

# Good practice in validation of learning outcomes

Estonia

## Qualification "Childminder"



*Good practise in validation of learning outcomes. Estonia. Qualification "Childminder"*

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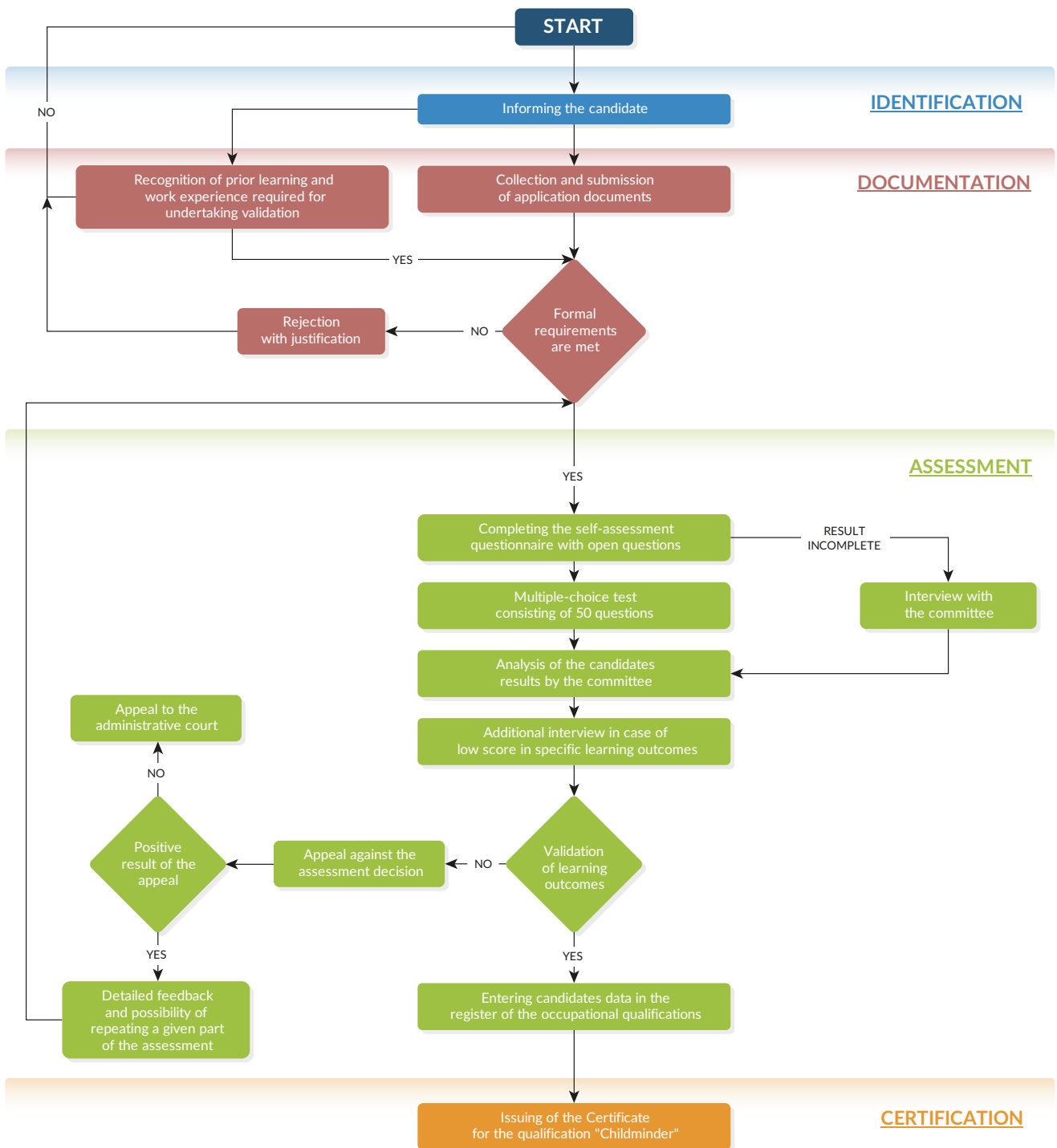
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## 1. Country, institution name

- Estonia
- Eesti Sotsiaaltöö Assotsiatsioon

## 2. Institution website

<http://www.eswa.ee>

## 3. Qualifications

Childminder (Estonian: Lapsehoidja)

- 4th level of the Estonian Qualifications Framework – EstQF (in Estonian: Eesti kvalifikatsiooniraamistik – EKR)
- 4th level of the European Qualifications Framework – EQF

## 4. Short description of the validation process

Comment

Before taking part in validation, the candidate submits an application and the documents indicated in the occupational qualification standard to the awarding body. They are then given to the occupational qualifications committee, which assesses whether the initial criteria have been met and whether the candidate may be admitted to assessment. Extension of the identification and documentation stages is not planned. Only learning outcomes listed in the occupational qualification standard are examined in the assessment stage. In the case of the “childminder” qualification, assessment can be performed in Estonian or Russian.

Assessment consists of three parts:

- self-assessment of the competences – conducted by the candidate by filling out the questionnaire;
- multiple-choice test – taken in an electronic version, consisting of 50 questions;
- interview – takes place only when the candidate has failed to demonstrate the proper level of competence but he/she has achieved a certain minimum level specified for the qualification; this stage will finally determine whether the candidate will be successful in undergoing the assessment.

The assessment is performed by an assessment committee, consisting of at least three assessors. The committee prepares an assessment protocol, which includes the results of each part of the assessment and the final result. On the basis of the protocol, the occupational qualifications committee decides on validating the competences of the candidate.

Assessment is performed slightly differently for persons attending vocational education institutions. In this case, certain competences are assessed already as part of learning at school and during a professional internship, which is part of the curriculum (see section 12.4 *Vocational education institution as a validation provider* for more information on this issue).

## 5. Detailed description of the validation process

### 5.1. Identification

The awarding body does not offer candidates the support of a counsellor to identify learning outcomes. Candidates are only provided with helpful information allowing them to identify their competences by themselves.

### Informing a candidate through the website

The candidate can become acquainted with information published on the website of the awarding body relating to, among others, the conditions to be fulfilled to begin assessment and the occupational qualification standards. If the candidate has decided to undergo the validation process, an application is submitted, which is then formally considered.

The awarding body is legally required to place the following information on its website:

- contact information;
- information about the types of qualifications that it awards along with their occupational qualification standards;
- description of the conditions to be met to undergo validation;
- list of documents that the candidate must submit;
- application form and other relevant document forms (e.g. CV, application for the recognition of prior learning and work experience, model letter of recommendation);
- deadlines for submitting the documents and dates of the assessment;
- the application fee;
- description of the validation and certification processes;
- description of the assessment standards (detailed information about the stages of assessment, methods, etc.);
- information about the members of the occupational qualifications committee.

The Estonian Social Work Association, which performs validation for the "childminder" qualification, also provides guidelines on how to complete the documents and the self-assessment questionnaire, examples of test questions, and a detailed description of the conditions of undertaking assessment (for example the scope of required training).

## 5.2. Documentation

The institution does not provide candidates with the support of a counsellor to document learning outcomes since it is not needed in this case – the method of analysis of evidence and statements is not used in the assessment stage. However, the candidate is required to collect and submit application documents demonstrating that he/she meets the conditions required to undertake assessment. Later, a formal assessment is performed and – in some cases – the application for the recognition of prior learning and work experience is examined. No assistance is provided for either activity by the awarding body.

### Collection and submission of application documents

A candidate for assessment should meet the following initial criteria:

- be at least 18 years of age;
- have completed secondary education;
- have completed first aid training (at least 16 hours within the last three years);
- have completed formal education or a professional course in childminding as part of non-formal education, both corresponding to EQF level 4, either one must have included practical training;
- have no contagious diseases;
- have no legal restrictions on working with children.

The fulfilment of these criteria is examined on the basis of the following documents delivered by the candidate:

- copy of his/her personal identity document;
- secondary school diploma;
- first aid training certificate;

- certificate of completion of education in a formal education institution or a diploma (certificate) confirming completion of non-formal vocational training;
- medical certificate confirming that the candidate has no contagious diseases;
- proof of not having a criminal record;
- completed application form for validation;
- letter of recommendation from an internship supervisor or training instructor;
- completed self-assessment questionnaire (the basis for the first stage of the assessment).

#### **Formal assessment of the application documents**

The occupational qualifications committee assesses the application documents submitted by the candidate. This is the basis for deciding whether the candidate meets the initial criteria and can undertake validation.

#### **Reviewing the application for the recognition of prior learning and work experience required for undertaking validation**

If the candidate has not undertaken a professional internship or has not completed the required path of formal education, he/she may submit an application for the recognition of prior learning achieved on his/her own or in another way and the acquired professional experience. In this document, he/she presents evidence of having acquired the learning outcomes of the “childminder” qualification through informal learning (for example evidence of knowledge of specialist literature, participation in Internet contests, etc.) or describes his/her professional experience. The occupational qualifications committee assesses the submitted information and evidence in detail and then determines whether the candidate meets the conditions of undergoing validation.

#### **Rejection with justification if the committee decides that the requirements have not been fulfilled**

If the candidate fails to meet the initial criteria and the application for the recognition of prior learning and work experience is rejected, the candidate will not be admitted to validation on the selected date. The occupational qualifications committee substantiates in writing the reasons for rejecting the application and the paid fee is refunded. The candidate has the right to apply again in the next application round.

### **5.3. Assessment**

The assessment committee reviews the detailed descriptions of the sets of learning outcomes included in the occupational qualification standard as the criteria for assessing the candidate’s competences (see section 12.5 for more information about this issue).

By completing the self-assessment questionnaire and taking the multiple-choice test, the candidate must demonstrate that he/she has acquired all the learning outcomes for the qualification. The committee analyses the results obtained and if the candidate has scored low in the earlier stages, they may hold an additional interview with him/her. Its result will finally determine whether the candidate has achieved a positive assessment.

After completing the assessment, the assessment committee prepares a protocol that includes the results obtained in each part of the assessment and the final result. The protocol specifies whether the candidate has exceeded the threshold of points required to attain the qualification, which means that the candidate’s possession of the required learning outcomes has been confirmed.

Based on the proposals of the assessment committee, the occupational qualifications committee makes the final decision on awarding the qualification – it does not interfere in the assessment of the assessors but only confirms that the assessment was performed in accordance with the procedure. If it is not possible to confirm that the candidate has all sets of the qualification’s learning outcomes or if the candidate has not obtained the required number of points, the awarding body prepares a written justification of the negative validation decision. It is recommended that guidelines on possible paths of professional and educational development for persons who have failed to attain the qualification should be included in the documentation



of the validation process. a good practice is also providing feedback to those candidates who have completed validation with a positive result.

Each candidate has the right to appeal the decision to the occupational qualifications committee within 30 days of the date of receiving the validation results. An effort is made by the parties to reach an agreement as a result of the appeals procedure. Should the appeals be positively considered, the candidate may repeat a given part of the assessment.

If no agreement is reached, the candidate may appeal the decision of the occupational qualifications committee to the administrative court (see section 11.3).

## 5.4. Certification

### Issuance of the certificate

After a decision has been made on awarding the qualification, the administrator of the occupational qualifications committee enters the data of the candidate in the register of the occupational qualifications.

The Estonian Qualifications Authority, which operates the register, issues a certificate for the qualification on behalf of the the awarding body. The candidate obtains the certificate within 30 days of receiving the decision. In the case of the “childminder” qualification, certification is valid for five years. At present, all certificates are in written form. Providing certificates in an electronic version is planned in the near future.

### Renewal of the certificate

After five years of the date of issuing the certificate, the interested party may request that the assessment of competences be repeated on the basis of documents confirming the fulfilment of the conditions for renewed certification.

The person applying for renewed certification should demonstrate that:

- no more than 12 months have passed from the expiration of the validity date of the certificate;
- he/she took first aid training (of at least 16 hours duration) within the last three years;
- he/she has no contagious diseases;
- he/she has no legal restrictions concerning work with children;
- he/she took part in vocational training lasting at least 120 hours within the last five years;
- he/she has at least three years' experience in working with children aged up to 7, acquired within the last five years.

The fulfilment of these criteria results in the repeated awarding of the qualification and issuance of the certificate. The procedure is repeated every five years. This differentiates certificates awarded as the result of the validation of non-formal and informal learning from certificates granted as part of formal education, which do not have to be renewed.

## 6. Validation methods

As no support is provided to the candidate for the “childminder” qualification in the stages of identifying and documenting learning outcomes, only the methods used during assessment are discussed:

- self-assessment of competences,
- test,
- interview.

### 6.1. Self-assessment of competences

The self-assessment questionnaire has open-ended questions referring to specific sets of learning outcomes described in the occupational qualification standard, such as:

1. Supporting the development environment of the child:

- *What are the main risks to the safety of the child? Give examples.*
- *How do i ensure the child's safety in the environment in which he/she is developing?*
- *How do i ensure a playful environment for the child?*
- *What are the most characteristic signs of child abuse? Which institutions can i turn to in case of such a problem?*
- *What can i refer to in my experience in order to demonstrate that i have already encountered such situations and know how to cope with them?*
- *What are the most important rules of hygiene? What have i done to follow these rules?*
- *Why is supporting the development environment of a child important in a childminder's work?*

The candidate answers the question in a descriptive manner, presenting his/her knowledge and skills demonstrating the acquisition of the learning outcomes belonging to a given set. Self-assessment usually includes 3–4 pages of standard typescript (font Times New Roman, 12, single spacing between lines). For answers to questions pertaining to sets 1, 2 and 8, the candidate can be scored from 0 to 4 points, for answers pertaining to sets 3–6: from 0 to 2 points, and for an additional set 7 – from 0 to 5 points.

The first part of the assessment is completed when the candidate has obtained at least 10 points. If the candidate wants to demonstrate that he/she has the competences of caring for an infant, he/she must additionally answer questions from set 7 and obtain at least 3 points from this set.

## 6.2. Test

The test consists of 50 multiple-choice questions arranged in thematic sections. It is offered in two language versions (Estonian and Russian) and taken online. The candidate must obtain a specific number of points for each section of questions to obtain a positive result for the entire test. For example, 4 correct answers are required to 6 questions in the part on first aid. More points obtained in one section do not make up for a lower score in another part.

## 6.3. Interview

An interview is conducted only when the candidate has failed to obtain a sufficient number of points in the competence self-assessment; it takes place on the same day as the test. After having read the self-assessment questionnaire, the assessment committee gives the candidate detailed information about the number of points obtained for individual sets of learning outcomes. The interview relates only to those sets in which the candidate obtained an insufficient number of points. This lets him/her know in advance whether such an interview with the committee will take also place on the test day and which issues will be discussed. Three assessors interview the candidate. This is an auxiliary method and is used to determine whether a poor result in the first part of the assessment is actually due to the candidate's lack of competences.

## 7. Validation results

Comment

The "childminder" qualification is awarded on the basis of obtaining of a positive assessment result. This means that the candidate has confirmed that he/she has confirmed the first six sets of learning outcomes. The last two sets referring to infant care are not required to obtain the qualification. If the candidate presents evidence of having acquired the competences of the last two sets and this is confirmed in the assessment, information about these additional skills will be presented in the certificate.

## 8. Human resources

### 8.1. Requirements of the occupational qualifications committee members

The required competences of the occupational qualifications committee members are specified in the validation regulations. The committee must include representatives of various groups of stakeholders who are connected with the field relating to the given qualification: specialists from the trade, employers, trainers, persons from professional associations, etc.

At least 2/3 of the members must represent the labour market (employers and specialists) and trainers and training providers must constitute the remaining 1/3. The awarding body is responsible for fulfilling these requirements and ensuring that the occupational qualifications committee members are well prepared. However, the members of this committee do not have to meet specific conditions relating to level of education or length or type of professional experience – stakeholders are free to appoint their representatives.

In the case of the “childminder” qualification, candidacies for membership are approved by the Sector Skills Council for Social Welfare. The Council is also entitled to make recommendations on appointing members of the occupational qualifications committee.

The occupational qualifications committee is responsible for:

- determining and approving the methods, principles and standards of assessment,
- appointing members of the assessment committee (assessors),
- admitting candidates to validation,
- making decisions about awarding qualifications.

## 8.2. Requirements of the assessment committee members

The validation regulations also specify the required competences of assessment committee members. The committee is to consist of at least three assessors (however, the online test can be assessed by only one assessor). The committee can include one trainer (teacher) providing training in the field of social welfare. One committee member can also have a professional relationship with the candidate but the internal regulations of the awarding body are usually stricter and do not allow an assessor to have a professional relationship with a validation candidate.

As a team, the assessors must have:

- the skills listed in the occupational qualification standard of the given qualification, and
- knowledge of validation and the qualifications system.

It is also required that 2/3 of the assessment committee members are from the labour market and have completed training on validation, organised by the awarding body. The Estonian Qualifications Authority conducts additional training for assessors to improve the quality of validation and make the process consistent when working with various types of qualifications.

Assessors are appointed by the occupational qualifications committee and must strictly observe the binding assessment procedures and standards. The awarding body specifies the internal requirements for members of the assessment committee. In the case of the “childminder” qualification, all assessors are required to have completed higher education but the field of specialization is not defined. It is also often recommended that assessment committee members should have a certificate in the qualification they validate.

The assessment committee is responsible for:

- performing an objective assessment, according to the principles and standards specified by the occupational qualifications committee,
- preparing and submitting assessment protocols and proposing the assessment result of each candidate to the occupational qualifications committee.

## 9. Organizational and material conditions



### 9.1. Time-frame

The validation process for the “childminder” qualification can last about 4 months from the time an application for issuing the certificate is submitted. At least 30 days are required for the application period. If there are problems in the presented application or documents, this period may be extended for up to 60 days, with additional guidance provided to the candidate on completing the forms or documentation.

Assessment of the self-assessment questionnaire lasts about two weeks. It is assessed online by the assessors in an environment that safely stores the material. The results are also submitted to the candidate in electronic form. This allows the candidates to quickly learn whether they have successfully completed this part of the assessment and whether they should prepare for an interview.

The test and possible interview take place on the same day. The final results of this part are announced within seven days together with the final decision of the occupational qualifications committee, which is then entered in the register of the occupational qualifications system. The certificate of the qualification is delivered within 30 days from the date of issuance of the decision ending validation.

### 9.2. Organisational and material conditions

The institution applying to become an awarding body must demonstrate that it meets the organisational and material conditions necessary for performing the validation of a given qualification. For example, it demonstrates that it has a lease agreement for the use of the facilities where the assessment will be performed or uses its own office facilities, materials and equipment.

Both the occupational qualifications committee and the assessment committee perform most tasks online and all documents concerning the candidates are prepared in electronic versions. Electronic mail is used as the basic means of communication by the committee for discussions, voting and decisions. Since the second half of 2017, the multiple-choice test has also been given in electronic form. That is why new requirements on the technical equipment of the facilities where this part of the assessment takes place have been developed. To give the test, the awarding body rents computer rooms in various locations, depending on where validation is performed. The candidates must register in an electronic system before starting the test.

To conduct an interview, the rooms used do not have to meet additional requirements. Usually, classrooms are leased. The interview is recorded and this is why good quality recording equipment must be ensured.

## 10. Quality assurance



### 10.1. External quality assurance

#### The Estonian Qualifications Authority

Since 2015, the Estonian Qualifications Authority is required to conduct quality control and if needed – the administrative supervision of institutions performing validation. To this end, the office has instituted a quality control system, which is mainly based on supporting and cooperating with institutions involved in awarding qualifications. As part of this system, quality assurance interviews are held each year with a number of awarding bodies.

External quality assurance also includes a review of documents (the awarding body is required to store the protocols of the occupational qualifications committee meetings for 10 years; the protocols must meet certain requirements).

After holding the interviews, the Estonian Qualifications Authority may present written suggestions for improving the processes. However, both participation in the interviews and following the suggestions are

voluntary. The Authority has no legal ability to enforce implementation of the recommendations by the awarding body. Previous experience shows that institutions have a positive attitude about the quality controls and are willing to cooperate to improve the processes.

However, if an awarding body does not follow the suggestions resulting from the quality control or if there are doubts that the regulations are being followed, the Estonian Qualifications Authority may begin the administration supervision of the awarding body's activities. After this procedure is initiated, the awarding body must submit all information and documents concerning the awarding of qualifications and the written suggestions of the Estonian Qualifications Authority become obligatory. In exceptional situations, the relevant Sector Skills Council for the given qualification can suspend the authorisation of such an institution to perform validation.

### **Sector Skills Councils**

The legislation regulating the operation of the Estonian Qualifications System and the process of awarding qualifications is quite detailed, and apart from the methods used in validation as well as the organisational and material conditions, institutions performing validation have little room to act independently. Most aspects not regulated by law must be confirmed by the relevant Sector Skills Council for the field of the qualification. These include:

- composition of the occupational qualifications committee;
- validation procedures (e.g. initial criteria, assessment methods, description of the process);
- amount of the validation fee.

The entities that apply to become awarding bodies take part in competitions that are assessed by Sector Skills Councils, which operate as part of the Estonian Qualifications Authority. The winners are then authorised to be awarding bodies and perform validation for five years.

During tenure as an awarding body, the entity presents annual reports of activities and the financing of validation to the Sector Skills Council. The reports have information about the number of qualifications awarded within a given year, the use of funds, number of appeals, actions taken to promote the qualifications systems, emerging problems and proposals for changes. Some of these issues are then discussed during Sector Skills Council meetings. Also, official documents issued by awarding bodies must be confirmed by the Sector Skills Council.

Coordinators of Sector Skills Councils maintain contact with awarding bodies on an ongoing basis and may monitor activities of these bodies.

## **10.2. Internal quality assurance**

Supervision of the internal procedures ensuring the quality of the validation performed by the awarding body is conducted by the occupational qualifications committee. Before the assessment stage, the committee analyses the documents of the candidates to ensure that they meet the initial criteria. Formal assessment is often performed online – both in the case of examining the documents and explaining doubts concerning the fulfilment of the initial criteria by a given candidate. The discussion is followed by voting, and a protocol of the meeting is prepared.

After completion of the formal assessment, the occupational qualifications committee collects the information and remarks of the assessment committee members to ensure that the assessment has been performed objectively and in line with the procedures. In the validation process, the roles of the assessment committee and the occupational qualifications committee must be separated to ensure that the assessment is objective. For this reason, the final decision on awarding the qualification is made by the occupational qualifications committee and not the assessment committee.

The feedback obtained from the assessment committee is used by the occupational qualifications committee to improve validation procedures and if needed – to adapt the methods and materials used. In fact, nearly all

proposals concerning improvements and further development are submitted by the assessment committee or the administrator of this process, while the final decisions are always made by the occupational qualifications committee.

### 10.3. Right to appeal the decision on validation

Each candidate has the right to appeal the validation decision of the occupational qualifications committee within 30 days of obtaining the result. Both parties must follow the procedure described in the act on administrative proceedings, which includes a model form for the appeal and describes the appeals procedure (e.g. specifies the time limits for responding). If the parties are unable to reach agreement, the candidate can appeal to the administrative court. In practice, this occurs extremely rarely and candidates as well as occupational qualifications committees find solutions that are acceptable to both parties. The occupational qualifications committee considers each appeals case individually. It may suggest that the candidate repeat all or only part of the assessment. The candidate also obtains a detailed justification of the negative validation result.

## 11. Financing

Comment

The awarding body is not governed by the regulations for validating vocational education qualifications. However, educational institutions having the status of an awarding body must comply with the general provisions on performing validation for a given qualification. They can decide independently on such issues as the fees for validation. This leads to differences in the cost of validation between formal education and non-formal education institutions. In the case of formal education, certain competences are already assessed in school. The way assessment is performed differs depending on whether the learning outcomes have been acquired by students in school or by candidates as the result of non-formal and informal learning.

### 11.1. Attaining qualifications on the basis of non-formal and informal learning

Validation candidates who acquired learning outcomes through non-formal or informal learning pay for the costs associated with assessment and the awarding of the qualification. The awarding body determines the validation budget and presents it for approval to the Sector Skills Council for Social Welfare. The budget includes:

- costs of the work of the occupational qualifications committee, the assessment committee and the administration staff;
- lease of facilities for assessment purposes;
- administration costs;
- issuance of the certificate.

Submitting an application to undergo validation costs 100 euros. Renewing the certificate after five years have passed since the qualification was awarded, i.e. confirming that the candidate meets the specific conditions, is 32 euros. The awarding body cannot grant discounts, resulting, e.g. from membership in a given association. However, certain professional associations partially cover the costs of validation for their members.

### 11.2. Attaining qualifications in the formal education system

The assessment of school students is financed by the Ministry of Education and Research. In the past, students were able to undergo validation in the awarding body of the relevant qualification within one year of completing their studies. Since 2018, all persons attending public vocational education schools are required to undergo validation after completing their studies in order to obtain a certificate, which is a precondition for graduating vocational school.

The maximum cost of assessing the learning outcomes of vocational school students is specified in an

ordinance of the minister of education. The assessment of the “childminder” qualification is treated as a theoretical, not a practical exam (since no tools or materials relevant to the workplace are used during the assessment) and the maximum cost does not exceed 32 euros.

## 12. Context of good practice

### 12.1. Establishment of the Estonian qualifications system

The establishment of the Estonian qualifications system was initiated by an employers’ association in 1997. Four years later, the Estonian Qualifications Authority was established. This is a private entity whose main task was initially to supervise the process of developing and then implementing the qualifications system. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Research specified the purpose of establishing the qualifications system: to develop a sustainable and flexible qualifications system, compliant with international standards, based on learning outcomes and meeting the needs of persons involved in lifelong learning and a knowledge-based society and economy. In 2008, the Estonian Qualifications Framework was established and since 2011, when the transitional period ended, all occupational qualification standards have been developed on the basis of this framework.

### 12.2. Estonian Social Work Association

The Estonian Social Work Association is a non-profit organisation of specialists from the social work sector. It consists of two organisations – The Council of Directors of Social Institutions and the Association of Estonian Social Workers in Healthcare – and about 450 individual members. The objective of the Association is, among others, to support social workers and protect their interests, promote the culture of social work, and participate in shaping the law at the local and national level. The Association is managed by a five-person council, which is appointed for a three-year term by the general meeting. The Estonian Social Work Association has five regional branches.

The Association has been awarding qualifications since May 2013. Each awarding body in Estonia obtains such a status for five years. Then it must enter a competition to become an awarding body again. The public and open competition is administered by the Estonian Qualifications Authority and the winner is selected by a majority vote and appointed by the Sector Skills Council for Social Welfare.

The Estonian Social Work Association has acquired the authority to award the following qualifications:

- “Care worker” – level 3 and 4;
- “Manager of a social welfare institution” – level 6;
- “Childminder” – level 4 and 5;
- “Social worker” – level 6 and 7;
- “Client service specialist for persons with mental health problems” – level 4;
- “Debt advisor” – level 6.

Six occupational qualifications committees, which work on individual qualifications, operate in the association. Each of the committees has a coordinator administering the process of awarding qualifications and the work of a given occupational qualifications committee.

### 12.3. Challenges for the system and planning further development

The Estonian Qualifications Authority’s is aiming towards a system in which the most important issue in the assessment process is whether a person has acquired the learning outcomes required for a given qualification and not how he/she obtained them. Adopting this perspective is quite challenging. However, the attitude of different groups of labour market stakeholders on this issue is gradually changing and increasingly more institutions are adapting their validation process to the requirements of the qualifications

system. This allows persons who have acquired competences through extensive work experience, non-formal training or informal learning to go through the certification process.

The further development of the validation process in Estonia should concentrate on having validation be more focused on the assessment of competences rather than on setting preconditions to apply. Presently, institutions performing validation are expected to lower initial criteria (for example, withdraw the requirement to complete core training lasting a certain number of hours or determine a minimum of professional experience) and to instead prepare materials for the assessment stage that would reflect the actual level of a candidate's competences. It would also be advantageous to implement credit transfer procedures (recognition of prior learning and professional experience) as part of validation. If this were to be introduced, a candidate who has completed training in the field and attained certain competences would not have to confirm them as part of the assessment – they would be recognised on the basis of a document confirming completion of the training.

One of the main objectives of the Estonian qualifications system is to enable persons to confirm competences acquired outside of the formal education system. However, some occupational qualifications committees require a certificate proving completion of a given type of school as one of the initial criteria for validation. The occupational qualification standard of a person with a “childminder” qualification refers to the social welfare act, which states that to take care of a child, a person should have either a secondary education and experience in working with children, or a school certificate of the childminder occupational qualification. The Sector Skills Council for Social Welfare may change this requirement.

#### 12.4. Vocational education institution as a validation provider

A vocational education institution in the formal education system may also apply for the authority to award qualifications to its students who have completed the relevant curriculum based on the occupational qualification standards. To be granted such authorisation, the following requirements must be met:

- the learning outcomes of the curricula of a given qualification must correspond to the competences listed in its occupational qualification standard;
- the composition of the assessment committee is approved by the occupational qualifications committee (the requirements of the composition of assessment committees described in section 8.2 are also applied to school assessment committees);
- the curricula of the given profession is accredited for at least 6 years.

In the case of “Childminder” the Sector Skills Council for Social Welfare is responsible for authorising institutions to award the qualification. An education institution with the status of an awarding body is to perform validation according to the guidelines of the occupational qualifications committee relating to the methods applied as well as the organisational and material conditions. The validation process of formal education differs from the validation of non-formal and informal learning because some of the students' competences are assessed as the curriculum is being implemented. Certificates granted within formal education are valid for an indefinite time, differentiating them from certificates granted through the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which are valid for five years.

#### 12.5. Occupational qualification standard for the “childminder” qualification

The learning outcomes required for the “childminder” qualification are specified in the occupational qualification standard, which is published in the register of the Estonian system of occupational qualifications. It are the basis on which competences are assessed as part of the validation process. Competences that do not relate to the qualification being validated are not assessed.

Occupational qualification standards are developed by groups of experts of the Estonian Qualifications Authority and approved by the relevant Sector Skills Councils for a given field relating to the qualification. The awarding body is responsible for preparing the materials used to assess the learning outcomes listed in the occupational qualification standard.



The first “childminder” occupational qualification standard was developed in 2007. The document is revised every five years and the new version is approved by the Sector Skills Council for Social Welfare. The newest standard for “childminder” was published in the register of the occupational qualifications system on 13 December 2016.

The occupational qualification standard has two aims:

- it is a point of reference for developing curricula in vocational education institutions (or at universities),
- it is the basis used to assess the competences of persons learning in formal education or candidates applying to have a qualification awarded through the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Thanks to the fact that the occupational qualification standard is used in formal and non-formal education, it is possible to ensure the quality of certificates granted as the result of various learning paths. Persons who completed validation with a positive result and obtained the “childminder” qualification certificate have the same competences as graduates of a vocational school.

The following sets of learning outcomes have been specified in the “childminder” occupational qualification standard:

1. Supporting the development environment of the child:

- creation of a safe and friendly environment;
- assessment and prevention of risk factors;
- identification of abuse;
- housekeeping and cleaning;
- using home appliances and compliance with safety requirements.

2. Supporting the development of the child:

- supporting the development of the child’s play, cognitive, educational, social, and self-help skills;
- supporting the development of language and speech;
- understanding the personality and development of the child;
- supporting the development of the values and manners of the child;
- planning, conducting and analysing games and activities;
- supporting the creativity of the child.

3. Supporting the development of the child’s self-help skills:

- supporting the development of self-help skills;
- teaching and supporting independent eating;
- supporting the development of the self-regulation skills.

4. Promotion of the child’s health:

- monitoring the child’s health condition;
- defining the child’s health factors and preventing risks;
- conducting health promotion activities;
- taking care of a sick child in a home environment;
- taking care of a sick child in a child care institution;
- taking care of a child with a chronic disease;
- ensuring proper nutrition for a child requiring a special diet;
- providing first aid.

5. Cooperation with parents/guardians:

- learning and respecting the background of the child and his/her family;
- involving parents/guardians in daily activities;

- communication and providing feedback to parents/guardians.

6. Taking care of a child with special needs:

- gathering information about the child's need(s);
- planning and conducting activities;
- ensuring a caring and accepting environment;
- designing the physical environment, including the use of medical aids;
- supporting the development potential and strengths of the child.

*Optional:*

7. Taking care of an infant:

- infant care;
- supporting the development of an infant:

8. General competences:

- language requirements;
- digital skills requirements;
- work ethics;
- goal orientation;
- independent professional development.

Each of these sets has been described in detail in the occupational qualification standard, for example:

1. Supporting the development environment of the child:

Creation of a safe and friendly environment:

*Creates a safe and playful environment for development, taking into account the individual characteristics, age and needs of the child.*

or

2. Supporting the development of the child:

Devoting attention to the personality and development of the child:

*Understands the child's personality and development: in cooperation with parents/guardians, supports the development of positive self-esteem and self-value in accordance with the principles of child-centred education; supports the child's activity and play undertaken individually and in a small group; values the traditions of the Estonian culture and respects other cultures.*

An occupational qualification standard may specify the expected level of a candidate's preparation (e.g. the required level of education or professional experience). The occupational qualifications committee, which determines the initial criteria for entering validation, must comply with these requirements, but it also can define them more precisely (e.g. if the requirement of documenting "professional experience" is included in the occupational qualification standard, the occupational qualifications committee may require documentation of "two years of professional experience"). In the "childminder" standard, secondary education is such a requirement. The occupational qualifications committee cannot, however, call for stricter requirements (e.g. the acquisition of a higher education certificate).

## Comments

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### The occupational qualification standard

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#### the occupational qualification standard

The occupational qualification standard describes the professional activities and specifies the competences of the person who is qualified to perform them. In Estonia, the standard consists of three parts. The first part describes the profession. It specifies, for example, the character of the work, main tasks, tools and the working environment, and describes the personal characteristics and competences that make it possible to undertake such professional activity. The second part describes the competences (required and optional), which are the basis for performing the assessment. The last part provides general information and a list of annexes. The occupational qualification standards are accompanied by assessment standards, which specify the methods, procedures and criteria of assessment. [Source: Cedefop (2016). European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country report: Estonia. Downloaded from: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>].

### Learning outcomes

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#### learning outcomes

In Estonia, the terms “competences” and “learning outcomes” are used alternately and refer to the readiness to perform the described tasks on the basis of acquired knowledge, skills and social competence.

### The candidate will be awarded a full qualification

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#### qualification is awarded

In the case of the “childminder” qualification, it is not possible to attain it by validating only some of the sets of learning outcomes. However, qualifications exist in Estonia that can be attained in stages. In such cases, the certificate states that the candidate has confirmed only some of the competences required for the qualification. Awarding a full qualification or some of its sets is in no way connected to the education path (formal education, non-formal education), the length of learning or other factors relating to the manner of how the candidate acquired the competences or experience.

### the candidate will be awarded a full qualification

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#### has confirmed the first six sets of learning outcomes

In the case of the “childminder” qualification, it is not possible to attain it by validating only some of the sets of learning outcomes. However, qualifications exist in Estonia that can be attained in stages. In such cases, the certificate states that the candidate has confirmed only some of the competences required for the qualification. Awarding a full qualification or some of its sets is in no way connected to the education path (formal education, non-formal education), the length of learning or other factors relating to the manner of how the candidate acquired the competences or experience.

### Means of communication used for voting, discussing and making decisions

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#### perform most tasks online

The digitalization of the assessment process has been conducted in cooperation with the Innove Foundation (working under the Ministry of Education and Research). The Contractor prepared a six-minute film introducing the digital environment, which can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RK7Pbm8sX7c&feature=youtu.be>

### Discussions on quality assurance

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## External quality assurance

Group discussions were conducted in the autumn of 2015 with representatives of the Estonian Social Work Association, which awards the “childminder” qualification. The participants included members of the management board responsible for validation, coordinators of the process, members of the occupational qualifications committee and assessors. A questionnaire was sent to the vocational education institutions that assess this qualification to gather opinions about their cooperation with the Estonian Social Work Association.

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## Discussions on quality assurance

### quality assurance interviews

Group discussions were conducted in the autumn of 2015 with representatives of the Estonian Social Work Association, which awards the “childminder” qualification. The participants included members of the management board responsible for validation, coordinators of the process, members of the occupational qualifications committee and assessors. A questionnaire was sent to the vocational education institutions that assess this qualification to gather opinions about their cooperation with the Estonian Social Work Association.

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## Administrative costs

### administration costs

These are the costs of office supplies, materials and equipment used during validation. They should not exceed 10% of the total budget designated for the performance of validation.

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## The awarding body may not grant discounts resulting from membership in a given organisation

### The awarding body cannot grant discounts

In Estonia, employers or other stakeholders do not cover the costs of validation. Some occupational qualifications committees have agreed to work free of charge or for a nominal fee so that assessment is accessible to more persons. Employers sometimes reimburse the validation costs of their employees. However, this does not happen often.

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## Obtaining a certificate is an initial condition for completing vocational school

### a pre-condition for graduating vocational school

This does not apply to students of vocational secondary schools (the equivalent of a Polish technikum).