NVQ system
and their role*

In view of the objectives pursued by the NVQ system, its main stakeholders are the state, employers and employee representatives. Other stakeholders include vocational and professional organisations and associations. The fundamental responsibility for the development and establishment of the NVQ system belongs to state authorities and institutions responsible for regulating the functioning of the labour market.

The formal basis for implementation of the NVQ system is the National Vocational Qualifications Act, which defines the main stakeholders in the NVQ system with an active role in the preparation and adoption of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues.

Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities is the central stakeholder in the NVQ system. It is responsible for drafting the National Vocational Qualifications Act and implementing regulations, and for monitoring implementation of the Act. Tasks of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities within the NVQ system:

- drafting of the Act and implementing regulations that regulate the functioning of the NVQ system,
- appointment of members of sectoral committees for occupational standards,
- adoption and publication of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- determination of lists of members of verification and validation committees,
- appointment of members of the permanent appeals committee.

The other main stakeholders in the NVQ system (expert bodies, authorities and organisations) are presented below, along with their respective tasks as defined by the National Vocational Qualifications Act.

Sectoral committees for occupational standards

The sectoral committees are made up of recognised experts appointed by the minister responsible for labour at the proposal of trade chambers, professional associations, employers' associations, trade unions, non-profit organisations and other competent ministries.

The presence of representatives of enterprises and other social partners on sectoral committees for occupational standards is important in order to ensure transparent, up-to-date and high-quality qualifications structures in a variety of professional fields. When considering suggestions for new

vocational qualifications, sectoral committees for occupational standards must make a careful selection in order to ensure that the vocational qualifications that appear in the labour market are those which the labour market actually needs. Sectoral committees for occupational standards exclusively reflect the interests of the labour market and therefore do not include representatives of the education sector.

On the basis of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has appointed 10 sectoral committees for occupational standards covering the following professional fields or sectors:

- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Education, Art, Culture**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Business and Management**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Engineering, Computing**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Manufacturing Technology**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Architecture, Civil Engineering and Mining**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Food, Veterinary Science**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Health and Social Care**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Services**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Defence Studies, Security**;
- Sectoral Committee for Occupational Standards in **Sustainable Development**.

Professional, technical and administrative support for the functioning of the sectoral committees is provided by the CPI.

Tasks of sectoral committees:

- to consider the merits of proposals for occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- to coordinate the contents of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- to propose priority tasks in the preparation of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues to the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training,
- to prepare a methodology for the preparation of an occupational standard and NVQ catalogue,
- to propose the preparation of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- to propose lists of recognised experts for the preparation of occupational standards, occupational profiles and NVQ catalogues,
- to propose a qualifications structure for the sector,
- to coordinate the contents of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- to propose the review of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- to propose occupational standards and NVQ catalogues to the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training.

Sectoral committees propose the preparation of an occupational standard and NVQ catalogue and appoint a working group of recognised experts for this task. A draft occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, or a proposal to extend the validity of an existing or revised occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, is submitted by the working group to the competent sectoral committee along with justifications. The sectoral committee examines the draft occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, draws up a proposal to accept or reject them and submits an opinion to the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training.

When coordinating the contents of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues, the sectoral committee must take into account above all the following:

- identified needs for the vocational qualification,
- international comparability,
- compliance with legal regulations,
- the placement of the proposal in the existing structure of qualifications for the sector.

Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has set up a national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training to make decisions on technical matters in the field of vocational education and training and to provide expert assistance in the adoption of decisions and the preparation of regulations in this field. The Expert Council is a social partnership structure and includes representatives of trade chambers, employers, trade unions and ministries.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia appoints a president and 14 recognised experts from the field of vocational education and training to serve as members of the Expert Council, as follows: five members at the proposal of ministries (two of them at the proposal of the ministry responsible for education), five members at the proposal of the relevant trade chambers, and four members at the proposal of trade unions. The role of the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training in the NVQ system:

- to propose occupational standards and NVQ catalogues for adoption by the minister responsible for labour,
- to adopt the methodology for the preparation of an occupational standard and NVQ catalogue,
- to set priorities in the drafting of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues in a given period on the basis of long-term needs in the labour market,
- to propose a committee members' licence training programme for adoption by the minister responsible for labour (committee members carry out verification and validation for NVQ candidates).

Technical and other tasks in the field of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues are undertaken for the Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training by the CPI.

To assist with decision-making, the Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training has appointed an Expert Committee for Occupational Standards (defined by the Rules on the Standard Classification of Occupations), which:

- considers occupational standards and NVQ catalogues (with regard to identified needs for a vocational qualification, international comparability, compliance with the regulations of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union, and the placement of the proposal in the existing structure of qualifications for the sector),
- examines the proposed occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, prepares an opinion on their acceptance or rejection and submits this opinion to the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training,
- considers the methodology for the preparation of an occupational standard and NVQ catalogue.

Social partners

Within the NVQ system, social partners such as trade chambers, employers' associations, professional associations, NGOs, trade unions and competent ministries perform in particular the following tasks:

- submit proposals for new occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- propose members of sectoral committees for occupational standards,
- propose experts for the preparation of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- propose members of the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training.

Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training

The founder of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) is the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. The Chamber Of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia and the Chamber of Crafts and Small Business of Slovenia are co-founders. Founder's rights are exercised on the behalf of the Republic of Slovenia by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

The CPI is the principal institution in the country for research, development and guidance in the field of vocational education and training. Through its work, the CPI ensures a connection between education and labour market on the basis of cooperation, agreement and decision-making with the social partner. Among the tasks of the CPI are development work and the drafting of background documents for the NVQ system. In this context, the CPI:

- conducts procedures for the development of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- leads working groups appointed by sectoral committees for occupational standards and provides expert assistance to experts for the development of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues,
- prepares and submits proposals of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues and proposals on the extension of the validity of current or revised occupational standards and NVQ catalogues, with justifications, to the relevant sectoral committee for occupational standards and the Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training,
- monitors the work of guidance and counselling personnel in the NVQ verification and validation process,
- develops methodologies for the preparation of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues and methodologies for the recognition of qualifications obtained in the workplace,
- monitors the NVQ system,
- monitors the international comparability of vocational qualifications,
- undertakes technical tasks and supplements the methodological basis of the NVQ system, the credit system and the qualifications framework,
- promotes vocational qualifications for new vocational and technical fields at all levels of difficulty,
- undertakes promotion of the NVQ system in cooperation with partners,
- cooperates with other partner institutions in the European Union,

- develops and supplements methodologies for direct and indirect verification,
- maintains and develops the information system within the context of the National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications (NRP),
- runs a compulsory training programme for guidance and counselling personnel involved in the NVQ verification and validation process.

National Examination Centre

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia founded the National Examination Centre (RIC) as a national centre for the external testing of the knowledge of primary and secondary school students, apprentices and adults. Its basic mission is to develop applicable, reliable, fair, effective and transparent testing of knowledge and examination systems in primary and secondary schools and in adult education. Principal tasks of the RIC in the NVQ system:

- to foster the development of methodologies and procedures for the verification and validation of NVQs,
- to organise the training of candidates for membership of NVQ verification and validation committees,
- to monitor and evaluate the realisation of the objectives of the training programme for candidates for membership of NVQ verification and validation committees and make suggestions for improvements to the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training,
- to oversee a range of questions and tasks in the NVQ verification and validation process,
- to foster the development of the NVQ verification and validation network,
- to keep a register of NVQ verification and validation providers,
- to grant licences to members of NVQ verification and validation committees,
- to keep the records it is authorised by law to keep,
- to monitor the work of NVQ verification and validation committees and report to the ministry at least once a year.

5

*Preparation of
bases for NVQ
verification
and validation
procedures*



5.1 Drafting the occupational standard

The process of drafting an occupational standard begins with a proposal submitted to the CPI on the prescribed form published on the NRP website. The submitted proposal must include the following information necessary for assessment of its merits: key jobs covered by the proposed vocational qualification, an assessment of needs in terms of the long-term development of the sector, information on existing possibilities to gain a vocational qualification, information on international comparability with standards for this qualification in EU countries, and information on the compliance of the proposed qualification with any relevant regulations and norms in Slovenia and the EU.

The CPI registers the proposal and, provided it contains all the information required for assessment, submits it for consideration to the relevant competent sectoral committee for occupational standards. Where necessary, the CPI draws up additional technical explanations and expert opinions regarding the proposal, which the sectoral committee then uses in its own assessment. If the sectoral committee for occupational standards considers the proposal to be well-founded, it appoints experts (proposed by the social partners), who then begin drafting the occupational standard with methodological support from the CPI.

In order to aid the drafting of the occupational standard the CPI prepares an occupational profile, which serves the experts as a tool in the development of the occupational standard. The occupational profile is a document that contains a detailed description of the jobs and tasks covered by a given occupation or group of occupations. It is prepared on the basis of observation in the workplace or interviews with workers and management staff at enterprises or employees in the small business and service sectors. The draft occupational profile is tested with the help of a questionnaire and supplemented across a representative sample of enterprises or representatives of the small business and service sectors.

The next step is the drafting of a document known as an occupational standard. Experts from enterprises are gradually joined in the preparation of the occupational standard by other experts or social partners: trade unions, trade chambers, professional associations, competent ministries. On the basis of analysis of the jobs and tasks contained in the occupational profile, and taking into account development trends in the sector, the experts draw up an occupational standard that sets out the contents of the vocational qualification at a specific level of difficulty and defines the necessary knowledge, skills and vocational competences. Vocational competences are given in the form of actual abilities to master a wide range of tasks in various professional environments.

5.2 Preparation of NVQ catalogues

Where a need to validate vocational qualifications exists in the labour market, the experts then go on to prepare an NVQ catalogue on the basis of the occupational standard. An NVQ catalogue is a document that serves as the basis for the organisation and implementation of the verification and validation process, in which the equivalence of the candidate's knowledge to the requirements of the occupational standard is ascertained.

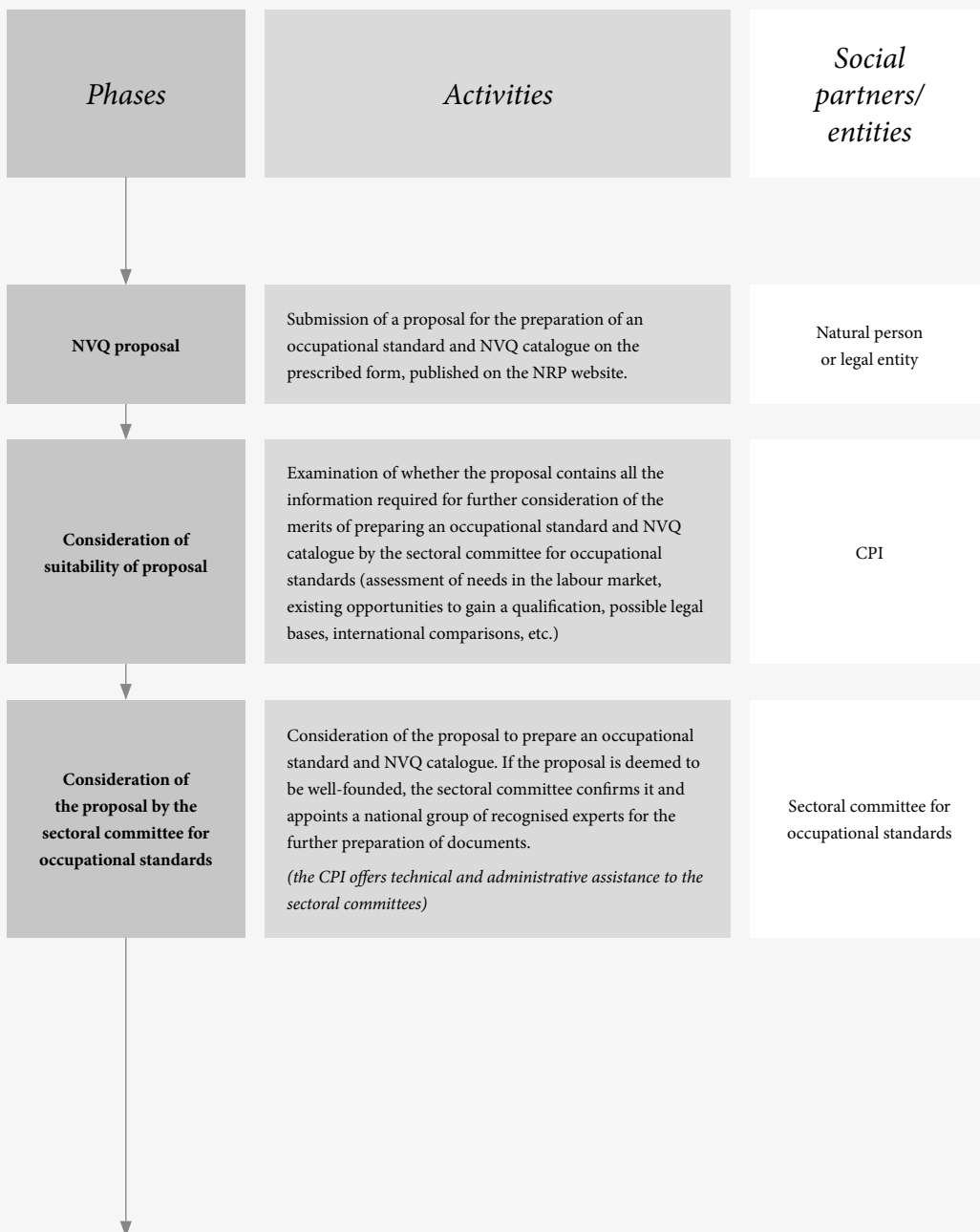
The NVQ sets out the entry requirements that candidates must meet before being able to participate in the NVQ verification and validation process. The determination of entry requirements in the catalogue is dependent on the level of difficulty of the NVQ. One entry requirement is usually a specified period of work experience in the field covered by the NVQ. Specific prior qualifications can also sometimes appear as an entry requirement for an NVQ, typically in the case of NVQs at a higher level of difficulty. Entry requirements can also include other special requirements, where these are a condition for the performance of a specific occupation and, consequently, a condition for the verification and validation of the vocational qualification.

Where a candidate meets the entry requirements, the equivalence of the candidate's proofs of non-formal and informal learning to the knowledge, skills and competences set out in the occupational standard is ascertained by the verification and validation process. For cases where a candidate fails to prove their mastery of the whole of the occupational standard, the NVQ catalogue also defines tasks for the direct testing of knowledge and skills from the occupational standard and the method and criteria for their testing, on which basis the committee is also able to test the candidate directly.

The NVQ catalogue prescribes compulsory material conditions for NVQ verification and validation providers, including the premises and equipment necessary for the implementation of verification and validation procedures for a specific NVQ. The catalogue also prescribes the eligibility requirements that the members of the NVQ verification and validation committee must meet (a relevant educational qualification and work experience in the field of the qualification they are verifying).

NVQ catalogues enable the rapid formation of a basis for the formal recognition of competences. The requirements of the labour market are constantly changing, occupations themselves are changing and new occupations are appearing which individuals learn independently in the labour market or in the course of their employment. The creation of NVQ catalogues makes it possible for individuals to obtain a formal document or official certification of their competence for these new and current occupations relatively quickly.

5.3 Diagram showing the process from NVQ proposal to conditions for verification and validation of the NVQ



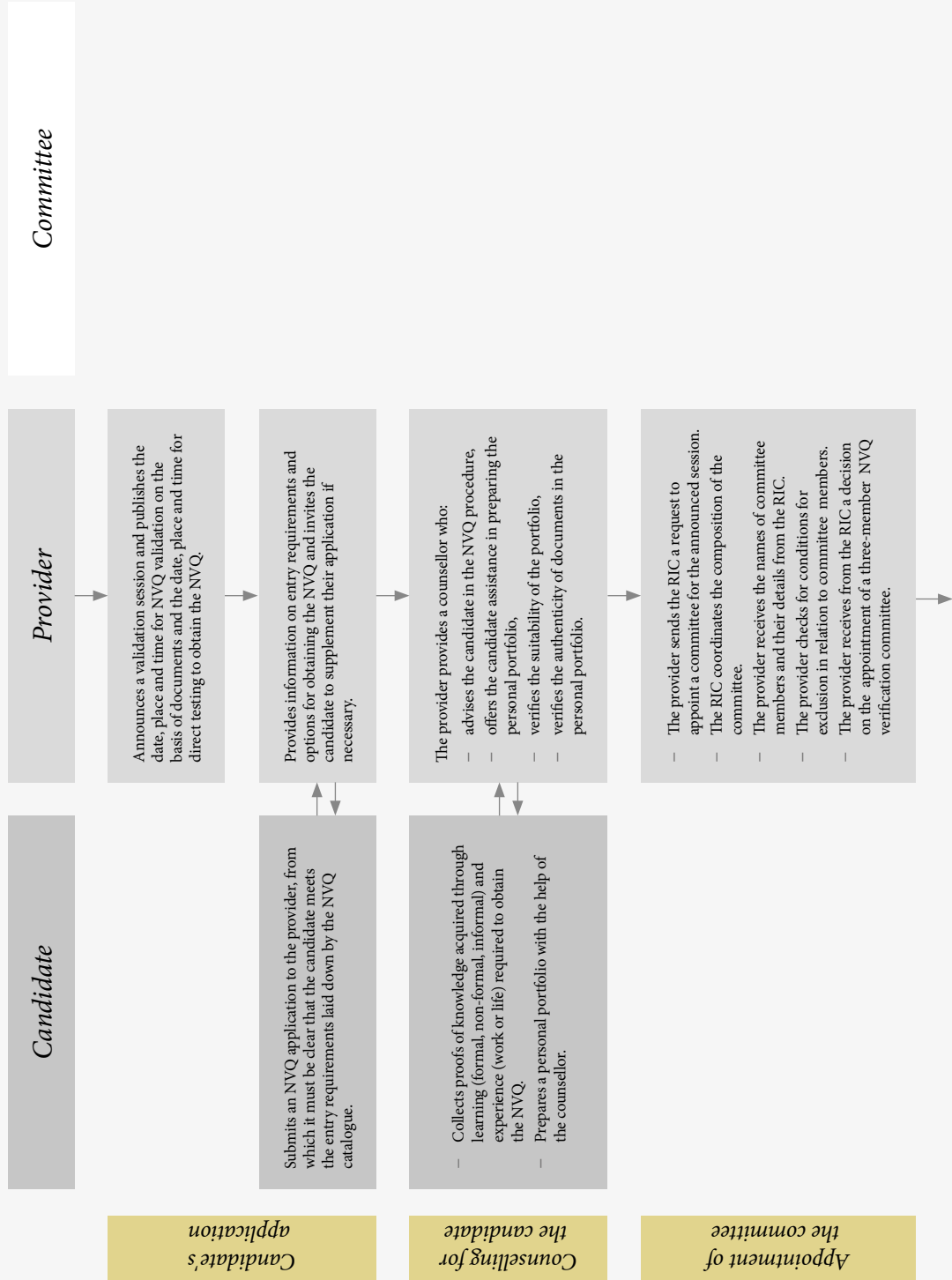
<i>Phases</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Social partners/ entities</i>
<p>Preparation of draft occupational standard</p>	<p>The preparation of an occupational standard begins with the preparation of an occupational profile:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – analysis of work processes, – detailed description of jobs and tasks covered by the occupational profile, – study and confirmation of the occupational profile against a representative sample of enterprises. <p><i>(the CPI covers the occupational profile in various working environments)</i></p>	<p>CPI, enterprises or representatives of the small business or service sector</p>
	<p>Occupational standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – preparation of the technical knowledge and skills necessary to perform the jobs and tasks defined in the occupational profile, – formulation of competences in the occupational standard, – determination of the level of difficulty of jobs covered by the occupational standard, – preparation of rationales for the occupational standard and NVQ catalogue for the processes of their adoption by the sectoral committee and the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training. <p><i>(the CPI provides methodological guidance and direction to the group of experts in the preparation of the occupational standard and preparation of the rationale for the occupational standard and NVQ catalogue)</i></p>	<p>CPI, national working group (representatives of enterprises, the small business or service sector, professional associations, competent ministries, trade unions, etc.)</p>
<p>Preparation of draft NVQ catalogue</p>	<p>NVQ catalogue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – determination of entry requirements for NVQ candidates, – formulation of tasks for direct testing of the candidate in cases where the candidate's proofs of knowledge are insufficient for certification of the NVQ, – determination of testing methods and assessment criteria, – determination of material conditions for providers and eligibility requirements for members of NVQ verification and validation committees. <p><i>(the CPI provides methodological guidance and direction to the group of experts in the preparation of the NVQ catalogue)</i></p>	<p>CPI, national working group (representatives of enterprises, the small business or service sector, professional associations, competent ministries, trade unions, etc.)</p>



6

*The NVQ
verification
and validation
process and
the role of
stakeholders*





Committee

Provider

Candidate

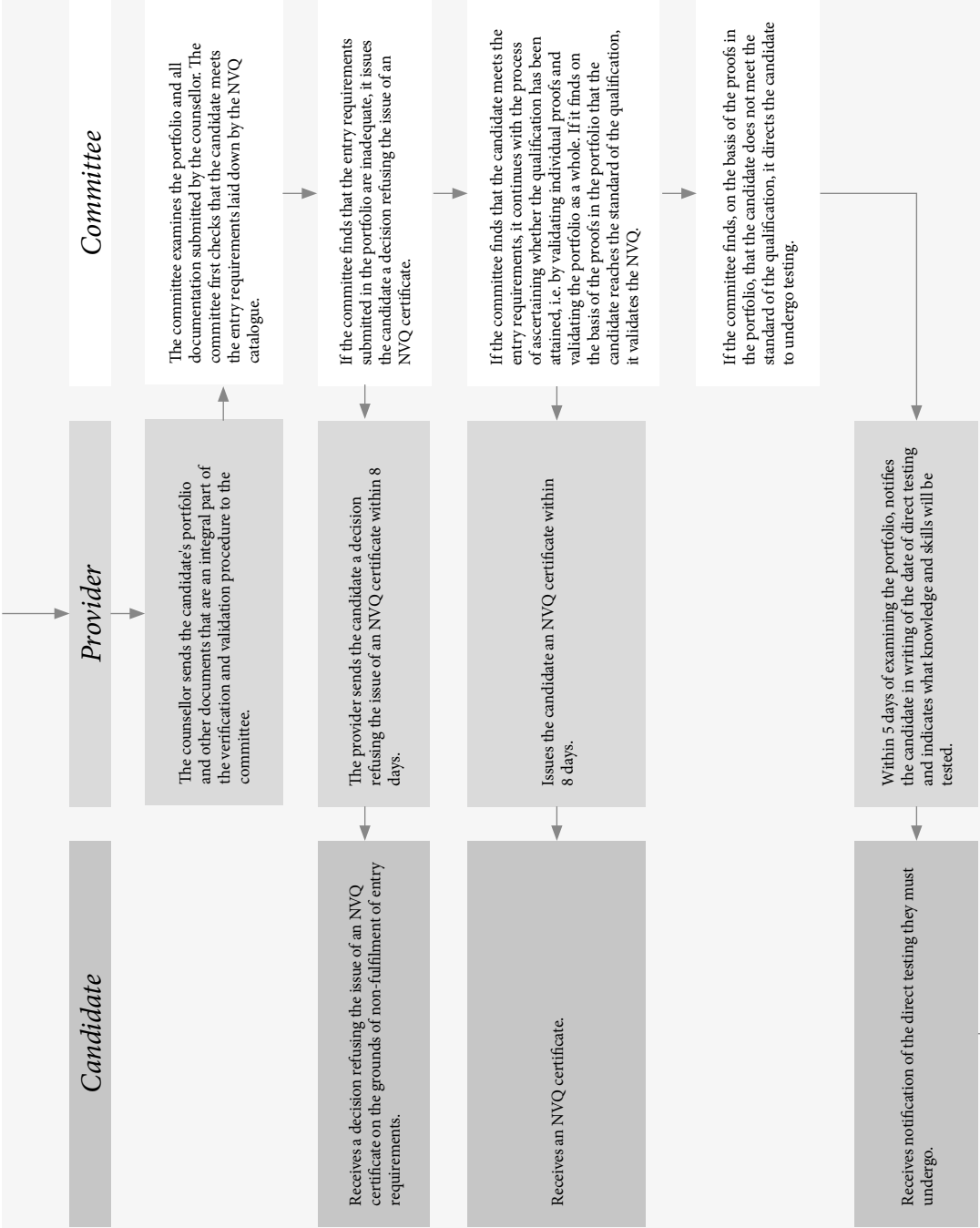
Candidate's application

Counselling for the candidate

Appointment of the committee

Verification and validation procedures may be attended by an authorised representative of the RIC, the MDDSZ, the Labour Inspectorate or the CPI. Authorised representatives have the rights to examine all the candidate's documentation but may not intervene in the verification and validation process.

Recognition of NVQs on the basis of portfolio evaluation



7

Description of stakeholders in the NVQ verification and validation process



7.1 NVQ verification and validation providers

Verification and validation of NVQs and the provision of advice and guidance to candidates throughout the process of obtaining an NVQ is carried out by NVQ verification and validation providers who are entered in the register of providers at the RIC.

An organisation entered in the register of NVQ verification and validation providers must also guarantee the material conditions prescribed by the catalogue for an individual NVQ and provide an NVQ verification and validation counsellor.

Tasks of NVQ verification and validation providers

- to undertake administrative and technical work for the members of NVQ verification and validation committees,
- to set dates for the verification and validation of NVQs (a date is set at least once every 12 months and verification and validation is carried out when at least one candidate registers for the procedure, provided the list of committee members includes a sufficient number of members with a licence),
- to provide candidates with an NVQ verification and validation counsellor who informs them about opportunities and conditions for obtaining an NVQ and provides assistance and advice for the compilation of a portfolio.

Registration of NVQ verification and validation providers

Organisations eligible for entry in the register, on the basis of an open invitation published by the RIC, are inter-enterprise training centres, schools, adult education organisations and trade chambers that provide state-approved education programmes, meet the material conditions laid down by the NVQ catalogue and employ an NVQ verification and validation counsellor. If no organisation is entered in the register on the basis of the open invitation, a call for applications is published, via which the RIC selects up to five providers (making use of the criteria formulated for the assessment of applications).

7.2 NVQ candidates

The National Vocational Qualifications Act provides that an NVQ may be obtained by a person who is at least 18 years old. The Act also provides that in exceptional cases an NVQ may be obtained by persons who are not yet 18 if they no longer have the status of apprentice or secondary school student and are able to prove that they are attaining the knowledge and skills defined by the relevant NVQ catalogue. Candidates who enter the NVQ verification and validation process must meet the entry requirements laid down by the catalogue for the NVQ they wish to obtain.

7.3 NVQ verification and validation committees

NVQs are verified and validated by the members of an NVQ verification and validation committee. Verification and validation is carried out by a three-member committee formed and appointed by the RIC for every NVQ verification and validation session.

The eligibility requirements that must be met by members of NVQ verification and validation committees are set out in individual NVQ catalogues.

Tasks of members of NVQ verification and validation committees

- to evaluate individual proofs submitted in the candidate's portfolio and the candidate's portfolio as a whole,
- to directly test candidates in cases where the documents enclosed in the portfolio do not satisfy all the requirements laid down by the NVQ catalogue and occupational standard,
- to certify candidates' NVQs (candidates receive an NVQ certificate) or issue a decision refusing to issue an NVQ certificate or a decision that candidates do not meet the conditions necessary to obtain an NVQ certificate.

Obtaining a licence to serve as a member of an NVQ verification and validation committee

The RIC prepares a call for applications for committee member candidates for each NVQ catalogue separately and publishes it on the NRP website and, if necessary, in other media. If the application of a committee member candidate meets the formal and substantive conditions of the call for applications and contains adequate proofs that the candidate meets the requirements laid down by the NVQ catalogue, the candidate is directed to a verified committee member training programme. Once the candidate has completed training, the National Examination Centre sends the minister responsible for labour a list of committee members who have completed training. The minister responsible for labour approves the list of committee member candidates and, on the basis of this approval, the RIC sends licences to the successful candidates.



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LICENCA

za preverjanje in potrjevanje nacionalne poklicne kvalifikacije



ime in priimek

rojen (-a) / v kraju

je usposobljen (-a) za
preverjanje in potrjevanje nacionalne poklicne kvalifikacije

katalog standardov strokovnih znanj in spretnosti za poklicno kvalifikacijo

številka licence / koda kataloga nacionalne poklicne kvalifikacije

kraj / datum

veljavnost licence

direktor (-ica)

žig

8

Quality assurance in procedures implemented within the NVQ system



The entry into force of the National Vocational Qualifications Act opened a route in Slovenia to the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning, regardless of learning methods or learning environments. It is therefore essential that the NVQ system should build confidence in the systematic regulation of the verification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. One of the fundamental ways to establish confidence is to ensure quality in all procedures implemented within the NVQ system. The first condition for ensuring the quality of the system is to have **suitable bases** for NVQ verification and validation procedures. Two further important conditions for ensuring quality in the NVQ system are the **standardised and high-quality implementation** of NVQ verification and validation procedures and the **right of candidates to appeal** completed NVQ verification and validation procedures. Quality in the NVQ system is also guaranteed by the **competent institutions responsible for monitoring and overseeing** NVQ verification and validation procedures. All these aspects of quality assurance contribute to the credibility of the system and in this way generate confidence among all key stakeholders, who identify their own interest in it.

8.1 Bases for NVQ verification and validation procedures

- The NVQ system is planned and established on the basis of jointly agreed occupational standards that are coordinated and confirmed at the national level, thus giving NVQ certificates a transparent value in the labour market. Occupational standards are the basis for the preparation of formal education programmes and also the basis for procedures for the verification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. They are the reference points or sets of common criteria by which the knowledge, skills and competences of the individual are verified.
- The establishment of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues takes place at all levels; from making the decision to prepare a qualification, procedures for the preparation of the qualification, and consideration and acceptance of the qualification at various levels of decision-making, to adoption of the qualification and the establishment of its formal and legal status. The participation of social partners is guaranteed in all these phases.
- The content of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues is designed at the national level in cooperation with social partners (those whose involvement is compulsory and other interested social partners) and on the basis of prior analyses in the labour market.
- Occupational standards and NVQ catalogues are devised according to a uniform methodology approved by the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training. On the basis of the uniform methodology, the CPI provides methodological guidance and direction to the groups of experts responsible for drawing up occupational standards and NVQ catalogues.
- Occupational standards and NVQ catalogues are reviewed every five years and the documents are harmonised with new developments in legislation, technology, work processes, service activities, etc.
- The basis for the implementation of NVQ verification and validation procedures is formed by the National Vocational Qualifications Act and implementing regulations that systematically and uniformly regulate the conditions and procedure for obtaining an NVQ.

8.2 Standardised, high-quality NVQ verification and validation procedures

Expert recommendations and experiences from the practice of various countries confirm that the most important quality factor in the process of verifying and validating non-formal and informal learning is how the process takes place, in other words the manner in which we organise and implement the verification and validation process. Following the European Council's Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012) and CEDEFOP's European guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2009), the validation process is divided into four phases:

1. **identification,**
2. **documentation,**
3. **assessment (recognition on the basis of portfolio evaluation or direct testing),**
4. **certification.**

It is important that the individual is provided with **information and guidance** during all phases

The CPI focuses on the recommendations of the European Council and CEDEFOP, which is the reason why verification and validation procedures in the NVQ system are coordinated with the above phases and implemented by appropriately qualified experts. For each of the four phases of validation, and also for information and guidance activities, elements of quality assurance are defined in the NVQ system. Through the use of these elements, a system can be established that guarantees the quality and comparability of verification and validation procedures, the reliability of the overall process and confidence in its results. The assessment phase in particular must be carefully planned and implemented. When validating proofs or carrying out direct testing, it is in fact essential to use reliable procedures and criteria, particularly if the certification of the results of non-formal and informal learning leads to the same status as that achieved through formal education and training.

Below we illustrate how we ensure quality in information, guidance and counselling activities within the NVQ system. These activities are present in all four phases of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

8.2.1 *Information*

In general terms, information activities may be defined as the process by which candidates are provided with all the main information that supports and orients the implementation of an individual phase of the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Viewed more broadly, information activities also cover the provision of information to the general public, and in particular to the specialist public, about the opportunities provided by the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This can take the form of providing information about purposes and benefits, about the actual process of validation, who offers it, how it can be accessed by different target groups, who participates in these processes, etc. The aim of information activities is to reach the different target groups that we wish to encourage to participate or cooperate in the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Within the NVQ system, we devote considerable attention to the provision of information so that individuals and the specialist public are aware of the existence of an NVQ system that can help them

formalise prior learning, skills and competences. We approach the provision of information about the NVQ system holistically (systemically), rather than merely at the level of the institutions that implement NVQ verification and validation procedures. At the same time, we endeavour to take into account established criteria for the effective provision of information. We also devote particular attention to providing information to the experts and guidance/counselling personnel involved in NVQ verification and validation procedures.

The quality of information provision within the NVQ system is ensured in the following ways:

At the national level:

- the NRP website www.nrpslo.org, offers the most comprehensive information about the NVQ system and certain information about the vocational and secondary technical education system. It provides candidates with information about verification and validation sessions for individual NVQs and includes all information important for the work of NVQ verification and validation providers, counsellors and committee members,
- a corporate identity developed for the NVQ system, along with a communication plan adapted to individual target groups,
- a range of printed and electronic material providing information on the NVQ system,
- presentations of the NVQ system to the social partners, participation in career education and sector-specific trade fairs, etc.,
- extensive media campaigns in the Slovenian context,
- the www.npk.si website, intended exclusively for the NVQ system and for candidates and enterprises encountering the NVQ concept for the first time. Information is provided in a clear and comprehensible manner, with NVQ holders providing numerous examples of their experiences. The website offers the possibility of viewing a portfolio in 3D format. Other features include a film on a guidance interview between an NVQ candidate and an NVQ counsellor, a film on the work of committee members involved in the direct testing of the NVQ candidates, and so on.

By NVQ verification and validation providers:

- they provide information on NVQs and on the conditions and procedures for obtaining them.

8.2.2 *Guidance and counselling*

Guidance and counselling activities take place in all phases of the validation of non-formal and informal learning and overlap with the provision of information (see above). Counselling consists of providing in-depth guidance to the candidate through all phases of validation. The counsellor must be capable of recognising opportunities for the candidate to use their work experience and non-formal learning and have them recognised in the course of their professional or personal growth. As well as being proficient in the basic communication skills required to conduct the guidance and counselling process (in which the counsellor helps the candidate record the knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired in various ways), the counsellor must be able to motivate and encourage the individual to play an active role in all phases of validation, to be aware of their own responsibilities and to persevere from the beginning to the end. During the guidance and counselling process, the individual's hidden knowledge is revealed, along with the frequently highly personal situations in which they came by their knowledge in a non-formal or informal way. For this reason confidentiality and professionalism must be fundamental elements of the counselling and guidance process and guaranteed by the counsellor.

Autonomy and professionalism are two important criteria, which every counsellor must follow in their work. In order to meet these criteria, counsellors must take into account the following well-established ethical guidelines from the counselling and guidance field:

Respect

Respect for the individual's wishes in all phases of the process. Guidance and counselling must take as their starting point the integrity and autonomy of the recipient. Guidance and counselling must not be led by the interests of the counsellor. It is the counsellor's task to ensure a balance between encouragement and the offering of challenges on the one hand, and respecting the individual's interests on the other.

Impartiality

Guidance and counselling must be neutral and impartial. They must protect the interests of the recipient of guidance and counselling rather than the interests of individual institutions or other interests.

Transparency

The general framework and conditions of the guidance and counselling process should be clearly defined. The counsellor must be willing to include other institutions in the process if necessary, and to inform the recipient of guidance and counselling of this in advance.

Confidentiality

All guidance and counselling conversations must be confidential. In cases where counsellors are required by law to communicate certain details to other institutions, the recipients of guidance and counselling must be told what details these are in advance.

Accuracy/conscientiousness

Information provided by the counsellor must be correct and up-to-date, and furthermore, the guidance materials must be suitable and carefully prepared.

The tasks of a counsellor in the NVQ verification and validation process have not constituted themselves into an autonomous occupation in Slovenia but instead form part of the duties of various profiles such as school guidance counsellors, adult education organisers, teachers of various subjects and many other professionals working in the fields of education, training and adult education who have trained at the CPI to provide guidance and counselling in NVQ procedures. At present the largest proportion of counsellors in the NVQ verification and validation process are employed at institutions that both implement and prepare NVQ verifications. This places them at the centre of various interests. On the one hand they are faced with the interests of the institution that employs them, and on the other with the interests of the candidate, which are not necessarily compatible with the former. For this reason, appropriate training and the quality of the work of NVQ counsellors is particularly important.

The quality of the work of counsellors in NVQ verification and validation processes is ensured in the following ways:

- the CPI runs a compulsory training programme for NVQ verification and validation counsellors,
- counselling and guidance are present in all phases of the validation of non-formal learning: at the beginning, when the candidate decides to validate their learning, during preparation of the application, the collection of proofs and preparation of the portfolio, during cooperation with the committee and during preparation of the candidate's personal education plan,
- the counsellor is obliged to follow the ethical guidelines that cover the guidance and counselling sector,

- guidelines have been formulated for NVQ counsellors to follow (and are published on the NRP website):
 - the counsellor provides the candidate with support in selecting suitable proofs or finding additional opportunities for education, and with mentoring that covers above all specific guidance in the selection of the level and field for verification and validation and in finding proofs and to determine their suitability when the candidate is preparing their portfolio,
 - all guidance and counselling must be based on the autonomy of the individual, whose task it is to think about their own experiences, while the NVQ counsellor is there to help them identify experiences and present them in a way that will facilitate their validation,
 - by providing support to the candidate, the latter's sense of worth is strengthened and they are motivated for further personal and professional development. This method of working with a candidate is essential in situations with which the candidate is unfamiliar, particularly when candidates are required to present their experiences in order to give them a formal value.

Below we illustrate how we ensure quality in individual phases of the validation of non-formal and informal learning within the NVQ system.

8.2.3 *Phases of validation of non-formal and informal learning*

1. Identification

Identification is the phase in which the individual, either alone or in cooperation with a counsellor, ascertains whether they meet the entry requirements to obtain an NVQ and what knowledge and skills they have already obtained in various learning environments, and then compares them with a predefined occupational standard and NVQ catalogue. The individual is asked for a self-analysis or self-assessment, or an interview is held with the candidate. The counsellor can also help with the self-assessment. This facilitates the first identification of prior knowledge, which the candidate will demonstrate (or document).

The quality of the identification phase is ensured within the NVQ system in the following ways:

- the provider provides information on entry requirements and the possibilities of obtaining an NVQ,
- the provider invites candidates to supplement their application if necessary,
- the provider is obliged to provide every NVQ candidate with an NVQ counsellor who helps the candidate identify non-formal and informal learning and ways of proving them.

2. Documentation

Documentation means the collection of proofs of the candidate's prior learning and is one of the key phases in the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Proofs can be collected in various ways. The question of whether specific knowledge, skills and competences of an individual are recognised depends on suitability of the proofs. The proofs should be varied and should express the candidate's abilities in as complex a manner as possible. Attention is also paid to the diversity and specificity of the activities in which the candidate acquired the knowledge in question. The proofs must be authentic, meaning that they must express the candidate's actual knowledge and competences. Authenticity does not relate here to the expert assessment or evaluation of the proofs, but to administrative and technical

work, which includes checking whether a document actually refers to the candidate, whether the copy is the same as the original and whether it has been signed and issued by a competent authority.

The quality of the phase of collecting proofs is ensured within the NVQ system in the following ways:

- the counsellor's assistance in determining the suitability of the candidate's proofs and forming the portfolio,
- by coordinating and regulating the conformity of the candidate's proofs with the competences, skills and knowledge listed in the occupational standard,
- if the portfolio is not prepared in an adequate manner, the counsellor invites the candidate to supplement it,
- the counsellor's assistance in preparing the candidate's personal education plan, which defines the requirements the candidate still has to complete or the missing proofs the candidate still has to obtain in order to be able to continue with the procedure to obtain an NVQ,
- the counsellor checks the authenticity of the proofs in the portfolio before it is submitted to the NVQ verification and validation committee,
- the cooperation of the counsellor with the NVQ verification and validation committee members, who as experts in the qualification in question are more easily able to define the documents necessary for the validation of the vocational qualification,
- in the guidance and counselling process, the counsellor also liaises as necessary with other institutions and individuals/experts if this is necessary in the validation procedure,
- when identifying and classifying the candidate's proofs, the **portfolio structure** prescribed by the CPI (published on the NRP website) is taken into account.

Portfolio:

The portfolio is a collection of the individual's abilities or achievements realised through learning (formal, non-formal, informal) or experience (work or life). In addition to the compulsory documents demonstrating the fulfilment of entry requirements for the NVQ, the portfolio includes various proofs demonstrating the candidate's mastery of the competences, knowledge and skills required in order to reach the occupational standard and satisfy the requirements of the NVQ catalogue. On the basis of the various proofs in the portfolio, which are arranged systematically with regard to the content of the occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, the committee makes a decision on the award of the certificate or on the method and scope of any additional direct testing.

The portfolio has several purposes:

- it demonstrates the candidate's competences (abilities and achievements) in the form of a personal record and regardless of how they were obtained;
- it increases the candidate's awareness of the knowledge and skills (competences) they have acquired in an unplanned, informal manner and are frequently unaware of;
- it organises the list of the candidate's achievements systematically (i.e. places them in logical order), with the result that the candidate has a ready-made professional curriculum vitae or EUROPASS CV;
- it raises and strengthens the candidate's self-confidence, encourages them to pursue further learning, encourages them to pursue further career development;
- it encourages the candidate to become more active in future learning and to plan it properly on their own.

The structure of the personal portfolio is prescribed and published on the website of the NRP and contains the following points:

1. FULFILMENT OF SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS	<p>Proofs by which the candidate demonstrates the fulfilment of the entry requirements for the NVQ (if prescribed by the NVQ catalogue):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - required educational qualification and/or - required number of years' work experience in the field of the vocational qualification, etc.
2. PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATE	Curriculum vitae or EUROPASS CV
3. WORK EXPERIENCE OF THE CANDIDATE	<p>Proofs of prior work experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employment record book, - work contract, - letter of reference, - description of candidate's job, - statement from employer, etc.
4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING	<p>Certificates of education or training that are mentioned by the candidate in the CV and are related to the qualification in terms of content but are not an admission requirement for the NVQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confirmation of attendance and/or completion of an educational training programme, - certificate, - diploma, - other proofs of completion of course units, etc., - confirmation from education and training providers of successfully completed educational training, - certificate, - licence, - confirmation of training from an enterprise, etc.
5. REFERENCES	<p>If the candidate states in their CV that they already have work experience in the field covered by the qualification, they are encouraged to document it.</p> <p>The following may be taken into account as proof:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - practical work completed in the workplace (product, model, computer program, etc.), - a written product prepared by the candidate in the workplace (e.g. project, plan, development paper, research paper, report, paper, analysis, essay, evaluation, translation, annual accounts of a small enterprise, HR plan of an enterprise, etc.), - service performed in the workplace. <p>The candidate may also prove their work experience in other ways, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prizes from competitions, - products, - articles, - authorship or co-authorship of books and other publications <p>The candidate must unambiguously prove that the product or service really is their own work, including in the case of group (project) work. They can prove authorship by means of written declarations from employers or project managers or by submitting awards, patents, photographs, etc.</p>

Example of a candidate's personal portfolio: www.npk.si/npk-portfolio/

3. Assessment

Assessment of the candidate's non-formal and informal learning is carried out by the members of NVQ verification and validation committees formed and appointed by the RIC for every NVQ verification and validation session. NVQ verification and validation committees consist of three members selected from a list of committee members approved by the minister responsible for labour and are appointed in accordance with the eligibility requirements for committee members prescribed in the NVQ catalogue.

In order to ensure that the assessment is conducted with professionalism, NVQ verification and validation committee members are required to observe the fundamental principles of ethical behaviour and fundamental ethical values prescribed for their work:

Fairness and impartiality

Committee members observe the provisions of the NVQ Act and relevant implementing regulations and conduct procedures impartially and fairly for every candidate.

Integrity of personality

Through their approach, appearance and behaviour they instil confidence and the sense of a high degree of fairness and expertise in candidates and other committee members.

Empathy

Committee members respect the rights and obligations of their interlocutors and observe the rules of polite and dignified behaviour. They are aware of the way their own behaviour can influence candidates and other committee members. They are capable of putting themselves in the position of those they are assessing and they give full support and encouragement to candidates.

Communication skills

They are capable of listening attentively and of asking clear questions. They are capable of writing clear, concise reports that are a description of the attainment of competences rather than a description of the candidate.

Expertise in verifying and validating NVQs

They are able to compare a candidate's skills to the prescribed occupational standards and to adapt verification and validation to each individual situation. They have a positive attitude towards NVQs.

Evaluation skills

They are able to give feedback to the candidate and counsellor on what skills are sufficiently developed and what skills require further development. They are relaxed in their work and through their behaviour give candidates all necessary support in their work.

Tolerance and teamwork

Relations between committee members are based on respect, sincerity, tolerance, comradeship and personal dignity. Committee members are able to accept well-argued professional criticism and do not take it as a personal affront. They are capable of cooperating with the other members of the committee and of putting forward cogent arguments in favour of their own decisions and joint decisions.

Responsibility

They must safeguard the personal details and information on verification and validation with which they come into contact in the course of their work. They do not provide information or commentary on the results of verification and validation to anyone outside the process. They must observe criteria for the verification and validation of national vocational qualifications and must be fair towards all candidates.

Exclusion

If a committee member is related to a candidate or has some other conflict of interests with a party to the process, they do not take part in the NVQ verification and validation committee.

The professionalism and objectivity of members of NVQ verification and validation committees is guaranteed during the phase of assessment of the candidate's non-formal and informal learning in the following ways:

- a committee member's licence may be obtained by anyone who holds the qualification specified by the NVQ catalogue and has worked in the field covered by the vocational qualification for the last five years,
- completion of the training programme for NVQ verification and validation committee members specified by the minister competent for labour at the proposal of the competent Expert Council is a condition for committee members,
- for each verification and validation session (independently of the provider), the RIC appoints a three-member committee in accordance with the eligibility criteria contained in the NVQ catalogue,
- the committees make their decisions autonomously and independently,
- any person who at the time of a verification and validation session is the employer of a candidate, the co-owner with a candidate of an enterprise, production unit, shop or establishment, the colleague of a candidate, or related or married to a candidate may not serve as a member of an NVQ verification and validation committee,
- committee members extend their NVQ verification and validation licence by proving their work experience in the last five years and ongoing professional training in the field covered by the vocational qualification they are verifying,
- committee members participate in further training organised for them by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, the RIC and the CPI.

Assessment of a candidate's non-formal and informal learning may be carried out either on the basis of **recognition of the proofs** of the candidate's non-formal and informal learning contained in the portfolio or on the basis of direct **testing of the candidate**. In practice, a **combination of both methods** is the most frequent approach, since the committee generally identifies a partial correspondence of the candidate's proofs to the occupational standard and determines the knowledge, skills and competences that are to be tested directly.

RECOGNITION ON THE BASIS OF PORTFOLIO EVALUATION

When validating non-formal and informal knowledge, committee members establish the correspondence of the proofs in the candidate's portfolio with the occupational standard and NVQ catalogue.

The quality of assessment of the candidate's proofs carried out by NVQ verification and validation committee members is ensured:

- by the prescribed criteria that committee members must observe when evaluating the suitability of individual proofs in the first step:

- **Authenticity**

In the case of the proofs contained in the candidate's portfolio, committee members must establish whether they genuinely relate to the candidate. The authenticity of various documents referring to candidates (*letters, references, etc.*) may be verified on the basis of stamps, information about the issuers of such documents or on the basis of the contact details of issuers, with the help of which it is possible to verify the authenticity of documents, etc. If the portfolio includes, for example, a product, it must be established whether the product really is the candidate's work. The candidate may keep a diary of their own work, supported by photographs and a description of the processes implemented, which however must be justified by a statement of reasons for the choice of techniques and methods of work.

- **Validity**

In the case of proofs or products contained in a portfolio, it is important that these should still be valid, in other words that they have not expired. The proof must ensure that the knowledge possessed by the individual is still applicable and that the individual is capable of performing the set task adequately on the basis of this knowledge. In the case of proofs of education and other proofs of a formal nature, the committee members are not able to assess their validity, since the rights deriving from such proofs do not expire.

- **Relevance**

For each submitted proof, the extent to which it covers the requirements of the NVQ catalogue and the occupational standard for a specific qualification is established. The occupational standard defines the skills, knowledge and competences required for the qualification that the candidate wishes to obtain. The NVQ catalogue describes the tasks for the verification and validation of knowledge and skills for the selected qualification. Every proof must be compared with both documents, in order to establish whether it relates to the contents they prescribe.

- by the prescribed criteria that committee members must observe when evaluating the portfolio as a whole in the second step (assessing whether they are able to certify individual areas or the entire qualification for the candidate on the basis of the proofs):

- **Sufficiency**

Sufficiency means that the committee members judge whether there are sufficient proofs with an adequate assessment on the basis of which the candidate is able to prove their proficiency in specific areas of works covered by the occupational standard or possession of a specific competences covered by the occupational standard, both autonomously and in various circumstances.

- **Diversity**

Diversity means that the proofs are very different. The proofs can be indirect (*letters of reference from previous employers or the current employer, special awards or commendations, articles about the candidate, photographs or video recordings of a product made by the candidate or job done by the candidate, certification of training programmes attended by the candidate*) and also direct (*the candidate's own products or works, e.g. computer programmes, training manuals, articles in journals or newspapers, video recordings, etc.*).

- **Complexity**

When the proofs in the portfolio cover all the areas and competences from the occupational standard but are not sufficiently diverse, the committee members make use of a supplementary criterion known as complexity. This is referred to as a supplementary criterion because it demonstrates »supplementary« knowledge that is not required in the occupational standard but is nevertheless valuable (*in portfolio the candidate shows vocational path, which can be very diverse and indicates for example the candidate's precision at work, self-discipline, ability to work in a team, adaptability to various work situations, ability to apply knowledge in different working environments, etc.*)

- in order to ensure the traceability of procedures, committee members are required to keep a record of NVQ validation on the basis of documents (a record of the evaluation of individual proofs in the portfolio and a record of the recognition of a vocational qualification on the basis of the portfolio),
- the CPI looks after the development and supplementing of the methodology for evaluating proofs and documents in NVQ validation procedures, updates the framework for compiling the portfolio, and so on.

- on the basis of the findings of the committee members in the course of their work, and on the basis of the findings of the appeals committee, the CPI continuously adapts and supplements the instructions and forms used in the evaluation of individual documents and proofs and in the evaluation of the portfolio as a whole.

DIRECT TESTING OF CANDIDATES

If a candidate's proofs are inadequate or only partially correspond to the occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, the committee members determine the knowledge, skills and competences that they will test directly. Direct testing of candidates is a process in which, using testing methods laid down by the NVQ catalogue, the knowledge, skills and competences that the candidate has gained in different learning environments are identified. The NVQ catalogue usually specifies various combinations of testing methods: written testing, practical tasks, oral presentation, task/performance. Committee members must have good knowledge of the testing methods and must also be capable of adapting them to the individual situation, since they are responsible for the quality of the procedure.

Giving feedback is an important part of each of the testing methods. Irrespective of the method used for testing, the NVQ verification and validation committee must provide feedback on its final decision and, at the end of the verification and validation process, inform the candidate about the factors that influenced an individual decision by the committee members.

The quality of direct testing of candidates carried out by NVQ verification and validation committee members is guaranteed in the following ways:

- testing methods and assessment criteria are prescribed by the catalogue for the individual NVQ and committee members are required to observe them,
- in order to ensure the traceability of procedures, committee members are required to complete a direct testing report and assessment forms, depending on the testing method specified by the NVQ catalogue,
- at the end of testing, the committee informs candidates of the results and, in the case of unsuccessful candidates, states the reasons for their failure. The committee tells the candidate what needs to be improved, and how. Committee members analyse the candidate's situation and, together with the candidate, look for ways to proceed,
- the RIC organises workshops for committee members to ensure uniform verification and validation criteria for individual NVQs and workshops for the preparation of task banks (a range of questions) and visual material for testing for individual NVQs,
- the RIC organises conferences of committee members in order to prepare testing instructions.

4. Certification

Certification is the final phase of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Certification is a phase in which a candidate's knowledge, skills and competences gained through non-formal or informal learning are formally recognised.

a) The NVQ verification and validation committee can certify a qualification and issue an NVQ certificate on the basis of validation of the proofs enclosed in the candidate's portfolio.

b) The NVQ verification and validation committee can certify a qualification and issue an NVQ certificate on the basis of direct testing that is successfully completed by the candidate.



Republika Slovenija

_____ naziv in sedež izvajalca postopkov za ugotavljanje in potrjevanje nacionalnih poklicnih kvalifikacij

CERTIFIKAT
o nacionalni poklicni kvalifikaciji



_____ ime in priimek

_____ rojen (-a) / v kraju

_____ je usposobljen (-a) za:

_____ naziv kataloga standardov strokovnih znanj in spretnosti

_____ evidenčna številka certifikata / koda kataloga standardov strokovnih znanj in spretnosti

_____ kraj / datum

_____ predsednik (-ica) komisije

_____ odgovorna oseba

_____ žig izvajalca

NVQ certificate. The certificate contains information about the company providing the NVQ procedure (name, headquarters, signature of the responsible person) as well as the signature of the committee president; the information about the certificate holder (name, date and place of birth); information about the certificate (certificate identification number and NVQ catalogue code). The vocational competences and the level of qualification are listed on the reverse side.

Proof of validated non-formal and informal learning in the NVQ system is provided by an NVQ certificate, a public document which has equivalent status to a certificate or diploma:

- with the “Rules on the form of the public document certifying a national vocational qualification – certificate and substitute certificate”, the minister responsible for labour determined the form, content and issuers of the public document on the national vocational qualification or NVQ certificate,
- the NVQ certificate form is printed in the Slovene language or the language of the national minority on paper prescribed by the Rules on the form of the public document,
- the RIC ensures transparency between the number of public documents issued for NVQs and the number of NVQ certificates awarded by comparing the number of issued documents sent to providers with the number of certificates awarded in the annual reports of providers on certificates awarded,
- NVQ certificates may only be issued by an NVQ verification and validation provider or the legal successor thereof, entered in the register at the RIC,
- NVQ verification and validation providers keep a record of issued NVQ certificates in the relevant databases of the national reference point for vocational qualifications (the NRP Website),
- the NVQ certificate contains the title of the NVQ obtained by the holder and lists the competences that the certificate holder is able to demonstrate with the certificate. The certificate also includes details of the issuer of the certificate (the NVQ verification and validation provider and the responsible person of the provider).

8.3 Rights of candidates to appeal NVQ verification and validation procedures

The candidate has the right to appeal within eight days of receiving the decision of the NVQ verification and validation committee.

The protection of the candidate's rights is guaranteed under the National Vocational Qualifications Act. If a candidate does not agree with the decision of the NVQ verification and validation committee, they may submit an appeal to the permanent appeals committee at the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which must decide within eight days whether to uphold the candidate's appeal. The permanent appeals committee is appointed by the minister responsible for labour. The committee consists of a representative of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, a representative of the CPI and a representative of the RIC.

The tasks of the appeals committee members are as follows:

- to examine the candidate's appeal and, where necessary, obtain additional details or information from the candidate, the NVQ verification and validation provider or the NVQ verification and validation committee,
- to establish whether the candidate's appeal is well-founded within an appropriate period after receiving the appeal,
- to appoint a new NVQ verification and validation committee in the event that the appeal is upheld.

8.4 Institutions competent to monitor and oversee NVQ verification and validation procedures

The national inspectorate competent for labour oversees the lawfulness of the work of NVQ verification and validation providers and the lawfulness and professionalism of the work of NVQ verification and validation committees .

An inspector oversees:

- the fulfilment of the conditions laid down for NVQ verification and validation providers,
- the lawfulness of NVQ verification and validation procedures,
- the composition of committees,
- the qualification of committee members.

In the event of identifying irregularities, the inspector issues a decision:

- determining measures and a deadline for the elimination of irregularities,
- requiring the replacement of the committee or individual member or president thereof,
- ordering the temporary or permanent withdrawal of a licence to perform NVQ verification and validation procedures,
- ordering the temporary or permanent withdrawal of a licence from a committee president or member.

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) monitors and oversees the performance of NVQ verification and validation procedures.

- It monitors the work of councillors in the NVQ verification and validation process in order to ensure good-quality and reliable guidance and counselling for candidates wishing to obtain a national vocational qualification,
- it monitors the NVQ system and reports on its findings once a year to the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities:
 - it monitors key factors and those entities or individuals with the main responsibility for individual tasks in the process, i.e. providers, counsellors and members of committees from a specific field. Other important stakeholders in the process of obtaining and validating NVQs are NVQ candidates and the holders of NVQ certificates, who are also included in individual studies.
 - the results of monitoring provide data which give the ministry responsible for labour the opportunity to supplement the formal (legal and other regulatory) bases for the operation of the NVQ system, help the RIC develop methodologies and the quality of the work of NVQ verification and validation committee members, and enable the CPI to plan and introduce improvements in verification and validation procedures.
- It develops monitoring methodologies and looks after quality assurance in the NVQ system:
 - on the basis of the assessment of competent institutions on any deviations from the expectations of the system or on the basis of the results of monitoring carried out by the CPI, it also selects

and plans other areas and target groups for monitoring in order to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the NVQ system as a whole.

The National Examination Centre (RIC) monitors and oversees the work of NVQ committee members and NVQ verification and validation providers.

- It collects and monitors the annual reports on the implementation of NVQ verification and validation procedures that NVQ verification and validation providers are obliged to prepare,
- it monitors the work of verification and validation committees and once a year participates in verification by an individual provider and reports on its findings to the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which on the basis of these findings has an opportunity to supplement the formal (legal and other regulatory) bases for the operation of the NVQ system,
- if, in the course of monitoring the work of committees, the authorised representative of the RIC finds that the president or a member of the committee is not professionally qualified to serve on the committee, or that they are infringing regulations relating to the validation of vocational qualifications, the RIC may withdraw their licence,
- it organises annual conferences for committee members by fields, where proposals are formulated by providers, committee members and councillors to improve verification and validation procedures for individual NVQs,
- it monitors and evaluates the realisation of the objectives of the training programme for candidates for membership of NVQ verification and validation committees and suggests improvements to the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training,
- it monitors and helps develop the NVQ verification and validation network, which includes the publication and promotion of calls for applications for licences to serve as committee members and for the entry of providers in the register for those NVQs that do not yet have providers.

Authorised representatives of competent institutions may also participate directly in NVQ verification and validation procedures.

The following may participate in a verification and validation procedure as an authorised representative:

- a representative of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia in order to oversee the lawfulness of the work of providers and the lawfulness and professionalism of the work of committee members,
- a representative of the CPI in order to monitor the performance of verification and validation procedures,
- a representative of the RIC in order to monitor the lawfulness and professionalism of the work of members of NVQ verification and validation committees,
- a representative of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which is the body responsible for the preparation and monitoring of implementation of the National Vocational Qualifications Act.

Authorised representatives have the right to examine all the candidate's documentation but may not intervene in the NVQ verification and validation process.



9

*Legislation –
formal basis for
implementation
of the NVQ
system*

The formal basis for implementation of the NVQ system or NVQ verification and validation procedures is the National Vocational Qualifications Act along with its implementing regulations.

National Vocational Qualifications ACT:

The Act regulates the entire process and the bodies and organisations responsible for the preparation and adoption of occupational standards and catalogues of standards of knowledge and skills. It also lays down the conditions and procedure for obtaining national vocational qualifications.

Implementing regulations:

- **RULES on the method and procedure for verifying and validating national vocational qualifications.**
The Rules regulate the method and procedure for verifying and validating national vocational qualifications.
- **RULES on keeping a register of providers of procedures for the identification and validation of national vocational qualifications.**
The Rules set out the procedure for entry in and deletion from the register of providers of procedures for the identification and validation of national vocational qualifications.
- **RULES on the composition of committees for the verification and validation of national vocational qualifications and on the method and procedure for obtaining and losing a licence.**
The Rules regulate the composition of committees for the verification and validation of national vocational qualifications and the selection of committee members, and the method and procedure by which a licence is obtained or withdrawn.
- **Rules on continuous training for members of national vocational qualification verification and validation committees.**
The Rules set out methods of continuous training for members of national vocational qualification verification and validation committees.
- **RULES on the standard classification of occupations.**
The Rules define the procedure for the drafting of occupational standards and preparation of catalogues of standards of knowledge and skills, which are adopted and published by the minister responsible for labour at the proposal of the competent Expert Council.
- **RULES on the form of the public document certifying a national vocational qualification – certificate and substitute certificate.**
The Rules set out the form, content and issuers of the public document certifying a national vocational qualification – certificate and substitute certificate.
- **RULES on the adoption and publication of catalogues of standards of knowledge and skills.** With these Rules, the minister responsible for labour, at the proposal of the national Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training, adopts and publishes catalogues of the standards of knowledge and skills necessary in order to obtain NVQs. The catalogues of standards of knowledge and skills published in these Rules become public documents.

10

A scientist with brown hair and a beard, wearing a white lab coat and blue nitrile gloves, is focused on looking through a black and silver microscope. The scientist is positioned in the center-right of the frame, leaning over the microscope. The background is a bright, slightly blurred laboratory environment with white blinds. In the foreground, a blue plastic rack is partially visible on the left. A semi-transparent white box on the right side of the image contains text.

*Positive
practices in
the use of the
NVQ system*

In Slovenia, we are able to highlight the effectiveness of the NVQ system, which, according to the experiences of users, is apparent in its rapid adaptability to technological changes and changes in service activities, since it offers opportunities for the rapid formation of a basis for the formal recognition of competences for new occupations in the labour market. The requirements of today's labour market are changing rapidly and new occupations are constantly appearing which individuals learn independently in the labour market or in the course of their employment. The formation of new NVQ catalogues that enable individuals to obtain a formal document certifying their competences for these new, modern occupations opens up new opportunities for individuals in their autonomous provision of services in the labour market, while enabling enterprises to give due value to their employees' knowledge and increase their own competitiveness in the marketplace.

The role of the NVQ system in Slovenia varies significantly, according to feedback from the NVQ certificate holders. It can mean added value in the labour market, since sole traders can use it as a specific reference that shows that they possess the required knowledge and quality to offer their services in the marketplace. The certificate can also help with obtaining state subsidies and with registering supplementary activities or handcraft business (when formal education does not fulfil the tender conditions for receiving a subsidy or is insufficient for registration of activities, in some sectors, an NVQ certificate is a sufficient proof of professional qualification). In some sectors NVQs have become practically obligatory when it comes to legally regulated occupations, where an NVQ is a condition for performing a profession prescribed by the law.

The NVQ system can help enterprises with recruitment or the appointment to new positions of existing employees (the acquisition of a formal basis for employment or retention of a position, advancement in the case of inadequate educational qualifications, etc.), although when it comes to employing a new person or appointing existing employees to positions, the majority of enterprises are still limited by the classification of positions, where the latter are only defined in terms of formal educational qualifications. Enterprises that use NVQs make their own decisions on whether or not to incorporate NVQs into their company bylaws. Alternatively, NVQs can remain an additional reference for the employee, in that they enable a higher level of services and thus added value for the enterprise in the marketplace. Be that as it may, the workplace can be a source of knowledge and an opportunity for non-formal learning, while the NVQ system offers employees an opportunity to give a this knowledge a value.

Evaluating and formalising knowledge and skills acquired in the workplace is also important for other reasons. Often the knowledge and experience gained by individuals through work is only recognised and valued in their own working environment. If such individuals wish to demonstrate this knowledge on leaving this work environment and applying for a new job, it is important that they have the opportunity, on leaving a job, to obtain a formal document certifying the vocational competence they have acquired in the workplace.

An examination of NVQ catalogues by individual fields shows that NVQs are actually being developed and used in those sectors where the labour market is seeing or forecasting a human resources shortfall. At the same time, this leads us to the realisation that the system of validating work experience in order to obtain formal documents certifying vocational competence is recognised as a suitable tool for regulating imbalances in the labour market. The NVQ system represents a flexible approach to obtaining new vocational qualifications with regard to the needs of the labour market and makes them easier to update and upgrade. In comparison to the education system, the responsiveness of the NVQ system is much faster.

Recognition of NVQ certificates in formal education

»By systematically obtaining and combining NVQ certificates, it would also be possible in certain circumstances to gradually improve the level of formal education. Unlike some countries, however, Slovenia still does not yet recognise the full equivalence of the results of the two routes. While an individual studying at school obtains both an educational qualification and a vocational qualification, the validation of non-formal learning only provides a vocational qualification, not an educational qualification. This in itself is not particularly controversial, since the added value of formal education lies above all in the acquisition of basic and general knowledge that is the basis for further education and for acquiring various competences. What is questionable, however, is the reluctance shown with regard to the officially certified vocational qualifications of those individuals who would like to supplement these qualifications within the education system with basic and general knowledge and in this way attain a higher level of educational qualification. Whatever the ratio between the two systems happens to be, it is nevertheless important that in Slovenia we have occupational standards as the common starting point for both routes.« (I. Svetlik, 2013)

11

*Statements
from users
of the NVQ
system*



11.1 Holders of NVQ certificates

The advantages that may be seen from the statements of NVQ certificate holders are:

- a relatively quick and simple route to recognised public documents for the performance of an occupation,
- career and personal development, since work experience and non-formal and informal learning are taken into account,
- an easier transition from one job to another, since the NVQ is a publicly recognised document,
- greater competitiveness in the labour market in Slovenia and also in EU countries,
- career advancement even while remaining at the same level of educational qualification, since an individual can obtain a publicly recognised document to perform a specific occupation at a higher level of difficulty,
- acquisition of the basics for possible rewards in an enterprise,
- the NVQ also facilitates lifelong learning.

»My name is Alenka Resman Langus and I'm a radio announcer on Radio Slovenia.«

»Slovenia six years ago. Before that I had worked at other radio stations. Why did I choose this occupation? Well, radio has a certain special energy and once you start... either it attracts you or it doesn't. In my case it did, and I hope to carry on doing this job for as long as possible. An announcer has certain skills and knowledge that not everyone has, and there's no school where you can gain the skills and learn them. Over the course of years working at a radio station, you gain certain experiences, and all these experiences, all the knowledge and skills you develop, can then be verified via an NVQ and you get an official document that otherwise you wouldn't be to get. With NVQ, a publicly recognised document that certifies what we know, doors open to you, not only here at Radio Slovenia, in Slovenia, but also elsewhere in Europe, for example. In my case an NVQ enabled me to get a job after working at Radio Slovenia for five years. If I hadn't had an NVQ at that moment, when the opportunity arose, I wouldn't have got the job. Because if you want to be employed at Radio Slovenia you either have to have a university degree – and I still need to finish mine – or an NVQ.«

»My name is Robert Ščuka and I'm a beekeeper.«

»I started working with bees around 15 years ago. Even as a boy, I always loved animals. I had chickens, ducks, a variety of guinea pigs, fish, and so on. I've been around animals my whole life. Then I made friends with someone who kept bees. He showed me a queen, a drone and so on... and that's kind of how I got started with bees. Over the winter I read beekeeping books, and then in the spring I bought my first bee colony and slowly began keeping bees. Around three years ago I took a beginners' beekeeping course. Then I said to myself that I would try and build my knowledge even further and I decided to get an NVQ in beekeeping. I submitted a portfolio for the NVQ. On the basis of everything I included in the portfolio, I was credited with part of the exam. Thanks to this portfolio, they issued me a certificate. So on the basis of my experience, I now have a piece of paper, and I am also using this knowledge. I have another occupation that I am now performing alongside my original occupation. An NVQ is the only way to become a professional beekeeper.«

»My name is Sergeja Hlede Podgornik and I work as a croupier.«

»In 1994 I embarked on a brand-new career. I signed up for a course advertised by [casino company] Hit d.d. The course seemed very interesting because it offered the chance to learn something new in a very specific field that I knew nothing about. This was a big challenge for me. Before that I was working in administration. The course took quite a long time. First I had to get through a demanding selection process, which included testing psychomotor skills and a foreign language test. In my case this was Italian, because most of the guests at the casinos in Nova Gorica come from Italy. The selection process also included passing an exam at the end of the basic course for croupiers. After all this, we continued with practical training for American roulette, which took three months. After passing the exam, I did a work placement at the company. Then we moved on to the next course, which was blackjack. That's a card game. In total, the courses and practical training for both games lasted approximately five months. There are always new things to learn in a croupier's job, which means you're always training. This might be training for new games of chance, familiarising yourself with work instructions, working with casino information systems, courses in communication, courses in intercultural relations, and so on. In short, training of every type, both specialised and general. Today I am qualified for 12 different games of chance. Working in the casino industry requires a completely different set of knowledge and skills. But then there is the question of how to prove that you have gained all this knowledge. At the company where I work, this knowledge is genuinely valued and respected. The problem comes outside the company, for example if I wanted to continue my career somewhere else. In 2005 an NVQ was approved for croupiers that covers American or French roulette and blackjack. Because there is no formal institution where I could qualify as a croupier, I decided to certify my knowledge on the basis of the work experience I have accumulated. I registered for the NVQ verification and validation procedure and, together with a counsellor, looked at the knowledge and skills required and at the entry requirements. We discovered that I already met all the conditions to obtain an NVQ as a croupier. So on the basis of this validation, I received a certificate.«

»My name is Terezija Nikolčič. For several years now I've been selling medicinal herbs at the market in Ljubljana.«

»We started off in 1990 when my son lost his job at Litostraj. It was essential to find work somewhere. We had a hectare and a half of land, but we couldn't farm it because in those days you had to have at least three hectares. So my son founded a company called Hedera d.o.o. I started working as a herbalist when I was 45 years old. But I had known about herbs since I was three. That's because whenever we bruised our knees or got blisters on our toes, our mother would say: »Go and pick some comfrey leaves« or »put a plantain leaf on your foot«. That was my first experience of medicine and healing. When I was a little girl, my mother showed me the different plants and explained what they were used for. We didn't know the scientific names for anything. During the process of getting my NVQ, I sent off all my documents. I had 15 of them. I've done a lot of courses. Then I sent my portfolio to the examination centre in Naklo. That's how I got an NVQ certificate. But I had to invest a lot of knowledge in it. A lot of sleepless nights. My husband got quite jealous because I would cuddle up to my books at night instead of him! The NVQ certificate means an awful lot to me. It doesn't mean that I know any more than I did before, but with it I can prove that I am a qualified herbalist.«

»My name is Matijana Capuder Šömen. I've been working as a home care and assistance provider for the elderly and sick for more than two years now.«

»Three years ago I lost my job and registered with the employment service. They looked at my previous work experience and realised that I like working with people. That I had always worked with people and could perhaps try something different. They suggested that I study for an NVQ, specifically for a national vocational qualification as a social care worker. I liked the idea and accepted the suggestion. I completed a three-month course and they were pleased with me. I also had a bit of luck, because the examination committee included the director of the Ljubljana Home Care Institute, who recognised my potential and wanted me to come and

work for them. I was already working somewhere else, but now I began to think about leaving that job. Then I called the lady from [training centre] Cene Štupar, who had recommended me, and they took me on immediately. Now I have been a social care worker at the Šiška unit of the Home Care Institute in Ljubljana for just over seven months. The work really suits me, as does working with old people in general. I've always loved talking to them. I feel as though I have really found myself in this occupation, in this field and this job. Some people win the lottery, but I have won this experience.«

»My name is Slavko Albreht and I'm a lighting designer at RTV Slovenia.«

»Way back in 1976 I applied for a job with the national broadcaster and was hired as a lighting programmer. What they were basically looking for was an electrician. Which is what I was qualified as after completing secondary school. In other words, I started off as an assistant. I helped control lighting, connections and things like that. In my case it soon became evident that there was a need for new blood in the ranks of lighting designers or chief lighting technicians. I was promoted after just a few years to become the youngest lighting designer at RTV. Apparently my older colleagues had spotted my hidden talents. My progress was also helped by my desire to build on the basic knowledge I already had. So I found myself in the role of chief lighting technician, with all the everyday demands that the job involves. Lighting design is a very specific occupation that requires specific knowledge. There is nowhere that you can come by this knowledge in the general education system. Especially when it comes to television, since this is knowledge that you can only acquire through practice and work experience. The only way is to learn from your own mistakes and those of your colleagues, to observe what's going on around you, and in this way gain knowledge and experience. In the past, there was no way of proving this knowledge on paper. Neither our practical work nor our rich experience helped us obtain certificates. For this reason we opted for an NVQ, which offers the opportunity to validate or certify all our knowledge and obtain recognition for it. An NVQ obtained on the basis of work experience undoubtedly improves staff mobility. It allows you to cross over to other similar media and other television companies around Slovenia and, of course, abroad.«

»My name is Gregor Šikman and I'm the owner of Netlife d.o.o.«

»My company is involved in creating websites, online stores, optimisation and internet marketing. After leaving secondary school I continued my education at the Faculty of Administration in Ljubljana. I started designing websites when still a student. I realised that I enjoyed it and found it interesting. I began by creating my own website. Then I set up an online store and started focusing on that. As time went on I started making websites for other people. I've been doing this for around five years now. Last year I received an invitation from the Maribor Adult Education Centre to take part in a project they were putting together for a website design course – in other words for an NVQ certificate. I decided to do it. On the basis of my prior experience, I received an NVQ certificate as a website designer. Since I don't actually have any formal qualifications in the field of website design, my NVQ certificate gives me greater credibility with my customers. It's a confirmation that I have experience and it serves as an additional reference.«

»My name is Tomaž Pančur and I'm a tourist entertainer.«

»I've wanted to perform and entertain people ever since I was a kid. It all started when I enrolled at the Faculty of Tourism Studies in Portorož, where among other things I took an intensive tourist entertainer's course. That's where I encountered the basics, the procedures, and learned about the job and working with people. On the basis of these experiences, I later gained an NVQ as a tourist entertainer. Before getting my NVQ, I had already worked as an entertainer for a tourism agency called Sonček and also for various companies on different occasions. I provided continuity between programmes, entertained people and audiences, and created children's entertainments. Entertaining is a way of life for me. An entertainer has to be relaxed and funny, but at the same time responsible. For me personally, the most important and most valuable thing about my job as an entertainer is that I entertain people and that my presence makes them feel good. To get the NVQ, I was able to make use of my experience to date and to get my qualification as a tourist entertainer. I always mention the NVQ in the applications I prepare for future employers. It gives me an advantage in the labour market.«

11.2 HR personnel or management

Many enterprises in Slovenia use NVQs when looking for new staff and for ensuring better staff mobility. The main advantages of NVQs cited by enterprises are the following:

- the rapid creation of new occupations in accordance with the needs of the enterprise and the marketplace,
- greater motivation, quality and professionalism of employees,
- bigger competitive advantage in the marketplace (higher quality of services),
- simpler staff selection,
- opportunities for advancement thanks to the referencing of NVQs to the classification of positions within the enterprise,
- increased internal mobility of employees, possibility of retraining,
- official documents certifying a vocational qualification can be obtained quickly because work experience and non-formal learning are taken into account.

Telekom Slovenije, d.d.

»We believe that the knowledge obtained in formal education institutions is not sufficient to do the job properly, so in addition to tailor-made workshops we have decided to offer some employees the opportunity to gain an NVQ in telemarketing, which also gives them an official certificate or proof. We look at NVQs from two points of view:

- *For the employee, this is an opportunity for them as an individual to obtain public, formal proof of their qualifications (which they will also be of use in the future in the labour market), and systematically develop their own knowledge and competences.*
- *From the point of view of the company, we believe that obtaining an NVQ is confirmation that an employee has suitable competences to work in our call centre and can perform their work better and more professionally. An employee with an NVQ means added value for the company in the market place, since this enables us to provide a higher level of services.«*

Lučka Wellness Salon

»As providers of wellness services, our first job is to gain the professional knowledge and experience that we need in our work. This is what the basic mission of the NVQ should be. There is (still) no formal education available in this field in Slovenia, so the responsibility of NVQ providers is all the greater. For an employer it is extremely important to have professionally trained, well-qualified staff. That is why we employers see numerous advantages in NVQs:

- *simpler staff selection;*
- *employees with an NVQ certificate have the competences, experience and knowledge required for a specific job;*
- *an NVQ guarantees that the individual's work will be of better quality and more professional;*
- *an employer who has employees with an NVQ certificate has a competitive advantage in the marketplace because this guarantees high quality services;*
- *the fact that a service is performed by employees with an NVQ certificate should act as a guarantee to customers of the high-quality and safe provision of services.«*

Cankarjev dom

»We made it possible for all interested employees to obtain an NVQ certificate on the basis of their references and experience, which signalled the start of the regulation of the chaotic conditions prevailing in the field of remuneration, and at the same time contributed to improving the motivation of key personnel, in other words our best people, in technical roles.

The value of the NVQ system also lies in the fact that it allows us to respond quickly to technological development around the world and to create new occupations. This applies in particular to specialist fields linked to technological development, particularly the development of digital technologies (multimedia, cinema, etc.). Today we are also able to respond significantly more quickly to developments in the international market. As well as being able to adapt constantly to the requirements of the marketplace in terms of staff, we are also able to deal successfully with the problem of motivating employees in technical roles within our cultural programme, which stems above all from the difference between those with formal qualifications and those who have arrived at an extremely high level of professional expertise through work experience alone.«

Ljubljana Home Care Institute

»An NVQ is an opportunity for an individual to obtain a publicly recognised document certifying their professional ability on the basis of the experience, knowledge and competences defined by an occupational standard, which cannot be obtained within the formal education system. It allows employees with unsuitable or inadequate qualifications to obtain a relevant qualification that enables them to keep their job. For those without a job, it facilitates additional qualification and retraining and thus increases their chances of finding employment, given that it is a vocational qualification in a field where employment opportunities are still open.

More broadly, within the home care field the NVQ system has facilitated the professionalisation of the occupation and raised the quality of services. In the labour market it enables the faster and cheaper formation of suitable staff and thus a relatively quick response to the needs of the labour market. The NVQ

system puts modern concepts of lifelong learning into practice and opens up employment opportunities for those in groups that are traditionally harder to employ.«

ENRAS d.o.o. (accounting services)

»Providers of accounting services usually have staff with a fair amount of experience behind them. Prior experience really does count. The process of obtaining an NVQ is different in one sense. It involves putting together a portfolio (certificate of education, proofs of attendance of seminars, other recommendations and recognitions, and so on), which is merely additional confirmation that the individual's prior experience and acquired knowledge are very important.

I see the advantage of training for an NVQ in accounting in the fact that it builds on formal qualifications with more comprehensive knowledge. It proves that the candidate has the professional ability and expertise necessary to perform the occupation fully and autonomously. This only increases the quality of services provided. Holding an NVQ also allows an accountant to raise their profile in their own profession. Recognisability in accounting is very important these days.«

EMO (toolmaker)

»Companies were facing a major challenge. In order to realise strategies of breaking onto foreign markets and satisfying demanding customers, they needed to reorganise all their resources. We realised that in order to become competitive, commercially interesting and successful, we would have to invest in new technologies, equipment, software and IT and increase the level of professional training of our employees.

For this reason, our annual strategic plans and targets had to include the planning of new competences. Obtaining an NVQ to meet needs within an industry has numerous advantages. Companies can train staff quickly and coordinate needs for new knowledge and competences. Employees obtain a public document that gives them a competitive advantage when it comes to seeking employment and an additional argument for the performance-related part of their pay. At the same time they become more flexible workforce.«

KRKA, d.d.

»At Krka we have spent a long time looking for the most suitable way to evaluate the expertise of employees who have gained a great deal of non-formal knowledge, skills and experiences in the workplace. These days, with the great emphasis that is placed on lifelong learning, obtaining a national vocational qualification is a quick, functional, cheap and effective way of keeping up with the changing demands of automated processes that can be repeated as necessary over the course of an individual's working life. Advantages of the NVQ system for Krka and the individual:

- the latest knowledge, skill and expertise, all obtained in the workplace;
- the transfer of knowledge by lecturers from direct practical experience and the assistance of mentors in candidates' workplaces;
- the easier connection of theory and practice and greater adaptability;
- acquisition of knowledge for a specific job;
- the rapid adaptation of employees to changes in work process;
- shorter training times;
- lower costs;
- the opportunity of permanent employment for agency staff;
- advancement to a higher pay grade.

We should emphasise that in all these years we have not made any employees redundant but instead have increased their employability and mobility by supplementing their pharmaceuticals knowledge and through retraining and additional training. We are also including agency staff in the new system, who in this way have been given the opportunity to become full-time Krka employees. This is also a contribution to the greater external and internal mobility of our staff.«

Pomelaj Rural Development Hub

»Crafts activities offer many opportunities for the rural population to validate and authenticate their knowledge in this field and obtain an NVQ certificate. This increases their employment opportunities and can also represent a source of additional income in rural areas. Indirectly, it also helps conserve natural and cultural heritage. By increasing the importance and validity of NVQs, we can also expect an increase in the importance of crafts activities and the conservation of heritage that has the potential to be an alternative employment opportunity, above all in rural areas. In the Pomurje region, where the agricultural sector is currently facing a difficult situation in terms of employment opportunities and the general economic situation, crafts can represent a major opportunity with an impact on several sectors such as tourism, agriculture and rural trades, provided of course that the necessary support is provided by development bodies, economic institutions and local communities. All these factors together can increase interest in traditional activities in rural areas, and with the right approach can increase interest of the rural population in obtaining NVQs.«

Letrika, d.d.

»The need to be competitive in foreign markets and conditions in the domestic labour market have led to the introduction of the NVQ system in industry. The modernisation of production with new technology has meant an increasing demand for qualified personnel. Analysis of the education structure of our employees revealed that there is a deficit of employees with level III and IV mechanical engineering qualifications, specifically in production and related positions. The gap between actual qualifications and required qualifications affected almost a quarter of all employees. This gap became even more apparent when sales increased and we began to see a shortage of workers with mechanical engineering qualifications. These considerations led us to revise our internal regulations and introduce NVQs.

The advantages of NVQs from our company's point of view are that they provide access to an occupation for those who do not have one and allow the rapid retraining of employees who already have an occupation, since through NVQs they gain the necessary knowledge.

Individuals also gain an opportunity for advancement, since we have referenced NVQs to the classification of positions within the company.«

Marianum Veržej Arts & Crafts Centre

»Most craftspeople learn their skills from their parents, relatives or friends, but in the process do not obtain any document proving that they are really proficient in their craft. An NVQ, which an individual can obtain on the basis of certification, is very important both for the individual and for potential employers. An NVQ gives craftspeople access to a formal occupation, which contributes to employment and to the conservation of cultural heritage. We know that occupations in the field of cultural heritage conservation can be a challenge and a way of life, and can compete on entirely equal terms with all other occupations.«

Gozdno gospodarstvo Postojna, d.o.o.

»When the NVQ system was introduced in Slovenia, our forestry company did not employ any workers without appropriate qualifications. We saw in this new system an opportunity to recruit new, suitably qualified personnel to work safely and efficiently in the forest, provided we adopted a suitable approach to potential candidates.

The advantage of the NVQ system for our company is that we can train up individual workers when necessary or – when they obtain a relevant qualification – move them to a different role within the company. In this way we take advantage of the capacities of those employees with the knowledge and skills to perform several different jobs.

Conversations with employees who have obtained an NVQ confirm that introducing the system was the right thing to do. Everyone we have employed and then given the opportunity to obtain an NVQ is someone who wanted to work in the forest but was not allowed to – despite possessing the right knowledge and skills – because of the way the law is written. The employees themselves also see an advantage in the fact that they can qualify for multiple occupations and a range of positions. This universality is also an advantage when it comes to keeping their jobs or looking for new ones.«

RTV Slovenia

»What does certification give to our staff? It allows them to gain a verified level VI qualification in a relatively short time and at little expense (RTV Slovenia staff contribute just half of the statutory costs). This is undoubtedly one of the most important contributions of NVQs. Even more important than this, however, is the psychological effect, since the document gives holders greater self-confidence and increases their employment security and social security, not to mention the greater mobility it gives employees. Once the process of allocating credits to catalogues of knowledge and skills has been completed, it will also become much easier for many people to make the transition to formal education programmes.

For employers, NVQs have significantly increased the competence structure of their employees in a relatively short time and in exchange for a relatively small material investment. The chance to obtain a verified document has been received extremely positively, above all by older employees. For this reason NVQs may be considered an element of lifelong learning or 'age management'. But certification is not only about regulating employment status. More important than this is the ensuring of conditions that will facilitate greater motivation and internal mobility and, last but not least, the recruitment of new staff.«

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