

**Partner Countries – Desk Research Exercise (VINFL)**

*\*\*please note, the aim of this template is to collate information on VINFL in national and prison contexts from **already completed research**, such as policy and academic papers. The purpose of this form is not to collect original research – the teacher survey will begin this process.*

Partner Country:	DE
Organisation:	BLINC
Representative:	Enrica PAUTASSO

Provide an outline of the **prison system** in your country (maximum 500 words)

*- You should include information such as: global prisoner numbers, estates, and trends.*

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Outline arrangements for **prison education** in your country (maximum 500 words)

*- You should include some information regarding the accessibility of education, opportunities, class sizes, resources, challenges.*

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Recent **study and policy recommendations** in your country (maximum 1500 words)

*Is there a national strategy for the validation of informal learning (VINFL)? If so, how well developed is this?*

*Has there been any pre-existing research carried out on the value of informal learning in education?*

*Does VINFL form part of training for teachers?*

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*Is there a national strategy for the validation of informal learning (VINFL)? If so, how well developed is this?*

In Germany there is no national strategy for the validation of informal and non-formal learning (VINFL), in fact a legal framework or standardised system for such issue does not exist at national level. Also, the regulatory provisions dealing with the recognition of cross-cutting or specialised competences are extremely rare. In general, it is possible to state that the issue is considered less important than the recognition of formal learning and that the two kinds of validation are legally not on an equal footing. Similarly, also at the policy and practice level, the issue is perceived as less important than the validation of formal learning. Looking at admission procedures, training and study programmes, as well as certification in formal education (at upper secondary level and in higher education), there is little use of the competences acquired in informal and non-formal education settings.



One tool that it is worth mentioning for assessing informal and non-formal learning outcomes is the admission to final examinations under Section 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG), better known as the “*Externen-Prüfung*” (examination for external candidates, i.e. those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). If candidates are able to furnish evidence that they have been employed in the occupation for which they wish to take the examination for a period at least one and a half times as long as is prescribed for the period of initial training, they can be admitted to a final examination for a recognised occupation requiring formal training without having attended such training. Credit can also be obtained for a higher level of general educational attainment, such as the *Fachoberschulreife* (entrance qualification for specialised upper secondary school), which allows to shortening the period of employment for which evidence must be produced. Finally, a previous relevant programme of initial vocational education and training (IVET) in a different training sector can also be credited towards the required periods of employment.

Source: Germany Country Report, CEDEFOP:

[https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2012/2012\\_CR\\_DE.pdf](https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2012/2012_CR_DE.pdf), 2012

The recognition of professional qualifications is, instead, more advanced, especially since the “*Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Feststellung und Anerkennung im Ausland erworbener Berufsqualifikationen*” (German Act Improving the Identification and Recognition of Professional Qualifications Acquired Abroad) (Recognition Act) came into force on 1 April 2012. The Act increased the possibilities of recognising vocational qualifications acquired abroad for the professions within the jurisdiction of the federal government. By the end of 2013 11 States had approved a corresponding state recognition law for the professions, which are based on state regulations. A very high number of people (10,989) applied for the recognition of a professional qualification acquired abroad in the reporting period. 20% of those applications referred to a non-regulated profession. In general, there is a very high demand for the recognition of professions related to the medical, healthcare sector, in fact over half of all applications requested the granting of a medical licence. The interest for a professional recognition is high and keeps growing as it is shown by the great number of visitors of the web portal “*Recognition in Germany*”, opened in April 2012, that gives information on the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications.

Source: *Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung* – Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training: VET data report Germany 2014 VET - Facts and analyses accompanying the Federal report on vocational education and training – selected findings.

Most of the approaches to validate informal and non-formal learning are adopted below the political (regulative) level and have generally the aim to represent a precondition for a “further” recognition connected to entitlements. In recent years, with the support of public funds, there have been several approaches, both at national and regional level for several different target groups. Here a selection of relevant examples:

- “*Career choice pass*” (*Berufswahlpass*) – an instrument for career orientation used in schools.
- “*Thematic study group competence diagnosis*” (*Facharbeitskreis Kompetenzfeststellung*) – approaches to improve the integration of migrants in the labour market.
- “*Competence certificate for voluntary work*” (*Kompetenznachweis Ehrenamt*) – a certificate to document knowledge, skills and competences acquired in voluntary settings.
- “*Competence balance for vocational returnees*” (*Kompetenzbilanz für BerufsrückkehrerInnen*) - tool to document knowledge, skills and competences developed during parental leave.



- “Competence certificate culture“ (*Kompetenznachweis Kultur*) - certificate to document knowledge, skills and competences acquired while participating in cultural events guided by skilled personnel.
- “Competence panorama for migrants“ (*Kompetenzenpanorama für Migrantinnen & Migranten*) – portfolio of competences with the aim to improve the process of integration.
- “Qualipass“ (*Qualipass in Baden-Württemberg*) – tool for assessing certain activities of students outside school supported by coaches.

To conclude, it can be said that, for the moment, validation in Germany is characterized by a variety of approaches at national, regional and local level without any overall framework.

*Has there been any pre-existing research carried out on the value of informal learning in education?*

In recent years a number of key publications have been highlighting the importance of lifelong learning, in particularly connected to the VINFL: the 2004 “Strategy for lifelong learning in the Federal Republic of Germany”, the 2007 recommendations for further education and the 2008 recommendations for vocational education and training.

Also, other European projects have been focusing on VINFL and have analysed the situation of different European countries, comparing strategies and approaches in relation to different sectors (e.g. traineeships, senior volunteering, etc.). A recent European project, under the Erasmus Plus - Knowledge Alliance Programme, that has analysed, among others, the German situation, is the project PROMOTE - Promoting and Validating Key Competences in Mobility and Traineeships in Europe ([www.promote-eu.org](http://www.promote-eu.org)).

*Does VINFL form part of training for teachers?*

No, as far as we are aware of, VINFL is not usually part of training for teachers. However, there is a general agreement on the growing importance of recognising learning outcomes of informal learning.

Are you aware of pre-existing research that has been carried out into **the need for and potential benefits of VINFL, particularly in prisons?** (maximum 1000 words)

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Give examples of **good practice in informal learning activities/projects in prisons and community justice settings** (maximum 1000 words)

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