

EUROSOCIAL TOOLS

N° 51

learnings **COHESION SOCIAL**

Study on policies and systems in latin america and europe for the recognition, validation and certification of professional competences (Volume I)

Acquired through experience and/or non-formal educational processes, with special attention to the group of immigrants

SYNTHESIS REPORT OF BOTH REGIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

GLORIA ARREDONDO • XIMENA CONCHA

With the support of: Cidalia



Funded by
European Union



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1. Presentation

This document constitutes a report-synthesis of the work carried out in the study of Politics and Systems in Latin America and Europe with reference to the recognition, validation and certification of professional skills acquired through experience and/or in informal education, focussing especially on the immigrant collective.

It is the product of a number of months of work done by the Cidalia team within the framework of the contract with the EU's EurosociAL programme, in particular with the body which coordinates its area of social politics, the Italian Latin-American Organisation, ILLA, with headquarters in Rome.

After 15 years of development, the European Union Programme, Eurosocial - which is currently in its third phase (2016-2021), Eurosocial+ - has established itself as an essential, strategic support for new priorities in the agendas of Latin American countries. Within the area of Social Politics of this Programme, work has been continuing for some time in the area of migrations on a number of different fronts: labour migrations, the integration of immigrants, migration and social cohesion, among others, at the same time keeping a close watch on gender. As is well-known, women and girls in general, and female immigrants in particular, always find their situation exacerbated, which in turn affects the entire collective. Due to the mere fact of being women or girls, they have fewer opportunities and are more affected by discrimination.

In this context, this study came into being to analyse the politics and systems of recognition, validation and certification of professional competences – acquired mostly through work experience – and its link with immigrant collectives or, rather, to find out to what extent immigrants are participating and accessing this type of mechanism.

It is a subject which grows in relevance in light of the reality of migration both in Latin America and in Europe and, also, facing the verification that employment – opportunities, access, permanence, mobility – plays a central role in the social and labour integration of immigrants in societies of destination and reception and, ultimately, impacts on the integration of these people and on social cohesion.

The analysis has been carried out both in Europe and Latin America, firstly, in order to extract conclusions and recommendations that could be useful to both regions based on cooperation among peers. The second priority was that the information be operatively useful to the countries which form part of the Pacific Alliance, insofar as these are advancing in making their systems of certification and labour skills compatible, and even designing procedures to help with the recognition of some of the certificates of labour competency which are awarded in different countries. All of this has been carried out with the support of the European Union Programme, EUROsociAL. Because of this, in the case of Latin America, work has been done to analyse and compare in detail those systems of certification of labour competences which exist in Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru. On the other

hand, in Europe, a more general analysis has been carried out¹ of the politics and systems of recognition and validation of acquired competences in the experience of four countries which were selected as case studies, whether for their proximity to Latin America with regard to exchange of experience in public politics, as is the case of Spain and Italy, or, at the same time, others which appeared, at first sight, to have mature development in this area: the Netherlands and Sweden.

Both primary and secondary sources have been used, as well as direct links with key informants in each of the 8 countries (and on the European level, interviewing the CDEFOP²). Here we would like to express our gratitude to all those people whose institutions and positions are reflected in the corresponding reports. Without them and the generosity with which they have shared information, this study would not have been possible.

This document serves as a brief summary or *abstract* to introduce this subject to those who are interested in a deeper understanding of the different reports elaborated which address, in depth and in detail, the reality of Europe and, primarily, the reality of Latin America, paying attention to those countries which make up the Pacific Alliance (PA) as has already been specified.

The entire study, without including this report which is a synthesis, is made up of 12 reports: 6 relating to the Latin American region and 6 relating to Europe.

The sections relating to Latin America are:

- A section on the national system of certification of labour competences in Chile which has been carried out by the Commission of the National system of Certification of Labour competencies, ChileValora.
- A section on the evaluation and certification of labour competences carried out by the National Learning Service, SENA.
- A section on the national system of certification of labour competences in Mexico carried out by the Board of Standardisation and Certification of Labour competences, CONOCER.
- A section on the evaluation and certification of labour competences in Peru, carried out by the Ministry for Work and Promotion of Employment, MTPE.
- A comparative section on the evaluation and certification of labour competences in the countries of the Pacific Alliance, which contributes to an advance in the road to the standardisation of certificates – and the correspondence of systems - among these countries and which responds to the mandates of the presidents of the four countries of the PA.
- A simplified section from the PA directed specifically at decision makers of the countries which make up the PA.

The sections relating to Europe are:

- A section on the system of recognition of acquired competences, primarily from experience and/or informal acquisition coordinated by the Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones (National Qualifications Institute) (INCUAL) which applies in the 17 Autonomous Communities.

A section on the Validation of Learning, non-formal and informal, which comes from the Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche (National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies) (INAPP).

1. The Lima Declaration signed by the presidents of the Republic of Chile, of Colombia, of the United States of Mexico and of Peru, in the framework of the XIV Summit of the Pacific Alliance, celebrated on the 6th of July 2019, contemplates as one of its points: "To elaborate a comparative report on the systems of evaluation and certification of labour competences in the Pacific Alliance countries as a first step in the elaboration of a roadmap which allows standardisation of systems of certification"

2. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

- (INAPP) and the Agenzia Nazionale per le Politiche Attive del Lavoro (INAP), from Italy;
- A section on the Accreditation of Previous Learning (APL) which is coordinated by the Recognition Centre for APL (National Kenniscentrum EVC) of the Netherlands;
- A section on the validation of non-formal and informal learning and acquired competences which is coordinated by the Swedish National Agency for Professional and Higher Education (Myn-digheten för yrkeshögskolan).
- A section describing the regulations, politics, programmes and initiatives which the European Union has set up and which, in one way or another, have supported the development of these systems in Europe.
- A consolidated section or overview of the 4 European countries analysed and the impact of the respective actions of the European Union.

In this synthesis document on the complex reality of both regions -and in the 8 countries previously mentioned- we have been sure to reflect the most relevant and common ideas in all systems, at the same time as highlighting some differences which are clearly significant and which indicate improvements and innovations. However, above all, we have attempted to take a closer look at those lessons learned and the recommendations arising from the analysis of different realities in order to make possible an exercise in mutual learning, with the conviction of the enormous potential that these systems have in the link between employment and training during a lifetime in all of the population, and, in particular, in the immigrant population. This question is even more relevant due to the harmful effects of the current pandemic.

The document consists of 5 parts, including this presentation, which is the first.

- The second part consists of Notes on Context to situate some concepts, the function, in general terms, of these systems and their link with migrations.
- The third part gives a summary of *the reality of the region of Latin America* including those countries which make up the Pacific Alliance: Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.
- The fourth part gives a summary of *the reality of the region of Europe*, relating to those countries analysed: Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.
- The fifth and final part enlarges on conclusions and recommendations divided into different sections to make them more operational and pertinent to the needs of these different countries. This last part also includes some recommendations directed at the programme Eurosocial+ which has motivated and supported this initiative to give answers, among other things, to the demands established by the countries of the PA in relation to the standardisation of certificates of experience among the different countries which make up this group.

2. Notes on Context

Assessment and certification of labour competences

International consensus exists on the usefulness of the recognition of labour competences, acquired primarily through experience and informal learning, as a way of better contributing to vocational integration, the continuation of studies, professional orientation, careers and, in general, lifelong education. This usefulness is recognised for people, businesses and the country in general. International bodies have given guidance and recommendations with regard to implementation of strategies, based on best practice in developed countries, which allow countries to set up training systems for competences (that is to say training systems for work, systems for developing abilities, skills or qualifications) which are effective in improving and strengthening competences in people during their lifetimes, in a globalised world and a labour market which is more and more uncertain and unpredictable. These strategies consider a series of initiatives, within which lies the role played by systems of recognition, validation and certification of labour and professional competences of people, especially those which have been acquired outside formal education, through their own work experience or in processes of work capacitation inside and outside of companies and workplaces. (OIT/CINTERFOR, 2015; OIT/CINTERFOR, 2017; OIT, 2019; Amaral, N y otros, et al 2017; OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2012; UNESCO, 2017; UNESCO, 2019).

The concept of certification of competences has a number of meanings and has been used to refer to diverse processes³. One of its manifestations corresponds to what prevails today in a number of countries, that it is mainly oriented towards the recognition of knowledge that people have acquired outside formal education. This concept appears to be clearly identified in studies and publications of the International Organisation for Work and Inter-American Centre for Development of Knowledge in Vocational Training, CINTERFOR and of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education, CEDEFOP. These have taken a key role in dissemination and support for different countries. It can be observed that each country, both in the LAC region and in Europe, has defined and implemented its own policies and institutional changes in this area, with different schemes and at different speeds. Also, similar processes and methodologies are identified, although they could take on different meanings, together with a series of common challenges.

3. It is pointed out that the concept of certification of competences has arisen and developed in the area related principally to the transformation processes of training institutions for vocational education. These were moving towards a focus on competences, while requiring a validation of learning on the part of students through observable work performance, not only through assessment centred only on acquired knowledge without giving importance to its application. (OIT/Cinterfor, 2004; Vargas 2004b; Hernández, 2002; Mertens, 1996).

Systems of assessment and certification of acquired labour competences, fundamentally from experience and informally

Systems of assessment and certification of labour competences are usually structured around two main components. Firstly, a formal process designed to identify and standardise which competences are in demand in today's labour market with respect to knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes associated with certain labour functions. Secondly, there is an organised process which allows the evaluation of work performance of a person according to these same competences and to award an official certificate where the person demonstrates competence in the assessed competences.

The certification of labour competences is conceived as a way to reach greater objectives, like improving employability, and the labour and educational mobility of those who receive it, apart from self-esteem and visibility in society. This also applies to productivity in companies and organisations which hire certified workers or, rather, certify their current workers. Finally, generally speaking about countries, it is a tool which allows identification and standardisation of human capital requirements in companies and organisations, the evaluation of gaps in competences which exist in those sections of the population who access these systems, and processes of orientation of education and training which allow them to cover these gaps and to train people according to the competences which are in demand in the labour market.

The situations which have been the origin of these systems are: asymmetric information in the world of work; lack of recognition of learning acquired through non-formal and informal means; the existence of large population groups with a low level of education, qualifications and productivity, often in the informal market; training plans and training programmes not based on real necessities, due to the difficulty of identifying competency gaps in people, like knowing and anticipating competency needs in strategic sectors of countries. Currently, these situations continue to prevail, even though they are mixed with others and updated, like: the need for each person to manage their own professional career, to speed up work integration of specific collectives in the population – in general with fewer opportunities- and, also, to have an instrument for accelerating and/or recycling professional profiles in times of unemployment and/or the reduction of this in some sectors of the economy⁴.

With regard to the beneficiaries that are hoped to be generated in a mature system of certification of labour competences, it is pointed out that this should generate positive effects in both the worker and the company, as well as contributing to a better functioning of the rest of the institutionality of competency training in a country. This includes not only the labour market but also the general system of education and training.

Systems of recognition, assessment and certification of labour competences as tools which facilitate labour integration and/or the continuation of study for migrants

Growing intra-regional migration in Latin America and the reality of migration in Europe, which is largely due to reasons of work, highlights the link between the recognition of competences and migratory politics. In all countries it is a challenge to create conditions so that migrant people can have their work and professional competences recognised as well as to continue their studies in the destination country. For the former, it is fundamental that systems of recognition, validation, assessment and certification of professional and labour competences exist, as well as the recognition of professional degrees, in both countries and regions. Without doubt, these mechanisms would facilitate the social and labour integration of this collective and would favour social cohesion.

4. A question which has been highlighted by decision makers in public politics to deal with unemployment in Europe as a product of the Covid-19 crisis.

The migratory situation in both regions and, in particular, in the PA countries

According to data published by the Division for Population of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations⁵ on the migrant population⁶, between 1990 and 2019, the percentage of this group of people has risen from 1.6% to 1.8% of the resident population of Latin American countries. In absolute terms, the migrant population has grown by 78% on a world level in the last 40 years. In Latin America and the Caribbean it has grown by 63% and with a larger growth in women (63.3%) than in men (62.17%)

In Europe, according to the Eurobarometer, on 1st of January 2018⁷, 39.9 million immigrants were residing in the UE-28, that is to say, that they were citizens of other countries from that in which they resided. This represents 7,7% of the total population of the EU-28, which was at that time 512.4 million people. Of these, 22.3 million people (4.4%) were not European citizens⁸.

In the countries which make up the Pacific Alliance (PA), the migratory situation shows some differences among them. Mexico, Colombia and Peru are within the countries that showed a growth in trans-border immigration between one census and another. With respect to Chile, which has a more recent population census, the fall in trans-border migration, in terms of percentage, has been a product of the considerable growth in the immigration of Venezuelan, Haitian and Colombian citizens in recent years. In the cases of Peru and Colombia, the Venezuelan diaspora opened a new chapter in the history of the immigrant population in these countries, given that it multiplied by a number of times the number of foreign residents. In Peru there were 864,000 Venezuelans, in Colombia 1,631,000 and in 371,000 in December of 2019 (Selee and Bolter,2020).

The International Organization for Migrations⁹ (OIM) synthesised the situation when it pointed out that **South America is becoming, just as Mexico already is, a region of origin, transit and destination of international migrations**. "Changes can be observed with regard to the direction, intensity and composition of population movements compared with previous years". Venezuelan migration has contributed notably to this configuration. It is calculated that more than 4.5 million Venezuelans have left their country in the space of a few years with Colombia, Peru and Chile as their main destinations. This has presented great challenges to institutions, and to the regulatory framework which manages and regulates migration in these countries, to integrate these immigrants socially and economically.

5. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

6. The OIM defines international migration as the "movement of people away from their habitual place of residency and across an international border towards a country of which they are not nationals." Ver: <https://www.iom.int/es/terminos-fundamentales-sobre-migracion>.

7. Data collected in March 2019, update of the article expected: June 2020

8. Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics/es

9. See: https://robuenosaires.iom.int/sites/default/files/Informes/Tendencias_Migratorias_en_America_del_Sur_Marzo.pdf

3. Overview and comparison of the systems of evaluation and certification of work competences in the countries of the Pacific Alliance (PA)

Overview of the region of Latin America

Before synthesising the situation of the synthesis of assessment and certification of labour competencies in the countries of the PA, it is important to mention that, on observing the outlook for this type of system in the available literature in the region of Latin America, there seems to be a lack of recent studies which describe and analyse this. The most complete studies on this topic are more than a decade old and have been elaborated by the National Organization for Work, OIT and the Interamerican Centre for the Development of Knowledge in Professional Training, CINTERFOR, which have played a key role in the dissemination of the concept of certification of labour competences in the region. This has been reinforced by multiple projects in technical assistance which they have carried out, thus supporting countries in the installation and development of this type of system for over a decade.

If it is observed that each country of the region has defined and implemented its own institutional policies and arrangements in this area, with different schemes and speed. It is possible to identify some common elements which may have influenced the emergence and development of systems of assessment and certification of competences in the region.

- A combination of problems and challenges that lead to a need to strengthen labour and professional competences in the population, as a basic element for achieving continued, inclusive and sustainable growth, with full, productive employment and decent work for all those countries in the region. Among these common problems and challenges are, for example, gaps in human capital, the division between competences which are being taught in education and those that employers say they require in their employees, and the challenges which the future of work implies.
- Recommendation 195 was adopted in 2004 in the 92nd International Work Conference (CIT) of the OIT on the development of human resources. This text points out, within the “Framework for the recognition and certification of professional skills”, in one of its sections, that “measures should be adopted in consultation with social representatives and based on a national framework of qualifications, to promote development, implementation and recognition of professional skills, including learning and previous experience in whatever country in which it was obtained and independently of whether it was acquired formally or informally”.
- The role of international bodies in the region who, through programmes of technical and/or financial assistance and a series of recommendations, have spread the need to count on mechanisms which allow the recognition and value of competences acquired by people from diverse contexts and have even supported the installation and the subsequent development of these systems. On

this point, the contributions made by the OIT and CINTERFOR, the Interamerican Development Bank, the World Bank and the EUROsocial programme of the European Union all stand out.

- The appearance in the 80's of a focus on labour competences and its impact on the training sector and the management of human resources in companies.
- The existence of pioneering systems of certification of competences in Latin America, which influenced the creation of similar experiences in other countries of the region. This is the case of INI in Costa Rica (1983), CONOCER in Mexico (1995), SENAI in Brazil (1997), SENA in Colombia (2003), the Ministry for Work, Employment and Social Security of Argentina (2006) and ChileValora (2008). It must also be highlighted that both CONOCER and ChileValora are the only institutions in the region whose principal mandate is the certification of labour competences in the population, with tripartite governance that regulates public and private areas.
- The experience of more developed countries in this area. The influence of the UK is recognised (for example, through the use of functional, analytical tools developed by National Vocational Qualifications, and in Spain (the National Institute of Qualifications), among others.

If each country has defined its own system of certification of competencies, with different levels of progress, the same authors have described various shared challenges, such as: having a coherent occupational framework (an occupational structure) which allows anyone to recognise the content of the occupation being certified; a guarantee of the legitimacy and value of the certificate; deriving from a simple mechanism, not bureaucratised and less costly than other alternatives for the user; to be legitimate and credible; to consider in its design the mechanisms of participation and involvement of employers and workers, as a means of facilitating their commitment with these systems and to have a positive impact on the perception of the value of certification; the low levels of relative coverage which these systems achieve; the importance of having finance structures in place which guarantee the sustainability of mechanisms of certification; the need to regulate them with National Qualifications Frameworks (MNC) which are in different phases of development in the region; among others.

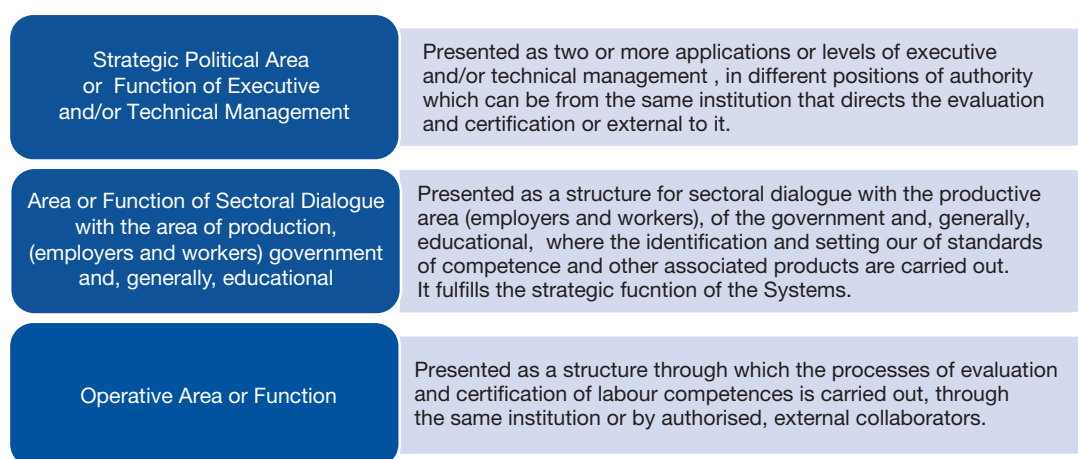
The Four Countries Analysed

In the case of the countries of the Pacific Alliance, the systems or initiatives of evaluation and certification of labour competences of people who implement them were analysed: in Chile, the commission for the National System of Certification of Labour Competencies, ChileValora; in Colombia, the National Learning Service, SENA; in Mexico, the Board of Standardisation and Certification of Labour Competences, CONOCER; and in Peru, the Ministry for Work and the Promotion of Employment, MTPE, of this country. The main common elements which can be highlighted in their systems of certification of labour competences, even though there are some differences between them, are the following:

- The four analysed countries of the Pacific Alliance possess **consolidated systems of assessment and certification of labour competences of people**. These have around ten years of development (in the cases of ChileValora and the Ministry for Work and Promotion of Employment of Peru, MTPE), more than seventeen years in the case of the evaluation and certification of labour competences in the National Training Service, SENA in Colombia, and twenty-five years in the case of CONOCER in Mexico. However, only in two cases, ChileValora and CONOCER, do their regulatory frameworks recognise the existence of a national service of certification of labour competences, although with different denominations. In the other two, SENA and MTPE in Peru, there has been no recognition until now of the existence of a national system of certification of labour competences as such, or it is in the construction phase, as in the case of Colombia.
- With regard to its institutional nature, it is possible to find organisations whose principal mission is to assess and certify labour **competences (ChileValora and CONOCER)**, and others whose

mission is considered to be **a broad mandate in the area of vocational training** which includes, among other functions, to assess and certify competences in people (SENA and MTPE).

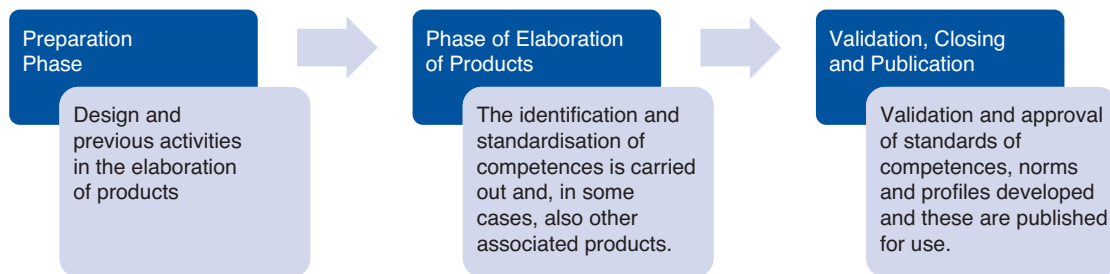
- With regard to the governance of systems of evaluation and certification of labour competences in the countries of the AP, CONOCER and ChileValora have, by legal mandate, the governing role in their countries. In the case of Colombia, the governance of evaluation and certification falls to the hands of the Ministry for Employment, while, in the case of Peru, it is the MTPE itself which applies the agreement in its legal framework.
- With respect to its governance, structures of organisation are observed where it is possible to identify three or four principal areas and functions in decision-making associated with the management of systems of evaluation and certification of labour competences in countries of the AP



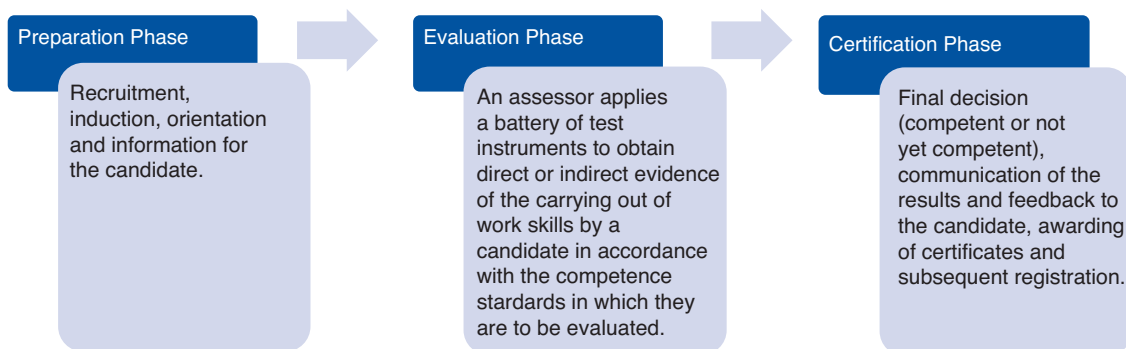
- Social dialogue is a fundamental element which forms the basis of the four systems analysed and it constitutes a determining factor in the legitimacy of the valuable proposal which exists behind each certificate of labour competence that is awarded to a person This model of social dialogue operates on two levels. The first level is associated with governance and strategic political function of these systems (through collegiate bodies of a higher directorate with a tripartite formation), which are present in three of the four (SENA, CONOCER and ChileValora). On a second level, it is associated with a work strategy with stakeholders in the world of productive work (employers and workers) and governmental, including, in almost all of them, stakeholders from educational and social areas (through roundtables, organisations and sectoral boards), which are present in the four cases.
- Regarding the **financing** of processes of evaluation and certification of labour competences, **only in the case of SENa in Colombia is the process free for everyone**, given that it is financed through the state budget. While in the MTPE of Peru, ChileValora and CONOCER of Mexico, with a few differences between them, the clients, both people and companies, must pay a price for this service which is fixed by the entities for evaluation and certification themselves and which follows market criteria. The exception in the case of MTPE is due to the Boost Peru Programme which offers a line of free certification for users and, together with the Employment Fund, has largely financed the processes carried out. In the case of Chile, the lines of subsidisation for certification of competencies are implemented through the National Employment Service, SENCE.
- The four institutions **have a well-known formal process for identifying and standardising competencies, even though the institution applies its own concepts and definitions**. The common principles which govern this process are: participation, transparency, expedience and representation. The institutions have well-defined stages to deal with their processes of standardisation or development of labour competences; those which respond to the strategic objectives of each institution and those methodological models adopted in coherence with their regulatory frameworks. In three of the four countries (SENA, CONOCER and MTPE), methodological

guidelines have been elaborated which define, standardise and detail procedures which are followed in the process of development and standardisation of competences (ChileValora is in the process of elaborating similar guidelines). These highlight how common elements: the application of functional analysis; the key role played by the government sector; production (employers and workers) and education, which participates by leading and validating these process through dialogue (in the form of boards, roundtables and organisations); the setting up of one or more technical teams, made up of experts with experience linked to corresponding labour functions; occupational standards or profiles developed in official registers, associated with occupational classifications and/or economic activity; and their availability for evaluating and certifying labour competences and as a reference for vocational education and work.

In general, the process these institutions follow to identify and standardise competencies can be grouped into three large phases which are identifiable in the four cases and which have a duration of between three to six months:



- The four institutions **have a systematised, formal process to evaluate and certify labour competences in people**, which responds to a common conceptualisation of the significance of each of these components (assess and certify) and it is organised in a series of phases and stages which, independent of some differences in terms, organisation, evaluation scales and rubric, respond to the same common logic. The **common principles** which govern these processes are: free or equal access, impartiality, transparency, validity, trustworthiness, and objectivity or independence. With respect to **those who carry out the assessment and certification of competencies process**, in three of the four cases (ChileValora, CONOCER and MTPE), the process of assessment and certification of labour competences of people is externalised to one or more entities who have been previously authorised by the institution responsible for the system. The exception is SENA, designated as a certifying body by the national government through government regulations and which carries out this process through government Centres for Comprehensive Vocational Education, so that there is no previous authorisation process.
- The process of assessment and certification of personal competences is structured in three or four phases, with a duration of between four and eight weeks, which includes:



- Regarding the **immigrant population**, the institutions analysed in the PA countries **are driving recent initiatives in attention and access of the migrant population in the processes of assessment and certification of labour competences, and so, they have early results and great challenges for future improvements.** To be highlighted among these challenges are widening attention for this population group in terms of certification of competences, simplification of requirements and procedures to reduce barriers to entry and permanence of migrants in the process, open financial resources to pay for associated costs of evaluation for certification among this population and to expand the knowledge level of the specific characteristics and requirements of the migrant population in the area of work profiles and certification of competencies. On the other hand, the percentage of the migrant population which is being served by the different systems is still small and it is only possible to give figures in the case of SENA and ChileValora. If there still do not exist evaluations which allow the identification of achievements and the establishing of improvements, qualitatively, **some obstacles can already be identified, both in the access of migrants to processes of certification and in complying with some of requisites and phases demanded by institutions.**
- The four institutions analysed have, within their legal mandate, the function of giving information or orientation **in designing an offer of labour capacitation in accordance with developed standards of competence** in their respective processes of standardisation, with the aim of providing relevance and facilitating for people the bridging of gaps in competences which have been detected during the evaluation process. The main advances are observed in the process of generation of **training programmes and skills courses based on standards.** However, advances have not been observed with regard to the availability of systematic mechanisms that allow people **to access these programmes and courses where they could cover the competency gaps** detected during evaluation processes.
- The institutions analysed are developing initiatives aimed at **linking systems or programmes of evaluation and certification of labour competences with formal education**, with the main objective of favouring the options for certified people of continuing studies through the recognition of previous learning and competences. In some there exist regulatory alignment or frameworks from the countries or their own institutions, which facilitate this coordination. However, these are recent actions which are beginning to show some results, especially in the advances achieved by ChileValora and SENA.
- The countries of the four analysed institutions are developing or already have **a National Framework of Qualifications** for their respective training systems with different levels for work and education: the Mexican Qualifications Framework (MMC), the Technical-Professional Framework of Qualifications of Chile (MCTP), the National Framework of Qualifications of Colombia (MNC) and the National Qualifications Framework of Peru (MNC). These initiatives are **directed by the Ministry for Education in each country**, however, in all cases, their approach has been through large inter-institutional working groups, in which the role of the Ministries for Employment and the institutionality of the certification of labour competences has played a fundamental role. **The level of implementation of these qualification frameworks in systems of certification of labour competences is still low.**
- In general, the institutions do not have **systematic mechanisms that allow a follow-up of the people who obtained certification or those that were considered not competent.** The objective would be to know, with respect to the former, what the effects have been in working life, and, in the latter, the actions taken to close the gaps that were detected and their willingness to repeat the evaluation process.
- In only one of these cases (ChileValora) has a mechanism been systematically applied (a survey) to know the level of value placed by employers and workers on the certification of labour competences and what types of factors its beneficiaries associate with people, the company and

participating institutions. With regard to measures of level of satisfaction of users of these systems, two of the four apply them systematically (SENA and ChileValora). In relation to impact evaluation, the four institutions have informed of a few advances in this area, although the methodologies applied would need to be analysed in order to share virtues and limitations and to divulge good practice. In this way, it appears to be a great challenge for the four countries to advance in a common proposal for a model of evaluation of the impact of certifications of labour competency which could be tested, improved and disseminated among other countries in the region.

- With regard to the results achieved, it was only possible to make some comparisons due to the limitations found in the way in which they were informed of the data by the institutions, thus making a comparison difficult (differences in the periods of information, in the categories used to group data, in the source backup of data and in the completeness of the requested information). On the subject of awarded certifications, there exists a large dispersion among the countries which can be partly explained by the number of years during which the systems have been functioning. CONOCER reaches 2.472.917 certificates awarded during the period 2011-2019 (this is for eight of the twenty-five years that it has existed as a system; SENAR reports 1.842.660 certificates awarded over the period 2010-2019 (that is for ten of the seventeen years that it has been giving certificates); ChileValora, 127.591 certificates awarded over the period 2009-2019 (this includes their entire period of existence plus some certifications which had to be recognised by law in a previous demonstration phase), and the MTPE with a total of 30.286 certificates awarded over the period 2009-2019 (which corresponds to ten of the eleven years of existence of the programme).

The following table presents a general outlook of how the systems are set up in each country, highlighting some particular and significant elements of each one. To gain an in-depth understanding of the reality of each country analysed, it would be useful to see the reports on each country.

Table Comparing Systems of Certification of Labour Competences in countries of the Pacific Alliance

AMBITOS	CONOCER, México	ChileValora, Chile	SENA, Colombia	MTPE, Perú
Type of institution and date of creation.	It is a quasi-state trust established through a Trust Contract, on the one hand, by the Secretary of Inland Revenue and Public Credit, as a Unique Trustor of the Federal Public Administration of the Federal Government, and, on the other hand, by the National finance corporation, SNC (NAFIN), as a Trustee, with the participation of the Secretary of Public Education. This was established on the 2nd of August 1995.	It is a decentralised public service of legal character and with its own assets, related to the Presidency of the Republic through the Ministry of Employment and Social Services of Chile, created by the law 20.267 published on the 25th of June 2008.	It is a national, public establishment with legal status, its own assets, independence and autonomous administration, affiliated with the Ministry for Employment of Colombia, created on 21st June 1957 under the Decreed Law 118.	It is a body of the Executive Branch of the Government of Peru which carries out government policy in relation to employment and is dependent of the Presidency of the Republic, created on the 30th of April 1949 as the ministry for Employment and Indigenous Affairs.
Legal Framework or regulations created and/or given the responsibility for subject evaluation and certification of labour competences	The legal framework which governs the National System of competencies (SNC): 1993: General Law of Education (LGE) 1986: Federal Law of Quasi-state Entities 1970: Federal employment Law (LFT) 2005: Trust Contract which is created by the National board for Standardisation and Certification of Labour Competence, as a Quasi-state Federal Entity; and 2009: general rules and criteria for the integration and operation of the National system of competences (SNC)	The legal framework which governs the National System of Certification of Labour Competencies is made up of: 2008: Law 20.267 which creates the National System of Certification of Labour Competences and improves the Statute for Training and Employment. 2008: Decree 137 of the Ministry of Employment and Social Services which approves the Regulations of the Law. 2010: Resolution 136 from ChileValora which regulates labour competencies projects and the OSCL. 2011: Decree 29 of the ministry for Employment and Social Services which regulates accreditation of the Centres and the granting of authorisation to assessors. 2011: Resolution 1068 of the Ministry for Employment and Social Services which fixes the fees of the System.	2003: Decree 933, article 19 2004: Decree 249, article 12. 2010: CONPES 3674. 2011: Decree 4108 2013: Resolution SENA 1658 2015: Single Decree 1074 of the Ministry for Industry, Commerce and Tourism 2016: Authorisation and certification given to SENA by ICONTEC 2019: Law 1955/2018. Art. 194 2020: Decree 78 of the Ministry for Industry, Commerce and Tourism	2009: Law 29.381 2009: Supreme Decree N° 001-2009-TR. 2013: Vice-ministerial Resolution N° 022-2013-MTPE/3. 2016: Ministerial Resolution N° 025-2016-TR

Table Comparing Systems of Certification of Labour Competences in countries of the Pacific Alliance

AMBITOS	CONOCER, México	ChileValora, Chile	SENA, Colombia	MTPE, Perú
Principal Purpose or Mission	<p>The objective is auxiliary to the Federal Government in the responsibilities that the General Law of education establishes, in order to give training for work as well as gaining the acquisition of knowledge, skills or abilities which allows those who receive this training to carry out a productive activity with market demand, through an occupation or a qualified trade¹⁰.</p> <p>The mission is "to develop productive potential in human capital for the competitiveness of Mexico through the National System of Competences"¹¹.</p>	<p>Its objective "is the formal recognition of labour competences in people, independent of the way in which they have been acquired and whether they have a certification or academic grade awarded through formal education conforming to articles of the Organic Constitutional of Education Law N° 18.962; as well as favouring continuous learning opportunities for people, their recognition and valuation through a process of assessment and certification, based on defined standards and authenticated by productive sectors"¹².</p>	<p>Its mission is to be "responsible for carrying out the function which corresponds to the state to invest in social and technical development of the workers of Colombia, offering and supplying integral vocational training, for the incorporation and development of people in productive activities which contribute to the social, economic and technological development of the country".¹³</p>	<p>"Its mission is to be the governing institution of public policy with regard to work, employment and human talent in the public service, which regulates and controls the meeting of work obligations through the carrying out of effective, efficient, transparent and democratic processes within the framework of models of comprehensive management in order to achieve an appropriate system of quality and support tending towards social justice and equality of opportunity".¹⁴</p> <p>It practises exclusive and discriminatory competence with respect to other levels of government in the entire national territory to formulate and plan, direct, coordinate, act and supervise and evaluate national and sectoral politics, among other areas, the standardisation and certification of labour competences.</p>
Governing Body of the evaluation and certification of labour competences in the country	CONOCER	ChileValora	Ministry for Employment	Ministry for Work and Promotion of Employment.

10. Public Education Secretary, SEP (2009) "General rules and criteria for the integration and operation of the National Competencies System". Mexico (D.F.) November.
 11. https://conocer.gob.mx/acciones_programas/conocer-mision-vision-politica-objetivos-calidad/
 12. Law 20.267 <https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=272829>
 13. <http://www.sena.edu.co/es-co/sena/Paginas/mision/vision.aspx>
 14. <http://www.trabajo.gob.ec/valores-mision-vision/#>

Table Comparing Systems of Certification of Labour Competences in countries of the Pacific Alliance

AMBITOS	CONOCER, México	ChileValora, Chile	SENA, Colombia	MTPE, Perú
Target Population	Anyone who requires it.	Any person who requires it, even though its target population are those between the ages of 20 and 50, who do not complete a professional level of education, and whose profession is present in the catalogue (this is the case of people in employment), and whose professional profile belongs to an economic sector of those who work with ChileValora.	Open to anyone, although it allows attention to special population groups in accord with their necessities.	Population economically active in employment, population economically unemployed (only the jobless) age group 18 to 59 years, elementary and technical level of labour competency, of at least basic education level and with one year or more of work experience.
How many and what type of entity can carry out the process of evaluation and/or certification of competencies?	The evaluation and certification is carried out by only one entity called Centres of Evaluation and Certification of Labour Competencies (Centres), who contract independent assessors to carry out this work.	Assessment can be carried out by three types of entities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entities of Certification and Assessment (ECE) • Assessment Centres (CE) • Independent assessors (EI). The certification can be done by two types of entity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification and Assessment Bodies (ECE); and • Certifying Bodies (OC) 	Assessment and certification is done by one type of body named SENA Centres for Vocational Training, which has assessors.	The assessment and certification is carried out by only one body named Centres of Certification of Labour Competencies (CCCL), which can assess internally or externally (through a contractual relation with the CCCL) and hire assessors.
What type of authorization is required in order to operate?	It is necessary to be previously accredited by ChileValora.	The must be previously accredited by CONOCER.	Authorised by national government regulations.	They must be previously organised by the MTPE.

Table Comparing Systems of Certification of Labour Competences in countries of the Pacific Alliance

AMBITOS	CONOCER, México	ChileValora, Chile	SENA, Colombia	MTPE, Perú
How is the certification disseminated among the general population?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies of dissemination and marketing which is carried out by CONOCER and its Network of Service Providers. A specific strategy is that of projects of the valuation of certification as an obligatory requisite for access to programmes or processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing campaigns, social networks, web pages and motivational talks. Through focussed strategies of deployment of certification in certain productive sectors or sub-sectors defined by the Direction of the institution for one or more years. A strategy to reinforce the presence of ChileValora in regions of the country. Strategy of alignment with different public policies in the area of human capital. 	Through Sectoral Roundtables, trade unions, businesses, and, directly, through training centres in regional areas and the media.	Through the Centres for Certification of Labour Competencies, the Boost Peru Programme, HONDOEMPLEO, Employment Centres, the DNCCL, among others, supported by merchandising, web page events, social networks and meetings.
Who can apply for certification of competencies?	Any person or entity that meets the requirements.	Any person or entity which meets the requirements.	Any person or body which meets the requirements.	Any person or body which meets the requirements.
What are the requirements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet the requirements and characteristics which establish the standard of competency in which candidates wish to be evaluated. The entity of the network of service providers should apply an obligatory diagnosis, free of cost, which allows the recommendation of a candidate, whether or not a candidate requires previous training before the evaluation, however, it will always be the decision of this person whether they take the recommendation or not or if they decide to go directly to the evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An occupational profile must be registered and there must be an accredited Centre to certify this. To be doing or having done during their working career the tasks linked to the competencies which they wish to assess; and In certain cases, to possess a qualifying licence with the professional profile in which they will be assessed and which is necessary for certification. 	<p>Application through registration and accreditation of work experience, taking into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the standard of competence/ units of competence in an occupational profile, the minimum work experience required is one year. <p>In the case of the Boost Peru Programme the following are added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults over 18 years of age Education Level form uncompleted primary to uncompleted higher or vocational; Unemployed or underemployed in vulnerable social and work conditions (i.e. a person with an income lower than two remunerations of the minimum wage (RMV) and/or a person with disability). 	<p>Application through registration and accreditation of work experience, taking into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the standard of competence/ units of competence in an occupational profile, the minimum work experience required is one year. <p>In the case of the Boost Peru Programme the following are added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults over 18 years of age Education Level form uncompleted primary to uncompleted higher or vocational; Unemployed or underemployed in vulnerable social and work conditions (i.e. a person with an income lower than two remunerations of the minimum wage (RMV) and/or a person with disability).

Table Comparing Systems of Certification of Labour Competences in countries of the Pacific Alliance

AMBITOS	CONOCER, México	ChileValora, Chile	SENA, Colombia	MTPE, Perú
What kind of facilities exist for users?	Network of service provider of CONOCER. Directly with CONOCER on the webpage, chat, call centre, email and/or social networks or in person.	ChileValora, Evaluation Centres and Certification of Labour competencies and programmes run by SENCE and other public and private organizations.	By organisations, social demand and by Companies.	Employment Centres of the Directorate or Regional Management of Work and the Promotion of Employment. Authorised Certification Centres.
Period of validity of the certificate of labour competency which is given to the user.	The validity of the Certificate of Competency depends on the length of validity of each standard of competency, which is specified in each case.	The validity of the certificate will be indefinite. What may be updated is the profile or the UCL in which the person obtained the certification, without affecting the validity of the certificate awarded.	The certification of labour competencies issued by SENA is valid for 3 years from the date of issue.	The certificate is temporary and its validity corresponds to the regularity of the occupational profile or the standard of labour competency, which is calculated from the date of issue of the certificate.
How does a person demonstrate that they are certified?	The candidate can physically show the certificate of labour competency or demonstrate this with the information published on the digital platforms of each entity.	The certificate of labour competency can be physically shown or, rather, demonstrated with information published on the digital platforms of each body.	The certificate of labour competency can be physically shown or it can be demonstrated with the information published on the digital platforms of each body.	The certificate of labour competency can be physically shown or it can be demonstrated with the information published on the digital platforms of each body.

Source: own elaboration with information from CONOCER, ChileValora, MTPE and SENA

4. Overview and comparison of the systems of evaluation and certification of work competencies in Europe and 4 countries of the region: Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden

The role of the European Union

Firstly, it is important to highlight the role of the European Union as a driving and orienting mechanism for the development of national systems of recognition of competences, both technically (with the action of CEDEFOP) and politically, and on a negotiation level with the States

In 2012, the Council of Europe encouraged -through Recommendation 2012/C 398/01- the member states¹⁵ to national agreements for the validation of experience with a 2018 time frame. The European Commission and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) permanently aid the Member States in this process, also through specific guidelines on the validations that are put forward in policies and practical suggestions from the States and interested parties. In this working framework, the CEDEFOP has been elaborating a European inventory, by country, in this area. This inventory gives a unique picture of how validation is used on a national level, including reports for all countries and recommending validation of experience, also for the immigrant population.

Additionally, the Recommendation of the European Council on “Upskilling Pathways - New opportunities for adults” (19th December 2016)¹⁶ has come to reinforce these strategies on a European level and in each of the countries. In this recommendation, emphasis is placed on the need to evaluate learning and informally acquired competences for the adult population and within this, especially, in certain population groups, like adults who have no formal qualifications, the unqualified unemployed, the long term unemployed and immigrants with residency permits in these countries. That is to say, this applies to certain more vulnerable groups to favour their integration into the labour market. In this sense, countries are invited to improve their systems of validation of non-formal, informal and previous learning so that those adults can return to formal education, support itineraries to improve skills, search for employment or continue their studies. In any case, the development of skills in adults is encouraged and is oriented towards obtaining a qualification of level 3 Or 4 (also 5) in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework.

15. The Recommendation of the Council in 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning recognises the challenges in this area in Europe and seeks to promote a more systematic focus on validation and the value of learning completed outside formal education and training. A key objective of the Recommendation of 2012 is that the member states of the EU establish, before 2018, regulations of validation so that all citizens can see their non-formal or informal learning identified and documented and, if they wish, assessed and certified.

16. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an instrument that should mark the boundaries and expected levels in the education systems and vocational education of countries. These systems should also be accessible through the validation of previous learning, whether to participate in continuing education, or, clearly as a direct expression of the obtaining of a qualification to be able to have access to employment. On the other hand, the EQF and, specifically, national frameworks of qualifications, are instruments which represent “the best allies” of any system of recognition of acquired competences outside the formal education system because they are designed on the basis of learning results. So, they are instruments which give clear standards for establishing evaluations and comparisons of knowledge, skills and abilities, independent of how the person has acquired them.

Even so, the recommendations and instruments generated on a community level go much further than the validation of experience. They provide validation of experience, but, with a strategic, long term vision to favour the employability of these people, the development of skills and the mobility of students and workers in a community setting.

Clearly, in the sphere of mobility and skills development there have been great advances in the region.

- The existence and application of regulation 36/2005 of the Council of Europe which favours mutual recognition of degrees and certificates;
- The setting up of ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations), which is a multilingual European Classification of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations;
- The development of EURES, which is a European platform for professional mobility based on a network of cooperation created to facilitate the free movement of workers within the 27 member states of the EU, Switzerland, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway¹⁷;
- The European professional card, which is an electronic certificate which accredits the recognition of a professional certificate or degree, on the basis that the person has met all the necessary conditions to work in a member state temporarily or permanently.

All the previous instruments are clear examples of evident advances in the European setting in the area of competences and mobility.

With regard to the recognition of experience and migrations, the European Union, through CEDEFOP, has been recommending that this be extended to the immigrant population and, to do so, it has been attesting to which countries do this and which do not do so yet. In the European inventory¹⁸ on validation of non-formal and informal learning, published in 2018, which describes the situation in European countries, a final chapter is incorporated where the validation of this type of learning among the immigrant and refugee population (or those who apply for refugee status) is described. Here, seven countries can be highlighted as having initiatives for systematic validation aimed at recognising skills and competences of migrants and refugees acquired through non-formal and informal learning. These include: Austria, Belgium-Walloon, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. It must be pointed out that, even though agreements have been identified on systematic validation for migrants and refugees in these countries, many initiatives are directed at highly qualified individuals.

On the other hand, the European Union has the “Directive on the Recognition of Professional qualifications of Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation”,¹⁹ approved in the

17. Article 19 of Regulation 2016/589 of the European Parliament, on a European network of employment services. (EURES)

18. Accessible at <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/es/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

19. Recommendation accessible in Spanish at <https://rm.coe.int/recomendacion-sobre-el-reconocimiento-de-cualificaciones-de-refugiados/16807688ab>

European Council by the Council of Europe Convention, in its extraordinary meeting held in Strasbourg on the 14th November 2017. In the framework of this recommendation which, under the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), is developing the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)²⁰, **a document which give an evaluation of higher education qualifications, work experience and command of the language of refugees**; at least in some countries

In general, in Europe, practically all countries have validation and recognition systems for non-formal and informal learning and/or products of experience, also known as previous learning in some countries. These systems are oriented towards European citizens and, for the moment, to a smaller extent, towards the immigrant population.

The validation of experience and previous learning are key in different strategies and recommendations associated with Education and Employment for adults by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and in line with this, many countries are strengthening their systems.

In this context, an analysis of four European countries has been prioritised, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden, because i) they have solid systems initiated in the 90's; ii) they share common elements (like the general procedures for validation and other specificities and particularities which are worth looking into; iii) within these differences, in each country effective learning can be found; iv) the four countries have large levels of immigrant population; v) they have systems which are in constant evolution and improvement; and vi) they constitute a good sample since two of them represent countries with intensive relations with Latin American countries and the other two are located in central Europe and Northern Europe, somewhat further away from the dynamic relations and technical transfers with Latin American countries.

The four countries analysed

In the case of Europe, the four countries, systems and experiences analysed were: in Spain, the system of recognition of acquired competences, primarily, in experience and /or in an informal way, coordinated by the National Institute for Qualifications (INCUAL) which is carried out by the 17 Autonomous Communities of this country; in Italy the National Institute of Analysis of Public Politics (INAPP) and the National Agency for the Active Politics of Work (ANPAL); in the Netherlands, Accreditation of Previous Learning (APL) which coordinates the Centre for Recognition for APL (National Kenniscentrum EVC); and in Sweden, the validation of non-formal and informal learning and acquired competencies which is coordinated by the National Swedish Agency for Professional Higher Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan).

A very graphic overview is established and, we hope, useful to have a more global idea of validation in the experience of the 4 countries. There are elements shared by all of them and which, in reality, any system of evaluation of experience should foresee as useful and valid, and should be taken into consideration.

- The four countries analysed: Spain, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands, **have consolidated systems of evaluation and certification of labour competencies that began their development in the 90's**. In all of these countries, except Sweden, there are national regulatory frameworks which they have created, protected and regulated in terms of update and improvements. In the case of Sweden there are sectoral regulations. All these countries have national tripartite (or tripartite+²¹) agreements to develop the validation of work experience. Agreements between

20. For more information go to <https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>

21. Including other non-governmental participants and bodies, companies and trade unions

governments and social stakeholders where companies and worker collectives are represented, are present in the four countries.

- The final objectives of these systems, in the four countries are: to **improve employability and labour mobility, to encourage continuing education, to provide tools which allow the management of one's own work career**, to make visible and to give value to the expertise of people independently of how they have acquired it. This is strongly linked with the improvement of self-esteem among workers. This allows companies to improve recruitment in human resources and their own management of human resources. This also allows those organisations which support employment to carry out more appropriate work orientation and itineraries of training and labour integration. At the close of these reports, it is also confirmed **that they are considered by some countries to favour faster professional recycling in moments of economic and employment crisis**. This has been confirmed in the cases of Spain and the Netherlands. Both countries are taking measures in this direction in order to partly deal with the increase in unemployment as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.
- These systems are structured around two main components. First, a formal process with the purpose of identifying and standardising which competencies are in demand in today's labour market with regard to abilities, skills and attitudes associated with certain labour functions, and, secondly, a systematised process which allows the evaluation of a person's work skills according to these competencies and the issue of an official certificate when they have demonstrated 'competence' in the evaluated competences. Furthermore, in the 4 countries the first process of identification and standardisation of competences is closely linked to a National Framework of Professional Qualifications.
- **The validations are done by taking into account national, sectoral and educational standards which, depending in each case, are the same for everyone involved in the validation, or, different when the validation is open to private providers or companies.** In view of this, effective developments in all these countries to improve standards is confirmed and they are linked to the National Framework of qualifications (or National Catalogue of Qualifications in the case of Spain) just as has been pointed out in the previous point.
- **In all of these countries, the incorporation of qualifications into their national frameworks (or catalogue in the case of Spain) is a question of priority** to gradually better adjust to the qualifications within the framework of required work and, at the same time, to generally align them.
- **All of these systems follow similar stages and procedures in the certification of work experience; initial evaluation, accumulation of evidence (evidence portfolio), assessment and certification.** Also, in all of them, two different professional profiles participate: an assessor and an evaluator. The latter must be an expert in the sector and in the type of competences to be certified.
- Regarding the participation of immigrant people in the systems and/or procedures of the certification of competences, it can be pointed out that all these countries claim access of this collective in conditions of equality with the rest of the population and always referring to people who are in a regulated situation in the country. Spain reports a procedure to facilitate people with no documentary evidence of the requirements being able to access the system and demonstrate their competences. This is not necessarily directed at the immigrant population, but, in fact, it favours them in so much as many people do not have documentary evidence to initiate the process. The other countries report particular initiatives and actions to facilitate the recognition of competences in the immigrant population. This can be seen in more depth in reports from each country.
- In all of these countries, systems of certification of competences are linked to education for employment and to advanced formal education, as well as the utilisation of certificates of competence as exemptions of credits, subjects or requirements for access to or to continue studies. In

some cases, like Sweden and the Netherlands this applies to exemptions at university, and in others, like Spain, to exemptions in professional vocational training.

- In relation to the obtained results, it may be pointed out that figures shared by these countries are not significantly high, a product, in many cases, of deficiencies in follow-up and registration and/or uncoordinated and outdated registers. In this context it is reported that:
 - In Spain, between 2010 and 2018, **266,646 positions have been convened in 21 different units of competence.**
 - In the Netherlands, **between 2007 and 2017, almost 100,00 certificates** were awarded and not all years have been included in this figure and neither are those APL of the educational route since the year 2016. In an interview with the person responsible for the coordination of the APL system of the Dutch Knowledge Centre (Kenniscentrum ECV) for this study, it was pointed out that there have been 4,000 new processes between 2018 and 2019. In the Netherlands the statistical follow-up of results of the system clearly needs to be improved.
 - In Sweden **there are no reports due to the spread of registration**, however, municipal adult education continues to be very low. 50% of municipalities reported 4,100 cases in 2017. In this country there is no system of unification of results and statistics.
 - Italy does not have data or statistics on a national level. This is one of the aspects that institutional heads have mentioned as a priority in the mid-term in the Italian system.

The following table shows the general situation of how the systems of each country are made up, highlighting some particular and significant elements in each case. To gain a more in-depth understanding of the reality in each analysed country, the reader is encouraged to see the reports from each country.

Comparative Table of systems of recognition, validation and certification of competencies in the four European Countries

Aspect	Spain	Italy	The Netherlands	Suecia
Entity governing the system of certification of competencies.	The National Institute for Qualifications, INCUAL.	National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policy (Istituto Nazionale per l'Analisi delle Politiche Pubbliche) (INAPP) National Agency for Active Employment Politics (Agenzia Nazionale per le Politiche Attive del Lavoro) (INAP)	Dutch Knowledge Centre APL (Dutch National Institute EVC)	National Swedish Agency for Higher Professional Education (Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan)
Created and protected in national law.	Yes, Organic Law 5/2002 of the 19th of June. Regulates all subsystems in the area of Vocational Education including the recognition of experience.	Yes, Law 12/2012 for the reform of the labour market which introduces the Italian strategy of permanent learning. Legislative Decree 13/2013 on the national certification of competences and validation of non-formal and informal learning.	Yes, Government Gazette, No. 59145, Covenant to encourage the recognition of previously acquired competences as part of lifelong learning.	No, sectoral regulations.
Access	Requires an open call for participants. Access is limited.	At any time, the process can be initiated individually or through companies. The Regions also carry out open calls for candidates.	At any time, in any of the itineraries.	At any time in any itinerary.
Public Objective	Primarily people without previous accreditations. In theory, the entire population.	Towards the entire population with the basic objective of favouring the recognition of qualifications in the entire Italian territory.	In theory and in practice, towards all of the population.	For the entire population, but with special emphasis on people who have lost their employment, that do not have accreditation and the immigrant collective.
Dissemination and publicity of the service by the body which governs the system of making it known.	In the framework of an open call for participants, this is publicised. It should appear on the web pages of different public services and in the Official Gazette of the autonomous communities.	The Decree Law 13/2013 foresees, among standards of the system, adequate information for citizens. However, not much action has taken place with regard to this question.	Dissemination is not carried out. It is a tasking pending. It is made known to companies and trade unions (not so much in educational itineraries).	Dissemination is not carried out, although it is made known to companies and on the municipal level.
Routes for certification of experience.	A route through an open call from the Autonomous Communities. CCAA	Different routes exist, principally: a) organisms of the education system and Vocational Education, in accord with the established requirements of the region; b) public services of employment, accreditation or authorisations; c) Companies specifically authorised to supply this service SRFC to its employees.	Two routes, educational and through work. Within both, certifications can be carried out by training centres and universities and 26 providers through work.	Four itineraries: a) public employment service, b) industries, c) municipal adult education and higher education (higher technical and universities). There are 25 models and providers in the area of industry.

Comparative Table of systems of recognition, validation and certification of competencies in the four European Countries

Aspect	Spain	Italy	The Netherlands	Suecia
What allows the certification of validity of experience.	<p>Accredit competency units (partially accumulated accreditations) These are recognised by companies. With this, through continuing study or accumulation of units of competences, one can opt for a professional or vocational education certificate. (FP)</p>	<p>Each phase of the process allows accreditation and validation from units of competence to the full professional qualification and issues different credentials:</p> <p>a. Skill and knowledge card: a document in which are formalised, through evidence, the knowledge and skills corresponding to parts of ,or, to the complete qualification.</p> <p>b. Certificate of Competence in which, after passing an interview or evaluation exam, skills are certified and corresponding knowledge of one or more Units of Competence.</p> <p>c. Professional Qualification Certificate which certifies, after having passed the exam, the skills and knowledge of a qualification.</p>	<p>Accredits experience through work or education. The Experience Certificate is obtained through education and the Experience Profile through work.</p> <p>Both allow the exemption of credits and so, shorten the time spent in formal study (or informal in the labour sector). A certificate gained through work can even be exchanged for an educational certificate relatively automatically (the decision is made by training centres and universities). Certificates of experience through the labour itinerary enjoy wide acceptance and value in the labour market.</p>	<p>Accreditation of experience in four ways. Certificates of experience are obtained through grades, profile certificates and others, all very different to each other. Certificates of experience awarded by industry enjoy wide value in the labour market.</p> <p>Certificates through educational itineraries serve as a continuation of study. In any case, the practice of validation is widely considered in all actions of training, orientation and employment. They make access possible to studies, to labour integration, exemption of credits and they shorten training time</p>
Standards and qualifications which can be validated are in line with National Qualifications Frameworks.	<p>Spain has developed its National Qualifications Framework but the Royal Decree Law for its application is still awaiting approval and application.</p>	<p>Yes, the National Qualifications Framework, although only recently approved (2018) is key in the Italian system and is related to the National Portfolio of Qualifications and the Atlante of Work and Qualifications, creating an innovative system and very useful from the technological point of view.</p>	<p>Different standards in the education and work itineraries. But all are covered by the National Framework of Qualifications of the Netherlands. The link between these certificates and the NLQF is encouraged.</p>	<p>Different standards are used in different routes. They are not all integrated into the National Qualification Framework (SwQF) of the country but a large number of them are. There is specific work carried out to train different providers, training centres and adult education centres in the use of the SwQF and links with this entity.</p>

Comparative Table of systems of recognition, validation and certification of competencies in the four European Countries

Aspect	Spain	Italy	The Netherlands	Suecia
Quality of the system.	Ensured in the standards framework fixed by the CNCP and the strong control of the process by the autonomous communities CCAA which apply and guide national validity procedures.	Ensured by the system of governance, The National Technical Commission, the ANPAL and the INAPP guarantee minimum standards of the system through a process of dialogue and which lends value to pre-existing experience.	Ensured in the educational route because it functions with the same standards as those of formal education. Controlled (but not ensured) through the labour route. There are great efforts to improve quality, starting with measures dealing with being able to register as a provider of validation through the labour route.	It is not ensured due to the dispersion of routes and entities. This is a pending task for the country
Who can apply for certification of competences?	Any individual who voluntarily applies to a current open call for candidates.	Any person, voluntarily or through open calls launched by regions and agreements with companies	Any person individually and voluntarily. Also, through agreements with companies.	Any person individually and voluntarily. Also, through agreements with companies.
What requirements are demanded?	(i) Meet the requirements and characteristics established by a standard of competence in which they wish to be evaluated. (ii) A minimum of hours of training demanded by the Autonomous Community. (iii) A minimum of months of training demanded by the open call for candidates from the Autonomous Community.	(i) Meet the requirements and characteristics which are established by a standard of competence in which the candidate wishes to be certified or evaluated. (ii) Supply evidence in the different phases of the process of recognition and validation (iii) Participate actively in the different phases of the process (interviews and final exam)	(i) Meet the requirements and characteristics established by the standard of competency in which the candidate wishes to be evaluated. II) Provide evidence. III) A commitment to actively carry out the process.	(i) Meet the requirements and characteristics of an established standard of competency in which the candidate wishes to be evaluated. (ii) If it is municipal adult education, to be enrolled and carrying out adult education programmes.
Validation of experience and migrants.	They can participate in equal conditions to nationals as long as they have a current residency permit. There do not seem to be any significant practices with respect to this, although within the process it has been taken into account that people can register who, while having experience, do not have accreditation.	They can participate in equal conditions to Italian nationals with some conditions: fundamentally, they must have a current residency permit. Others are related to knowledge of the language and the region autonomous province.	They can participate in equal conditions to nationals if they have a current residency permit. A number of significant practices can be seen and the recognition of degrees and certificates not yet accredited stands out.	They can participate in equal conditions to nationals if they have a current residency permit and the system prioritises this collective. There are many significant practices.

Comparative Table of systems of recognition, validation and certification of competencies in the four European Countries

Aspect	Spain	Italy	The Netherlands	Suecia
Development and enforcement of the European Qualifications Passport for refugees.	N/A	Yes, the CIMEA encourages different projects of evaluation of qualifications of refugees including the European Qualifications Passport. 22	Yes, recognition of degrees and certificates not accredited. Information can be accessed in NUFFIC. National Body for the Internationalisation of Education.23	Yes. It is carried out by the Swedish Council for Higher Education. All information is accessible on its web page. 24

Our own elaboration from reports from the 4 countries of Europe.

22. <http://www.cimea.it/en/services/services-recognition-of-qualifications/recognition-of-qualifications-held-by-refugees.aspx>

23. <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/diploma/information-refugees-about-diplomas>

24. <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/recognition-of-foreign-qualifications/before-you-apply/i-want-to-apply/background-paper/>

5. Recommendations

In this chapter, four types of recommendations are highlighted.

- Recommendations for the countries of the Pacific Alliance, in order to advance in the strategy of validation which they have promised, and to boost its impact on employability and labour mobility of people.
- General recommendations which arise from the challenges that are identified in the national systems of certification of labour competencies, which are implemented in the countries of the PA, but which are generally valid for this type of system and initiative in any country in Latin America.
- Recommendations arising from an analysis of European reality and that can be taken into account in any design, implementation and/or improvement strategy in the systems of validation and recognition of competences, both in Latin America, particularly in the PA countries, and in Europe; and
- Recommendations directed at the European Union Programme, Eurosocial+, a cooperation initiative between Europe and Latin America, and which promoted this study.

5. 1. Recommendations for the Pacific Alliance to advance in its commitment to a strategy of 'standardisation' and to promote its impact in the employability and labour mobility of people

The purpose of a process of recognition of certificates of labour competences which are given in one country with respect to another which receives the certified person, is that that person can validate their labour competencies in the destination country, without needing to repeat the process of evaluation and certification, thus facilitating their incorporation, permanence or mobility in the labour market. This implies, for example, that when seeking employment, the future employer can consider the effective competences of the person and offer them adequate contractual conditions, simply by their presenting a certificate from their country of origin, validated by the national institute responsible for the certification of labour competences in the destination country.

Understood in this way, recognition should then be the result of an agreement between two or more countries that opt for recognition of the validity of certificates of labour competence which are issued in each country by official institutions. These have a legal mandate to certify labour competences under certain established procedures and conditions and within the framework of the governing principles agreed by both parties.

So that this process of mutual recognition can operate and be effective for those who need it, the trust that exists between participating countries will be key in respect to validity and legitimacy of awarded certificates. Also, the conditions of implementation of these types of agreements should be in accordance with the reality of the people who wish to benefit and should be simple, agile and have the necessary support.

By validity we mean that the promise behind the certificate must be effective, that is to say, that the person who has received it has the competences which the certificate indicates and that all necessary protocols have been met in order for it to be awarded.

By legitimacy we refer to the social agreement that should operate between the government, workers and employers around a system of certification of competences for the world of work. The value of certificates of labour competence lies in the commitment, support and involvement that these three stakeholders have; at least, with respect to the existing systems of certification in each country.

By conditions of implementation we refer to specific procedures that each country will apply in order for the agreed validation to be effective in the view of the people who demand it. This implies defining stages and mechanisms which should be put in place in each institution responsible for the certification of competences in each country. These should be followed by the user interested in standardisation.

Considering the objective of the standardisation process and how to guarantee the conditions of trust, based on validity or faith in the certificates and effective conditions of implementation among participating countries, the following identifies a series of elements (and recommendations) which should be taken into consideration when setting out a Route which allows the countries of the Pacific Alliance, and others which it is hoped will join in this process in the future, not only to agree on a route towards standardisation but to implement this successfully, thus generating positive effects in the lives of people who may benefit from it.

1) A standardisation agreement which is established among those institutions responsible for assessment and certification of labour competencies in each country, based on official certifications of labour competences

An agreement of standardisation of certificates of labour competence should refer to certain certificates which have been awarded, in each country, by the institutions with legal support for awarding this type of recognition under the agreed framework for quality agreed and accepted by participating parties. Or, in other words, a standardisation agreement could not be referred to as any certificate of labour competence which has been awarded in one country or another, but rather to those that are guaranteed by the institutions which are recognised in each country to issue them. In the case of the countries of the PA, an analysis is made of whether the institutions which have been described in this report are the only ones that could be covered by this agreement of standardisation in each country, and also, what conditions should be met by other institutions interested in joining this type of agreement, outside the countries of the PA.

2) A standardisation agreement that defines what type of certificates of labour competence could be included and establishes distinctions between types of standards and certifications

As a general criteria, certificates of labour competences that could form part of an agreement of standardisation are those resulting from a systematised process of evaluation of job performance of a person, with respect to a standard of competence which has been previously identified and standardised (transformed into an official regulation accepted by the country), through a valid methodology (that considers essential the application of functional analysis) and a process led by the representative stakeholders from the world of work (employers, workers and government as a minimum). All of this lies within a common methodological framework and criteria of quality established by the institution responsible for the certification of labour competences in the country. Additionally, it is recommended

that a distinction be made between the different types of standards that exist in these systems in each country and models and types of associated certifications, designing different strategies to deal with standardisation in each particular case.

3) A common, methodological framework of quality to advance and accelerate standardisation processes and a basis for an 'agreement of trust' between countries

The countries of the Pacific Alliance have proposed, up till now, eight principles, seven stages and a general agreement on how standardisation should operate with regard to its users. With respect to the scope of the 'route towards standardisation', they have opted for initiating an advanced route in the standardisation of certificates associated with certain standards of competence which, after a technical comparison, is later validated with representatives of productive sectors of different countries, and there exists a level of similarity which recommends standardisation. This means that standardisation would only operate in those certifications of competence that are associated with standards that have been previously 'standardised' between countries.

This route, which is technically correct, could be long and slow from the point of view of efficiency in implementation of processes of standardisation. So, it is proposed that an advance be made in two complementary ways, evaluating the results achieved and making necessary adjustments.

A first route, which maintains the revision of standards of competence that have been constructed in different systems, focussing on those that have a greater impact on the employability of people and greater significance in terms of people's preferred occupations of those who migrate between countries of the PA, incorporating the differences in standards that were mentioned in the previous point.

A second route which may be considered as complementary to the former, and whose objective is to construct a Common Methodological Framework among the four countries, with equivalent conditions of quality, puts forward an unquestionable basis of trust that, once achieved, allows for a more rapid advance and a more general way of recognition of systems of certification of labour competences among the four countries. In this case, there would not be a standardisation of profiles, but rather, a general recognition of the systems under the common framework of achieved quality. This would allow recognition of certificates issued in each country under this agreement. To do this, it is proposed that an executive board be set up for 'Pacific Alliance' technical jobs, made up of specialist professionals in each analysed institution. The first, focusses on the development and standardisation of standards; and the second, on the methodological evaluation and certification of people. A preliminary agenda of topics has been proposed and these should be dealt with by these organisations.

4) The legitimacy of certificates is nurtured by social dialogue

The legitimacy of certificates is nurtured in social agreement that should operate between government, workers and employers around a system of certification of competences for the area of work. The value of certificates of labour competence that are issued to people rests on commitment, support and involvement that these three participants have with respect to the existing systems of certification in each country.

So the question to be answered is, what elements should be present in governance of institutions which form part of agreements on standardisation and recognition that allow precautions in this legitimacy, both on the level of strategic political function as well as in strategic dialogue with the area of production in line with the identification of which competencies are in demand in the labour market

and require workers. The translation of this into standards will later allow the orientation of processes of evaluation and certification of people.

Legitimacy would be a consequence of systematic processes of participation and involvement of the stakeholders in the labour market in these systems, those that should play a key role in the decision-making structure of these systems in the two previous functions.

5) Conditions for the implementation of agreements of standardisation and /or recognition with regard to users

By conditions of implementation, we refer to the specific procedures applied in each country so as to make effective the standardisation and/or recognition of agreements regarding the users who demand it. This implies defining stages and mechanisms that occur inside each institution responsible for the certification of competencies in each country, such as those which the user, interested in standardisation, should follow. Each entity should define the specific conditions of operation of these agreements in the institutional reality and regulations of each country, centrally placing the promise made to users and the standards of service that they offer, and identifying potential problems that should be resolved before launching. Topics should be defined, such as: What will be the attention window for the user? What will be the requirements that the user should meet to opt for standardisation? Will it be a costly economic process for its users? Can a person initiate the process before arrival in the country? Will it be necessary to carry out the process face-to face or remotely? How will the institution verify the authenticity of the certificate of labour competence shown by the user? Will these processes of standardisation be open permanently or will there be attention windows? In the case of institutions that have externalised the processes of evaluation and certification of competences, what role will these entities play regarding standardisation, or will it be a centralised process? In what information systems and how will the person, whose certificate of labour competence has been standardised by the national institution, be registered? Can they form part of an official register administered by the institutions of the awarded certificates and the standards on which they are based? How are potential users informed about standardisation? How will standardisation be disseminated to potential employers? How will monitoring take place of advances and necessary improvements in the process of standardisation inside countries and among countries of the PA? How and how often should countries report on how many people have benefited from the agreement? And, what indicators of success can be established to measure the efficiency of the agreement?

5.2. General recommendations which arise from the challenges identified for the national systems of certification of labour competences implemented in the countries of the PA, but which have general validity for this type of system and initiative in any country in Latin America

6) Strengthen the institutionalization and governance of systems based on social dialogue

The institutionalisation and governance of systems of evaluation and certification of labour competencies should guarantee not only efficiency, credibility and public faith in the certificates which are issued to people, but also, fundamentally, the legitimacy and support of this initiative by stakeholders in the labour market. This ensures its relevance to competency requirements in the area of production and development priorities of countries and the value of certification as a signal to the labour market.

A system of certification of labour competencies should be permanently connected to the necessities of human capital in the country and requires a strategic outlook in the middle and long term that connects them with current competences and, above all, the future requirements of people, so that which is certified is what needs to be certified and generates a positive impact on employability and on competitiveness among companies and countries.

In this sense, effective involvement and participation of employers, workers and government in the strategic political management of these systems should be strengthened with regard to subjects like: In which current and future competences will people need to be certified to impact on their employability and productivity in companies? How will quality, impartiality and reputation be guaranteed in carrying out evaluation and certification processes? How will equal and non-discriminatory conditions be guaranteed in access to these processes, thus decreasing entrance barriers for reasons of economics, gender, nation, race or others? How to increase efficiency in processes while taking precautions with the good use of public resources involved and improving the level of service for users? How to improve the social value of certificates issued, on the part of employers and workers, to boost their impact as a signal to the labour market and the positive effects on people, companies and organisations? How to give these systems of certification a public finance structure that guarantees sustainability, independent of contributions which may be made by the private sector? Who should pay the cost of certification? How to activate public and private resources which allow the covering of costs of certification of people, and in particular, disadvantaged groups or populations who have no option of finance with their own resources? How to improve regulation of these systems of certification with work training programmes or vocational education and technical professional education so that people can close competence gaps, and the development of training itineraries and opportunities of work development through the recognition of previous learning? How to boost the role and utility of national frameworks of certification of competences? How to advance towards recognition processes based on trust and/or the standardisation of systems of certification across countries in the region?

7) Sustainability and Finance

On the subject of financing of the analysed institutions, including the mechanisms and budgets available for financing processes of evaluation and certification, it could be argued, on one hand, that problems exist for some institutions. These include the existence of financing schemes that depend on annual budgets whose maintenance or sustainability is not guaranteed or faces restrictions associated with legal frameworks, as in the case of ChileValora. Also, like the financing mechanisms of processes of certification when these are not covered by state, subsidy schemes, affecting system coverage and generating a barrier for entrance of some sectors of workers who do not have the resources to finance this, like, for example, the migrant, unemployed or low income population.

8) To broaden knowledge of these systems and their social value in stakeholders in the area of labour

Generally, it is recognised that the systems of certification are not well-known in their countries and are not sufficiently valued by employers, and sometimes, even by the workers themselves. So, they do not see the positive effects of certifications in work opportunities, and this contributes to their discouragement. Both elements, not being well-known and not being considered of value, together with relatively low coverage of certification, are narrowly linked. One cannot value something that one does not know about.

Experience shows that certification does not have the same meaning in all economic sectors or labour functions in which they are applied. Some act basically as a tool of recognition in the worker's career or experience, while for others it is an obligatory, regulated and critical step in assuring clients of the traceability of the processes involved. Others act to complement the security conditions within tasks and areas of production, or as an element of confidence in high opening sectors or internationalisation. This being the case, a recommendation could be made to design different strategies which allow promotion and pedagogy of the virtues of certification with a message that responds to a different meaning of the tool for each sector, sub-sector or productive area in particular. At the same time, the need is identified to use language that is understood by all stakeholders, moving from technical language, which has been used up till now, to one which is comprehended by both employers and workers.

9) Orientation of certification towards future Jobs, the sectors with greater potential employability and as a means of recycling of workers in a world context of unemployment

Certification has a double dimension. On one hand, it acts as a mechanism of labour recognition in populations with no formal certification thus reducing asymmetric information in the labour market and favouring employability and also, as a tool which allows the accompaniment of people, especially in the adult working population which learns fundamentally from their own work experience, processes of acquisition of new competences and labour renovation and recycling. This second element requires efficient regulation of certification with processes of training and vocational education and with mechanisms of recognition of previous learning in formal education, both processes being supported by national frameworks of qualifications.

This being the case, a challenge to all systems is to boost both dimensions of certification and to make efforts to advance in the identification of and research into which labour competences will be in demand in future employment and to direct the efforts of certification at those sectors, population segments and/ or territories where greater potential employability exists among those who obtain certification.

An additional element is the world context marked by the pandemic and its well-known negative effects on employment. There will be thousands of people, young and adult, who will be left unemployed, and, the certification of their competencies linked to training programmes may constitute an agile and opportune response to move them towards sectors and occupations where there exist better work opportunities.

10) Boost actions which allow people who do not achieve certification to bridge the gap

If the systems of certifications operate separately from professional training programmes, and also the institutions take measures to maintain the independence of both processes in order to avoid a conflict of interests, part of the mission of systems of certification of competences is to supply information on professional training on the labour competencies towards which they should be oriented in their offer of plans and training programmes, to improve their relevance and boost their impact on the client population. In this way, the value of participative methodologies is recognised, which is led by stakeholders in the area of work and education (roundtables, boards, committees and sectoral bodies) that apply these systems as a way to identify and regulate standards of competences that emerge as useful, not only for evaluation and certification, but also to design a choice of training relevant to the demands of the labour market. In this situation, the analysed institutions demonstrate very significant advances.

The second objective of this link with training and vocational education is to facilitate the closing of gaps in competencies which have been diagnosed in evaluation, in particular, of those who do not achieve certification. Advances should be made in the design of mechanisms that allow those who do not achieve certification to know what options they have for improvement and what instruments are available on a state level as well as in companies or organisations in which they work, in order to effectively improve. If the possible answer does not lie within the institutions responsible for certification, then these should be responsible for disseminating the available options so as to meet promises made to the user.

11) Simplify processes, reduce time and costs by incorporating technology

The key processes which sustain systems of certification of labour competences are robust and highly technical, but, at the same time, long and complex.

For example, the development of a competency standard through methodologies led by the productive sector, the application of functional analysis, visits to companies, validations with groups of experts, standardisation and formalisation, among other mechanisms, takes between three to six months in the different analysed countries. But it also involves the formation of a roundtable or the putting in place of a sectoral representative who leads and validates the process. This means that if a person wants or needs to certify competencies against a standard of competence that is not registered in these systems, they will have to wait while a long process takes place before being able to have the said standard available, if all the conditions are met and they have the requests relating to their evaluation and certification. On their part, the process of evaluation and certification of labour competences of a person oscillates between one and four months approximately, from when a person applies until they obtain the final decision on whether they are considered competent or not.

If there are grounded technical reasons which allow explanations and even justifications for the times associated with both processes, the time frames involved could be transformed into discouragement for those who await rapid and convenient responses in view of changes in competency standards associated with technological changes, into a barrier to entrance for those groups, who, like migrants, often do not have the necessary time to dedicate to these processes. Or rather, there could exist an offer of rapid certification directed at recycling as a response to a situation of crisis like that which we are experiencing. For this reason, institutions should advance in the simplification of their processes, in reducing the time involved and the incorporation of technological means that could facilitate both access and development of some of the activities under consideration.

12) Regulation in the area of education, in particular, technical professional education, is key so that certification is an element of development of people, and allows for lifelong training

If the framework of action intrinsic to systems of certification of labour competences is the identification and regulation of standards of competence and the subsequent evaluation and certification of people based on these same standards, then part of the mission of these systems is to favour lifelong learning in people through training and labour itineraries that recognise their previous learning and competences.

In order for this to become a reality, the certificate of labour competence which is issued should achieve recognition in the countries as a qualification route valid for people, in particular, in the area of formal education which historically has relied on its degree processes based on a curriculum, a

certain number of hours or credits and its own mechanisms of assessment. Recognition and validation of certificates of labour competence which a person has received implies trusting that this certificate is an unmistakable sign of acquired competences which deserve recognition and which could be equivalent to a number of hours, content or competence considered in a course programme or module within a university degree or professional degree.

Instruments like national qualification frameworks justly aim at the establishment of a common language between education and work and at agreement on a series of levels associated with results of learning, from the simplest to the most complex. This tool could facilitate a social agreement on value and equivalence of credentials issued by systems of certification of labour competences with respect to other credentials associated with degrees. To advance in this direction, it would be key that institutions participate and lead in systems of certification of labour competences in the design and implementation of national frameworks of qualifications in different countries, along with other strategies that allow a coming together of the two areas and which establish labour agreements which facilitate regulation and recognition, taking into consideration the regulatory frameworks of each country.

13) Assess, measure and show impacts

One of the critical elements of any social policy is the measurement and evaluation of its results to improve the quality of the service given to its citizens and to guarantee the correct use of public resources.

In this sense, it is necessary for the institutions that lead systems of certification of labour competences to systematically apply instruments of evaluation that allow the monitoring and management of the perception of different users of the system, to follow up on graduates of these processes of evaluation and certification together with evaluations of impact with proven methodologies to demonstrate changes in the lives and companies which can be attributed to certification of competencies. In relation to measurements of impact in particular, which are methodologically more complex, we would need to carry out a detailed analysis of methodologies which have been applied in reported experiences of countries, so as to share virtues and limitations of the models applied and to share good practice. So, it is a great challenge to advance in a common proposal of a model of evaluation of impact of certifications of competency which could be tried, improved and disseminated among countries of the region.

In relation to the coverage of systems of certification of labour competences, it is considered recommendable that institutions have a clear definition of the target population whom they wish to attend in the middle and long term, so that it is feasible to measure whether the efforts made are or not being reached in the coverage of awarded certificates. This is significant in relation to the number of people who could be beneficiaries of this tool of recognition of competencies

14) Strengthen policies and strategies of attention to the migrant population which facilitate and boost their access to certification of labour competencies in countries of destination

It proves interesting to establish basic criteria and methods of attention for the migrant population which allow a significant increase in their access to certification of labour competences in countries of destination, thus reducing barriers, learning about good practices which are being developed by different institutions and elaborating new proposals that can be considered in the regulatory frameworks of the countries. The following elements should be considered:

- Maintain strategies that are considered a permanent regulation with public institutional mechanisms (in particular, the migratory institutional mechanisms of each country) and private at the national and international level linked to this area, and to their own migrant organisations so as to ensure relevance and viability of interventions and proposals which are carried out.
- Establish, where possible, contact with relevant stakeholders in the countries from which comes the greatest flow of migrants with the aim of giving appropriate and complete information to people about the options which certification of labour competences implies, and the requirements and procedures before arriving in countries of destination.
- Manage mechanisms that allow the financing of costs for the migrant population who cannot cover these costs by their own means.
- Encourage studies that allow improvement in the knowledge level of specific requirements of the migrant and returning population mostly arriving in these countries. This should be done in order to direct efforts in certification of competences which are brought from the country of origin. In this sense, it is interesting and useful that the institutions consider and analyse information on the nature of the migrant population which arrives primarily in each of the countries of the PA, and which has been constructed in the framework of this study.
- Encourage programmes of job training for migrant people which allow the bridging of detected gaps in the processes of evaluation, and also to support processes of recycling when their original competences are considered insufficient or where they need to expand their options of employability.
- Strengthen processes of dissemination among this population of the requirements of certification and the way to apply.

Study the difficulties which the migrant population has to access and remain in evaluation and certification of labour competence programmes, as well as to meet the requirements intrinsic to the standards of competence in which they are evaluated, thus identifying areas for improvement which could reduce existing barriers. Especially, to encourage networks of support around this migrant population which reduces abandonment of the process, something which has already been detected in some institutions.

5.3. Recommendations arising from an analysis of the current situation in Europe and which should be considered in any strategic design, implementation and/or improvement in the systems of validation or recognition of competences, both in Latin America and, in particular, in the countries of the PA, as well as in Europe

Analysing the reality of the region of Europe and, especially, the 4 countries which have been studied in-depth (Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden), has allowed the compilation of a number of reflections and learning which services Latin American countries and particularly those which make up the Pacific Alliance. The spirit of this does not lie in understanding that the policies, model, systems and practices related to the area of interest - validation of informal knowledge and competences acquired through experience – are much better in Europe than in Latin America. Rather, they simply have a longer history of development, that is to say, they have been implemented for many years and this has made advances possible.

Europe's regional integration has played a critical role in harmonising instruments, political recommendations, the generation of consensus ratified in decrees and even regional programmes (like Erasmus+) which finance the creation of methodologies and good practices. In short, the importance of Europe is clear in the development of these systems which enjoy a certain robustness, even though they coexist at the same time with multiple obstacles and challenges as has been seen in previous chapters, and, especially in the detailed reports on each country.

In the following, some elements will be set out that could be considered in the challenges identified in the countries of the Pacific Alliance in their common route in the area of employment, training and recognition of labour competences. Certain questions stand out which contribute to reinforcement, not only of the systems of the PA countries, but also of any system of certification of competences which is in a constant state of improvement and development. So, the following recommendations have been divided into 4 areas: general to all systems; related to mutual recognition and standardisation; linked to the migrant and refugee population; and focussed on gender. Finally, we include a couple of reflections and recommendations directed at the programmes Eurosocial+ in its responsibility to support and accelerate strategic, relevant public policies in the region of Latin America.

5.3.1. Recommendations for systems of validation of experience

1) Significant adult learning is found outside of formal education

It should be explicitly recognised in policies of education and employment that what an adult person knows how to do is learned basically in their practical work and/or life experience and that, furthermore, adults dedicate comparatively less time to formal education than a younger person. Not recognising this is limiting adults to obtaining formal certificates through formal education, where they must invest a number of years of training and material resources that they cannot always allow themselves if they have family responsibilities. This does not prove to be a reasonable strategy, and even less so, one that resolves the problems in the labour market which require agility and immediate answers with regard to qualified human resources.

2) Allow exemptions in formal education and/or the direct obtaining of qualifications

Relating to the former, it seems recommendable to advance and reach an agreement with education systems on effective exemptions to continue study from certificates of experience and, also, exchange certificates of experience directly for professional qualifications. There are countries which are working on this, as in the case of the Netherlands. After a large agreement between the government, the education system and social agents (2016) it is possible to enter into the education system via work, and even to 'exchange' certificates of experience for professional qualifications without necessarily going through periods of formal education if accredited in this way. This has been put forward by law and the agreement, even though, de facto, as recent as 2018, has begun to take place with more strength and to appear possible. Up to now, cases have been symbolic and the 'power' of who can do this and who cannot, lies in higher education centres and universities. In the Netherlands. In theory, it is possible to opt, from experience, for qualifications at any level of the NLQF (National Qualifications Framework), even though, in practice, these advances are slow.

3) Allocation of systems of validation of experience to the entire population

Extending target groups of systems of validation of experience to the entire population and removing them from vulnerable and uncertified groups, as happens in many countries, can be recommendable for avoiding a similar error to that which happened with Technical Professional Education (ETP). For years, the EFTP has been considered in Latin America (also in Europe) as education directed at young people from more vulnerable social classes or at those who did not have the ability to reach and complete university education successfully. In other words, it has been considered the less favoured sister of education.

Following this analogy, the validation of experience can be considered by some as 'the solution or the route for vulnerable collectives and for those who have no certification'. However, from our point

of view, allocating systems of validation and certification primarily from work experience to more vulnerable collectives converts them into being only a complement to formal education and as a means of favouring the obtaining of certificates on the part of those who cannot obtain them through the general system, taking away or even eliminating their ability to be an instrument of exponential potential to align abilities and competencies of people with market needs. Under this limited conception, we lose the potential, which we have identified in some European countries, in the recommendations of the European Council and in the analysed countries of Latin America, to generate benefits both for people (to manage their own professional careers favouring vertical or horizontal mobility), companies (to better manage human resources by applying more intelligent, motivating and relevant policies of organisation) and on the country level and public policies (generating social value by regulating more agile services aimed at all the population that it favours, in fact, lifelong learning in adults whose responsibilities do not allow them to spend years in formal education).

4) Improve visibility and the dissemination of these services

In all the countries analysed it has been detected that this point is weak; little is invested in visibility and dissemination of these services and so, they are not well-known and, in general, they are used by a limited number of the population. Perhaps the only exception is Sweden, which by having a very decentralised system managed by town councils – and many private providers – seems to be more well-known by the population. In view of this, the analysed countries suggest that investment should be made in giving these systems greater visibility in each country. This would contribute to greater use of the system and an increase in the total number of certifications each year.

5) Validation as a practice and procedure in different areas of training and employment, beyond national systems

The practice of validation of previous learning and acquired competencies from experience is being used fundamentally in Sweden and to a lesser extent in the Netherlands in different areas linked to education, training in adults, professional orientation and employment. We place emphasis here on practice (methodology and actions) beyond national systems. This idea suggests the enormous potential to put into effect the sustainment of any training itinerary, job or employment orientation both in youth and adults, of the accumulated experience of each person and their knowledge. This is the central characteristic of any process which is said to be oriented towards a person in the logic of individualised itineraries. The practice of the validation of experience allows this principle to be operative and to be applied in technical professional education, in orientation towards employment, in technical accompaniment in employment or self-employment, and in immobility within companies, etc. Furthermore, in practice, this is more and more recommended in the policies of the Directorate General of Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission to generate new routes towards employment in the adult population. Among other instruments there exists the EASL programme: *'Awareness-raising activities in Member States on "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults'* 25, a programme which emphasises this idea.

6) The role of National Qualifications Frameworks

Having a national qualifications framework along with the European qualifications Framework has, without doubt, allowed significant advances in systems of validation of experience. The qualifications frameworks, since they have different, defined levels which carry on from the results of learning, allow structuring and organisation with reference to comparability, of the qualifications of each country and between countries. Nationally, it has an instrument which favours the 'translation' of results of

25. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=515&furtherCalls>

learning associated with employment acquired through formal, non-formal and informal ways or through work experience. In this way, national frameworks of qualifications become the best 'ally' of systems of validation of work experience.

All the countries analysed (some with greater advances than others) associate their experience validation systems with their national qualifications framework because in this instrument they find not only references to levels of qualification – to those which may arrive through experience – but also the walkway between levels and legitimacy of certificates.

Also, in all countries, there exist effective channels for incorporation – with certain agility – of professions arising sectorally from the labour market, to update frameworks and to reflect in these the qualifications that are really required by industry and companies. In addition, the greater part of qualifications which arise from the labour market are usually, at least initially, unregulated professions, that is to say, they do not necessarily require a certification of training obtained through formal education. This last idea is key in translating competences acquired through experience into recognised qualifications in national frameworks without necessarily going through formal education. In Latin America, having a National Qualifications Framework would give a strategic boost to systems of validation of experience. Having a regional framework, or by sub-region, as in the PA, would strategically facilitate mobility and mutual recognition in the area of qualifications.

7) Giving further 'value' to these systems

In Sweden there exists a higher technical degree awarded by the University to become an assessor in the validation of non-formal skills or competences acquired through experience. This shows the institutional value that is given in this country to technical expertise to carry out adequate processes of validation of experience. Without necessarily reaching this level, the incorporation of technical training linked to this knowhow would give greater institutional value to validation of experience and its associated systems.

5.3.2 Recommendations related to mutual standardisation and recognition between countries

The following recommendations are highlighted to the extent that some of them speak directly about mutual recognition and others favour worker mobility between countries to the extent that their certifications are recognised and valid with regard to work. It should not be forgotten that a standardisation is not an aim in itself but rather a means of favouring worker mobility between countries and the guarantee of being able to work in the destination country asserting the competences acquired in the country of origin.

8) Directive 36/2005 of the Parliament and Council of Europe, on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications, modified in 2013

This directive and its later modification, is known as a trust Directive because it is based on mutual trust among European countries on the quality of different systems of education and vocational education. It was regulated to favour the mutual recognition of qualifications among European countries.

We are not going to give all details here about what is suggested in this directive because this has been widely described in the report referring to Europe. What is important to point out is the existence itself of this directive which makes possible the mutual, fast recognition of qualifications

between countries, even though it is not exempt from processes of paperwork in each case. Its strength lies in European countries being obliged to recognise the equal value of qualifications in any other European country without long, arbitrary or excessively demanding standardisation or conditioning of the recognition in exams, tests or to complete other levels of study in the destination country. At times, in certain professions, this could happen (in the health professions) but the directive recommends diminishing and speeding up of procedures with the aim of acceptance of European certificates in any country. So, this favours the mobility linked to work in the European setting.

Even though the directive speaks of all qualifications in a wider sense, it has practical application in the so-called regulated professions that require being in possession of a professional qualification recognised in the country to be able to carry them out. With this directive, since the year 2005, the application of this exercise of mutual trust and recognition has become easier, although it is only in recent years that this has taken on greater interest. There is greater mobility between countries – especially of young qualified people – and in the European qualifications framework and its respective national frameworks, they have facilitated the translation of qualifications between countries which, undoubtedly, speeds up these recognitions. In this sense, the Directive represents a good example to follow for those countries of Latin America that are involved in projects of regional integration, as is the case of the Pacific Alliance, in the area of qualifications, competencies and mutual recognition.

Note that the regulations mention mutual recognition- and not standardisation- thus speeding up processes and enabling of people, through these processes of recognition, so that they can practice their profession in a destination country different to that in which their degree or certificate was issued. In view of this, the directive recognises the right of each member state so that, in accordance with its requirements and conditions, candidates should take respective actions to access recognition. In practice, following what has been shown in this study, degrees obtained in another European country are recognised relatively quickly.

9) Non-regulated professions which do not need mutual recognition to practice them

These types of professions (which do not need a formal certificate or degree issued by a competent and recognised body in a country) can be freely practised. There is no need for mutual recognition. That is to say, they are not subject to being officially recognised in the destination country to be able to practice them. They are more often subject to the demands of the labour market in each case.

This idea is interesting for the PA countries because, in general, competencies which are validated through systems of validation of competences and experience usually correspond to professions or trades arising through the labour market and companies and, generally, they are non-regulated professions. In Europe, these are exempt from recognition to be able to practice them. This facilitates and accelerates labour integration in the case of worker mobility. Being clear on what type of certificates are needed or not needed, necessarily requires mutual recognition in the PA region and would contribute to focussing efforts of recognition and standardisation only in those cases where necessary. These efforts would not be extended (in the case of intensive standardisation) to professions which do not require this because they are at the discretion of the market of each country and not framed by an education regulation.

10) Online instruments to verify regulated professions

If we adhere to the previous regulation, we could even value some instruments with which the European Community already counts for the verification of which professions are regulated and, so, require formal recognition to be able to be practiced in another country. In the chapter on Europe, a direct link was shared to an online tool of the European Council which allows an interested person to

see whether their certificate or degree is considered as a regulated profession or not, in the country to which they wish to move. This varies from country to country with cases arising where the profession is regulated in the country of origin and not in the destination country. In this case, the person could freely practice their profession, without going through the recognition process.

11) The European professional card

Independently of what has previously been said, the European professional card is another instrument to be considered in this area of mutual recognition. On the web page of the European Council it is presented as: “European Professional Card, your competencies recognised”²⁶ It applies to regulated professionals and it is an instrument which greatly speeds up mutual recognition since everything can be done electronically. There is direct support from the competent body of the country of origin to verify the authenticity of documents. These documents remain uploaded to the platform and so, if a procedure for another country must be applied for, the documents are already available and, most importantly, the principle of ‘administrative silence’ is applied as a sign of acceptance. If there is no reply within the period established by the country which must recognise the qualifications (this can vary among professions), it is understood that they have been accepted and a European Professional Card is issued digitally. The person can then make use of it in order to work in the destination country. For the moment, the EPT is only available for some professions, although the idea is to expand this to all professions in the next few years. A model like this would be very useful in the countries of the PA to favour mutual recognition and worker mobility.

5.3.3. Recommendations linked to the immigrant and refugee populations

It must be considered that all shared information from different key informants, as well as the revision of services and existing programmes in the area of validation of experience and immigration, refers to people in a legally regulated situation (or being processed in the case of applications from the refugee population). Ultimately, this deals with people who have a residency permit. Those people who do not have a current residency permit are excluded from these systems. This, in itself, represents a great obstacle to being able to use the experience that immigrant people bring with them.

12) Certification and recognition of their knowledge

There is consensus that the validation and certification of immigrant people’s knowledge is necessary to add value to the labour market in the host country. However, in Europe, in the area of national and regional certification services, there is little experience in this respect. The systems of the analysed countries are based on the principle that public services are equally available to the entire population, without distinction or discrimination. This is logical to the extent that, if public services were to favour the immigrant population in some way then they could put this general principle in danger and would create elements easily useable by extreme right-wing groups (present in all 4 countries) against immigration. However, when services do not consider measures of adaptation or specific measures in certain collectives with initial disadvantages, in fact, their access is limited. This makes even more sense in those services which distinguish groups for preferred attention in the areas of validation of experience where the immigrant population is included. They are included as a preferential group, but, at the same time, no measures exist for them to facilitate their access by contemplating their disadvantages (language, lack of documentation to accredit work experience, resources to pay fees, etc.) This is clearly incoherent in the systems that should be improved in European countries and which should be considered in Latin American countries. Even so, in Spain an example of good practice has been identified,

26. https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/professional-qualifications/european-professional-card/index_es.htm

which, even though it is not directed at the immigrant population, could, in fact, be used mostly by this population. This refers to facilitating the registration and access to validation of work experience, even though they have no accreditation documents.

13) Validation of work experience in the host country and not accumulated in the country of origin

Generally, the evidence found shows that when the immigrant population certifies its experience, it only includes experience acquired in the host country and not that which has been accumulated in the country of origin. This is not defined as such in the services, but the very conditions and methodology of the processes determine it. The competencies that are certified are those defined as educational or sectoral standards valid in the host country, and for this it is generally necessary to have an evidence portfolio which allows the initiation of the process. If they do not have evidence or do not have valid experience in the country, it is almost impossible to have access. This becomes even more difficult if they do not have the language. Because of this, it can be asserted that European systems are not validating the original experience of immigrant people but rather, they are validating their experience once they have acquired it in the host country and when they have a certain command of the language. Furthermore, in the Netherlands it is recommended that immigrant people who study the language, begin work (even though voluntarily) in order to accumulate evidence before beginning the validation process.

Even so, we have found Good Practice in Sweden that stands out in this context and which may be highlighted as a recommendation. The Swedish project SFx for vocational education for immigrants (in the county of Stockholm), starts with the recognition of the original trades of this collective. As has been described in the report from Sweden, this project is directed fundamentally at learning the language, but, it also starts with an initial filter which considers the trades that people carried out in their country of origin and aligns them with trades demanded in the labour market of the host country, Sweden. In this way, drivers, construction workers or similar, programmers and even higher degrees are identified and language courses are organised concentrating on the professional sector and alternative measures to make participants familiar with these sectors in Sweden. This is not validation of experience directed towards certification, but rather, to use validation as a practice and focus within this programme to allow people who know a certain trade (or have certificates or higher degrees) to be able to learn the language intensively in a work context directly linked to their original experience. It is quite a successful programme with reasonable rates of labour integration, just as has been described in the report on the country. This practice is often rejected because the idea would be easily transferable to any other country since all policies of integration of immigrants contemplate learning the language of the host country. Because of this, linking the language and employment (recognising previous work experience) seems to be an intelligent strategy. In Latin America this would make sense for those foreigners who do not speak Spanish (as is the case of the Haitian population present in a number of countries). Also, it would make sense in any policy of integration linking people with employment sectors in which they have accreditation or experience in the country of origin.

14) Validation of higher certificates for refugees still without documentation

A number of European countries are applying systems of validation of experience – or the methodologies essential to this – to recognise and validate work experience as well as certificates and higher degrees, even when they do not have accreditation documents. This is being done through the European Qualifications Passport for refugees who apply, among the analysed countries, in Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden. The process to be followed for this is framed in each system of validation of the countries and also follows the common procedures of this instrument generated by the European Council or by the UNHCR to put into operation the Lisbon Convention on recognition of competences

for refugees. This instrument could be applied, subject to some relevant adaptations in each case, to millions of immigrants and refugees from Venezuela in the countries of the Pacific Alliance.

15) Giving other options for transfer of education, certificates or degrees to what the host country considers or can understand

In Sweden, in the framework of procedures applied by the Council for Higher Education, there exists the possibility of using, without achieving standardisation and/or formal recognition of a certificate, a tool called UHR ("bedömningstjänst). This is a database that can be consulted and used to quickly see the correspondence between studies and certificates (including primary, secondary and vocational) of a certain country with the Swedish Education System. This information can be kept as a pdf document and attached to any job application. So, in the logic of the Swedish system, the presentation of evidence is speeded up in the search for employment that, without being formally standardised or certified, helps a company to know the educational profile of a foreign candidate. A tool of this kind would be useful and agile among countries of the PA for those people who cannot opt for validation of their certificates, but who do have a document, a PDF, which situates them in the system and levels of certificates of the host country.

16) Facilitate and accelerate the recognition of studies and certificates

A similar tool to the Swedish UHR is already set up in the Netherlands, although it is directed at giving more speed to the recognition and standardisation of higher degrees. This is a database which contains information on education systems, curriculums, university systems and levels in many countries of the world (including nearly all those from Latin American countries). This allows the comparison of information, both for the applicant as well as the organism which must take the decision on the recognition of these certificates and degrees: NUFFIC (Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education). A similar tool can also be applied in systems of recognition and certification of work experience in the countries of the PA to speed up processes of mutual standardisation and recognition.

17) Immigrants and systems of validation of experience

Finally, it is considered necessary to reflect profoundly on the analysed countries and on others, with respect to a possible undesired result of the function of national systems on migrants. Perhaps it would be necessary to consider, in the mechanisms of identification and evaluation of competences of all people, but especially in migrants, the totality of experience and not only that acquired in the country where the procedures take place. On one hand, because migratory projects can be broad and, on the other hand, because work experience in European countries is obstructed by discrimination and segmentation that these systems could reproduce by only considering these labour experiences. So, systems of recognition of competences should be an instrument to break the labour circle of migrants, especially women, in destination countries and for the recognition of their entire work experience. Something like this is being tried in Sweden with the programme Stockholm SFx for Swedish language and vocational education, starting with the employment experience of immigrants in their country of origin.

5.3.4. Recommendations focussing on gender

Generally, in this area, as in many others, clear gender discrimination is identified which ends up excluding women from these services and the real possibility of validating their experience with relation to studies and, above all, employment. Evidently, explicit and direct discrimination is not registered

but the normal functioning of each system in considering the conditions of special vulnerability of women, their family responsibilities, the cultural norms in their communities of origin or, simply, adjusting to the dynamic of labour markets in which they are under-represented or discriminated, ends in their exclusion.

18) Validations in almost all countries incorporate professions required in the labour market in each case and, in general, women are under-represented in certain sectors of these or, they are over-represented in highly feminised sectors with generally more precarious conditions

In Sweden, for example, some studies of evaluation and statistics (not very current) show that, in the immigrant population, the proportion of men who validate their work experience is infinitely greater than that of women. One of the most important explanations to be found for this is that the systems of validation of the country prioritises sectoral professions and trades where women are under-represented. Professions in heavy industry, truck or bus drivers, programmers, construction etc. are some examples of this. The country recognises this gender gap as a challenge to be worked on. On the other hand, we have the situation in Spain. In recent years, Spain has been certifying many women in trades relating to home care in association with the Madrid Care Association. Here, more than 90% are women - many immigrants - and although, certainly, it is important to certify this sector, it is no less important that women continue to advance in access to validation of their work experience in other sectors, with equal conditions to men.

19) Conditioning the validity of certificates of experience to be able to do courses or exams in the formal education system would be leaving out more women than men in the immigrant collective

Without any country having reported data on this, it is generally considered that the demands for issuing certificates of experience with formal validity, which generally mean investment of time, effort and resources in formal education (or to prepare for an obligatory exam), would leave women out. The responsibilities that they have in their families, at the same time as in the cultural position attributed to them in their traditional communities would lead to self-exclusion, or alternatively, an explicit prohibition may be placed on them by male members of the family or community.

20) Validation services used in the area of employment, and that are not necessarily subject to covering gaps in formal education, should also safeguard the presence of immigrant women

In the Netherlands and Sweden, experts tell of situations in which it has been detected that these services – for example, municipal services in Sweden – do not reach women in very traditional communities simply because their contact with the world is very limited and controlled. Town councils and their services do not detect them and, at the same time, they do not approach these services and all relations are established through the heads of families (men) that do not allow them to participate. Of course, we also need to reflect on this and manage improvements in all countries.

21) Finally, a question which should be considered in a country's system of validation and which has not yet been incorporated: the validation of work experience in voluntary work and in soft skills

Experience and competences that, in many cases, have been developed by women in the home (not only in immigrant collectives, but in all groups), managing the family, in community work, in social

relations and /or in aid work and care work in the logic of the extended family, thus demonstrating a great capacity for permanent learning. In short, it is experience which is highly profitable in the current labour market which prioritises, at the same time as technical, sectoral skills, soft skills and the capacity for continuous learning as desirable qualities for employment.

5.4 Recommendations directed at the European Union's Eurosocial+ Programme

As has been seen in the preceding conclusions and recommendations, these are not exclusively directed at the actions of the systems of validation of experience and the immigrant population. Although they were the 'starting principles' of this study, a more profound analysis of the subject through a revision of the systems, interviews with key informants, access to documents facilitated by different countries and interviews with diverse international organisations, has allowed a much broader outlook and to conclude that, **validation or certification of competencies acquired fundamentally through work experience, as a practice and as a system, should play a central role in the politics of professional, technical education, in professional orientation, in employment, and, in general, any policy linked to the employability of young people and adults.** In immigrant collectives, the need to start from accumulated experience and competences that they can bring to destination countries should be an obligatory question. There exist programmes, instruments and projects- set out in this report- that could make this possible both in Europe and Latin America.

A recommendation is made to the Eurosocial+ programme to subject all the recommendations made previously to dialogue and reflection, with Latin American countries and, in particular, with those which make up the Pacific Alliance, to identify areas of action where it is possible to advance in some of these directions.

Taking into consideration the route already taken by countries of the PA, it is estimated that, within the recommendations previously set out, there exist relevant areas that would allow these countries to take a close look at spaces of integration, prioritising some of the challenges put forward. Mutual recognition between countries on the basis of a common framework of quality in systems of certification of labour competencies, of actions aimed at strengthening the work with, and attention to, the immigrant population, of gender alerts, of improvements in the general functioning level of systems and of advances with regard to the complementary nature of instruments and methodologies, may all be considered notable starting points to advance in the improvement of public policies and in significant technical innovations.

Finally, a last critical recommendation for the Eurosocial+ programme in the area of support for countries in Latin America in their policies for social cohesion in the era of Covid-19, is to situate the validation of work experience in a central position from which a group of instruments can be regulated which contribute to management, imminently and intelligently, of the great challenges in the area of employment and unemployment that this crisis is generating.

The Covid-19 crisis and its economic and social consequences, are unprecedented situations in the recent history of the world. It is calculated that the PIB will fall (and it is already falling) between 8% and 12% in the Eurozone and that unemployment will affect at least 10% of the population (estimations from the BCE in May). Only in Spain, in the first trimester of the year 14.5% unemployment has been registered (and it is predicted that this could reach 34% if companies do not gradually

recuperate).²⁷ In Italy it is said to be 12% according to the National Agency for Active Policies in Employment (ANPAL). In the case of Latin America, the figures are also evident, with the aggravating factors of inequalities and poverty which characterise many countries in the region. In the most optimistic predictions made by the ECLAC the PIB will fall, on average, to the levels of 10 years ago. This gives rise to the organisation speaking of “another lost decade”. In the countries that make up the PA the figures are evident: Peru 13%, Mexico 9% and Colombia 5.6%.²⁸

In this context, making quick, relevant and practical decisions to favour people not losing their employment and, if they do lose their jobs, being able to ‘recycle’ with certain effectiveness, appear to be necessary and urgent policies. Here, systems of validation of experience are key to political regulation directed at keeping people in their jobs, basically, by modelling the recycling of profiles between sectors where employment is being destroyed and others which need qualified personnel. The validation of work experience is elevated here as a critical strategy for certification and for giving people accreditations which allow them to enter into employment and, at the same time, as a practice for services of vocational education to speed up and shorten time in training. European countries are already putting this into practice.²⁹ Also, it is recommendable for Latin American countries that, at the time of writing this report, represent the area of greatest, exponential growth in transmissions in the world, with a consequent economic and employment crisis.

In short, the potential that these systems have and the methodologies of validation of work experience is unquestionable to the extent that it speeds up processes, allows for its relevance to dynamics in the labour market, profiles people, shortens time frames, distances and gaps in the processes of professional training and/or recycling. In other words, the validation of work experience is a strategic tool for managing policies of education, training and employment in a fast and efficient way. Today, more than ever, these characteristics need to be essential in the labour challenges in the era of Covid-19.

27. Newspaper specialised in finance ‘5 Días’.

28. Data published by ECLAC in July 2020.

29. In the country reports, examples can be found along this line in Spain and the Netherlands

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