Definitions related to validation of prior learning:

**Informal learning:** Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner’s perspective.

Comments:
- Informal learning outcomes does not usually lead to certification but may be validated in the framework of recognition of prior learning schemes.
- Informal learning is also referred to as experiential or incidental/random learning.


**Knowledge:** The outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of study or work.


**Knowledge society / knowledge-based society:** A society whose processes and practices are based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge.


**Learning:** A process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas and values and thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences. Learning may take place in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

Source: Cedefop and EQF Working group, 2006.

**Learning outcomes:** The set of knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process. Learning outcomes can arise from any form of learning setting (either formal, non-formal or informal).

Source: Cedefop 2003 and 2006.
**Lifelong learning:** All learning activity undertaken throughout life, and which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.


**Non-formal learning:** Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view.


**Qualification:** The term qualification covers different aspects:

(a) **formal qualification:** the formal outcome (certificate, diploma or title) of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards and/or possesses the necessary competence to do a job in a specific area of work. A qualification confers official recognition of the value of learning outcomes in the labour market and in education and training. A qualification can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade (OECD);

(b) **job requirements:** the knowledge, aptitudes and skills required to perform the specific tasks attached to a particular work position (ILO).

Source: adapted from: TESE - Thesaurus for Education Systems in Europe; European Training foundation, 1997; OECD, Qualifications systems: bridges to lifelong learning; ILO Thesaurus, 1998.

**Qualification framework:** An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes.


**Recognition (of learning outcomes):**

(a) Formal recognition: the process of granting official status to skills and competences either:

- through the award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles); or
- through the grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers, validation of gained skills and/or competences;
(b) social recognition: the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders.

**Skill:** The resources (knowledge, know-how and/or experience) needed to perform tasks and solve problems.

**Validation of learning outcomes:** The confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of an validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification.
Source: Cedefop, 2006.

**Valuing learning:** The process of promoting participation in and outcomes of (formal or non-formal) learning, in order to raise awareness of its intrinsic worth and to reward learning.