

Manual for Validation and Recognition of Prior Learning in EGREEN +

Target groups: individuals applying for validation and assessors performing the recognition and validation work



Authors: Professor Hæge Nore, Professor Jorunn Dahlback and Associate Professor Kate Louise Milosavljevic (all from OsloMet)

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What is Validation and Recognition of Prior Learning?

In a life-long perspective, non-formal and informal learning may count for more than formal education and training when speaking of employability and career development. This is often called prior learning and covers learning through paid or unpaid work, in-company training, leisure activities and other things that add to or replace formal education and training.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) is the process where former learning is “made visible” and transparent for an assessment process. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process for proving competence where individuals may apply for an assessment and validation of their formal, non-formal, and informal learning. Assessment is based on a portfolio showing an individual’s competence in a specific field.

There must be an authorized body confirming that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a standard. The assessments need to be discretionary and holistic as the competences may not be equal to descriptions in the standard, but still equivalent.

VNIL and RPL may be used for up-skilling, re-skilling, or mobility reasons. They may also serve as tools for intake or inclusion into (parts of) education and training programs.

You can read more about recognition and validation [here](#).

What do VNIL and RPL mean in an EGREEN+ context?

The EGREEN+ project has developed two training programs targeting sustainability in the green sector (landscaping, gardening, and floristry). Each program covers four modules with topics that are crucial for understanding and acting according to sustainability.

EGREEN+ offers three different kinds of diploma or certificate, assessed by EGREEN+ registered assessors following standardised EGREEN+ learning outcomes and assessment criteria. This serves as social recognition: the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic or social stakeholders (Cedefop, 2008). The partnership in EGREEN+ represents European branch organisations, companies, schools and training organisations in six European countries.

As many individuals working in the green sector already have developed competences in the field of sustainability (non-formal or informal), they may not need to participate in all modules or in a training program. However, they may want an EGREEN+ diploma or certificate for several possible reasons: a) mobility (moving to another company or country), b) upskilling (career path), c) as part of the company’s quality assurance, or d) marketing.

Through the Skillsbank¹ system, EGREEN offers an online possibility for VNIL and RPL in the field of sustainability in the green sector as well as a self-assessment against sector-based qualification criteria on EQF-levels² 2-6.

For a full recognition of prior learning in a trade, as a skilled worker or master of skilled art certificate, we recommend that individuals contact local or national authorities and follow

¹ Skillsbank is a multilingual database covering qualification definitions

² <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>

their provisions and existing systems. In this way, we act in accordance with the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (CEDEFOP 2015, pp 38-39).

“Web-based platforms that allow for recognition and assessment of specific skills require careful consideration and need to be compared to existing systems of validation to promote adequate quality assurance and allow for rationalisation of efforts.”

EGREEN+ offers training programs with open online resources (MOOCs). These do not include the presence of assigned teachers, trainers or supervisors that can help individuals with inclusion to or shortening of a program. Interested individuals may proceed to a training program or a specific module in one of the programs based on the self-assessment procedure or one or more module diplomas.

If the EGREEN+ resources are used as part of formal training organized by VET providers, the organizers should follow local, national or trade specific provisions regarding RPL.

VNIL/RPL options in EGREEN+

There are four different options for VNIL/ RPL in EGREEN+:

- 1) *A self-assessment procedure* resulting in an individual profile and a spider chart showing your self-assessed strengths and weaknesses compared to competence descriptions in floristry, gardening and/or landscaping on selected EQF levels 2-6. Read more about this option [here](#)
- 2) *A procedure to receive a diploma* equivalent to the one they get as part of the modules / micro-credentials in EGREEN+. You may take a quiz to check your knowledge in the fields. Read more about the different modules/ topics in the box below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Climate awareness • Recycling and composting • The problem of polymers (plastic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being an informed worker/producer • Circular economy • Green supply chain management • Innovative business practices
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- 3) *A procedure to receive a certificate* based on a more holistic competence across the modules. Two certificate options:
 - a. Sustainable resource use in the green sector on EQF level 3 or 4. Read more about this topic and the learning outcomes [here](#).
 - b. Sustainable businesses in the green sector on EQF level 5 or 6. Read more about this topic and the learning outcomes [here](#).

4) *A procedure to receive a European Green Mastery Certificate in Innovative sustainable practices* (EQF level 6) based on a portfolio task.

All diploma and certification procedures follow common steps in VNIL/RPL:

Step one: Clarify your purpose or intentions for VNIL/RPL

Step two: Identification and mapping of competences

Step three: Documentation

Step four: Assessment, recognition, and validation

Step five: Certification

These steps are described in more detail further down.

Individual preparations

Prior to assessment and validation for all certificates you need to develop a portfolio. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of performed work that can document and demonstrate your competence in a targeted field. As the purpose is to visualise that your competence is equivalent to learning outcomes for a module, training program or Mastery certificate, you need to include some reflections on how your prior learning is in line with the learning outcomes. Your documentations do not need to be completely similar or cover all learning outcomes. Portfolios can include any documents, pictures, charts, videos, transcripts, interviews etc. In an VNIL/RPL context, portfolios will serve as showcasing for achievement of a certificate.

What you need to document, depends on which diploma or certificate you aim at. For this reason, you need to follow all steps. How you apply for validation and recognition through the Skillsbank system are described in the next section.

Step one: Clarify your purpose

Before you start documentation for VNIL/ RPL linked to sustainability in the green sector, you need to know the different options in EGREEN+ and how to apply for RPL. It may also be a good idea to discuss your purpose with your employer or a colleague. Your company might be interested in getting a validation and recognition of your competences as part of a company strategy. Or maybe you are planning to move to work in another company or even another country and thus want a recognition and validation for mobility reasons.

The diplomas and certificates in EGREEN+ are all linked to [the European Qualification Framework](#) (EQF) describing competences according to different qualification levels. If you are unsure about your level of starting point or ambitions, or curious about your sustainability competence profile, you should start with the self-assessment.

If you regard yourself as a specialist in a specific topic of sustainability in the green sector, according to your self-assessment profile, you may take the quiz to verify your knowledge in the field and automatically get a module diploma. You may also go directly to the quiz without the self-assessment.

If you are more of a generalist in sustainability resource use and are a skilled worker at EQF level 3 or 4 (depending on the country where you are living), you may apply for a certificate in sustainability resource use. This certificate covers the following topics: Biodiversity, Climate awareness, Recycling and composting, The problem of polymers (plastic). To receive this certificate, you must document competences according to EQF level 3 or 4.

If you are an employer and run a business, you may already have demonstrated that you run a sustainable and innovative business. Maybe you want a certificate as part of a marketing strategy or even part of quality measures. The certificate of sustainable business practices requires demonstration of competences at a high level, meaning EQF level 5 or 6. This certificate covers the topics: Being an informed worker/producer, Circular economy, Green supply chain management, Innovative business practices.

If you have demonstrated innovative sustainable business practices over time and acted as a specialist, expert, or moderator for others, you may apply for a **European Green Mastery Certificate in Innovative sustainable practices**. This may supplement a Master of Skilled Craft certificate.

If you feel unsure about your sustainability competences, you may proceed to the EGREEN+ training programs.

If you would like to apply for a certificate based on your prior learning, you need to identify and map your competences as described in step two.

Step two: Identification and mapping of competences

For module diplomas

To identify your previous knowledge of a specific topic (one of the modules in EGREEN+ listed above), you should check your competences against the learning outcome descriptions for knowledge. If you are familiar with the concepts and outcome descriptions, proceed to take the module quiz.

For a certificate of Sustainable resource use in the green sector

To identify your knowledge of sustainable resource use, you may start by taking the four quizzes: biodiversity, climate awareness, recycling and composting, and the problem of polymers (plastic). If you are familiar with the concepts and content, you may proceed to check your competences against the learning outcomes (level 3 or 4) for all four topics (modules). Discuss with a colleague, employer, mentor, or friend how you can demonstrate your knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy in sustainable resource use. Ask questions to yourself and others like:

- What kind of work tasks, projects or other contributions to your company, branch organization, customers, providers, or private life can you refer to?
- What kind of resources or training may have contributed to your upskilling on sustainability? (Formal, informal or non-formal) What about Internet resources?

Start collecting evidence for your portfolio. If needed, you may use Skillsbank for storage of your documentation.

For a certificate of Sustainable businesses in the green sector

To identify your knowledge of sustainable businesses, you may start by taking the four quizzes: Being an informed worker/producer, Circular economy, Green supply chain management, and Innovative business practices. If you are familiar with the concepts and content, you may proceed to check your competences against the learning outcomes (level 5 or 6) for all four topics (modules). Discuss with a colleague, mentor, or friend how you may demonstrate your knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy in running a sustainable business. Reflect on what kind of work tasks, projects or other contributions to your company, branch organization, customers, providers, or private life you can refer to. Reflect on your sources for upskilling on sustainable businesses.

Start collecting evidence for your portfolio. If needed, you may use Skillsbank for storage of your documentation.

For a European Green Mastery Certificate in Innovative sustainable practices

To receive this certificate, you must demonstrate innovative sustainable practices in a broad spectre of topics according to the portfolio task for Innovative sustainable practices in the green sector.

Step three: Documentation

In EGREEN+, validation, assessment and recognition of informal and unformal learning are based on documentation. Any form of media documentation is possible, but we recommend formats suitable for documenting practical and innovative activities as well as interactions with colleagues, customers and/or providers. Such formats may be pictures, videos, websites, presentations, or even virtual reality (VR). Written formats may be used when suitable, for instance business or project plans, strategies, offers, tenders etc.

The portfolio and all documentation may be in your own language, but for the Green Mastery Certificate, the portfolio cover should be in English as it will be assessed by an international committee.

Together, this documentation should demonstrate your level of competence for the applicable certificate. Use the learning outcomes as a backdrop, not a framework for documentation. Your informal and unformal learning will be recognized and validated as equivalent to formal learning (like the training programs in EGREEN+ or offers through VET providers using EGREEN+ resources).

How to apply for VNIL/RPL in EGREEN+?

Before you start, it's a good idea to download and read both this RPL-manual and the manual for video documentations. Be aware that applications will only be assessed twice a year with deadlines February 1st and October 1st.

Here's what you need to do to apply for RPL in EGREEN+:

- 1) For recognition and validation of your competences, the first step is **to register as a user and to set up a personal account in Skillsbank** (www.skillsbank.eu). With this personal account you can store all your portfolio components (documents, videos, pictures etc) as a basis for your application or a CV, or you can wait until you have designed your portfolio and then upload it for assessment and recognition.
- 2) Choose the EGREEN+ RPL option
- 3) Choose **your preferred language** from a drop-down menu
- 4) Choose your **trade** and your **educational (EQF) level** from drop-down menus
- 5) Choose the **self-assessment** option if you want to start there to clarify your EQF level and your competence profile
- 6) From a drop-down menu, choose which **diploma or certificate** you will apply for
- 7) **For diplomas:** follow the links to the quizzes. To get a diploma you need 100% correct answers. You may take the quiz as many times as you want, but we advise you to proceed to one of the training programs if you feel unsure.
- 8) **For certificates: Upload your documents** to your account according to Skillsbank procedures (if you want to store them as work in progress before you integrate it all into a portfolio document).
- 9) **Gather all your documentation** into one portfolio document in pdf-format. You may convert your file to pdf through your editor (Microsoft Word for ex). Alternatively, you can use <https://www.freepdfconvert.com/>. We advise you to use links to external videos or other documentations (on Youtube, websites etc) along with pictures and descriptions in your portfolio file. All external documents must be open online.
- 10) **Upload your portfolio** according to the certificate you apply for. Make sure you present a list of all content in your portfolio and write a **short statement** as part of your portfolio, in which you tell how your documentations are linked together as a picture of your competences (help assessors with the puzzle)

Assessment and certification

Assessors from all the three trades and all countries represented in EGREEN+ are registered in Skillsbank. They get a notice twice a year (see deadlines above) when applications for RPL are uploaded and start the assessment and validation process.

Step four: Assessment and validation

For the certificates ‘Sustainable resource use in the green sector’ and ‘Sustainable businesses in the green sector’, the individuals’ documentations will be assessed and validated by minimum one of the EGREEN+ assessors from own country and trade. They will perform a holistic and discretionary assessment of whether the documentation demonstrates competence equivalent to formal training in the field and the qualification level. The learning outcomes referred to will be used as a backdrop for the validation, not a rigid checklist.

For validation according to the European Green Mastery Certificate in Innovative sustainable practices, there will be an international and interdisciplinary commission of two or three assessors. For this reason, application and as much documentation as possible must be in English. The commission will perform a holistic and discretionary assessment of a portfolio showing competences equivalent to the portfolio task in EGREEN+. The learning outcomes referred to at this level will also be used as a backdrop for the validation.

The assessors will register the result in Skillsbank (approved/not approved with some comments) normally within four weeks after submission deadline. When the portfolio documentation is approved, the assessors “push a button” to generate the relevant certificate.

Applicants will be notified when the validation is finished and may then proceed to download the EGREEN+ certificate on the right EQF level.

Please see more information in the EGREEN+ guidelines for assessors.

Step five: Certification

After acceptance of the quizzes, a diploma will automatically be available for downloading and printing. After the recognition and validation by assessors and approval registered in Skillsbank, a certificate will automatically be available for downloading and printing.



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NTI Multilateral
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