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## Investigation of the legal framework and state of implementation of RPL from VET to HE in Romania, Estonia and Germany (Saxony) (R1)

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LEONARDO DA VINCI Transfer of Innovation Project  
“RELATE – PROMOTING THE RECOGNIZABILITY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO HIGHER  
EDUCATION”

Grant agreement number: DE/11/LLP-LdV/TOI/147640

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## 1 Executive summary

WP3 “*Sharing the results of former projects and summarizing key issues*” is a key work package for the development of the project’s core outcomes. Its results represent the basis for designing the methodologies and tools for the transfer of innovation. WP3 relies on desk research and field research to be performed in Estonia, Germany (Saxony) and Romania with the purpose to collect useful data about the partners’ previous projects on RPL, about the current status of RPL implementation from VET to HE in partner countries, on recognition criteria of VET diplomas.

This document is a transnational report presenting the research findings from all partners in the framework of WP3 on the *legal framework and state of implementation of RPL from VET to HE in Romania, Estonia and Germany (Saxony)*.

As indicated in the application, to later transfer and adapt the shared results to the local and institutional contexts, firstly it is necessary the partners to discuss experiences and present the available documents, to learn from one another and develop a reliable basis of common knowledge.

This document will contribute to the achievement of and is prerequisite for results 2-5.

This document represents the first project result and part of the set of outcomes/deliverables for WP3.

## 2 Objective

This desk research was aimed to gather information and practice about RPL, namely:

- National policy description and aims
- Categories of target groups
- Benefits for the target groups
- Practical functioning
- Advantages and disadvantages for the target groups
- Suggestion for future national/international developmental needs/plans
- Obstacles on national/international level
- International recognition (EU)

- National credit systems (systems of LO recognition)
- The relations between national and international systems
- Differences in credit (LO) recognition
- (National) local documentation

It is expected that thanks to the findings on the above issues and other outcomes of WP3, we will be later able to develop:

- Process model for the cooperation between VET and HE institutions;
- Common methodology for Quality Assurance (of the documentation) of learning outcomes in VET on the basis of ECVET.

## 3 Methodology

The desk research (collection of data, information and practice) was achieved at national level, in Romania, Estonia and Germany (Saxony) based on standardized template, discussed and agreed by all partners.

The national findings on the legal framework and state of implementation in partner countries for RPL from VET to HE are rendered in the Annexes 1- 3.

Processing and interpretation of these findings was then achieved and the present transnational report was elaborated.

## 4 Findings

In the analyzed countries – Romania, Estonia, Germany (Saxony) – the level of development and implementation of RPL from VET to HE is different. Similarities, differences and specificities have been equally identified by our research.

### 4.1 National policy description:

In all analyzed countries there is legislation on RPL (laws, acts, standards, recommendations, procedures), although the variety of legislation is quite high. In all countries the sector ministries are responsible with RPL, together with other specific institutions (e.g. National Qualifications Authority for VET and adults' professional training in Romania, VET schools which have set their own procedures according to principles worked out in Ministry of Education in Estonia, Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, KMK).

In Romania there is a mismatch between the Law of National Education which stipulates that credit transfer system for VET will be used and the MO 4543/468 which specifically mentions that no transferrable credits are granted for recognition of skills acquired in other ways than the formal ones.

In Estonia, national strategy for validation is clearly stated in HE and VET. Validation principles are generally also used in the system for awarding professional qualifications.

Specificity is to be noted in the case of Germany where education is in the responsibilities of the regional governments; however, there are also organizations that work on national level in order to set national standards.

### 4.2 Aims:

High compatibility among the aims on RPL in all analyzed countries was found. Thus, the main aims of RPL identified as common are:

- supporting and promoting Lifelong Learning and increasing motivation for it;
- increasing flexibility between the education & training system and the labour market;
- enhancing the qualification level, mobility and employability;

- improving the functioning of the labour market by transferring the scientific research results to the economy and by fostering the efficiency of utilising individuals as a resource for society.

### 4.3 Target groups:

In the analysed countries, the target groups that could benefit of RPL are quite diverse:

- in Romania: *educator, preschool teacher (institutator), schoolmistress, instructor-foreman, coach* wishing to occupy a didactic position as teacher in preschool education, teacher in primary education and teacher for practical training, respectively coach-teacher in school sport clubs and in children's clubs; under-privileged groups, including unemployed persons and those exposed to unemployment; young people and (elderly) workers with experience from the workplace, which are not accredited or certified; the unemployed and those at risk of losing their jobs; migrants and other categories who need or wish (re)professionalization; early school leavers; graduates who open a new educational/professional pathway;
- in Estonia, people who: wish to begin studies but lack the required formal qualification to get on to a course or programme; wish to study abroad but cannot easily establish that their education is adequate to meet the requirements of the educational institution in the foreign country; have already obtained a higher education but want to extend it or start working in another field; people who wish to continue interrupted studies; wish to provide evidence of existing skills and knowledge in the process of awarding professional qualifications; wish to have recognised the skills that have been acquired informally through work or leisure activities.
- in Germany: Persons with or without Abitur (Secondary Education Degree - classical entrance qualification for higher education) who have completed vocational education and training (formal accredited education programmes) with or without work experiences.

This diversity of the groups of RPL beneficiaries represents also an indicator on the necessity and importance of RPL from VET to HE.

## 4.4 Benefits for target groups:

The analysed countries perceive the benefits of RPL upon the target groups / groups of potential beneficiaries at different levels (individual, institutional or societal) and in a multitude of ways, as rendered below.

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### 4.4.1 ROMANIA:

RPL enables people to:

- make visible what they have learned in non-formal and informal contexts and use these experiences to develop their career or to continue to learn;
- correlate the competencies they have with the demand for work force;
- come closer to new work and learning possibilities (especially the people farthest to the labour market);
- valorise their entire human capital;
- eliminate duplication of learning;
- reduce costs of learning;
- shorten the time to complete a learning/training programme;
- increase self-esteem and self-confidence

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### 4.4.2 ESTONIA:

RPL enables people to:

- finish studies faster and improve their position on the labour market;
- make optimal use of the resources of an educational institution or employer;
- use personal, social and economic potential more efficiently;
- plan their career and studies with greater awareness.

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### 4.4.3 GERMANY:

1. Entrance Requirements for HE are loosened
2. Recognition towards study programs
  - 2.1 Shortened study time
  - 2.2 Accomplishing alternative modules
3. Part-time study programs:
  - 3.1 Studies in addition to regular employment (extra-occupational / part-time studies)
  - 3.2 Work Experience is part of the studies (up to 50%) (work-based learning)



## 4.5 Practical functioning:

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### 4.5.1 ROMANIA

In Romania, the practical functioning of RPL is based on MO 4543/468 of 2004 regarding the recognition of skills acquired in other ways than formal is acquired. The implementation procedure follows specific steps, as rendered in Annex 1 and requires that the person wishing to be evaluated for recognition of professional skills to address to a centre authorized for the occupation / qualification in question and to get the support of a professional competences evaluator.

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### 4.5.2 ESTONIA

Main principles for RPL in HE sector are the same all over the country in Estonia. VET schools have set their own procedures according to principles worked out in Ministry of Education. RPL are mainly used for students who have dropped out from gymnasiums or vocational schools and start over in same or different course in VET school. In some cases RPL is used for recognition of work experience, while student is working at the same time in the same vocational area.

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### 4.5.3 GERMANY

In Germany there are laws of higher education of the different federal states and also exist Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education National Qualifications Framework. German Rectors' Conference (HRK) provided recommendations on the implementation of recognition of VET for HE (2002 and 2008), regarding the criteria for accreditation of the study programmes and the ways of recognition (see Annex 2).

## 4.6 Advantages of RPL:

Main advantages underlined by the analyzed countries refer to the fact that RPL save time and resources and it is not necessary the people to study the same thing again.

Other advantages:

- RPL valorizes certain learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) for which the necessary efforts in acquiring them have been achieved before (even long time ago); thus,
- RPL increases the learners' mobility on the labour market (by validating their PL, they can shift/change/adapt more rapidly to a new qualification or job).
- RPL does not require to people to repeat what they already know.
- RPL allows to fulfil the requirements of curriculum and to study less intensively.
- RPL bring more students in universities in times of less young people.
- RPL supports the linkage with economy and companies.
- RPL fosters the companies in the implementation of latest scientific results.

The advantages have been identified through a combination of ways: they express either the opinion of RPL beneficiaries (Estonia) or the one of experts and stakeholders (Germany, Estonia and Romania).

## 4.7 Disadvantages:

The analysed countries have identified a common disadvantage: RPL is a bureaucratic process.

Romania mentioned that *"RPL is an effort and time-consuming and quite bureaucratic procedure for both the evaluated person and the evaluator"*.

Estonia pointed out that *"RPL is seen as a lot of bureaucracy (applicants and university staff)"*, while Germany opined that *"for universities, RPL means more administrative needs"*.

Other disadvantages:

Romania:

- as it is designed now, by law, the decision to go or not for RPL is based on the advice and recommendation of an assessor. If the assessor is not a real professional, relying on his/her advice could be a risk;
- for the moment, there are not too many existing authorized centres to perform RPL;

- Knowledge and information about RPL (the fact that is possible and the afferent procedures) is not very spread among potential beneficiaries.

#### Estonia:

- applicants get disappointed - if not positive decision and the feedback from the assessors is not sufficient;
- RPL is seen more as a way to save time rather than a tool for learning (self-analysis).

#### Germany:

- for universities: more students in times of less financial resources.
- for professors / lecturers: different levels of knowledge and skills in one class; extra work in recognition process.
- for companies: employees have less time for extra-work during their studies.

### **4.8 Future national developmental needs/plans:**

In Romania, considering the current state of policies and policy instruments in this field, UEFISCDI (Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation – a Unit of the Ministry of Education and Research) has developed a set of recommendations to improve the way in which the objectives internationally assumed are implemented in the national context. The recommendations were divided into four categories: legislative changes, development of tools, case studies and analysis, and the development of national strategies. More details can be found in Annex 1.

In Estonia validation practices are well developed in formal education sector. Higher education has been leading the developments of validation and other sectors e.g. VET have been following the path. Thus the domination of HE has formed validation and therefore it sometimes is seen as something only HE related. The challenge in Estonia is for other sectors to follow up on RPL developments and to create a unified system. The current model is fragmented and for potential applicant it could be difficult to find his/her way in the various systems that are sector specific.

In Germany, the future plans envisage the implementation of HE at institutions. The needs refer to the resources for development and implementation of recognition procedures. The development is based on the fact that the government supports universities through proposals. The federal governments support these developments with a different intensity.

## 4.9 Future international developmental needs/plans (suggestions):

All suggestions have been converging in that they made reference to common European instruments, documents and frameworks in the targeted field:

### Romania:

- efficient and common implementation of European Area of Recognition Manual provisions;
- higher compatibility between NQFs and EQF (EQF as source); RPL should be part of NQFs;
- all EU countries to accept and use the common terminology and definitions established by EU in the field of VET.
- large use of Memoranda of Understanding/Learning Agreements among VET providers/institutions responsible for RPL.

### Estonia:

- fit with the European Qualifications Framework.
- adjusting the recommendations from European Recommendations for Validation of RPL.

### Germany:

- implementing the law for recognition of vocational education from foreign countries and also providing its recognition within the different educational sectors.

## 4.10 Obstacles on national level:

Besides financial, economic, administrative and legislative obstacles, the analyzed countries identified also a series of difficulties which are specific to the field, difficulties related to the sectoral policies, the study programs, the learning outcomes, level of the skills, the recognition process. All these are rendered below:

### Romania:

UEFISCDI in its paper “Romania’s Commitments in the EHEA” (see section “National policy description”) emphasizes the following obstacles: the national educational policy have no continuity, the legislative framework is not favourable to the university autonomy in the field of internationalisation, the lack of advantageous loaning system for students, the academic offer is heterogeneous and unstructured, the online teaching and assessment system not implemented in a homogenous and coherent manner, not enough space to develop academic activities, difficult integration of graduates on the labour market, limited access to electronic information resources,

few services abroad to promote the Romanian education system, technical endowment often under the current European level.

Estonia: the key challenges for implementing RPL are:

- to describe the learning outcomes more in detail;
- variety of curriculum structure and examinations;
- tools to measure RPL still need developing;

Germany:

For students:

- lack of information about possibilities of recognition
- fees that might be taken from the students

For universities:

- diversity of German educational system (16 federal states)
- small of financial resources for recognition processes
- small knowledge about recognition procedures
- small resources for increased administrative needs

For professors/lecturers:

- different levels of knowledge and skills in one class
- lack of working time for individualized recognition processes

For companies:

- lack of information about possibilities of recognition
- need for different employment structures
- SME's are sceptical towards the benefits of HE

## **4.11 Obstacles on international level:**

Romania and Estonia have identified as common obstacles on international level the lack of common definitions in the field and not enough networking. Romanian and Germany underlined the obstacle regarding the lack of transparency and standardized definition of the learning outcomes. All obstacles are listed below:

Romania:

- lack of common language (terms, concepts, definitions, compatible procedures)

- not enough networking, not enough bridges between vet and he
- lack of unified/standardized definition of the learning outcomes for the same qualification/profession in all countries

#### Estonia:

- little cooperation and networking between different countries;
- confusion with definitions;
- Different small developments (CEDEFOP, ERPL network, countries etc.)

#### Germany:

- lack of resources for qualified translations of certificates
- proof of German Language competence
- transparency of learning outcomes achieved within foreign VET programmes
- Missing mutual trust concerning foreign VET degrees.

### **4.12 International recognition (EU):**

In Romania, it is currently acquired as follows:

- In HE, based on diploma obtained abroad and Transcript of Records / Diploma Supplement (recognition procedure at the level of Ministry of Education and Research);
- In VET field: through the Europass Mobility Certificate (recognition procedure at the level of the authorized centres for recognition of occupation / qualification);

In Germany, a law for recognition of vocational education from foreign countries has been developed, but only in the field of vocational education and training. On an international level, universities recognize international study programmes on the legal base of a contract between the institutions or on the base of the transcript of records.

### **4.13 National credit systems (systems of learning outcome recognition):**

ECTS for HE system functions in all three analyzed countries (see below). In VET common framework could not be identified for the moment in Romania, Estonia and Germany, except the fact that ECVET is/will be used as a base.

#### Romania:

- For HE: 1 ECTS = 20 - 30 hours - student workload

- For VET: there is no credit system. There are only types of training and allocated hours (training course = 360 training hours; qualification course = 720 training hours or 1080 training hours).

## Estonia:

- From 1992 till August 2009 Credit Points (CP) system was used in Estonia. 1 CP = 40 hours of work.
- ECTS from 1st of September 2009 in HE institutions. 1 ECTS = 26 hours of work.
- Equivalence: 1 CP = 1.5 ECTS.

## Germany:

ECTS is common standard at German universities.

The implementation of ECVET is in the beginning. Projects for the implementation of ECVET (Pilot Initiative DEVCET) are about to be finished. So far ECVET is not a central issue, because there are hardly any VET programmes described with ECVET units. The recognition of VET is done on the base of the matching of learning outcomes (skills, competences and knowledge) according to the German qualification framework (DQR) which was adopted in March 2011.

### **4.14 The relations between national and international systems:**

A high dispersion in terms of the achievements on cooperation/compatibilisation between national and international systems was observed in all the three analyzed countries, Estonia and Germany being more advanced than Romania in the field. Thus:

- The Romanian RPL system is on its way to further development. There is a national team of ECVET experts, which among other has the aim to support the adoption of measures for that ECVET to be gradually applied in VET qualifications at all NQF levels and that EQF to be used in transferring and recognizing the learning outcomes obtained in formal, no-formal and informal contexts. Romania has 3 institutions as individual members of EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and some other institutions as associate members. Romania is also member of the Steering Committee the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET).
- Estonian RPL has been influenced by the Dutch, French, Danish and Norwegian RPL systems. Estonia is a member of different international RPL networks and is currently leading the European RPL Network. An Estonian RPL Association (ERPLA) has been created in 2013.

- In Germany, ECTS is implemented as requested by the EU. ECVET instruments and principles are about to be adapted to German contexts at different levels of VET and in different branches. By the adoption of the German national framework a link to the EQF has been provided, which allows to compare and recognize learning outcomes on different levels independent of their learning framework.

### *Differences in credit (learning outcome) recognition:*

VET and HE systems are different in all the analyzed countries. Details upon the ECTS and VET credit systems have been provided under the section “*National credit systems (systems of learning outcome recognition)*”.

### **4.15 (National) local documentation:**

The basic ones in Romania are:

- Law of National Education no. 1/2011
- MO 5484/2011 on recognition and equivalence of professional competencies acquired formally, non-formally or informally
- Law no. 200 / 2004 on the recognition of professional diplomas and qualifications for the professions regulated in Romania
- MO 3075/2008 on the procedure of professional recognition of the professions which are not regulated in Romania

In Estonia, on the national level, RPL is governed by the following documents:

- The Universities Act
- The Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act
- The Vocational Educational Institutions Act
- The Standard of Higher Education
- The Professions Act.

In Germany, the recommendations and resolutions of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and German Rectors' Conference (HRK) have been transferred into documents of legislation:

- Framework Act for Higher Education
- Laws of Higher education of the different federal states
- Regulations of the institutions of higher education



## 5 List of abbreviations

RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training
HE	Higher Education
LO	Learning Outcomes
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
LA	Learning Agreement
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
ECTS	European Credit Transferable System

6 Annexes

6.1 Legal framework and state of implementation of RPL from VET to HE in Romania

	Country: Romania
National policy description	<p>In Romania, the institutions responsible of educational policies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) MER - Ministry of Education and Research for HE (and pre-university education);</li> <li>(2) NQA - National Qualifications Authority for VET and adults' professional training;</li> <li>(3) MLSSF - Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family for certain policies related to VET.</li> </ul> <p>RPL is one of Romania's commitments in the Bologna Process. In Romania, RPL is based on the Law of National Education no. 1/2011 and the Order of Education and Research Minister (Ministerial Order - MO) no. 4543/468 of 2004.</p> <p>Recognition of skills acquired in other ways than formal is acquired based on MO 4543/468 of 2004. This MO shows that vocational skills certificates are nationally recognized and that no transferrable credits are granted for recognition of skills acquired in other ways than the formal ones. According to Law 1/2011 , <i>"Initial and continuing professional training programs, as well as evaluation systems of the learning outcomes obtained in non-formal and informal contexts will comply with ensuring occupational mobility on horizontal and vertical, by using credit transfer system for vocational education and training"</i>. Thus, there is a mismatch between the Law of National Education and MO 4543/468 governing the recognition of skills acquired in other ways than the formal ones.</p> <p>Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI), a unit of MER , developed in 2013 under a project co-financed by the ESF program, the document entitled "Romania's Commitments in the European Higher Education Area", which includes a set of conclusions and recommendations on RPL, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• certification of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning is regulated in the existing legislation, but there is still some ambiguity concerning these procedures, which includes their lack of adaptation to the new Law of National Education no. 1/2011;</li> <li>• not all forms of prior learning have recognition procedures (e.g. recognition of learning which does not lead to</li> </ul>

	<p>a qualification);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in discussions with experts, it was noted that the general perception towards this type of education is not very favourable within the academic community, fact which could be changed by increasing awareness and introducing ways to ensure its quality.</li> </ul> <p>UEFISCDI also developed a set of recommendations (see section “Future national developmental needs/plans” below).</p>
<p>Aims</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enhance mobility and employability;</li> <li>• To increase motivation for lifelong learning (particularly in the case of the socio-economically disadvantaged or the low-qualified);</li> <li>• To improve the functioning of the labour market (by promoting mobility and enhancing competitiveness and economic growth);</li> <li>• To provide more flexible learning pathways;</li> <li>• To facilitate and improve access to and evolution within the education, training and labour market;</li> <li>• To facilitate transition between work and learning;</li> <li>• To create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;</li> <li>• To potentially reduce the costs of delivering education and training.</li> </ul>
<p>Target groups (e.g. immigrants)</p>	<p>Currently, there is specific methodology (MO 5484/2011 on recognition and equivalence of professional competencies acquired formally, non-formally or informally) for teaching staffs occupying positions of <i>educator, preschool teacher (institutur), schoolmistress, instructor-foreman, coach</i> and wishing to occupy a didactic position as teacher in preschool education, teacher in primary education and teacher for practical training, respectively coach-teacher in school sport clubs and in children’s clubs.</p> <p>Other target groups which could benefit of RPL could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• under-privileged groups, including unemployed persons and those exposed to unemployment;</li> <li>• young people and (elderly) workers with experience from the workplace, which are not accredited or certified;</li> <li>• the unemployed and those at risk of losing their jobs;</li> <li>• migrants and other categories who need or wish (re)professionalization;</li> <li>• early school leavers;</li> <li>• graduates who open a new educational/professional pathway;</li> </ul>

Benefits for target groups	<p>RPL enables people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make visible what they have learned in non-formal and informal contexts and use these experiences to develop their career or to continue to learn;</li> <li>• correlate the competencies they have with the demand for work force;</li> <li>• come closer to new work and learning possibilities (especially the people farthest to the labour market);</li> <li>• valorise their entire human capital;</li> <li>• eliminate duplication of learning;</li> <li>• reduce costs of learning;</li> <li>• shorten the time to complete a learning/training programme;</li> <li>• increase self-esteem and self-confidence.</li> </ul>
Practical functioning	<p>Based on MO 4543/468 of 2004 regarding the recognition of skills acquired in other ways than formal is acquired:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Persons who wish to be evaluated for recognition of professional skills acquired in other ways than formal, based on a occupational standard/ professional training standard, address to a centre authorized for the occupation / qualification in question.</li> <li>(2) The assessment can be done for all units of competence within an occupational standard / professional training standard or just for one or more units of competence from that standard;</li> <li>(3) Each candidate is assigned a professional competences evaluator who assists him/her in analyzing the own professional performance (self-assessment) and recommends the candidate to enter or not in the evaluation process; the decision to enter into the evaluation process belongs to the candidate;</li> <li>(4) Each assessment centre establishes the method of assessment (a written test and a method to practically demonstrate the competence is obligatory) and duration of the evaluation process (no more than 30 days);</li> <li>(5) The decision on the applicant's competence is determined for each unit of competence for which the candidate has been evaluated;</li> <li>(6) If after the evaluation the candidate is not satisfied with the decision "<i>not yet competent</i>" in relation to specific units of competence, s/he has the right to appeal; the assessment center appoints another professional competences assessor who organizes a new evaluation process;</li> <li>(7) Persons declared competent as a result of the assessment process receive a certificate of professional</li> </ol>

	competences for the units of competences for which they have been declared competent. The certificate has national recognition.
Advantages (which target groups)	<p>For all target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RPL valorises certain learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competencies) for which the necessary efforts in acquiring them have been achieved before (even long time ago); thus,</li> <li>• RPL spares the learners' time and money (they do not invest again in study/training programmes already taken before);</li> <li>• RPL increases the learners' mobility on the labour market (by validating their PL, they can shift/change/adapt more rapidly to a new qualification or job).</li> </ul>
Disadvantages (which target groups)	<p>For all target groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as it is designed now, by law, in Romania the decision to go or not for RPL is based on the advice and recommendation of an assessor. If the assessor is not a real professional, relying on his/her advice could be a risk;</li> <li>• RPL is an effort and time-consuming and quite bureaucratic procedure for both the evaluated person and the evaluator;</li> <li>• for the moment, in Romania there are not too many existing authorized centres to perform RPL;</li> <li>• knowledge and information about RPL (the fact that is possible and the afferent procedures) is not very spread in Romania among potential beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
Future national developmental needs/plans	<p>Considering the current state of policies and policy instruments in this field, UEFISCDI (see section "National policy description" above) has developed a set of recommendations to improve the way in which the objectives internationally assumed are implemented in the national context. The recommendations were divided into four categories: legislative changes, development of tools, case studies and analysis, and the development of national strategies.</p> <p><u>Legislative changes:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Evaluation of current RPL procedures and recommendation to improve them, based on good practice examples of PL systems from countries in which they are already implemented;</li> <li>(2) Correlating current legislation in the field and clarifying responsibilities at central and institutional level;</li> <li>(3) Elaborating RPL procedures for other cases than those mentioned by law (according to European Area of</li> </ol>

	<p>Recognition Manual);</p> <p>(4) Developing recognition procedures of competences acquired through previous studies, including regulation for recognizing the studies taken by students who did not finalise their studies within the pre-Bologna system at an accredited university, and who wish to re-take their studies within the current system;</p> <p>(5) Implementing the ECTS system in all cases of RPL, with a focus on the learning outcomes, including adopting specific procedures to implement art. 203 of Law of National Education no. 1/2011 on granting ECTS credits for volunteering activities;</p> <p>(6) Including provisions regarding the way to recognize PL within the universities' Codes of Ethics;</p> <p>(7) Revising the procedures on the recognition of diploma obtained abroad, based on RPL procedures and achieving a guide for the institutions responsible of this process;</p> <p>(8) Elaborating a procedure regarding the issuing of certificates for those who give up the studies before graduating.</p> <p><u>Development of tools:</u></p> <p>(1) Developing a national integrating strategy regarding PL which to include both universities and high schools and continuing training providers;</p> <p>(2) Organising training courses for university staff responsible with evaluation and certification of PL within universities.</p>
<p>Future international developmental needs/plans (suggestions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient and common implementation of European Area of Recognition Manual provisions;</li> <li>• Higher compatibility between NQFs and EQF (EQF as source); RPL should be part of NQFs;</li> <li>• All EU countries to accept and use the common terminology and definitions established by EU in the field of VET.</li> <li>• Large use of Memoranda of Understanding/Learning Agreements among VET providers/institutions responsible for RPL.</li> </ul>
<p>Obstacles on national level</p>	<p>UEFISCDI in its paper "Romania's Commitments in the EHEA" (see section "<i>National policy description</i>") emphasizes the following obstacles: the national educational policy have no continuity, the legislative framework is not favourable to the university autonomy in the field of internationalisation, the lack of advantageous loaning system for students, the academic offer is heterogeneous and unstructured, the online teaching and assessment system not implemented in a homogenous and coherent manner, not enough space to develop academic</p>

	activities, difficult integration of graduates on the labour market, limited access to electronic information resources, few services abroad to promote the Romanian education system, technical endowment often under the current European level.
Obstacles on international level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of common language (terms, concepts, definitions, compatible procedures)</li> <li>• Not enough networking, not enough bridges between VET and HE</li> <li>• Lack of unified/standardized definition of the learning outcomes for the same qualification/profession in all countries</li> </ul>
International recognition (EU)	<p>In Romania, it is currently acquired as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In HE, based on diploma obtained abroad and Transcript of Records / Diploma Supplement (recognition procedure at the level of Ministry of Education and Research);</li> <li>• In VET field: through the Europass Mobility Certificate (recognition procedure at the level of the authorized centres for recognition of occupation / qualification);</li> </ul> <p>“Romania’s Commitments in the EHEA” (see section <i>“National policy description”</i>) specify 5 guidelines for all EHEA states, to adapt to their national contexts. No. 5<sup>th</sup> is <i>“Promoting the recognition of qualifications, as a key element in facilitating mobilities from and towards EHEA”</i>.</p> <p><u>Useful resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Eurydice inventory on Recognition of Prior Non Formal and Informal Learning in HE education</li> <li>• The Bologna process tools on recognition: Learning Outcomes/ QF/ ESG / the diploma supplement and the Future revised ECTS users’ guide.</li> </ul>
National credit systems (systems of learning outcome recognition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For HE: 1 ECTS = 20 - 30 hours - student workload</li> <li>• For VET: there is no credit system. There are only types of training and allocated hours (training course = 360 training hours; qualification course = 720 training hours or 1080 training hours).</li> </ul>
The relations between national and international systems	<p>The Romanian RPL system is on its way to further development. Romania has only 3 institutions as individual members of EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and some other institutions as associate members.</p> <p>EURASHE Bucharest communiqué 2012 emphasizes on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• efforts to support the recognition of RPL;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and RPL;</li> <li>• Implementation of fair academic and professional recognition, including recognition of non-formal and informal learning.</li> </ul>
Differences in credit (learning outcome) recognition	See: National credit systems.
(National) local documentation	<p>The basic ones are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law of National Education no. 1/2011</li> <li>• MO 5484/2011 on recognition and equivalence of professional competencies acquired formally, non-formally or informally</li> <li>• Law no. 200 / 2004 on the recognition of professional diplomas and qualifications for the professions regulated in Romania</li> <li>• MO 3075/2008 on the procedure of professional recognition of the professions which are not regulated in Romania</li> </ul>
Accreditation process in VET	<p>3 important aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The course can be authorized only by a legal person or association /foundation (not by a physical person!);</li> <li>• The VET provider needs to have a trainer (whom to hold a trainer diploma and to have expertise in the field of the respective course);</li> <li>• The VET provider needs a rental contract for the classroom where the course will be held.</li> </ul> <p>The legislative framework: Methodology for authorizing the providers of professional training for adults (MO 353/23.07.2003 MMSF and MO 5202/8.10.2003 MECT)</p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Checking the eligibility of the company (the VET provider)</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Choosing the course to be authorized (upgrading / perfecting course OR qualification course)</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Preparing the documents that shows the company's eligibility and the fulfilment of authorization criteria</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> Paying the authorization fee</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> Submitting the authorization file to National Qualification Agency (NQA)</p>



	<p><b>Step 6:</b> Getting the authorization (waiting period: maximum 45 days; validity: 4 years)</p> <p><b>Step 7:</b> Re-authorization (every 4 years, the same file has to be submitted, the same procedure, the same fee).  <a href="http://www.traininguri.ro/cum-autorizez-curs/">http://www.traininguri.ro/cum-autorizez-curs/</a></p>
<p>Accreditation process in HE</p>	<p>Government Decision no. 865/23.10.2006:</p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> The education provider submits a request to ARACIS to start the external evaluation procedure for the provisional authorization / accreditation of the study programme (together with an Internal Evaluation Report, proof of fee payment and the observance of the rule that the request is submitted after 2 years since the graduation of 1st series of students – no earlier, no later!)</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> ARACIS nominates a commission of 3 experts, which verifies in situ the observance of the normative criteria imposed by the Methodology (GD 865/23.10.2006)</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> The Commission issues an Evaluation Report and proposes, depending on the case, to be granted (or not) the provisional authorization or the accreditation, respectively.</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> Based on this Report, on debates and analysis of the documents, the Council of ARACIS elaborates its own Report, by proposing or not the authorizations / accreditation to be granted (or not); the Council of ARACIS submits its Report to the Ministry of Education (minimum 8 votes/signatures are required on behalf to the Council of ARACIS, at this stage).</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> The Ministry of Education, based on the positive opinion of the Council of ARACIS issues draft government decision, which it is sent to the Government.</p> <p>(ARACIS: Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education)</p>

## 6.2 Legal framework and state of implementation of RPL from VET to HE in Estonia

	<b>Country: Estonia</b>
National policy description	<p>National strategy for validation is clearly stated in higher education and vocational education. Validation principles are generally also used in the system for awarding professional qualifications. In the field of general education, the RPL system has thus far not been initiated. Institutions providing non-formal education have started to implement learning outcomes as means to support validation practices.</p> <p>RPL is regulated by various acts and standards related to the sector eg University Act and The Standard of Higher Education in HE. RPL in VET is regulated in The Standard of Vocation Education and NQF is regulated in Professions Act.</p>
Aims	<p>The <b>recognition of prior learning is a process</b> that helps a recognized institution assess the competence of an applicant based on specific criteria. The key criteria are designed to assess how the applicant’s knowledge, skills and aptitudes match the entry requirements of the educational institution, the learning outcomes of the programme or sections of it or the competency requirements of professional standards. If the applicant meets the requirements, their competencies will be taken into account when considering the enrolment criteria and completion of the programme or upon awarding professional qualifications.</p> <p><b>The goal of RPL is:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) to value the competency of a person and provide equal opportunities for assessing and acknowledging it, regardless of the time, place and manner of acquiring the knowledge and skills;</li> <li>(2) support lifelong learning and flexibility between the education system and the labour market as well as within these;</li> <li>(3) improve access to education for people who are socially disadvantaged; broaden their opportunities to acquire an education and compete in the labour market, thus fostering the efficiency of utilising individuals as a resource for society.</li> </ol>
Target groups (e.g.	<p><b>People who could benefit from RPL include those who:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(* ) wish to begin studies but lack the required formal qualification to get on to a course or programme;</li> <li>(* ) wish to study abroad but cannot easily establish that their education is adequate to meet the requirements of the</li> </ul>

immigrants)	<p>educational institution in the foreign country (for example, there are many institutions that will allow study for a Master's degree without a corresponding Bachelor's degree, as long as the applicant can show that they have relevant experience to contribute. Also a person from the age of 22 without basic education, but with corresponding competencies, can enter vocational secondary education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) have already obtained a higher education but want to extend it or start working in another field: RPL can help avoid repeating modules or courses that have already been passed;</li> <li>(*) wish to continue interrupted studies;</li> <li>(*) wish to provide evidence of existing skills and knowledge in the process of awarding professional qualifications;</li> <li>(*) wish to have recognised the skills that have been acquired informally through work or leisure activities.</li> </ul>
Benefits for target groups	<p><b>RPL enables people to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) finish studies faster and improve their position on the labour market;</li> <li>(*) make optimal use of the resources of an educational institution or employer;</li> <li>(*) use personal, social and economic potential more efficiently;</li> <li>(*) plan their career and studies with greater awareness.</li> </ul>
Practical functioning	<p>The recognition of prior studies and professional experience can be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) admission to a higher education institution for fulfilling entrance requirements. This is only valid if the applicant has a certain previous level of education (e.g. High school diploma, bachelor or masters degree, depending on the level of study applied for);</li> <li>(*) continuing studies in higher education and vocational education;</li> <li>(*) changing curriculum of study in higher education and vocational education;</li> <li>(*) achieving a professional qualification.</li> </ul> <p>Most of the RPL developments in Estonia are in the higher education sector, due to the extensive funding from the ESF programmes (LÜKKA 2005-2008; Primus 2008-2015), which means that the main principles for RPL are the same all over the country. VET schools have set their own procedures according to principles worked out in Ministry of Education. RPL are mainly used for students who have dropped out from gymnasiums or vocational schools and start over in same of different course in VET school. In some cases RPL is used for recognition of work experience, while student is working at the same time in the same vocational area.</p>

Advantages (which target groups)	There is no common data available on the benefits of RPL to individuals. However successful RPL cases have been portrayed. The greatest emphasis was on saving time and resources in studying, but the programme also stressed that prior learning is of value and adult learners can benefit from validation of their prior learning, because they are not required to repeat what they already know. The applicants from Tallinn University were asked why they used RPL, and the main reasons were to save time, not to study the same thing again and wish to fulfill the requirements of curriculum and study less intensively.
Disadvantages (which target groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) Applicants get disappointed - if not positive decision and the feedback from the assessors is not sufficient;</li> <li>(*) RPL is seen as a lot of bureaucracy (applicants and university staff);</li> <li>(*) RPL is seen more as a way to save time rather than a tool for learning (self-analysis).</li> </ul>
Future national developmental needs/plans	Validation practices in Estonia are well developed in formal education sector. Higher education has been leading the developments of validation and other sectors e.g. VET have been following the path. Thus the domination of HE has formed validation and therefore it sometimes is seen as something only HE related. The challenge in Estonia is for other sectors to follow up on RPL developments and to create a unified system. The current model is fragmented and for potential applicant it could be difficult to find his/her way in the various systems that are sector specific.
Future international developmental needs/plans (suggestions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) Fit with the <u>European Qualifications Framework</u>.</li> <li>(*) Adjusting the recommendations from European Recommendations for Validation of RPL.</li> </ul>
Obstacles on national level	<p>Key challenges for implementing RPL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) to describe the learning outcomes more in detail;</li> <li>(*) curriculum structure and examinations;</li> <li>(*) tools to measure RPL still need developing;</li> </ul>

Obstacles on international level	<p>The obstacles on the international level are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(*) little cooperation and networking between different countries;</li> <li>(*) confusion with definitions;</li> <li>(*) different small developments (Cedefop, ERPL network, countries etc).</li> </ul>
International recognition (EU)	<p><a href="http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/estonco.htm">http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/estonco.htm</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/bibliographies/18212.aspx">http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/bibliographies/18212.aspx</a></p> <p>European Inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning (will be published in 2014)</p> <p><a href="http://www.studyinestonia.ee/study/recognition-of-studies?page=333&amp;">http://www.studyinestonia.ee/study/recognition-of-studies?page=333&amp;</a></p>
National credit systems (systems of learning outcome recognition)	<p>ECTS from 1st of September 2009 in HE institutions. 1 ECTS = 26 hours of work. From 1992 till August 2009 Credit Points (CP) system was used in Estonia. 1 CP = 40 hours of work. 1 CP = 1,5 ECTS.</p> <p>VET had a different system of crediting: module based and weekly systems until 1.09.2013. According to vocational education institution law KÕS (Kutseõppeasutuse seadus) since September 1st 2013 EKAP (The Credit Point of VET) is being used. This is based on ECVET principles.</p>
The relations between national and international systems	<p>Estonian RPL has been influenced by the Dutch, French, Danish and Norwegian RPL systems. Estonia is a member of different international RPL networks and is currently leading the European RPL Network. An Estonian RPL Association (ERPLA) has been created in 2013.</p>
Differences in credit (learning	<p>See: National credit systems.</p>

outcome) recognition	
(National) local documentation	<p>On the national level, RPL is governed by the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Universities Act</li> <li>• The Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act</li> <li>• The Vocational Educational Institutions Act</li> <li>• The Standard of Higher Education</li> <li>• The Professions Act</li> </ul> <p>In addition, RPL regulations have been established in educational institutions and with professional bodies who award professional qualifications.</p>
Accreditation process in VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objective and results of state recognition: State recognition is a quality assurance tool used to create a feeling of certainty toward educational quality of institutions providing vocational education and training (hereinafter <b>VET schools</b>, in a narrow sense, school) stakeholders, primarily to customers and employers. A focus is on the quality and sustainability of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- implementation of curricula;</li> <li>- methodology of teaching;</li> <li>- development of students;</li> <li>- development of curricula and educational process;</li> <li>- educational outcomes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• State recognition is curriculum group oriented and includes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- internal evaluation;</li> <li>- accreditation;</li> <li>- an extension of the right to conduct studies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• State recognition is based on the results of accreditation, established by a directive of the Minister of Education and Research and includes granting a school the right to conduct studies. There are three choices in extending this right:</li> </ul>

- to extend for a full period (for six years);
- to extend for a limited period (for one to three years);
- not to extend the right to conduct studies (a school loses the right to admit new students; current students must be ensured the completion of the curriculum and graduation in the school, in cooperation with another school or in another school).
- The utilization of results of state recognition:
  - feedback and input for further activities of a school and a school holder, including for planning of in-service training for teachers, managers and others;
  - planning of investments and development funds;
  - determination and utilization of state-commissioned education.
- Compliance with national requirements (e.g., curricula with national curricula and teachers with qualification requirements) is a prerequisite for gaining state recognition and therefore it is not addressed in the course of accreditation.
- Accreditation is not conducted for teaching and learning which takes place in prisons. A decision on the right to conduct studies is made on the basis of teaching and learning in a school.
- An accreditation is conducted by an independent assessment committee (HK) formed by an accreditation authority (AKA). The cooperation and communication between assessment committees within a curriculum as well as between curriculum groups is crucial. AKA ensures it through the organization of work of the assessment committees. HK is comprised of three experts: one to two experts in a profession related to the curriculum group, representing employers of a corresponding sector (assigned by a relevant professional council); one to two experts from the field of a curriculum/school/education.
- The assessment is carried out in two views—a current and a development view—by five assessment fields supported by performance indicators. An objective of using the current view is to get information about school performance and the objective of using the development view is to get information about school's sustainability in a curriculum group.
- Assessment fields (a core process and support processes):
  - Educational process (a core process);
  - Leadership and management;

	<p>Management of human resources; Cooperation with interest groups; Management of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the assessment of a current view, predetermined assessment criteria and a four-point scale are used.</li> <li>• Assessment methods:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) An analysis of documents, including the analysis of the report and data of a curriculum group.</li> <li>2) A school visit: interviews with teachers, students, employers and alumni; observations (the teaching and learning environment, support structures, educational activity, etc.).</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p>Accreditation process in HE</p>	<p><b>I. General Provisions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (hereinafter 'EKKA'<sup>1</sup>) shall establish and disclose the conditions and the procedure for quality assessment of study programme groups.</li> <li>2. Quality assessment of study programme groups in the first and second cycles of higher education is an external evaluation which assesses the compliance of study programmes for professional higher education (hereinafter 'RKH'), bachelor degree studies (hereinafter 'BA'), master degree studies (hereinafter 'MA'), and integrated study programmes of bachelor and master degree studies (hereinafter 'INT'), including their delivery and instruction-related development activities – measuring them against legislation as well as national and international standards and trends, with the aim to provide recommendations for improving the quality of instruction.</li> <li>3. Higher education institutions have an obligation to undergo assessment of the quality of their study programme groups at least once in seven years.</li> <li>4. A higher education institution shall submit a request for quality assessment of its study programme group to the EKKA Bureau no later than one year prior to the assessment visit. The assessment shall be based on a self-</li> </ol>

<sup>1</sup> [http://ekka.archimedes.ee/files/OKH\\_kord\\_07.08.2012\\_Eng-2.pdf](http://ekka.archimedes.ee/files/OKH_kord_07.08.2012_Eng-2.pdf)



evaluation of the study programme group prepared by the higher education institution and its background information compiled by the Ministry of Education and Research based on data from the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS).

## **II. Preparation for Assessment**

### **II.1 Preparation of Self-Evaluation**

5. A higher education institution shall conduct self-evaluation in a study programme group incorporating all study programmes belonging to the study programme group, and prepare a self-evaluation report which consists of a general part and self-evaluations of individual study programmes.
6. Self-evaluations of a study programme group shall be submitted in EKKA's electronic environment. Sample forms for general parts and self-evaluations of study programmes are available on EKKA's website.
7. The choice of a language for a self-evaluation report shall be subject to the planned composition of an assessment committee and agreed upon with each higher education institution individually. The available choices include the Estonian and English languages.
8. EKKA shall provide basic training in preparing self-evaluations of study programmes to higher education institutions at their request. EKKA shall reimburse the costs related to trainers' wages and the development of training materials.
9. Higher education institutions shall submit their self-evaluation reports in electronic format to EKKA no later than three months prior to the assessment visit. If there are more than ten study programmes in a study programme group (see subdivision II.2), the higher education institution shall submit its self-evaluation report four months prior to the assessment visit.
10. EKKA shall send the self-evaluation report to the assessment committee no later than two months prior to the visit.
11. EKKA shall not publicise self-evaluation reports.

### **II.2 Coordination of Study Programmes Under Evaluation**

12. If the number of study programmes within a study programme group under evaluation is larger than ten, EKKA may, after receipt of the self-evaluation report and in accord with the higher education institution, make its selection of study programmes on which the assessment will focus.

13. EKKA shall make its selection based on agreed principles.

### **III. Formation and Functions of Assessment Committees**

14. EKKA shall start forming an assessment committee (hereinafter 'committee') no later than five months prior to the assessment visit and, when determining the composition of the committee, EKKA shall, if possible, take into consideration reasoned proposals by the higher education institution under evaluation, regarding candidate members of the committee and/or emphases arising from development needs of the higher education institution.

15. EKKA shall form an assessment committee based on agreed principles.

16. Requirements for members of a committee has been agreed on.

17. EKKA shall send the information about a preliminary composition of the committee to the higher education institution, who then has ten working days to ask for additional members or the removal of a member, when justified.

18. The Director of EKKA shall approve of the final composition of a committee by his or her order and appoint a chairperson of the committee and an assessment coordinator.

19. An assessment coordinator (hereinafter 'coordinator') shall be an EKKA employee. The coordinator is a support person of a committee and an administrator of the assessment process whose main duty is to ensure smooth functioning of the assessment process on the basis of the requirements and the timeframe provided in this document. The coordinator is not a member of a committee.

20. Members of a committee shall confirm by signature an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of information that has become known to them in the course of assessment, and a lack of conflicts of interest. In the case of a conflict of interest, committee members shall immediately notify the Director of EKKA of it and remove themselves from the work of the committee.

21. If the working language of a committee is English and the higher education institution wants to use interpretation services, it shall notify the EKKA Bureau of it no later than one month prior to the assessment visit. According to EKKA, an interpreter must meet the following requirements: he or she has necessary preparation for consecutive interpretation in Estonian-English-Estonian (master degree studies in interpreting, in-service training in interpreting, interpreting as an additional specialty, etc.), past experience in consecutive interpretation, and commands the terminology regarding higher education. Costs of interpretation services shall be incurred by the

higher education institution under evaluation.

22. Duties of members of a committee have been agreed.

23. Duties of the chairperson of a committee have been agreed.

24. EKKA shall enter into contracts for services with members of a committee and compensate the members of a committee for transportation and accommodation costs related to performing their duties.

#### **IV. Assessment Visits**

25. A higher education institution who receives a committee shall, no later than one month before a visit, appoint a person who is responsible for a smooth process of the visit and who ensures appropriate working conditions for members of the committee.

26. No later than one month prior to the assessment visit, the coordinator shall, based on the proposals by members of the committee, prepare questions and/or comments on the self-evaluation report; a list of additional materials to be requested; and a list of individuals whom the committee would like to meet during the visit.

27. The coordinator shall, in cooperation with the chairperson of the committee, prepare the schedule for the visit and start to coordinate it with the higher education institution under evaluation no later than three weeks prior to the visit.

28. A visit shall last for one to two days. In justified cases, a member of the committee may be excused from participation in the visit. If the higher education institution conducts studies at different locations, the committee may split into corresponding parts.

29. In the course of a visit, the higher education institution shall make working space available to the committee members and allow the committee to:

30. Within five days after the visit, EKKA shall ask the higher education institution for feedback on the apparent preparation of members of the committee, the relevance of their questions and other pertinent issues according to the form established by EKKA. The results of the feedback shall be taken as a basis for choosing members of committees for subsequent assessments.

## V. Assessment Reports and Recommendations by Assessment Committees

31. It has been regulated what the assessment report shall contain.

32. Assessment committees' recommendations shall preferably be adopted by consensus. If consensus is not reached, the dissenting view(s) together with the reason(s) shall be included.

33. Committees shall submit assessment reports to EKKA by the end of the fourth week after the visit and EKKA shall forward it to the institution of higher education within one week after receipt of the report.

34. Higher education institutions shall have the opportunity to submit their comments about the assessment report within two weeks after receipt of the report. The committee shall review the comments received and consider them while preparing its final report.

35. The chairperson of a committee shall forward the electronic version of the final assessment report, signed by the chairperson of the committee, to the EKKA Bureau no later than by the end of the ninth week after the visit, which the EKKA Bureau will immediately send to the higher education institution under evaluation.

36. The EKKA Bureau shall forward the committee's assessment report and the comments by the higher education institution to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council.

## VI. Decision by EKKA Quality Assessment Council

37. The Quality Assessment Council shall base its decision on the self-evaluation report of a higher education institution, the assessment report, the comments by the higher education institution received in a timely manner, and on additional materials submitted at the request of the Quality Assessment Council. If necessary, the Quality Assessment Council may ask the chairperson of the committee or a member of the committee assigned by the chairperson to attend the session

for explanations.

38. The Quality Assessment Council shall approve an assessment report within three months after receipt of the report. The Council shall weigh the strengths and areas for improvement pointed out by an assessment committee and its recommendations, and then shall decide whether to conduct the next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven years – or less than seven years, if the study programmes, instruction and instruction-related development based on those programmes do not comply with legislation, national or international standards.

39. The EKKA Bureau shall electronically forward the final decision by the Quality Assessment Council and the assessment report to the higher education institution within two weeks after the date of the decision by the Quality Assessment Council.

40. Within one week after the decision and the assessment report were forwarded to the institution of higher education, EKKA shall publicise on its website both the decision and the assessment report.

## **VII. Contesting of Assessment Proceedings Conducted by EKKA and Decision by Quality Assessment Council**

41. A person who finds that his or her rights are violated or his or her freedoms are restricted by assessment procedures conducted by EKKA or by a decision made by the EKKA Quality Assessment Council may file a challenge pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Administrative Procedure Act. The challenge shall be filed with the EKKA Quality Assessment Council within 30 days after the person filing the challenge became or should have become aware of the contested finding.

42. A decision by EKKA Quality Assessment Council may be challenged within 30 days after its delivery, filing an action with the Tallinn courthouse of the Tallinn Administrative Court pursuant to the procedure provided for in the Code of Administrative Court Procedure.

## **VIII. Follow-Up Activities**

43. EKKA assumes that the responsibility for resolving the problems pointed out in assessment reports and for continuous improvement activities lies with the higher education institutions. EKKA shall regularly organise workshops where higher education institutions introduce developments in study programme groups during the post-assessment period, based on areas for improvement and recommendations presented in the assessment reports.

## **IX. Involving Competent Evaluation Authorities of Foreign Countries**

44. When assessing the quality of study programme groups, it is possible to take into account assessment reports approved by international professional organisations or other competent assessment authorities which include the analyses and opinions described in clause 31 above.

45. If a higher education institution wishes that a competent foreign assessment authority (hereinafter ‘assessment authority’) would conduct quality assessment of its study programme group and the costs thereof will be covered by the state budget of Estonia, the higher education institution shall submit a well-reasoned application to EKKA to include that assessment authority, no later than two years prior to the expiration date of its current accreditation, and the application shall contain certain information.

47. Within one month after receipt of the request, the EKKA Quality Assessment Council shall make a reasoned decision on the suitability of the assessment authority to conduct quality assessment of the study programme group.

48. If EKKA approves of the use of an assessment authority, it shall conclude a tripartite contract with the higher education institution and the assessment authority, providing the rights and responsibilities of the parties during the assessment process and the procedure for reimbursement for expenditures.

49. An assessment authority shall submit its assessment report to EKKA.

50. If a higher education institution wishes that the result of a previously conducted assessment would be taken into

account as a quality assessment of a study programme group, the higher education institution shall submit a corresponding request including the assessment report approved by the competent assessment authority, to the EKKA Quality Assessment Council.

51. If an assessment report does not include all aspects described in clause 31 above, and it is impossible to make a final decision that would be in accordance with the procedure outlined in this document, the EKKA Quality Assessment Council shall have the right to return the report to the assessment authority for modification and improvement or (in the case described in clause 50 above) not to make an assessment decision on the quality of the study programme group based on the submitted assessment report.

52. If it is possible to make a final decision that would be in accordance with this procedure, the Quality Assessment Council shall approve the assessment report, weigh the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations pointed out in the assessment report, and then shall decide whether to conduct next quality assessment of that study programme group in seven years or, in justified cases, in less than seven years.

53. The proceedings described in this chapter and the decision by the Quality Assessment Council shall be contested following the procedure provided in Chapter VII.

## 6.3 Legal framework and state of implementation of RPL from VET to HE in Germany (Saxony)

Country: Germany							
National policy description	<p>In Germany education is in the responsibilities of the regional governments. This results in many different laws and regulations. However, there are also organisations that work on national level in order to set national standards.</p> <p>For VET, this is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the "Kultusministerkonferenz" (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, KMK),</li> </ul> <p>for higher education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the "Hochschulrektorenkonferenz" (German Rectors' Conference, HRK).</li> </ul> <p>The responsible ministry at national level is the "Federal Ministry of Education and Research" (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF).</p> <p>In Saxony, the responsible Institutions of educational policy are:            Saxon Ministry of Educational Affairs (SMK) - for VET            Saxon Ministry of Science and Cultural Affairs (SMWK) - for HE</p>						
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sector</th> <th>HE</th> <th>VET</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Legal Framework</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualification Framework for German Higher Education (Hochschulrahmengesetz) - BMBF</li> <li>Federal state constitution (Art. 101.1),</li> <li>Laws for higher education of the different federal states (Hochschulgesetze der Länder) - SMWK</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Federal state constitution (Art. 101.1)</li> <li>2. Schools' law of Saxony (Saxon Parlament)</li> <li>3. Ordinances for different schooltypes (Rechtsverordnungen, SMK)</li> <li>KMK: Coordination that Ordinances are similar (e.g. for Recognition), adoption of national framework curricula</li> <li>SMK: Curricula of the federal states</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sector	HE	VET	Legal Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualification Framework for German Higher Education (Hochschulrahmengesetz) - BMBF</li> <li>Federal state constitution (Art. 101.1),</li> <li>Laws for higher education of the different federal states (Hochschulgesetze der Länder) - SMWK</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Federal state constitution (Art. 101.1)</li> <li>2. Schools' law of Saxony (Saxon Parlament)</li> <li>3. Ordinances for different schooltypes (Rechtsverordnungen, SMK)</li> <li>KMK: Coordination that Ordinances are similar (e.g. for Recognition), adoption of national framework curricula</li> <li>SMK: Curricula of the federal states</li> </ul>
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		(Sächsischer Lehrplan für...)
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Qualifications Framework (DQR)</li> <li>HRK: Implementation of recognition of VET for HE (2002 and 2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative regulations (Verwaltungsvorschriften) – SMK</li> <li>National Qualifications Framework (DQR)</li> </ul>
<p>For RPL recommendations and resolutions of the BMBF, KMK and HRK are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside Higher Education towards study programs at institutions of Higher Education (II) ("Anrechnung von außerhalb des Hochschulwesens erworbenen Kenntnissen und Fähigkeiten auf ein Hochschulstudium (II)"), Resolution of the KMK, 18.09.2008)</li> <li>- Recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside Higher Education towards study programmes at institutions of Higher Education (I) ("Anrechnung von außerhalb des Hochschulwesens erworbenen Kenntnissen und Fähigkeiten auf ein Hochschulstudium (I)"), Resolution of the KMK, 28.06.2002)</li> <li>- Recommendations to the institutions of Higher Education about the allocation of credit points in vocational further education and recognition towards study programs in Higher Education ("Empfehlung an die Hochschulen zur Vergabe von Leistungspunkten in der beruflichen Fortbildung und Anrechnung auf ein Hochschulstudium"), BMBF, KMK and HRK, Bonn 2003</li> </ul> <p>Transferred into documents of legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Framework Act for Higher Education (Hochschulrahmengesetz) , § 15 Abs. 3 HRG</li> <li>- Laws of Higer education of the different federal states (Saxon "Hochschulgesetz", § 17 Abs. 5 SächsHSG)</li> <li>- Regulations of the institutions of higher education</li> </ul>		
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing the number of people with higher education degrees</li> <li>- Promoting Lifelong Learning including the sector of higher education</li> <li>- Enhancement of Qualification Level of population</li> <li>- Increasing the innovation potential</li> <li>- Intensifying the link between economy and science</li> <li>- Transfer of scientific research results to the economy</li> </ul>	
<b>Target groups (e.g.</b>	<p>Persons with or without Abitur (Secondary Education Degree - classical entrance qualification for higher education) who have completed vocational education and training (formal accredited education programmes) with or without</p>	

immigrants)	work experiences
Benefits for target groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Entrance Requirements for HE are loosened</li> <li>2. Recognition towards study programs               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Shortened study time</li> <li>2.2 Accomplishing alternative modules</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Part-time study programs:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Studies in addition to regular employment (extra-occupational / part-time studies)</li> <li>3.2 Work Experience is part of the studies (up to 50%) (work based learning)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Practical functioning	<p>Recommendations of the HRK to implement recognition of VET for HE (2002 and 2008):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criteria for accreditation of the study programs: recognition on the base of learning outcomes, at an amount which corresponds to the requirements of module</li> <li>- two ways of recognition:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "general recognition": matching of special study programs and selected vocational education programs (more often further education than initial)</li> <li>2. "Individual recognition": Recognition of initial or further education or / and work experience or / and non-formal/informal learning outcomes</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Advantages (which target groups)	<p>for universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More students in times of less young people</li> <li>- Linkage with economy and companies</li> </ul> <p>for professors / lecturers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linkage with economy and companies</li> </ul> <p>for companies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of latest scientific results</li> </ul>
Disadvantages (which target groups)	<p>for universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More students in times of less financial resources</li> <li>- More administrative needs</li> </ul> <p>for professors / lecturers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different levels of knowledge and skills in one class</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extra work in recognition process for companies:</li> <li>- Employees have less time for extra-work during their studies</li> </ul>
Future national developmental needs/plans	<p>Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation at institutions of HE</li> </ul> <p>Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources for development and implementation of recognition procedures</li> </ul> <p>Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government supports universities through proposals. The federal governments support these developments with a different intensity.</li> </ul>
Future international developmental needs/plans (suggestions)	<p>Implementing the law for recognition of vocational education from foreign countries and also providing its recognition within the different educational sectors.</p>
Obstacles on national level	<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of information about possibilities of recognition</li> <li>- Fees that might be taken from the students</li> </ul> <p>Universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity of German educational system (16 federal states)</li> <li>- Small of financial resources for recognition processes</li> <li>- Small knowledge about recognition procedures</li> <li>- Small resources for increased administrative needs</li> </ul> <p>Professors/Lecturers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different levels of knowledge and skills in one class</li> <li>- Lack of working time for individualized recognition processes</li> </ul> <p>Companies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of information about possibilities of recognition</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for different employment structures</li> <li>- SME's are skeptical towards the benefits of HE</li> </ul>
Obstacles on international level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'- Lack of resources for qualified translations of certificates</li> <li>- Proof of German Language competence</li> <li>- Transparency of learning outcomes achieved within foreign VET programs</li> <li>- Missing mutual trust concerning foreign VET degrees</li> </ul>
International recognition (EU)	<p>A law for recognition of vocational education from foreign countries has been developed, but only in the field of vocational education and training.</p> <p>On an international level, universities recognize international study programs on the legal base of a contract between the institutions or on the base of the transcript of records.</p>
National credit systems (systems of learning outcome recognition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ECTS is common standard at German universities.</li> <li>- The implementation of ECVET is still going on. Due to the priority ECVET in the Leonardo da Vinci Program (2007-2013) many projects regarding the implementation of ECVET have been done.</li> <li>- So far ECVET has been not a central issue, because there are hardly any VET programs described with ECVET units.</li> </ul> <p>The recognition of VET is done on the base of the matching of learning outcomes (skills, competencies and knowledge) according to the German qualification framework (DQR) which was adopted in March 2011.</p>
The relations between national and international systems	<p>ECTS is implemented in Germany as requested by the EU.</p> <p>ECVET instruments and principles are about to be adapted to German contexts at different levels of VET and in different branches.</p> <p>By the adoption of the German national framework a link to the EQF has been provided, which allows to compare and recognize learning outcomes on different levels independent of their learning framework.</p>
Differences in credit (learning outcome) recognition	<p>The systems of ECTS and ECVET do not have much in common. ECTS credits are only based on workload. ECVET is based on learning outcomes, and workload is only one of the three different criteria which are included. Before matching the systems is possible, learning outcomes will have to be described based on the criteria skills, knowledge and competences and related to the levels of EQF and/or DQF.</p>
(National) local	<p>The basic ones are:</p> <p>Recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside Higher Education towards study programs at institutions of</p>

documentation	<p>Higher Education (II) ("Anrechnung von außerhalb des Hochschulwesens erworbenen Kenntnissen und Fähigkeiten auf ein Hochschulstudium (II)"), Resolution of the KMK, 18.09.2008)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside Higher Education towards study programmes at institutions of Higher Education (I) ("Anrechnung von außerhalb des Hochschulwesens erworbenen Kenntnissen und Fähigkeiten auf ein Hochschulstudium (I)"), Resolution of the KMK, 28.06.2002)</li> <li>- Recommendations to the institutions of Higher Education about the allocation of credit points in vocational further education and recognition towards study programs in Higher Education ("Empfehlung an die Hochschulen zur Vergabe von Leistungspunkten in der beruflichen Fortbildung und Anrechnung auf ein Hochschulstudium"), BMBF, KMK and HRK, Bonn 2003</li> </ul>
Accreditation process in VET	<p>Law for Independent School Agencies/Private Schools (<i>Gesetz über Schulen in freier Trägerschaft, SächsFrTrSchulG</i>), of February 4th, 1992 – legally updated version of August 1st, 2011 (§§ 4-8)</p> <p>School Regulations for <i>Fachschule (Schulordnung Fachschule – FSO)</i> of Dezember 2nd, 2009 - legally updated version of August 1st, 2011 (§§35-39)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Permission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- given by Saxon Educational Agency (<i>Sächsische Bildungsagentur</i>) before the school/vocational training starts → status: officially approved substitute school</li> <li>- requirements of permission: e.g. teachers are educated similarly to teachers of public schools, economic factors, responsible leadership</li> <li>- permission fails, if the vocational training/school doesn't start or has to close within one year</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. External Exam (so called <i>Schulfremdenprüfung</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- procedure to test the school's abilities</li> <li>- final exam in any subject of the schedule/curriculum (original and unofficial subjects)</li> <li>- examination board of a public school</li> <li>- official examination time table</li> <li>- Pupils of an officially approved substitute school can apply for the external exam if they fulfil the admission requirements for the estimated vocational training</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- application has to be handed in on time → applicants get an official notification</li> <li>- pass of exam with a certain result (only one defective result in an unofficial subject)</li> <li>- if a minimum of 80% of the pupils passes these external exams – school gets the accreditation</li> </ul> <p>3. Accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- after passing external exam substitute school has to apply for accreditation             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ becomes officially recognised substitute school</li> </ul> </li> <li>- school must permanently be able to meet the requirements of a comparable public school</li> </ul>
<p>Accreditation process in HE</p>	<p>Every study program for bachelor and master degrees from state or state recognized higher education institutions in Germany has to accredit (program accreditation). The accreditation process is a multistage process and based on the peer review principle. The accreditation is carried out by one of ten agencies, these agencies are accredited by the Accreditation Council (Akkreditierungsrat) and they are entitled to award the seal of quality of the accreditation council.<sup>2</sup> The Accreditation Council<sup>3</sup> defines standards, criteria and processes for the accreditation. In the context of the accreditation of a study program is to define the consideration of acquired competence outside of the university.</p>

<sup>2</sup> The ten agencies: [ACQUIN](#) (Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute), [AHPGS](#) (Accreditation Agency for Study Programmes in Health and Social Sciences), [AKAST](#) (Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Canonical Study Programmes), [AQ Austria](#) (Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria AQA Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance), [AQAS](#) (Agency for Quality Assurance by Accreditation of Study Programmes), [ASIIN](#) (Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics/Computer Science, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics), [evalag](#) (evaluation agency Baden-Württemberg), [FIBAA](#) (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation), [OAQ](#) (Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education), [ZEvA](#) (Central Evaluation- and Accreditation Agency Hannover).

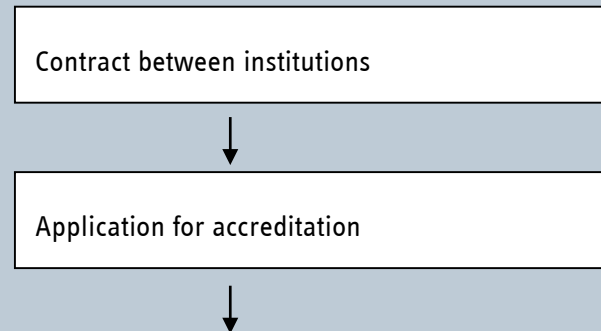
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=aufgaben&L=1&contrast=etc%2Fpasswd>. 1.9.2014.

Since a few years with the system accreditation, an alternative form of accreditation exists. The system accreditation applies the internal quality assurance of the university and all study programs pass through the quality assurance of the university and all accredited study programs are included in the Accreditation.<sup>4</sup>

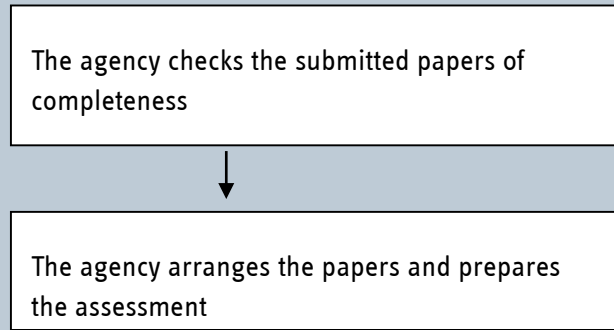
### Three steps of the Accreditation Process

#### 1. Application for Accreditation

The institutions of higher education file an application for accreditation of a study program to an accreditation agency, which they have chosen. In most federal states the process of accreditation has to be completed before the study program starts. The agency drafts a contract with the costs and schedule of the process. The agencies have forms and handouts which lists the required papers for the application and the process of accreditation. After the conclusion of a contract the procedure begins.



<sup>4</sup> <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=22&L=0->. 1.9.2014. At the moment (6/2014) there are 20 universities system accredited. <http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=akkreditierungsdaten&L=1%2Fsq|%27>. 1.9.2014.

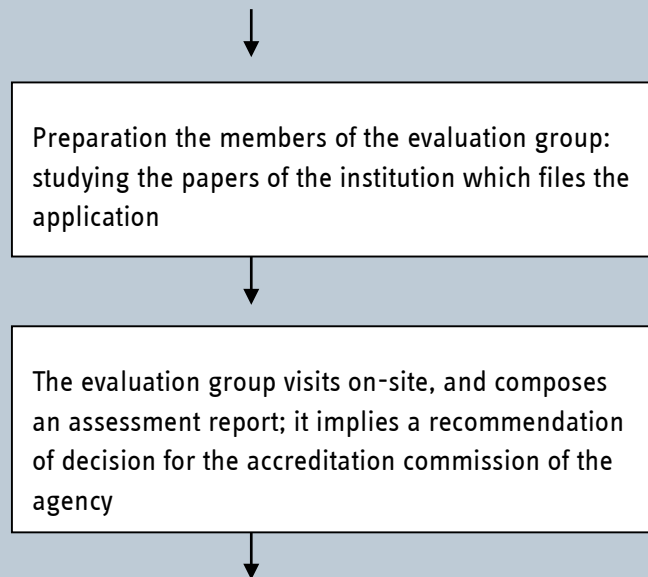


## 2. On-site visit of the institution - peer review

The agency deploys an evaluation group whose composition must be consider the specialist content focus of the study programme and its specific profile. The institution of higher education can propose evaluators. Members of the evaluation group are representatives of higher education institutions - teachers and students -, and representatives of the relevant professional experience.

The members of evaluation group are familiar with the standards and criteria for the accreditation. The evaluation takes place in form of a on-site visit. A representative of the agency attends the peer reviewers. During the visit at the institution of higher education the evaluation group talks with the leaders of the institution, the dean, the responsible for the study programme, teachers and students. The peer reviewers prove the frame conditions of the study program. The Evaluation group composes an assessment report. It includes a recommendation of decision for the accreditation commission of the agency.





### 3. Decision of the Accreditation Commission of the agency

The Accreditation Commission of the agency decides on the accreditation. The decision is based on the application for accreditation and the report of the evaluation group and the regulations of the Accreditation Council. Three alternatives are possible: to grant, to grant with conditions or to reject an accreditation. The conditions are timed and have to be fulfilled at the time. The accreditation is normally limited to a period of five years for the first time. After this time a re-accreditation has to propose. A successfully re-accreditation is terminated to seven years.



The accreditation commission of the agency decides on the accreditation on the base of the report of the evaluation group

The procedure of accreditation of a study program (after application) takes normally about nine month.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> On the homepage of the accreditation council is a database available, which includes the accredited study programs.  
<http://www.akkreditierungsrat.de/index.php?id=4&L=1>.