

# NATIONAL POLICY COHERENCE REPORT

**Poland**

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# Introduction

## The TRANSVAL-EU project

Transversal skills are often only an implicit part of the existing validation and guidance process. The aim of the TRANSVAL-EU project is to experiment on how to make those skills more explicit and to embed the lessons learned in validation and guidance provisions. TRANSVAL-EU proposes innovative approaches for the validation of transversal skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), which were tested in five pilot countries – Austria, Belgium, Italy, Lithuania and Poland.

TRANSVAL-EU aims to increase the knowledge and awareness of validation assessors, counsellors and career guidance practitioners on transversal competences through capacity building. The project strengthens cross-sector cooperation between practitioners, policy-makers and other stakeholders in order to build coherent VNFIL systems. The project life span encompasses 30 months, starting on March 1st, 2021 and ending in August 2023. It is co-funded by Erasmus+ (Call KA3 Policy Reform – Policy Experimentations).

## TRANSVAL-EU National Reports

In the last phase of the project, partners were looking into the potential for translating the successful experimentation that took place within the project frame into sustainable policy change.

Successful policies often rely on policy coherence and coordination. Policy coherence refers to how policies are connected between them and across silos, avoiding overlap and inefficiencies. It does not just happen by default. It implies a set of collaborative and knowledge-sharing practices between the responsible authorities in charge of the policy, their institutions and the staff in the institutions (the policy-makers). It is dependent on this cooperation to materialise in the policy texts.

A partner in the TRANSVAL-EU project, the Lifelong Learning Platform investigated coherence at the European level with the support of the other partners (see TRANSVAL-EU, European Policy Coherence Report, August 2023 and its short version). At national level (or in the case of Italy and Belgium, taking the regional dimension into consideration), partners from the five EU countries or regions where the experimentation took place (Austria, Belgium, Italy, Lithuania and Poland) plus a partner representing Nordic countries (for the case of Sweden and Iceland) also looked into the issue of policy coherence at national and regional levels. The National Policy Coherence Reports are the results of these reflections. They mostly relied on desk research and dialogue with the respective public authorities involved in the project. The National Policy Coherence Reports address the issues of main policies relevant for validation, guidance, skills and competences, coherence between these policies (e.g. terminological coherence), coordination between the institutions in charge of these policies, among others. All Reports include recommendations for policy-makers at national and regional levels.

The results of this work complete the early research made in the first phase of the project which led to the publication of the TRANSVAL-EU, European State-of-Play Report on the Validation of Transversal skills and Country sheets for the five countries ([download links here](#)).

## Poland - Policy Coherence Report

### Main national policies and policy coherence challenges

The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 adopted in 2019 (general part) and in 2020 (detailed part) defines the lines of action for the skills policy across all sectors. It covers general education, VET, higher education and non-formal learning. Validation and guidance are an important part of ISS 2030 (separate chapters are devoted to these issues).

The Strategy takes into account the need for specific skills, their availability, as well as methods for anticipating skills needs, their development, adaptation to the requirements of social life, labour market and economic needs, effective application and management and coordination system. It provides a framework to support the complementarity of policies that support the development, activation and effective use of skills.

The key challenge is skills policy coordination – implementing of the governance system envisaged in ISS 2030. As a result of an European Social Fund (ESF) funded project (2021-2023), in Q4 2022, the tasks and the setup of the inter-ministerial task force for LLL and NQF have been updated. Similar cross-sectoral bodies (Regional Coordination Boards) have been established in each of Poland's 16 regions. Additional funds from Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and ESF have been allocated to new policy coordination projects at national and regional levels, which are planned to be launched in 2023. As it is a very recent development, we need 1-2 years to see how the governance system works in practice.

### Inter-institutional coordination

The following are responsible for the creation and development of lifelong learning policy and for carrying out activities related to the implementation of lifelong learning in Poland: Ministry of Education and Science and Ministry of Family and Social Policy. Additionally, the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy and the Ministry of Development and Technology are associated with LLL policy.

An Inter-ministerial Taskforce for lifelong learning has existed since 2010. Initially, its task was to ensure adequate and coherent content for new sectoral strategic documents regarding education and training (with focus on upskilling of staff in a given sector). The Taskforce was

also instrumental in developing the legislative framework for the NQF in Poland and since 2015 it has had a coordinating role in the process of implementing the Integrated Qualifications System. Its tasks were further expanded in 2022 (see point 1) and the membership was extended to key institutions/agencies supervised by ministries and to key social partners.

The Act of 22 December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System enables the integration of the Polish Qualification System through the introduction of two tools: a) the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF), which includes 8 qualification levels, and b) the Integrated Qualifications Register.

Regarding career counselling in the context of lifelong learning: activities are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science. Joint initiatives regarding lifelong learning are also undertaken with the ministry responsible for the labour market.

### Is there coordination between national and regional levels?

So far, such coordination has been limited. However, in the process of drafting and adopting ISS 2030 several meetings/workshops involving key ministries and regional representatives took place. Efforts to coordinate national and regional policies were also made while drafting demarcation lines between EU-funded national and regional operational programmes. Networking on skills policy between national and regional levels and between regions is going to be formalised and promoted under the ESF project planned for 2023-2028. Among other things, it is planned to create centres to coordinate the policy in the field of vocational education and training and lifelong learning, as well as to develop operationalized programs for the implementation of the ISS at the regional level.

Regarding career counselling: Coordinators for vocational education and vocational counselling are appointed at each Board of Education (responsible for pedagogical supervision in each voivodeship), whose task is to support local vocational counsellors and teachers educating in the profession, and thus creating a network.

### Has progress been made in the policy on transversal skills and competences since the first year of the project (individual country sheets)?

Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 as a public policy promoting transversal skills at national and regional level should be noted as recent progress. The statement from the Country Sheet that there is no such policy in place should be converted into: "Transversal competences in Poland feature prominently in the "Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 (detailed part)" adopted in 2020. This policy is aimed at developing skills for lifelong learning and selected transversal competences (e.g. personal, civic, digital) make up one of the eight areas of concern mentioned in the ISS. The ISS covers the entire education and training system, including

general education, vocational education, higher education, non-formal education and informal learning. It provides a framework to support the complementarity of policies that support the development, activation and effective use of skills. Additionally, there are policies aimed at facilitating validation, such as: (...)"

### Coherence with EU policies

The Integrated Skills Strategy 2030, which Poland committed to prepare and adopt in the EU Partnership Agreement was finally adopted in 2020, thus replacing The Lifelong Learning Perspective, 2013-2019. The ISS is also a direct answer and a way to implement the Recommendation of the EU Council on key competences in the process of lifelong learning (2006 and 2018) and OECD "Skills Strategy" . The ISS is in line with the national development management system, integrating national documents of a strategic nature (in terms of skills), as well as trans-regional strategies, such as the Human Capital Development Strategy or Responsible Development Strategy. At the regional level, the Integrated Skills Strategy also provides a reference point for development strategies of voivodeships.

Concerning career guidance: there are many solutions and programs to ensure the quality and standards of vocational education and career guidance, in relation to lifelong learning. It is worth mentioning: EQAVET, ECVET, CoVEs and ReferNet.

Moreover:

- the concepts contained in the ISS 2030 are implemented as part of the In-school Vocational Guidance System and the annual career counselling program;
- the Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies (2008/C 319/02) are being implemented in the educational institutions;
- the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) are promoted through: teacher training centres, pedagogical libraries and psychological and pedagogical counselling centres.

### Terminological coherence challenges

Terminology used in national documents is mostly based on EU policies, with some adaptations to national context in definitions of particular terms. Coherent usage of skills related terminology at various levels of policy discourse remains a long term challenge. It could be well illustrated by the prevalence of the term "lifelong learning" (pl.: uczenie się przez całe życie) over the pre-2000 term kształcenie ustawiczne (en.: "perpetual schooling"). After over 20 years of implementing lifelong learning policy we can state that the meaning and importance of LLL is almost universally understood. However, the older term (favouring formal, school-based training) is still occasionally used by some policy makers, researchers and practitioners. Another example could be the transition from "competences" to "skills" as

the central term of LLL policy, induced by recent OECD and EU documents. A national definition of “skills” (pl.: umiejętności) has been coined for ISS 2030, focusing on praxeology but also valuing knowledge and attitudes. However, this change in terminology is not yet entirely transparent to most stakeholders without further explanation.

Moreover, despite the introduction of new terms such as lifelong learning, formal/informal/non-formal education, qualifications, skills (including different types of skills), competences, validation (recognition and certification of competences) etc. into documents, their use is not consistent. The terms education, training, learning are still used alternatively, although an attempt to introduce this terminology into strategic and legislative documents should be highlighted. They function in a large number of documents and are not always used in the same way, sometimes even interchangeably.

## Policy recommendations for Poland

- a. On a more holistic approach to skills and better visibility of TSCs in skills strategies (if applicable), validation and guidance policies
  - Transversal skills and vocational skills are too often treated as separate sets of competences, with different approaches/measures taken to promote them. Discourse about policies should emphasise the links between different types of competences, optimisation of skill sets for professional roles and enabling the value of transversal competences.
  - Introduction of identifying and documenting transversal competences together with a tutor (teacher or career counsellor) in secondary schools (or even primary schools) as a cyclical activity carried out throughout all years of study. Ultimately, the student would graduate from school with a portfolio attesting transversal competences.
- b. On professionalisation of practitioners
  - Promotion of career planning focused on competences, instead of only specific professions.
  - Training in identifying and documenting transversal competences for validation practitioners, guidance/career counsellors and teachers.
- c. On more coordination of policies across education sectors and vertically between the different levels of competences?
  - Including transversal competences as a part of the curriculum for career counselling classes at schools.



- Emphasising transversal competences in the teachers / vocational counsellors training.
- Promoting places/institutions where different education sectors, levels and competences can meet (e.g. Centres of Vocational Excellence, technoparks, science museums, libraries, KidZania etc.).

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