

**Implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-  
formal and Informal Learning**  
**One-off report: Portugal**

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### ***Abbreviations and Acronyms***

ANEFA – National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (Agência Nacional para a Educação e Formação de Adultos)

ANQ – National Agency for Qualification (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação)

ANQEP – National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional)

CNO – New Opportunities Centres (Centros Novas Oportunidades)

CQEP – Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional)

DGFV – Directorate General for Vocational Training (Direção-Geral da Formação Profissional)

EFA Courses – Adult Education and Training Courses (Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos)

EQF – European Qualifications Framework (Quadro Europeu de Qualificações)

ESF – European Social Fund (Fundo Social Europeu)

HE – Higher Education (Ensino Superior)

IEFP – Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional)

NCQ – National Catalogue of Qualifications (Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações)

NOI – New Opportunities Initiative (Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades)

NQF – National Qualifications Framework (Quadro Nacional de Qualificações)

NQS – National Qualifications System (Sistema Nacional de Qualificações)

RVCC - Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências)

SCQ – Sector Councils for Qualification (Conselhos Setoriais para a Qualificação)

SIGO - Online Information and Management System for Education and Training Provision (Sistema Integrado de Informação e Gestão da Oferta Educativa e Formativa)

## ***Introduction***

This report intends to give a clear picture of VNFIL in non-higher education in Portugal. Since its creation in 2000, the VNFIL system is called National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC). It has represented an important part of the measures in place to tackle the critical deficit of qualifications of the Portuguese adult population.

Inspired by the structure suggested for the one-off country report on the implementation of validation arrangements, this report is divided into six chapters. In this context, chapter one presents the general features of validation arrangements, highlighting their development from year 2000 until 2017. In chapter two the different stages of intervention of validation centres and of RVCC processes are described in detail. Chapter three focuses on the results of RVCC and on the coherence of validation arrangements in the National Qualifications System and the European transparency tools. Chapter four describes the role and relevance of stakeholders in the RVCC system at national, regional and local levels. Chapter five presents relevant information on the evaluation and monitoring of the system, as well as on quality assurance, though the support provided to the validation centres by the monitoring teams and by the training to the teams. Finally, chapter six presents some conclusions on the role of RVCC in upgrading the qualification of adults in Portugal and highlights some challenges faced in the implementation of VNFIL.

Besides complying with the request for countries to report on the implementation of VNFIL by 2018, this report aims to be useful as an example of how VNFIL arrangements were implemented in a Member State, taking into consideration Portugal's specific features and line of action. Furthermore, international institutions and experts have acknowledged the high degree of development of our RVCC system<sup>1</sup> and Portugal's vast experience in this field. The national system for RVCC is in line with the Council Recommendation on VNFIL, of 20 December 2012.

## ***Chapter I. General features of the validation arrangements***

It is well-known that qualifying people has an impact in economic growth, in promoting social inclusion and sustainable employment. Portugal has long faced a structural problem of low educational attainment (53% of the people aged 25 to 64 had not completed upper-secondary education in 2016, against the EU average of 23%, Eurostat). Despite the progress made over the last decades, the investment in the qualification of the adult population has fluctuated over the years and across political cycles both in its centrality and in the resources (human and financial) allocated to it. The strategies adopted are closely linked to the public policies defined by different governments. The creation of a VNFIL system (RVCC) has been crucial to effectively recover the qualification levels of the adult population. Even though it has evolved over the years, RVCC is

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<sup>1</sup> 2010 Update of the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - Final Report

developed by a network of validation centres (specifically created for this purpose within existing institutions) and is targeted at adults aged 18 or plus who do not hold either primary or lower-secondary education (4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> grades), upper-secondary education (12<sup>th</sup> grade) or a professional certification. Those up to 23 years old must have at least three years of professional certified experience to be eligible. Hence, this chapter provides an historical overview of validation arrangements throughout time spans since its creation and the corresponding legal, institutional and financial background.

## **2000-2005**

The RVCC system began in December 2000 with the creation of the first 6 validation centres (Centros RVCC), which operated under a pilot experience, being the result of the recommendations of a task force created by the Ministries of Education and Labour in 1997. Besides, the task force also recommended the creation of an institution to coordinate adult education and training. Therefore, the National Agency for Education and Training of Adults (ANEFA)<sup>2</sup> was created in 1999.

ANEFA functioned until 2002 and was of great importance in adult education and training for several reasons. Firstly, because it was established as a public institute under the supervision of both the Ministries of Education and Labour, thus bridging two fields of intervention that traditionally operated separately. Secondly, it created and developed three innovative instruments that became the foundation of adult education and training:

### **- Key-Competences Standard - Basic Education**

This instrument was conceived as "an integrative matrix between the balance of competences acquired in life experience and the development of adult education/training projects". This standard began to be applied in 2001, in RVCC processes and in the Adult Education and Training Courses (EFA courses) and is structured in three interconnected levels called B1, B2 and B3, corresponding to the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> year of schooling, respectively.

### **- EFA Courses**

This double certification pathway (awarding a school and a professional certification) was targeted at people aged 18 or over who had not attained lower-secondary education and who did not hold a professional certification required by the labour market. An innovative feature of EFA Courses was that they started with the recognition and validation of competences previously acquired in formal, informal and non-formal contexts and the adult only needed to complete the missing training modules. These courses awarded the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> year of schooling and training level 1 or 2 of Decision no 85/368/EEC, of the Council of 16 July.

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<sup>2</sup> Decreto-Lei n.º 387/99, de 28 de setembro.

- RVCC

RVCC was the result of the field experience of EFA Courses, which showed that there were adults who already had the key-competences necessary to obtain school certification. This led to the creation of the RVCC system and to the establishment of the first 6 RVCC Centres, promoted by diversified entities: a business association, two professional training centres, a public school, a professional school and a local development association. The supervision and monitoring of the system, carried out by ANEFA, allowed to test the adequacy of the instruments and to extend the network of RVCC Centres<sup>3</sup>. For the expansion of the network, a National System for the Accreditation of Entities Promoting RVCC Centres<sup>4</sup> was implemented. These Centres were co-financed by the ESF and by the State Budget.

In 2002, a new structure exclusively under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, the Directorate General for Vocational Training (DGFV)<sup>5</sup>, replaced ANEFA. Until 2005, DGFV proceeded with the policies in place and there were no major changes to what was on the ground.

### **2005-2011**

The New Opportunities Initiative (NOI) was launched in 2005 and was, at that time, the largest governmental programme dedicated to upgrading the qualifications of the Portuguese population, having the upper-secondary level of education as reference. NOI resumed ANEFA's initiative and placed adult education and training in the centre of the governmental agenda. The initiative aimed to: 1) give low-qualified adults a formal recognition of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning; and 2) build on their professional experience and skills developed through their working lives to obtain an upper-secondary school diploma, by expanding the provision of adult education and training. The NOI set ambitious targets, including qualifying one million active workers by 2010: 650 000 through the RVCC process and 350 000 through adult education and training. Another target was to enlarge the network of RVCC Centres to 500, according to certain criteria (existing network; population density; geographical distribution; and number of active population without upper-secondary education), while keeping the institutional diversity of the entities promoting the centres (public and private schools, professional schools, professional training centres, municipalities, companies and business associations, local and regional development associations, among others). Besides adult education, NOI had another axle targeted at young people (15-18 years old) to tackle early school leaving and school underachievement. The implementation of NOI was carried out by the National Agency for Qualification (ANQ)<sup>6</sup>, a public institute under the supervision of both the Ministries of Education and Labour.

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<sup>3</sup> Portaria n.º 1082-A/2001, de 5 de setembro

<sup>4</sup> Portaria n.º 1082-A/2001, de 5 de setembro, and Portaria n.º 286-A/2002, de 15 de março

<sup>5</sup> Decreto-Lei n.º 208/2002, de 17 de outubro

<sup>6</sup> Decreto-Lei n.º 276-C/2007, de 31 de julho

As a main milestone, in 2007 the National Qualifications System (NQS)<sup>7</sup> was created to reform VET within the education system and within the labour market by creating common objectives, structures and tools. For the first time, RVCC is established as a way to obtain a qualification, alongside with training paths. The legal framework of the NQS thus came to systematize the entire adult education and training system, which had begun to be built in 2000.

The main objectives of the NQS were (and still are): - to make upper-secondary education the reference objective for the qualification of young people and adults; - to strengthen the link between general education and professional training in all VET pathways ensuring for all of them the principle of double certification; - to reinforce and consolidate the RVCC system; - to design arrangements for VET qualifications to better match labour market needs.

The NQS established some structures to ensure its functioning: - ANQ; - the National Council for Vocational Training; - the Sector Councils for Qualification (SCQ); - the RVCC Centres (renamed New Opportunities Centres) and the training providers network (public, private and professional schools, professional training centres, private training providers and entities not under the scope of the ministries responsible for education and training, such as the schools of hospitality and tourism). It also created the following tools: - the National Catalogue of Qualifications (NCQ)<sup>8</sup>; - the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)<sup>9</sup>; and – the Individual Skills Handbook<sup>10</sup>.

Among the main measures implemented by the NQS are the structuring and organization of the NCQ, the enlargement of the RVCC system, the regulation and entry into force of the NQF and the approval of the model, content and registration process of the Individual Skills Handbook, as well as the valorisation and diversification of education and training pathways for young people and adults.

The creation of the Key-Competences Standard for Adult Education and Training - Upper-Secondary Education<sup>11</sup> led to the restructuring of the EFA Courses, as well as to the enlargement of the RVCC process to upper-secondary education.

The restructuring of the EFA Courses brought out the possibility of organizing these courses in three types: only with a school component; - only with a professional component; and – with both components, awarding double certification (school and professional). Furthermore, it also enabled the definition of courses with varied durations according to what the adult had achieved before. With the separation of the recognition and validation of competences stage from the training component in EFA courses, only CNO could carry out the recognition and validation of competences. The legislation that created the new EFA Courses also regulated Certified Modular

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<sup>7</sup> Decreto-Lei n.º 396/2007, de 31 de dezembro

<sup>8</sup> Despacho n.º 13456/2008, de 14 de maio and Portaria n.º 781/2009, de 23 de julho

<sup>9</sup> Portaria n.º 782/2009, de 23 de julho

<sup>10</sup> Portaria n.º 475/2010, de 8 de julho

<sup>11</sup> Available at <http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Content/pdfs/ReferencialRVCCNivel3.pdf>



Training as a form of continuing adult education, built on the standards of the NCQ, allowing the capitalization of learning and the attainment of a certain level of qualification.

The creation and functioning of CNO<sup>12</sup> was regulated to meet the goals defined in NOI. Therefore, CNO become the "doorway" to the NQS, its main functions being adult counselling and guidance for training or RVCC processes, with a view to raising the qualification levels of the adult population.

A new intervention stage was introduced in the validation centres: the diagnosis and the referral stage, which was done by new practitioners who joined the team. Since then, validation centres can carry out RVCC processes of basic and upper-secondary levels, either in the school and/or in the professional component. Key to this was the creation of the NCQ, a dynamic tool for the strategic management of national non-higher qualifications which promotes the effective link between the competences necessary to the social and economic development of the country and the qualifications developed within the NQS. Regarding its organisation, the NCQ includes for each qualification the occupational profile, the training standard and the RVCC standards (school and professional). As far as professional RVCC standards are concerned, they have progressively been designed based on the training standards.

Simultaneously, the Online Information and Management System for Education and Training Provision (SIGO)<sup>13</sup> was developed to keep record of RVCC and other pathways of the NQS. It also allows gathering accurate and updated statistical data, enabling the monitoring of RVCC processes and the issuing of certificates and diplomas.

NOI had a great impact on adult education and training by mobilizing an unprecedented number of adults for learning and significant financial resources. The funding allocated to CNOs between 2008-2010 is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Funding allocated to CNOs (2008-2010)**

Programme	Year	ESF	State Budget	Total/Year
<b>POPH (Operational Programme for Human Development)</b>	2008	47 721 604,00 €	24 338 018,00 €	72 059 622,00 €
	2009	119 993 310,75 €	60 808 929,00 €	180 807 239,94 €
	2010	114 190 318,26 €	58 847 436,22 €	173 037 754,48 €

Source: ANQEP

<sup>12</sup> Portaria n.º 370/2008, de 21 de maio

<sup>13</sup> Despacho n.º 14 019/2007, de 3 de julho

CNOs located in the regions of the North, Centre and Alentejo were funded by the ESF and the State Budget, regardless of being a private or a public centre. In the regions of Lisbon and Algarve the private centres were also funded by the ESF and the State Budget. The centres promoted by public entities in these two regions were exclusively financed by State Budget.

## 2012-2016

The new political cycle, which started in Portugal in 2011, and the financial crisis caused constraints on the activity of the validation centres. In 2011 and 2012, the funding and the activity of CNOs were progressively reduced.

In February 2012, the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)<sup>14</sup> was set up under the joint supervision of three the Ministries (Education and Science, Employment, and Economy), replacing the former ANQ but carrying on the same mission.

In March 2013, all CNOs were extinguished. Following a procedure to create the new validation centres, in 2014 a network of 242 Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (CQEP) was established. The criteria for the creation of this network and the institutional diversity of the promoters were maintained.

There were some changes in the mission of CQEP when compared to the former CNOs. CQEP provided information, guidance and referral for young people, aged 15 years or over or to those attending the 9<sup>th</sup> school year, regardless of their age, so as to identify the most appropriate education and training pathway to their needs, motivations, expectations and individual capacities. As far as the RVCC process is concerned, new procedures in the validation and certification stages were introduced:

- Validation of competences: a score (from 0 to 200);
- Certification of competences: a written, oral and practical examination (or a combination of these) assessed by an external jury. This examination is also scored from 0 to 200.

For CQEP to fulfil their new attributions, a *Methodological Guide for Lifelong Guidance*<sup>15</sup>, which includes a standard for lifelong guidance, was designed and applied to young people and adults. This standard is used in the first stages of CQEP's activities (diagnosis, information and guidance, and referral).

The ESF and the State Budget allocated the amount of 15M€ for leveraging CQEPs' activity between 1 October 2015 and 31 December 2016 in the regions of the North, Centre and Alentejo, regardless of being a private or a public centre. In the regions of Lisbon and Algarve the centres

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<sup>14</sup> Decreto-Lei n.º 36/2012, de 15 de fevereiro

<sup>15</sup> Available at [www.anqep.gov.pt](http://www.anqep.gov.pt)>Adultos>Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências>Documentação

promoted by public entities were exclusively financed by the State Budget. There was no public funding for the private centres.

## 2017- 2018

In March 2017 another governmental programme was launched - the *Qualifica* programme - an integrated strategy to foster the training and qualification of adults. The programme targets less qualified adults, unemployed people and NEET and has the following objectives: - raise the qualification level of adults and their employability; - Increase digital and functional literacy; - better align the training provision with labour market needs; - facilitate tailored training pathways that lead to raising the qualification level of adults (better combining VNFIL with adult education and training).

Until 2020, the *Qualifica* programme aims at attaining the following goals: - 300 *Qualifica* Centres in 2017; - 50% of the active population with upper-secondary education; - 15% of adults in Lifelong Learning activities; - contribute to 40% of 30-34 year-olds with higher education.

After the publication of the legal framework that regulates *Qualifica* Centres<sup>16</sup>, the new network was made up of the former CQEP that wished to continue their activity and the centres whose application was approved. Currently, the network comprises 303 *Qualifica* Centres, distributed by region as shown in table 2.

**Table 2 - Network of *Qualifica* Centres**

Region	Number of <i>Qualifica</i> Centres
North	114
Centre	83
Lisbon	52
Alentejo	39
Algarve	12
Autonomous Region of Madeira	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>

Source: ANQEP

*Qualifica* Centres have refocused their activity on adults and exceptionally on NEET. The main changes in the RVCC process are linked to the examination and to the introduction of a minimum of 50 hours of training.

Under the *Qualifica* programme, the *Qualifica* Passport<sup>17</sup> was created, replacing the Individual Skills Handbook. It is an online tool where the education and training pathways attained are

<sup>16</sup> Portaria nº 232/2016, de 29 de agosto

<sup>17</sup> Portaria n.º 47/2017, de 1 de fevereiro

recorded; it also provides guidance to pathways in order to complete or to obtain a new qualification, taking into consideration the training already attained and the skills acquired. The Passport can be modified, updated and printed at any time, thus being a tool that accompanies the adult throughout his active life. It is an important lifelong guidance tool used by the *Qualifica* centres.

*Qualifica* centres are co-financed by the ESF and the State Budget. In the regions of the North, Centre and Alentejo they are co-financed by the Operational Programme for Human Capital (POCH), while the regions of Lisbon and the Algarve are co-financed by the Regional Operational Programmes (ROP).

**Table 3 - Budget allocated to *Qualifica* centres between 1 January 2017 and 30 September 2018**

Budget allocated		
POCH (North, Centre and Alentejo)	ROP Lisbon	ROP Algarve
50 M€	16.586 M€	3.625 M€

Source: POCH, ROP Lisbon, ROP Algarve

The RVCC system has been co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the State Budget. It is a free of charge process for individuals and is directed at all adults living in Portugal, regardless of their migrant background. In addition, concerning disadvantaged groups there is a specific Key-Competences Standard – Basic Education for people with disabilities; for unemployed people or people at risk of unemployment, the IEFP (Institute for Employment and Vocational Training), which is the Public Employment Service, has validation centres or works in coordination with other validation centres throughout the country so as to find solutions for these groups.

The standards as well as pedagogical materials used for RVCC are available online and offered freely. Moreover, learning acquired through open educational resources can be matched to the existing standards and be validated through RVCC. The use of ICT platforms (i.e. Skype, Moodle) in RVCC facilitates the access to validation procedures, although RVCC mainly involves face-to-face sessions.

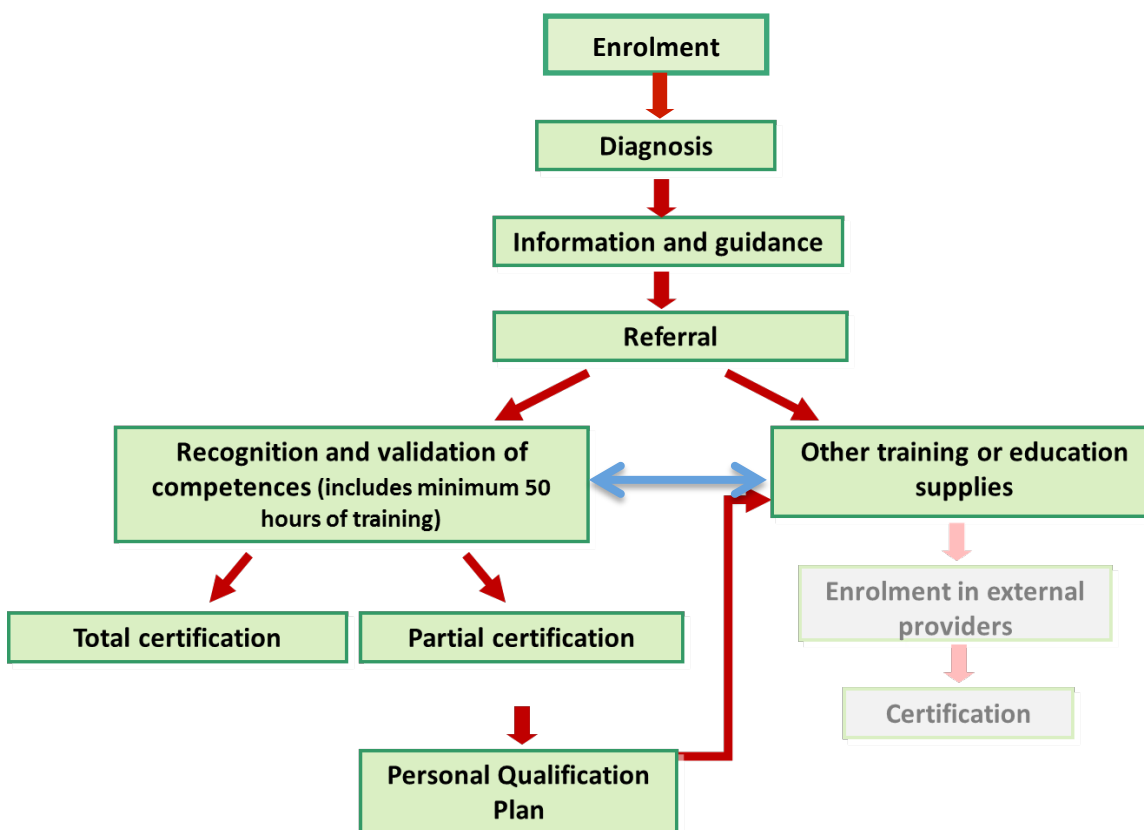
Although VNFIL is also possible in higher education (HE), the priority of this report is VNFIL in non-higher education. Portuguese legislation enables the access of adults aged 23 or over who do not hold an upper- secondary diploma (standard admission requirement) to HE through the assessment of prior learning. HE institutions have autonomy to develop their own procedures to validate NFIL (called accreditation process) which must be published in the official journal of the Portuguese Republic and the institution's website. VNFIL in HE leads to credit awarding: this is only possible after admission in a course and in case of pursuit of studies to obtain an academic degree. The current crediting framework has been in force since 2006. Several amendments were made afterwards, for instance through Decreto-Lei n.º 115/2013, of 7 August, which states that: - accreditation processes and results must be approved by the scientific board of the HE institution;

- only up to one third of the total number of ECTS of the degree can be obtained through VNFIL and used for exemption from part of the course (partial certification). Credits are portable across HE institutions which use their own financial budget to develop accreditation processes and determine specific fees, which vary largely across institutions. There are institutions where candidates pay on a basis of number of credits awarded and others where candidates pay for the process as a whole, regardless of the number of credits claimed.

**Chapter II. The different stages of intervention and the support to individuals**

This chapter describes the stages that a candidate goes through in the validation centre (currently the *Qualifica* centres) and the team members of a centre. Figure 1 shows the attributions of *Qualifica* centres which include the enrolment of candidates, their information and guidance and the referral to a RVCC process or to an education and training offer, external to the centre. When candidates are referred to RVCC, the centre provides all the process of validation until the final certification of the candidate, which can be a full or a partial certification.

**Figure 1 - Intervention stages in a *Qualifica* Centre**



Source: ANQEP

In the enrolment stage, the candidate is informed about the mission and the activities of the validation centre. The candidate is enrolled in SIGO and the procedures associated to each stage will be recorded there.

The diagnosis stage consists of reviewing the candidate's profile, namely through the analysis of his/her curriculum and life experience, taking into account his/her motivations, needs and expectations. This initial information will be included in the Vocational Development Portfolio. This portfolio consists of the compilation of documents and results of guidance activities, namely the interview. It belongs to the candidate and it is prepared by him/her with the support of the guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioners throughout the guidance process.

The information and guidance stage aims at providing the candidate (adult and/or NEET) with support in the identification of a career project, helping in the decision-making process that best suits his/her profile and that enables the pursuit of further studies and/or entering the labour market. This stage promotes candidate's self-knowledge and awareness. The candidate continues to build the Vocational Development Portfolio and prepares the Individual Career Project that contains the definition of a career project, the rationale, the implementation strategy, the challenges and the timetable associated to the fulfilment of the Individual Career Project.

The *Methodological Guide for Lifelong Guidance* is used both in the diagnosis and in the information and guidance intervention stages. This tool helps identify the knowledge, skills and competences adults need to acquire and develop to be able to effectively manage their career and make informed choices throughout their lives. It also helps them to make successful transitions between training and work.

Based on the diagnosis and on the information and guidance stages, the referral stage aims to guide the candidate to an education and training pathway or to an RVCC process. Taking into account the Vocational Development Portfolio, the education and training pathways available in the NQS as well as the Individual Career Project, the referral is formalized through the Individual Referral Plan. Whenever the candidate is referred to an education and training pathway, he/she leaves the validation centre in order to attend the pathway. Only the candidates referred to an RVCC process (school and/or professional) remain in the validation centre in order to begin the stages associated to the RVCC process.

When candidates are referred to an RVCC process, their Portfolio of Vocational Development is considered in the elaboration of the portfolio developed in the process.

Table 4 presents the number and type of sessions recommended for the intervention stages referred above, and the team members responsible.

**Table 4 – Initial intervention stages in *Qualifica* Centres and recommend sessions**

	<b>Enrolment</b>	<b>Diagnosis</b>	<b>Information and guidance</b>	<b>Referral</b>
<b>Number of sessions</b>	1	Up to 6	Up to 6	1
<b>Type of sessions</b>	Group or individual	Group or individual	Mainly individual	Individual
<b>Team member responsible</b>	Guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioner or the Coordinator	Guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioner	Guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioner and trainers (whenever applicable)	Guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioner and trainers (whenever applicable)

Source: ANQEP

In the scope of the intervention stages in a validation centre, only candidates aged 18 or over who have acquired competences throughout life in formal, non-formal and informal contexts can be referred to an RVCC process. Those aged between 18 and 23 years must have 3 years of legally certified working experience to develop RVCC processes, which include the intervention stages described below.

For the development of their attributions, the validation centres have a team composed of a coordinator, guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioners and trainers or teachers. The coordinator is responsible for ensuring the regular functioning of the centre in terms of pedagogical, organizational and financial management. A higher education degree is required for the coordinator.

Guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioners carry out the enrolment, diagnosis, information and guidance, and referral stages. They also take part in the development of RVCC processes. These practitioners must have a higher education degree and should also have experience in methodologies directed to young people and adults in different training pathways. Most of them have a degree in psychology.

A higher education degree in the key-competences area<sup>18</sup> they work is the minimum competence requirement for trainers and teachers involved in school RVCC. Based on the Key-Competences Standard, they are responsible for identifying the competences held by the candidate, supporting the preparation of the Portfolio, organizing and developing complementary training actions.

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<sup>18</sup> Despacho n.º 11 203/2007, de 8 de junho

For professional RVCC trainers the minimum requirement is a certificate in pedagogical competences to be a trainer<sup>19</sup> and professional experience (minimum 5 years) in the qualification under assessment. Based on the different professional RVCC standards, these trainers are responsible for identifying the competences held by the candidate, supporting the preparation of the Portfolio, applying the assessment tools, organizing and developing complementary training actions.

### Recognition and validation of competences

RVCC processes are based on key-competences standards (basic and upper-secondary education) – school RVCC - and professional RVCC standards, included in the NCQ, available at [www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt](http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt).

The key-competences standard – basic education – comprises 4 key-competences areas: (i) Language and Communication, (ii) Mathematics for Life, (iii) Citizenship and Employability, and (iv) Information and Communication Technologies. Each of these key competences areas is composed of four Competence Units that integrate a variable set of Evidence Criteria, defined in terms of examples of actions/ achievements, through which the candidate can demonstrate the competence held.

The standard is organized in three levels, corresponding to 4, 6 and 9 years of schooling. Each level includes 16 compulsory Competence Units (Table 5).

**Table 5 - Organization of the Key-Competences Standard – Basic Education**

	Key competence areas			
	Language and Communication (LC)	Mathematics for Life (ML)	Citizenship and Employability (CE)	Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
Level	Competence Units (UC)			
<b>B1 - 4 years of schooling</b>	UC 1	UC 1	UC 1	UC 1
	UC 2	UC 2	UC 2	UC 2
	UC 3	UC 3	UC 3	UC 3
	UC 4	UC 4	UC 4	UC 4
<b>B2 - 6 years of schooling</b>	UC 1	UC 1	UC 1	UC 1
	UC 2	UC 2	UC 2	UC 2
	UC 3	UC 3	UC 3	UC 3
	UC 4	UC 4	UC 4	UC 4
<b>B3 - 9 years of schooling</b>	UC 1	UC 1	UC 1	UC 1
	UC 2	UC 2	UC 2	UC 2
	UC 3	UC 3	UC 3	UC 3
	UC 4	UC 4	UC 4	UC 4

Source: ANQEP

<sup>19</sup> Portaria n.º 214/2011, de 30 de maio



The key-competences standard – upper-secondary education – comprises 3 key-competences areas: (i) Culture, Language and Communication, (ii) Society, Technology and Science, and (iii) Citizenship and Professionalism (Table 6).

These key-competences areas are composed of 22 Competence Units and the candidate has to demonstrate a set of competences in different reference domains (private, professional, institutional and macro structural).

**Table 6 - Organization of the Key-Competences Standard – Upper-secondary Education**

	Key competence areas		
	Citizenship and Professionalism (CP)	Society, Technology and Science (STC)	Language and Communication (CLC)
<b>Themes</b>	8	7	7
<b>Competence Units</b>	8	7	7
<b>Reference Domains</b>	Private	Private	Private
	Professional	Professional	Professional
	Institutional	Institutional	Institutional
	Macro structural	Macro structural	Macro structural

Source: ANQEP

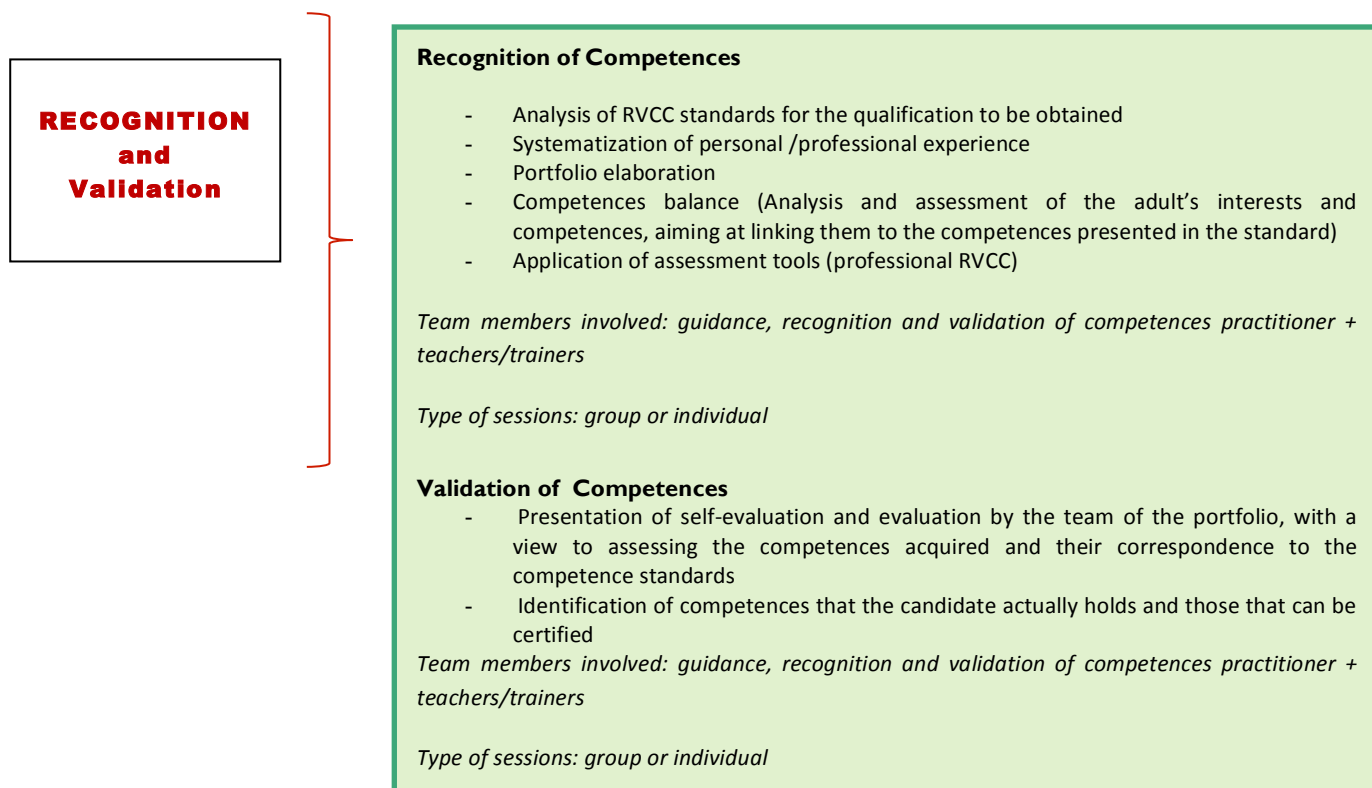
Professional RVCC standards are based on the training standards used for the technological component of formal education (NQF levels 2 and 4) and comprise a set of competence units broken down into tasks, through which the candidate can demonstrate the competences held within the qualification he/she wishes to complete. For each professional RVCC standard there are 4 specific assessment tools: (i) form for portfolio analysis, (ii) script for technical interview, (iii) grid for assessment of performance in the workplace and (iv) grid for assessment of practical exercises in simulated practice.

In the recognition and validation of competences stage, the candidate collects biographical and curricular documents in a portfolio, where evidence of the competences is presented, in order to be validated by comparison with the standard. This portfolio illustrates the candidate's life experience and, for this reason, is a personal and unique document, in which he/she expresses (through written self-reports) and evidences (through different sorts of certificates, documents and other proofs) the competences defined for the level of qualification under assessment. In professional RVCC, besides the portfolio, the other assessment tools above mentioned are also used.

This stage includes a minimum of 50 hours of training provided by the validation centre or by a training provider. This training is intended to overcome the needs identified by the teachers/trainers.

Figure 2 shows the work done in the recognition and validation stage, as well as the team members involved in the identification, documentation and assessment of competences, within the process.

**Figure 2 – Recognition and validation stage**



Source: ANQEP

### **Certification of competences**

The certification of the competences previously validated requires the presence of the candidate before a certification jury. It consists of the following elements:

School certification - A trainer or teacher from each of the key-competences areas and the guidance, recognition and validation of competences practitioner who accompanied the candidate's process. Trainers or teachers involved in his/her RVCC process are excluded from the jury.

Professional certification - Two trainers with adequate technical qualification in the education and training area of the standard under assessment (with at least five years of work experience); the trainer who accompanied the candidate's process; a representative of the business associations or employers; and a representative of trade union associations in the activity sector.

The jury's decision on the certification of competences is based on the candidate's performance in a certification examination, combined with the portfolio analysis and the assessment tools applied during the recognition and validation of competences stage.

In the certification of school competences, the certification examination consists in an oral presentation of a work on a theme that demonstrates knowledge and competences on the key-competences areas of the respective standard.

In the certification of professional competences, the certification examination is a practical demonstration of the competences held within the professional competences standard.

The result of this stage enables the candidate to obtain a full certification (when the candidate certifies all the competence units of the standard) or a partial certification. In school RVCC, a full certification enables the candidate to obtain a certificate of basic education (4, 6 or 9 years of schooling) or upper-secondary education (12 years of schooling). In professional RVCC, a full certification testifies that the candidate holds the competences of the professional RVCC standard in question.

In the case of a partial certification, the candidate is informed about the remaining training for him/her to obtain a qualification, which is registered in the Personal Qualification Plan. Besides, the validation centre informs the candidate where the needed training is available.

### ***Chapter III. Results and coherence of validation arrangements***

Chapter III focuses on the results of validation for the individual and the coherence of validation arrangements in place in terms of the NQS and the European transparency tools.

The NQF, in force since 2010 and referenced to the EQF, is a unique reference tool to classify all qualifications produced in the national education and training system, regardless of the access pathways (general education, VET, RVCC, higher education). The NQF improves the legibility, transparency and comparability of qualifications in the education and training system and in the labour market, easing the mobility of citizens and facilitating Lifelong Learning. Regarding RVCC, NQF levels 1 to 4 are only granted in the case of a full certification.

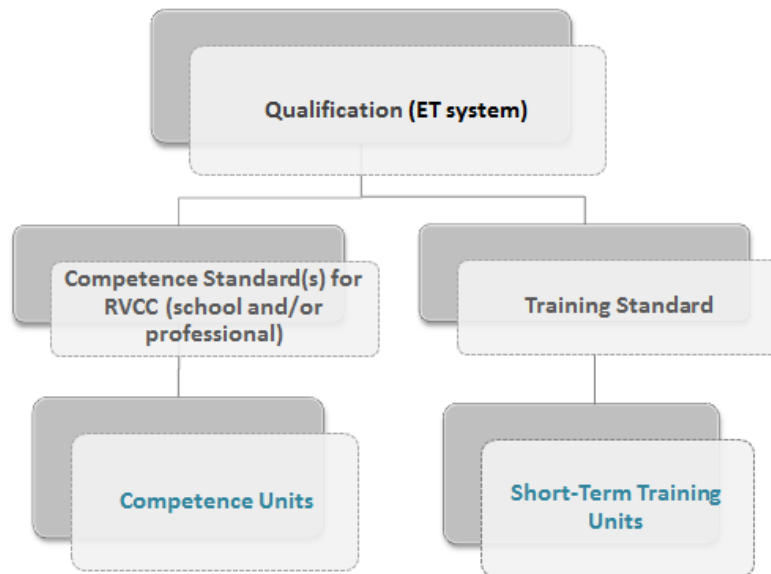
Figure 3 - Integration of RVCC in the NQF

NQF Level	Qualifications	EQF Level
Level 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle of basic education obtained via general education, VET pathways or RVCC	Level 1
Level 2	3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle of basic education (lower-secondary education) obtained via general education, VET pathways or RVCC	Level 2
Level 3	Upper-secondary education obtained via general education, VET pathways or RVCC	Level 3
Level 4	Upper-secondary education obtained via general education, VET pathways or RVCC	Level 4
Level 5	Post-secondary non-higher education qualification with credits to pursue higher education studies	Level 5
Level 6	Bachelor degree	Level 6
Level 7	Master degree	Level 7
Level 8	Doctorate degree	Level 8

Source: ANQEP

RVCC is based on competence standards included in the NCQ. It facilitates the access to qualification, by promoting the flexibility in attaining qualifications (paths organized in training modules, certified autonomously and capitalized to obtain a qualification). The NCQ aims at the progressive integration of qualifications based on learning outcomes, identifying for each qualification a competence standard and a training standard in its technological component.

**Figure 4 – Standards for a qualification in the NCQ**



Source: ANQEP

The Catalogue standards are used in IVET, CVET and RVCC. The standards used in RVCC (The Key Competence Standard for basic education; the Key Competence Standard for upper-secondary education; 156 standards for professional RVCC- 76 NQF level 2, out of a total of 113, and 80 NQF level 4, out of a total of 151) are equivalent to the training standards used in formal education. The integration of qualifications based on learning outcomes in the CNQ is a shift in paradigm in the NQS for the following reasons:

- Quality is improved as there are performance criteria in the Competence Units of the competence standard, as well as assessment criteria in the Short-Term Training Units of the respective training standard;
- The readability of qualifications for the labour market is increased, since learning outcomes confer increased precision to what the holder of a qualification can do, knows and understands, by using a clearer and more explicit language, thus getting the education and training system closer to the companies;
- It increases readability for the learner because the use of learning outcomes expresses what needs to be demonstrated when a trainee is evaluated (the result of his/her learning);
- It allows and facilitates the construction of a coherent credit system, which is fundamental for the transfer between learning contexts and for the accumulation and capitalisation of learning outcomes.

Table 7 shows the number of certifications (total and partial) obtained in 2017, according to the type and level of certification.

**Table 7 - Number of certifications (total and partial) obtained in 2017**

Certification	Total Certification in RVCC					Partial Certification in RVCC				
	Basic education	Upper-secondary education	Professional		Total	Basic education	Upper-secondary education	Professional		Total
			Level 2 NQF	Level 4 NQF				Level 2 NQF	Level 4 NQF	
	2717	3385	1920	1268	9290	16	9	520	322	867

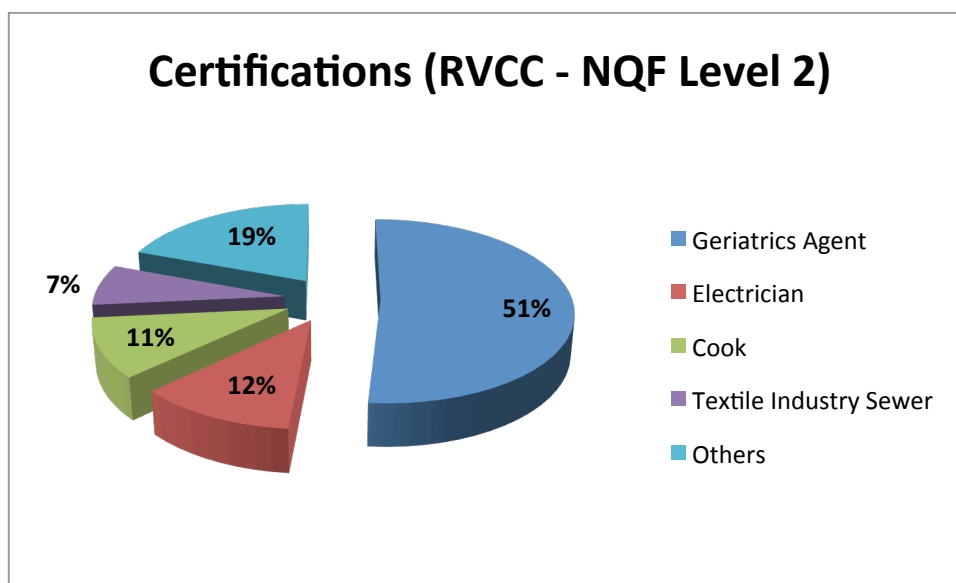
Source: ANQEP

Candidates who obtain a partial certification in RVCC may complete the qualification through training (EFA Courses and Certified Modular Training). The permeability between courses and the capitalization of certified competences is ensured because the standards used have the same contents, allowing the construction of pathways adjusted to the needs, starting from what is already known (RVCC) to what is still needed to learn.

Certificates and diplomas obtained through RVCC have the same legal value as any other way of obtaining a qualification.

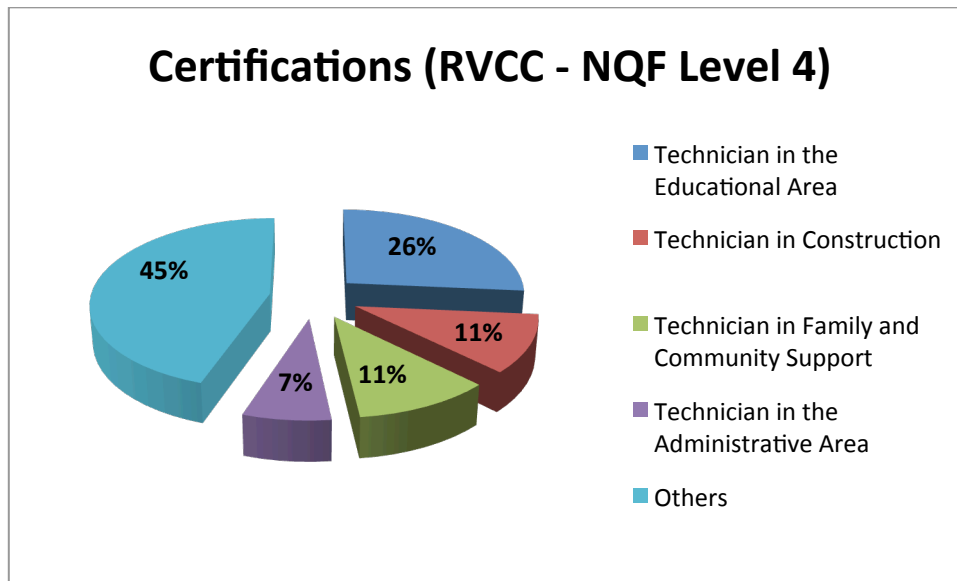
Concerning professional RVCC, the certifications obtained have the following distribution:

**Figure 5 – Most representative certifications obtained via professional RVCC (level 2)**



Source: SIGO

**Figure 6 – Most representative certifications obtained via professional RVCC (level 4)**

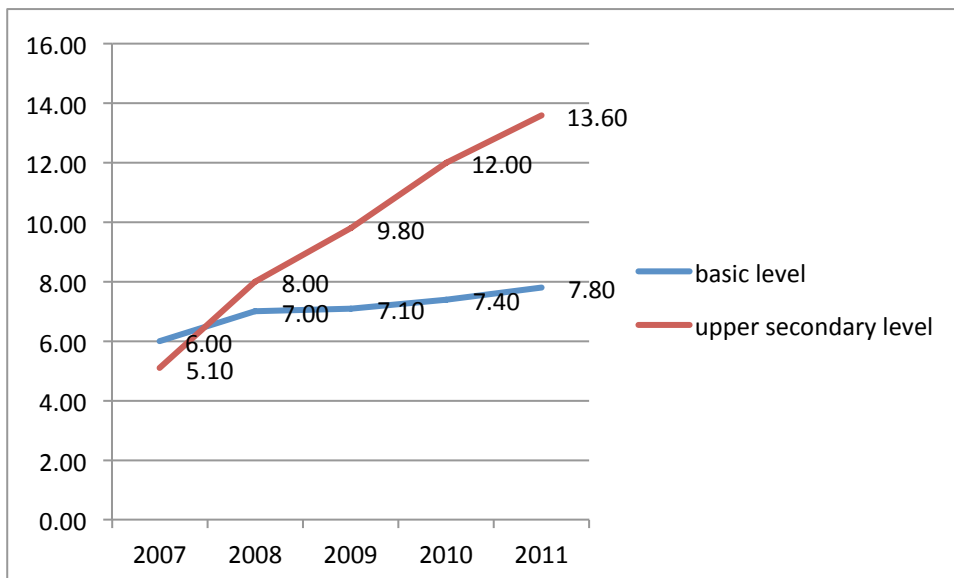


Source: SIGO

Regarding RVCC certifications NQF level 4, the category “others” includes 43 certifications, for example, Technician in Sales (3,2%) and Technician in Automotive Mechatronics (3,2%). The Technician in the Educational Area is the domain with a greater number of certifications.

As far as the length of the RVCC process is concerned, usually upper-secondary education processes are longer. However, there is not a maximum time limit to finish an RVCC process.

**Figure 7 – Average number of months between entry into RVCC Process and Certification**



Source: SIGO, May 2011

Figure 7 only presents the average length of RVCC processes until 2011, since it corresponds to a period when the network had stable conditions to operate (number of centres, human and financial resources) and the greatest number of certificates was awarded.

To foster permeability among VET pathways and higher education as well as mobility within Europe, in 2017, the National Credit System for Vocational Education and Training was created<sup>20</sup>. This system is aligned with some ECVET principles. This system enables the allocation of credit points to level 2, 4 and 5 qualifications of the NQF included in the National Catalogue of Qualifications and to certified training which is recorded in the online information system for the management of training provision (SIGO) and complies with quality assurance criteria in place. The development of the Credit System is based on three complementary dimensions: a) the attribution of credit points to formally certified learning within the scope of the NQS, namely the units that integrate the qualifications of the NQC; b) the accumulation of credit points related to that learning; and c) the transfer of credit points obtained through training courses. Regarding RVCC, whenever access to the qualification is done through professional RVCC, the total or partial certification assumes the credit points corresponding to the whole or to a part of the short-term training units that integrate the technological component of the standard of the qualification.

#### ***Chapter IV. Role of stakeholders***

This chapter is dedicated to the stakeholders involved in RVCC, the coordination between them and their specific roles. Strong coordination is a condition for an effective RVCC system and its operationalization in the validation centres. In Portugal stakeholders are involved in the RVCC system from the design phase of the standards up to the certification of the candidates, covering central and regional governance levels.

The involvement of stakeholders appears at the macro level, with the central role played by ANQEP in coordinating the RVCC system. ANQEP is a public body under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security in coordination with the Ministry of Economy, whose mission is to coordinate the implementation of VET for young people and adults, as well as to ensure the development and management of the National System for RVCC. ANQEP's General Board (GB) involves different types of stakeholders in the area of qualification, namely services and public bodies, social partners, other entities with attributions in VET addressed at young people and adults and independent experts, are represented. The GB is a statutory body of consultation, support and participation in the definition of this Agency's general lines of action. In order to exploit the heterogeneity and richness of the visions of relevant stakeholders, the GB - encompasses the Specialized Board of Social Partners, the Specialized Board of Technicians, the Specialized Regulatory Bodies and the Specialized Board of Public Bodies

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<sup>20</sup> Portaria n.º 47/2017, de 1 de fevereiro

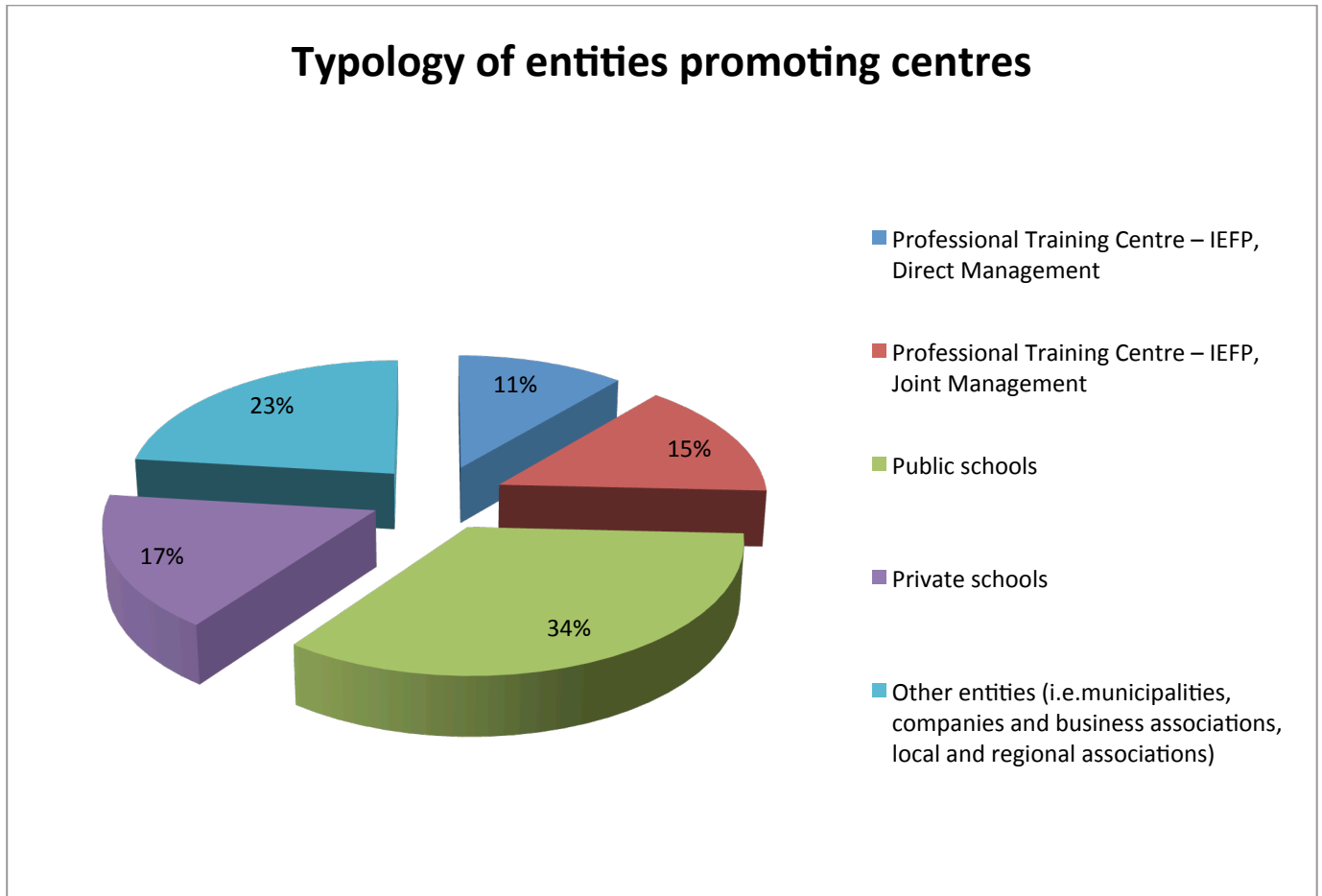


(organized by areas and specific topics). Through this operating method, better conditions to gather opinions and to get more detailed and deeper information about the stakeholders' positions are ensured.

At regional level, Intermunicipal Communities (CIM) also play an important role, not only in anticipating qualification needs, but also through the involvement of the Qualifica Centres in the development of actions in the scope of the coordination, dynamization and regulation of training provision. For example, the Intermunicipal Community of Ave (CIM Ave) - an association of 8 municipalities in the North of Portugal, with a combined population of 425 411 people - created, in 2013, a council composed of political representatives from its several municipalities, with the mission of developing a strategy for VET in the region, in articulation with each municipality and the central Government. The council has developed several networks, among which a network for coordinating the supply of education and training, with all local education and training providers, and a network of Qualifica Centres, to promote partnerships, develop common practices, train Qualifica Centre professionals, and support the centres' interaction with ANQEP and other central bodies.

Still at regional level, the *Qualifica* Centres, which are promoted by diverse types of institutions (see figure 8), establish protocols with companies and other institutions to motivate and mobilize adults to increase their qualifications as well as to develop RVCC processes in the work context.

Figure 8 – Centres by type of promoter



Source: SIGO

An example of coordination between different stakeholders is the project for validation of competences in enterprises, developed by ANQEP in partnership with SONAE (a multinational company that manages a group of companies in the retail, financial services, technology, shopping centres and telecommunications sectors and that has over 36,000 workers) and the validation centre promoted by CEFOSAP (confederation of unions – UGT). Concluded in March 2016, this project aimed at developing professional RVCC in the workplace and fostering firms' and social partners' participation in RVCC processes. Within the project, priority was given to employees with lower and upper-secondary education who wished to obtain a professional certification in order to be awarded double certification. In addition, the work methodology adopted was based on the existing professional RVCC assessment tools, applying preferably the form for portfolio analysis and the grid for assessment of performance in the workplace. Finally, and according to the procedures followed in the certification of competences stage, there was an examination before a jury of certification which involved representatives from business and trade unions, among others.

Nowadays, ANQEP is working towards extending the recognition and validation of the set of skills acquired by workers in the workplace, so that they are taken into account by firms when providing further training. This is a strategic aspect for firms' competitiveness and productivity.

ANQEP has continuously boosted the intervention of various stakeholders in the design of qualifications within the SCQ, which work as a platform for updating/revising the qualifications included in the Catalogue. The 16 SCQ comprise several stakeholders (social partners, representatives appointed by the Ministry in charge of the activity sector, reference companies, VET providers, independent experts...) bringing together the world of education and training and the world of work. They seek to ensure a sectoral representation of the national economic activity and they are an example of a bottom-up approach in the design of qualifications. No qualification is integrated in the NCQ (competences standard and training standard) without being submitted to the respective Sector Council for analysis and approval by consensus. This process of integration/updating qualifications included in the NCQ takes between 4 and 6 months (average).

### Figure 9 – The 16 Sector Councils for Qualification

- Personal services
- Tourism and leisure activities
- Craft and jewellery
- Wood, furniture and cork
- Healthcare and services to the community
- Fashion
- Transports and distribution
- Computers, electronics and telecommunications
- Metallurgy and metalworking
- Chemical industries, pottery, glass and others
- Agriculture and nourishment
- Building construction and urban services
- Services to enterprises (finance activities, consulting activities, secretariat services)
- Energy and environment
- Culture, heritage and production of contents
- Trade and marketing

Besides the SCQ, mention should be made to the open model of consultation, which allows any entity to make a proposal to integrate new standards or update the existing ones in the NCQ. All the proposals are discussed by the SCQ and, if approved, included in the NCQ.

At the level of validation centres, employers and trade unions participate in the juries of certification of professional RVCC, as mentioned in chapter II.

## *Chapter V. Evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance*

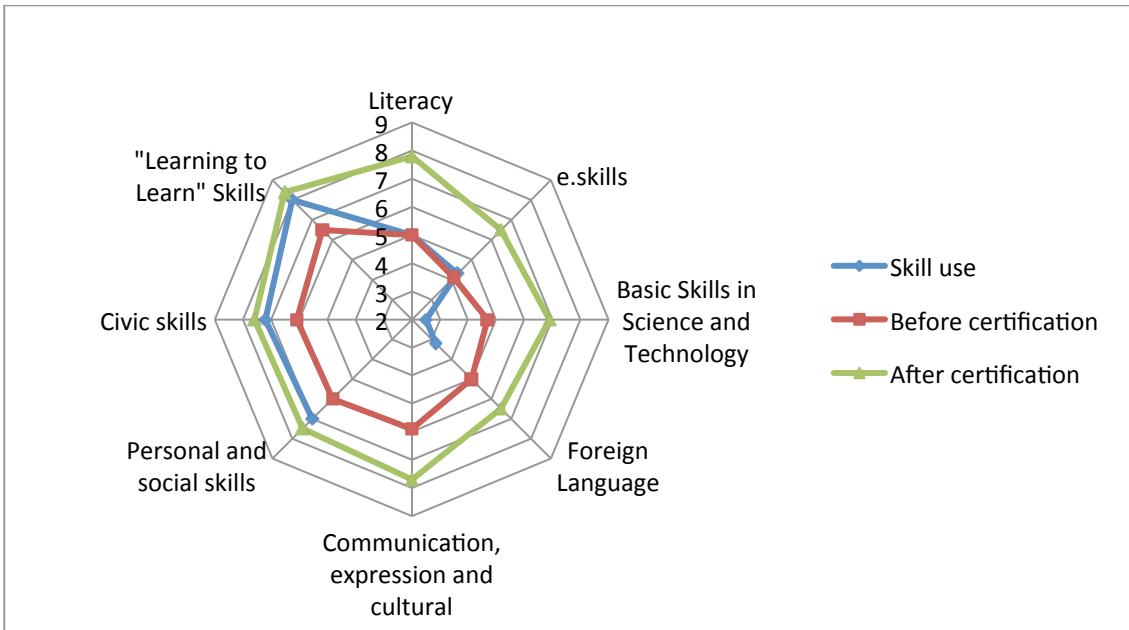
The current chapter presents evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance arrangements in place, as well as training provided to the staff of the validation centres.

Robust evaluation and monitoring arrangements are an important basis as they can generate information on the returns of adult learning and the effectiveness of the RVCC system. The RVCC system has been the object of several external evaluations.

The study carried out by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Economic Studies (Centro Interdisciplinar de Estudos Económicos - CIDECE) between 2003-2004 analysed the socio-professional development of adults certified up to 31 December 2002 and assessed the pertinence, implementation and achievements of the RVCC system. The main results of the study showed the positive effects of the RVCC process in terms of personal dimensions (better self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-worth), of greater employability and better work conditions and motivation to pursue studies. The second study, conducted in the last quarter of 2004, updates and confirms the previous results based on a questionnaire answered by people certified in 2003.

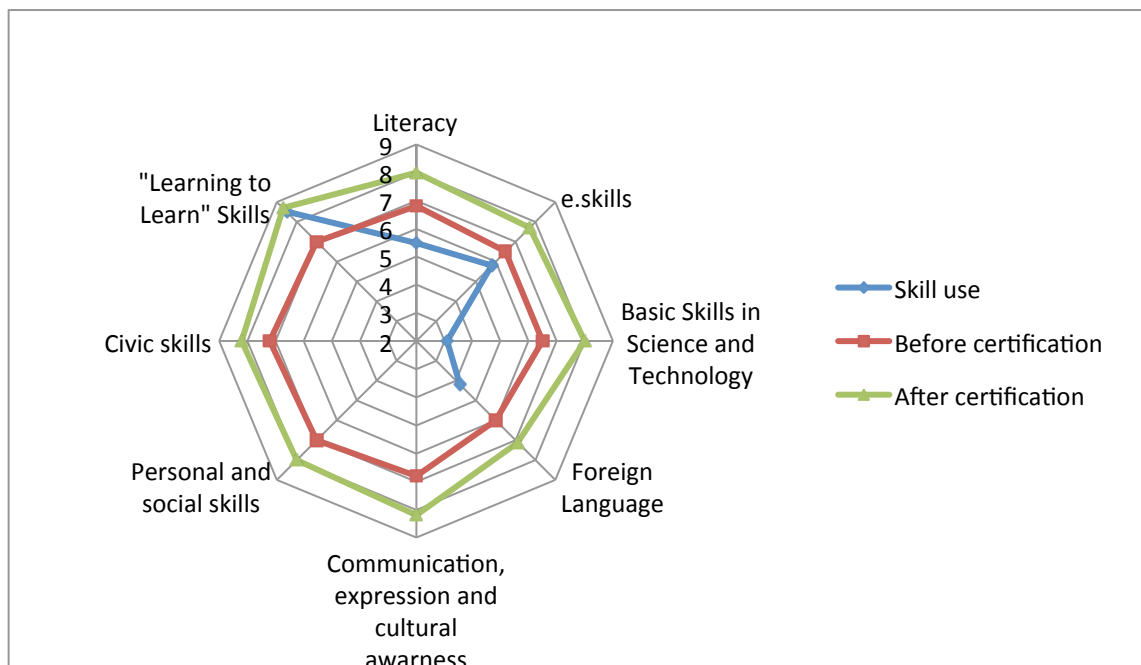
The NOI, specifically the axle dedicated to the qualification of adults, was the subject of two external evaluations. The first evaluation (Carneiro et al., 2010) focused mainly on the implementation of the initiative and participants' experiences. A survey carried out among 1300 participants showed a large increase in self-esteem and self-confidence, use of ICT/internet, motivation for further education/training and a desire to improve work prospects. Figures 10 and 11 show, in a ten points scale, that the average level obtained for each of the eight key-competences considered for lower and upper-secondary education improved after participating in the NOI, not exclusively in the RVCC process.

**Figure 10 – Key-competences progress after NOI and key-competences use in the work context (lower-secondary educational level)**



Source: NOI external evaluation

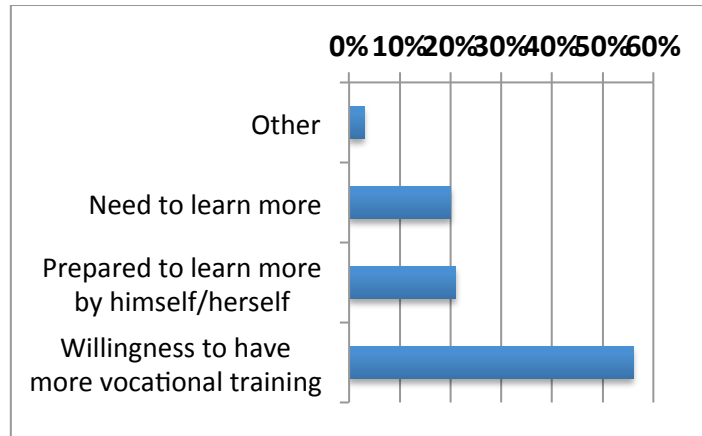
**Figure 11 – Key-competences progress after NOI and key-competences use in the work context (upper-secondary educational level)**



Source: NOI external evaluation

Although the lower-secondary level of education reported greater progress in almost all the key-competences assessed, it is in upper-secondary education that adults generally start and achieve higher levels of key-competences. As far as competence use in job tasks is concerned, hard skills are much less used than soft and meta-skills.

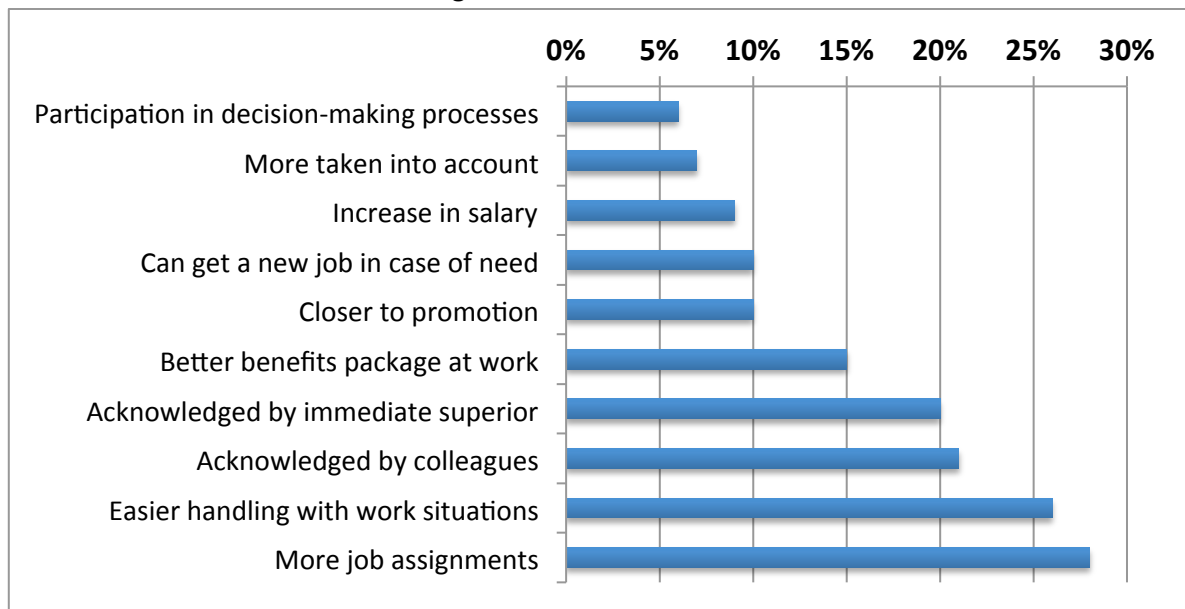
**Figure 12 – Feeling at the level of professional training**



Source: NOI external evaluation

Figure 12 highlights the need and willingness to learn more after participating in NOI, which is a relevant factor to the promotion of lifelong learning.

**Figure 13 - Benefits at work**



Source: NOI external evaluation

Figure 13 shows that acknowledgment among superiors and peers, as well as performing tasks more easily and more job assignments are the most relevant benefits at work.

The second evaluation (Lima, 2012) focused on labour market outcomes and comprised two studies: one on the RVCC process and the other on adult education and training courses and the Certified Modular Training (FMC). The results from the first study indicate that RVCC processes only improve employability in the case of participants enrolled in professional RVCC, or when school RVCC (basic level of education) was supplemented with FMC, and showed little or no effect on wages. The results of the second study showed that EFA courses increased the probability of moving from unemployment to employment, while the FMC had a positive effect on this transition, although not so significant. Figure 14 illustrates the results of both studies.

**Figure 14 - Benefits in terms of transition from unemployment to work**

**Professional RVCC - increases by 4,6%** the probability of finding a job for unemployed men;  
**RVCC (NQF level 2) combined with modular training - increases by 3,3%** the probability of finding a job for unemployed men when compared with just RVCC;  
**RVCC (NQF levels 3 and 4) combined with modular training - increases by 6,3%** the probability of finding a job for unemployed women when compared with just RVCC;  
**RVCC (NQF level 3) - increases by 1,1%** the remuneration for men;  
**RVCC (NQF level 3) - increases by 4,8%** the remuneration for women in the transition between jobs.

In the scope of ANQEP's attributions, specifically the monitoring, assessment and regulation of the RVCC system, SIGO (the restricted access platform where validation centres register the progress made by the adult) is of utmost importance. Furthermore, 5 regional monitoring teams, gathering members from ANQEP and the regional services of IEFP and the Directorate-General for Schools, support the activity of validation centres and reinforce the involvement of stakeholders in the RVCC process.

Based on the data from SIGO, on the inputs from the regional monitoring teams and the centres themselves, ANQEP produces quantitative and qualitative reports on a regular basis:

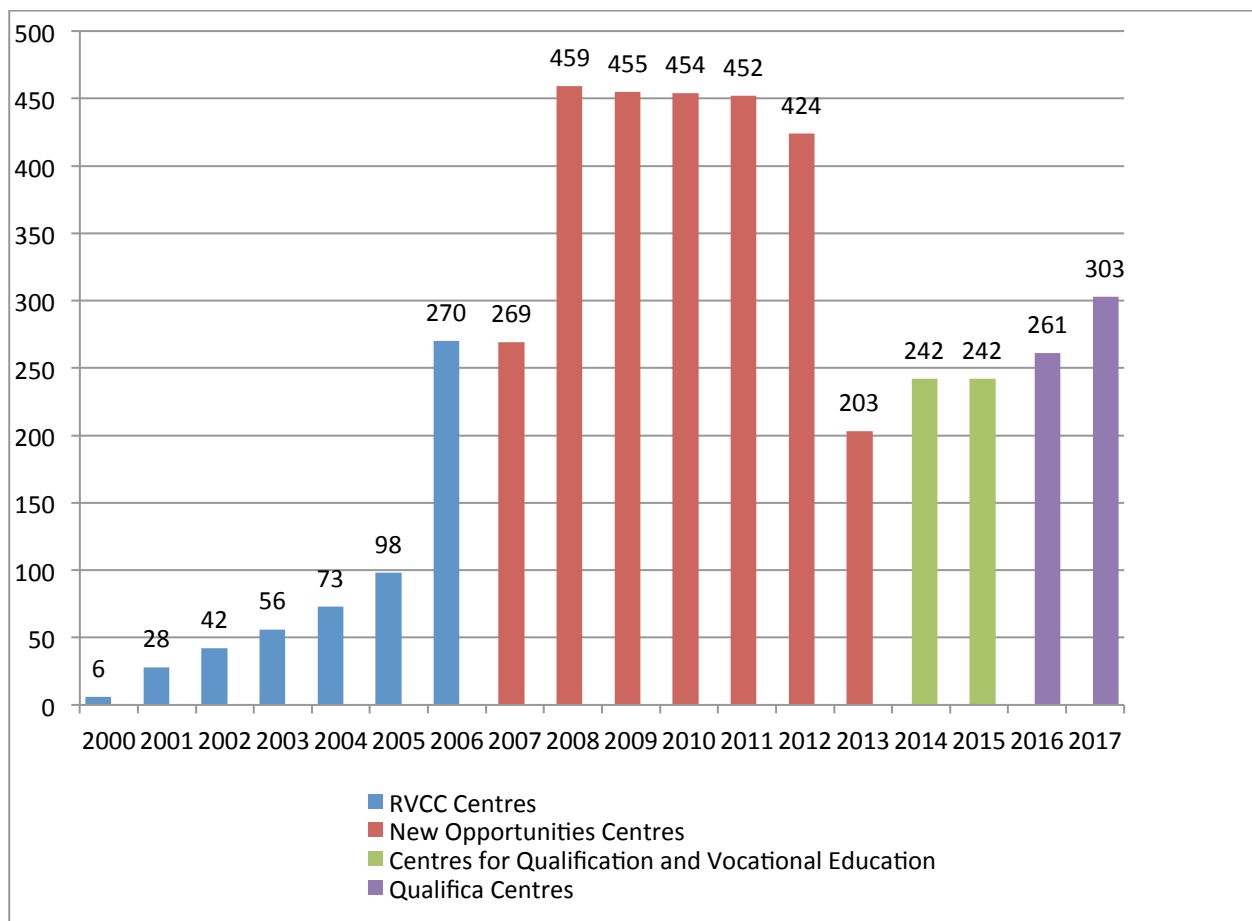
- a monthly report (quantitative) with information on the performance of the network of validation centres in terms of enrolments, referrals and certifications in RVCC (total and partial). This report is sent to the Secretaries of State of Education and Employment. Further, each centre is informed about its performance as well as about the performance of all the centres belonging to the same NUTS II and III;

- a quarterly report (qualitative) giving account of the monitoring actions carried out by the monitoring teams in each region, identifying challenges and making suggestions for improvement;
- an annual report (quantitative and qualitative) which assesses the functioning of the network of validation centres and presents the results of the self-evaluation of the activities of each centre.

The above-mentioned procedures are directed to improve the system and the activity of the validation centres, as they provide information to the decision-making process from the level of the validation centres to the ministerial level.

The monitoring of the system makes clear that the network of validation centres, enrolments and certifications vary over the years according to the investment in adult education and training, as shown in figures 15, 16 and 17.

**Figure 15 – Network of Validation Centres per year (2000-2017)**

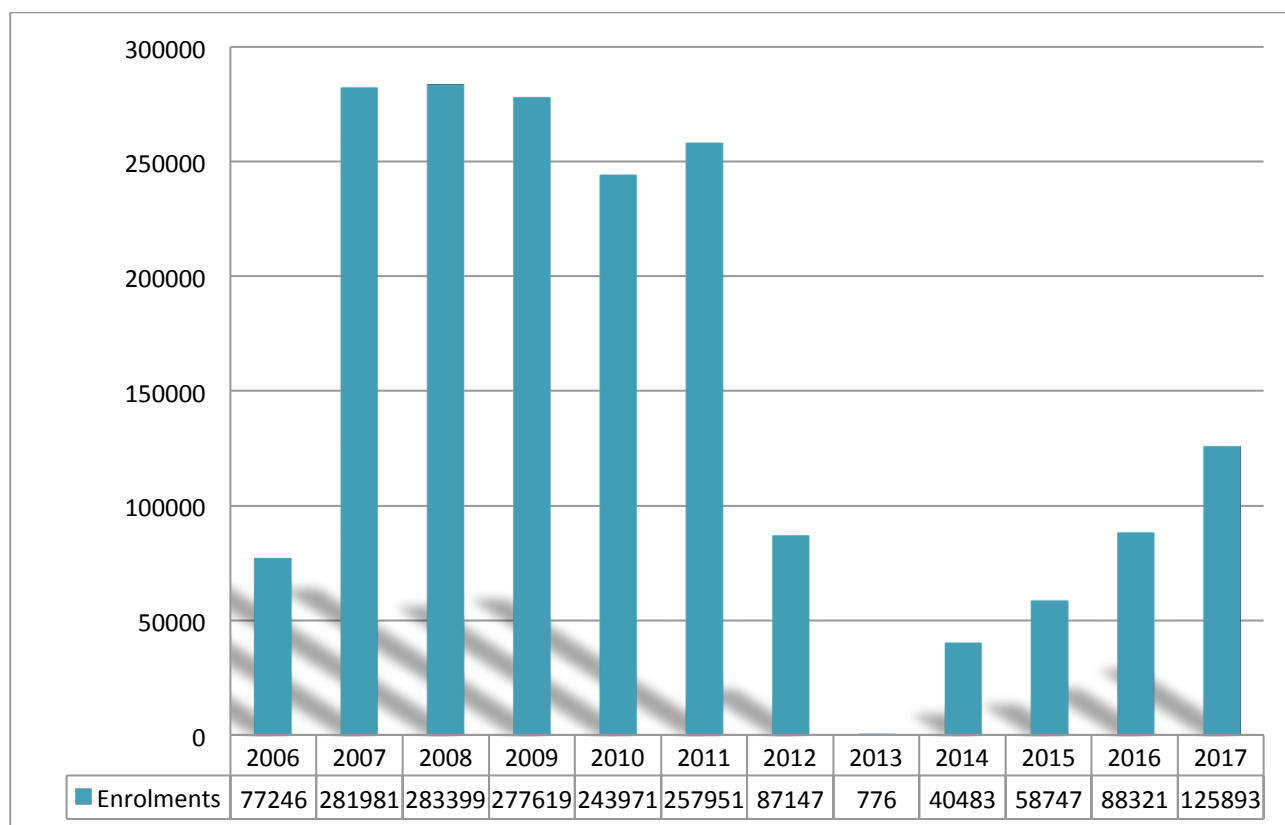


Source: ANQEP

In figure 15 it is possible to verify that the expansion of the network is associated to the NOI (2005-2012) and to the *Qualifica* programme, launched in 2016.



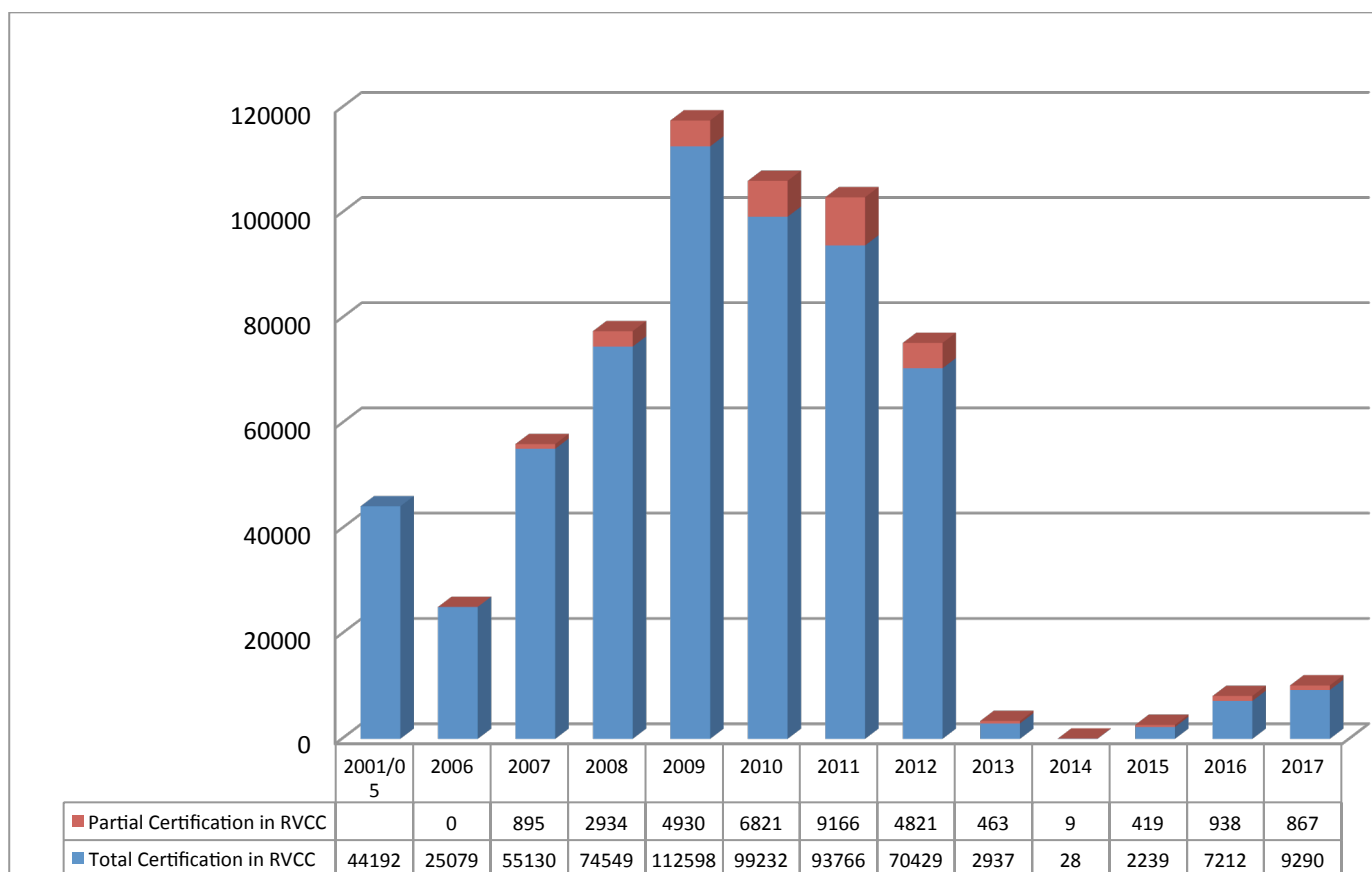
**Figure 16 – Enrolments in validation centres per year (2006-2017)**



Source: SIGO

The number of enrolments between 2007 and 2011, presented in figure 16, is connected to the enlargement of both the network of validation centres and the RVCC process to upper-secondary education. The sharp decrease in enrolments in 2012 and 2013 is the result of the reduction of the funding allocated to validation centres and the restructuring of the network.

Figure 17 - Certifications obtained via RVCC per year (2006-2017)



Source: SIGO

The peak of certifications between 2009 and 2011, as shown in figure 17, corresponds to a period of increased financial and human resources in the validation centres and is also linked to the enlargement of the RVCC system to upper-secondary education. This enlargement also led to the increase of partial certifications.

As far as quality assurance is concerned, it is also worth mentioning the existence of national standards for RVCC, the accuracy and reliability of the data provided by SIGO, the key performance indicators established in the quality chart for the validation centres and the training provided to the staff of the validation centres. This training, provided by ANQEP annually, addresses subjects essential for the centres' activity, namely the mobilization of adults, lifelong guidance, referrals, RVCC processes (school and professional), certification, SIGO, the *Qualifica* Portal, the National Credit System for VET and the *Qualifica* Passport. More than 1100 members of the validation centres participated in the training sessions organized in 2017.

Finally, adults who have participated in the RVCC process have assessed it very positively (see box 1).

## Box 1 – Testimonies on the RVCC process

Idalina Lopes had to leave school early to support her family. Working in textile factories, she knew she had capability for more. She returned to school as an adult, blazing her own trail to university and, ultimately, her own legal practice: <https://vimeo.com/172745354>

Catarina Gaspar, a production manager in the film industry, completed upper-secondary education via RVCC. The certification was made possible by a mix of portfolio evaluation, presentation of self-evaluation, oral and written examinations, and has opened up the possibility of further study at the American Film Institute in the US. In an interview for *Skillset and Match* (Issue 9, January 2017), Catarina said she would "highly recommend this process to everyone who intends to improve their careers" and that she sees it as "an opportunity to grow as a person... the whole process implies a journey of self-awareness."

José Azevedo, 42 years old, concluded in 2010 upper-secondary education via RVCC: "I confess that the period between the first work session at the centre and the day of the jury session, about a year, was a period of many and varied emotions: interest, motivation, lack of interest, lack of motivation, effort, fatigue, commitment and, finally, pride in having achieved the goal I had set - obtaining the upper-secondary certificate. I entered the process feeling interested and motivated because it was an opportunity to complete upper-secondary education (I had only finished the 11th year of schooling). However, as time went by, that same motivation and interest lowered in such a way that I thought of giving up several times. ... to obtain the certification, I realized I had to get down to work, which required a lot of work, availability, dedication, which is not easy for those who have a family and work at the pace that today's world requires. This effort and commitment involved in an RVCC process may be responsible for some dropouts, but for me it is much more important and rewarding the fact that it enables the recognition of our competences. In my case, besides increasing self-esteem and increasing the level of schooling, the added value of the RVCC was the motivation to go back to school. Afterwards, I enrolled in HE in the Business Management course at ISVOUGA."

## Chapter VI – Conclusions and challenges

A well-developed and flexible RVCC system helps overcoming the challenges faced by low-educated adults, namely the barriers to accessing the formal education system. RVCC is a vital mechanism to promote the return of adults to the education and training system, insofar as it values the competences acquired throughout life in non-formal, informal and formal contexts and contributes to making lifelong learning a reality. A comprehensive network of validation centres, covering Portugal's whole territory, has contributed both to giving RVCC the relevance it can have in acquiring a non-higher qualification and to providing lifelong guidance. RVCC has played an important role in motivating adults to up-skill, in fighting social exclusion and in supporting policies to increase the qualification level of the population (since 2000 up to 2017, 600 272 adults obtained a certification through RVCC, being most of them in lower-secondary

education). The flexibility of the RVCC system contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency in obtaining a qualification, enabling the certification in less time and with lower costs than in formal education. The outcomes of this system have been determined by political cycles and their respective interest and investment in adult education.

Nevertheless, some challenges remain and overcoming them will require complementary efforts, namely: (i) reducing the reliance on EU funds to support the RVCC system, which can be a challenge for the long-term sustainability of the system; (ii) achieving wide consensus regarding policy priorities for adult education; (iii) improving the social value/recognition of diplomas obtained via RVCC; (iv) increasing the engagement of stakeholders, especially employers, in order to mobilize low-skilled employees and facilitate their access to RVCC; (v) raising the awareness of the benefits of learning so as to go beyond motivational barriers.

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