

The National vocational qualification (NVQ) certification (Acquisition procedure, counsellor training, panel members qualifications)

Exemplar: Slovenia

National vocational qualification (NVQ) is formally recognised work-related, competence-based qualification, which reflects the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively and shows that a candidate is competent in an area of work, or individual segments of work, within an area at a certain level of achievement, and as such, part of the national qualification framework. A NVQ equals vocational diploma and is shown by a public document – a certificate whose form and content are defined by the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

The NVQ certification system enables the formal verification of knowledge gained in non-formal and informal learning, thereby allowing the economic sphere to initiate an incentive to create professional standards according to the needs of the labour market, especially for those professions or tasks within the profession that are not defined in school VET programmes.

The National Professional Qualifications Act (2000) ¹ implemented the NVQ certification system, which is a network of institutions and bodies for the assessment and recognition of qualifications. First NVQ certificates were awarded in 2003. Through the verification and validation of NVQs, candidates can prove their knowledge and demonstrate their competences and skills in various ways with regard to a specific occupational standard and a catalogue of standards of vocational knowledge and skills. The NVQ acquisition procedure is roughly divided into three segments:

1. Submission of the application;
2. Counselling and compilation of a portfolio (certificates, diplomas, supporting documents demonstrating the completion of study obligations and similar, supporting documents attesting to prior work experience, reference letters, recognition documents...);
3. NVQ assessment and award.

1. NVQ can be obtained by adults who:

- acquired different vocational competences throughout their lifetime, but did not have them assessed or awarded;
- reached the age of majority (18) or are exceptionally younger and who no longer enjoy the status of an apprentice or secondary school student and have gained relevant work experience;
- wish to be promoted in their professional career without obtaining a higher level of professional education or completing a formal education programme.

2. In Slovenia, counsellors involved in the National Vocational Qualification procedure did not become accepted as an independent profession, but they represent a work task segment for different profiles, such as school counsellors, adult education organisers, teachers of different subjects and many other individuals acting in education, training and adult counselling service,

¹ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/indexSearch?search=Zakon+o+nacionalnih+poklicnih+kvalifikacijah>.

and completing a necessary training programme provided either by the National Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) or the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (ACS).

They are usually employed at organisations examining individual NVQ or at counselling centres for adult education. The NVQ assessment and award procedure gives every applicant a right to counselling in the registration procedure and portfolio elaboration. Every provider has to offer counselling to the applicant throughout the NVQ acquisition process.

In order to guarantee professional execution in the NVQ assessment and award procedure, a trained counsellor is the prerequisite for an institution to be entered in the register of providers² of the NVQ assessment and award procedure. Training objectives are as follows:

- be familiarised with NVQ acquisition paths with the emphasis on the NVQ certification,
- get to know the relevance of counselling in assessment and award procedures,
- get to know the legal basis and NVQ procedures,
- training in the applicant's portfolio elaboration,
- training enabling the counsellor to engage in a counselling interview with the applicant,
- training in the use of registration IT system.

The training lasts for two days and finishes with the drafting of a final paper, which a future counsellor defends in an interview. So far, there are 451 counsellors in Slovenia.

3. A three-member panel appointed by the National Examinations Centre (chairperson and two members) conducts recognition and validation of NVQ. All three must hold a licence issued by the National Examinations Centre. The panel reviews and assesses the knowledge and skills of candidates, which are laid down in the NVQ catalogue:
 - assesses the submitted evidence / documents and the candidates portfolio;
 - ratifies vocational qualifications, as long as the submitted documents in the portfolio meet all the conditions (knowledge and skills defined in the catalogue);
 - refers the candidate to practical examination when the submitted documents in the portfolio don't meet all conditions.

A licence for a member of a panel for assessment and certification of NVQs can be obtained by anyone:

- having acquired a qualification which will be assessed as determined by the Catalogue of Standards of Professional Knowledge and Skills;
- having work experience within the profession during the last five years;
- having performed a training programme determined by a proposal of the relevant Council of Experts by the Minister.

Candidates for panel members can also obtain proof of qualification through direct assessment based on the Catalogue of Standards of Professional Knowledge and Skills determined by the Minister. Based on public invitation for tenders at the National Examinations Centre, the Minister of Labour (or the Minister of Defence for military professions) appoints a list of panel members for each catalogue of standards of professional knowledge and skills separately. Members are appointed for a period of four years.

A candidate for a member of a panel for assessment and certification of a NVQ answers to public invitation for tenders and submits to the National Examinations Centre the following documents:

² So far, there are 151 NVQ providers in Slovenia.

- an application for acquisition of a licence;
- documents of proof, as determined by the Catalogue of Standards of Professional Knowledge and Skills, for a vocational qualification in question;
- a statement declaring a panel member would step down if a clash of interest occurred;
- a receipt showing administrative fees have been paid (€47.54).

The National Examinations Centre:

- checks whether staff conditions, as determined by the Catalogue of Standards of Professional Knowledge and Skills, are met and whether documents of proof of work experience in the profession during the last five years have been submitted;
- refers candidates for a three-day training at the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (after having completed the training, candidates pass an exam and send the certificate to the National Examinations Centre).

If all these criteria are met, the National Examinations Centre issues a licence for a panel member, which is valid for four years, after which time it must be renewed. So far, there are 1878 licenced members in Slovenia.

A member of a panel for assessment and certification of NVQs has to attend, or perform, one of the following activities at least once in the period before the licence expires:

- work in the profession;
- attend education and training in the profession;
- attend or give a lecture at a conference at home or a similar event at home and/or abroad;
- publish an article in a peer review, publication, book or monograph;
- make a study visit abroad;
- be given an award by relevant institutions for achievement directly linked to standards of knowledge and skills from the area of vocational qualification for which he/she is a panel member.

As the Act defines that candidates for panel members have to have at least five years of work experience in the profession, it is necessary to attach to the application for the renewal of the licence, a document of proof confirming work experience of the past five years.

Members of a panel for assessment and certification of NVQ, subject to basic principles of ethic conduct and basic ethic values (outline – ethic principles of panel members), have to continually renew their professional competences, help define criteria for the assessment of individual tasks and analyse the reliability of assessment tools and improvement thereof.

NVQ can be directly assessed in one of the following manners:

- written assessment and interview;
- practical performance assessment and interview;
- written and practical performance assessment and interview;
- on-the-job observation and interview;
- role play and interview.

Source:

http://www.ric.si/national_vocational_qualifications/general_information/
<http://www.nrpslo.org/en/>

<http://www.npk.si/index.php?lang=en>