

ContinueUP

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the ContinueUP Project (2023-2026) regarding the formal recognition and accreditation of teacher continuous professional development (CPD) across Europe. As education systems face rapid digital transformation and evolving pedagogical and societal demands, the traditional frameworks for recognising how teachers learn are being challenged. This document aims to serve as a starting point for national and European policymakers to engage with the topic and take steps towards a more flexible and aligned accreditation landscape.

A growing gap is opening between the learning teachers undertake and the learning their national systems formally recognise for career progression. Although CPD is treated as a professional duty in most European countries, the activities that count towards it often remain narrowly defined. This report identifies the systemic barriers behind that gap and proposes concrete steps towards more flexible, outcome-focused recognition and accreditation frameworks at national and European level.

Throughout this report, key terms are used in line with the working definitions adopted by the ContinueUP project. In particular, *accreditation* refers to the formal approval of a CPD offer (such as a course, programme or MOOC) against defined quality criteria, whereas *formal recognition* refers to the official acknowledgment granted to an individual teacher's completed CPD activity within a national or regional framework. The term *alternative formats of CPD* is used as an analytical category covering flexible, collaborative, digitally enabled, practice-based or cross-border professional learning that goes beyond traditional courses, seminars and workshops. Full definitions of these and related terms are provided in the Annex.

The findings presented here are derived from a multi-phase research design conducted between 2023 and 2026:

- Literature and regulatory review: A systematic analysis of 77 studies across 31 countries and an evaluation of regulations in 14 countries.
- Stakeholders' interviews: Semi-structured interviews with experts from seven national accreditation bodies (France, Greece, Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Türkiye, and Czechia).
- MOOC pilot case studies: An examination of the practical hurdles faced in accrediting a MOOC in Croatia, Portugal, and Spain.
- European Dialogue Lab: A multi-stakeholder workshop held in Brussels in April 2026, involving 31 experts from Ministries of Education, universities, and regulatory bodies.

The report highlights that while some countries possess flexible, principle-based frameworks, many others struggle with rigid, highly bureaucratic systems designed for traditional onsite training. Key challenges include a lack of quality assurance for international providers, language barriers, and a credential accumulation mindset that prioritizes certificates over meaningful learning outcomes.

Responding to this picture requires moving from format- and input-based logics to outcome- and competence-based ones, anchored in shared European reference frameworks and supported by digital tools such as micro-credentials and portfolios. The recommendations developed in the concluding chapters translate this argument into concrete action at four levels.

At national policy level, accreditation systems should be built on teacher competence frameworks, ideally aligned with European frameworks like DigCompEdu, and embed a lifelong-learning logic that deliberately connects initial teacher education, induction and CPD as one continuum rather than three disconnected phases. At the level of accreditation bodies, evaluation should shift from verifying duration to assessing learning outcomes and classroom impact, supported by harmonised units such as ECTS and micro-credentials. At school and provider level, school authorities should be empowered to validate international and self-directed CPD, opening a flexible recognition pathway at

the local level. At European level, the Commission and Member States should jointly develop a flexible, non-prescriptive reference framework setting out common quality criteria for teachers' CPD, providing the shared language needed to make professional learning credible and portable across borders.

Following this introduction, the report is organised into five main sections: 1. Literature Review: A comparative analysis of requirements and processes for CPD recognition across Europe; 2. Interview Results: Insights into how national bodies define, organize, and incentivise CPD; 3. The MOOC Pilot: A summary of the challenges in accrediting a MOOC; 4. The European Dialogue Lab: recommendations & actions for updating national accreditation frameworks ; and 5. Recommendations: A set of strategic actions at the national and European levels to facilitate framework updates and reciprocal recognition.

Literature Review: A comparative analysis of requirements and processes for CPD recognition across Europe

This first section maps the structural picture across Europe: how teacher CPD is regulated, what is recognised, by whom, and through what kinds of frameworks. The diversity revealed here is one of the reasons recognition does not travel easily between countries, and it sets the stage for the country-level mechanisms that the interview chapter examines next.

In 2023, the ContinueUP project conducted a comparative study of national CPD recognition systems, aiming to get a better understanding of the requirements and processes for the accreditation and recognition of teachers' continuous professional development across Europe. The [report](#) combines a systematic literature review covering 77 studies from 31 European countries with an analysis of regulatory documents from 14 countries.

Its main conclusion is that teachers' CPD is widely recognised as important and, in most European countries, is considered a professional duty. However, the ways in which CPD is regulated, accredited, recognised and linked to career progression vary considerably across countries. Some countries (e.g., Portugal, Spain, Hungary) have highly formalised, detailed accreditation procedures. Others, such as Finland, Ireland, Switzerland have light or no national accreditation frameworks, relying on trust-based professional autonomy of teachers and schools.

Recent reforms (e.g., in Czechia and Spain) show a shift toward more flexible, less mandatory models. Only a minority (Portugal, Spain, Croatia) strongly connect CPD to career progression. In most countries CPD is considered a professional duty, but only a subset requires a minimum number of hours/days.

The report highlights that CPD regulation is usually defined at national level, often by ministries of education or similar regulatory bodies. In many countries, CPD is regulated by law, meaning that changes to accreditation and recognition systems may require complex and prolonged legal processes. At the same time, the report shows that several countries have recently revised or are revising their CPD regulations, indicating that this is, presently, an active policy area across Europe. Many countries have updated legislation in the last 10 years.

Also, the report emphasises a need for greater clarity, harmonisation, and shared terminology across Europe. A key finding is, in fact, the diversity of terminology, concepts, providers and recognised CPD formats. Different countries use different terms. This diversity makes comparison and mutual understanding very difficult and points to the need for a more shared European language and frameworks around teachers' CPD. It was also possible to see that there are many different types of CPD providers recognised across countries. Higher education institutions remain the dominant providers. But the landscape also includes public and private training centres, NGOs, teacher unions, private companies, and international actors. Some systems (e.g., Finland, Belgium) allow any

organisation to provide training, while others (Hungary, Portugal, Türkiye) restrict provision to certified national providers.

Furthermore, the report stresses that the CPD landscape is becoming more diverse. While traditional onsite courses remain the most widely recognised format, some countries also recognise fully online and blended courses, conferences, webinars, massive open online course (MOOCs), international mobility projects, workshops, working groups, school projects, research-based activities and, in a smaller number of cases, teachers' self-study activities (represented in portfolios or reflective reports). However, formal recognition of these alternative formats is uncommon and often not transferable across countries. Formal recognition of international CPD is limited. International mobility projects (Erasmus+, eTwinning) are increasingly recognised as CPD. But only 8 countries fully recognise training provided by international organisations. Recognition of international MOOCs is still inconsistent and often blocked by accreditation rules. Although the existing accreditation systems often remain strongly connected to traditional formats, (especially onsite training courses), teachers are increasingly participating in online, blended, international and self-directed forms of professional learning.

Key findings from the report:

- CPD processes and requirements differ significantly across countries; this diversity makes common recognition very difficult.
- Changes in accreditation and recognition systems require complex and prolonged legal processes.
- Accreditation systems would benefit from moving from a narrow model based mainly on traditional course formats toward broader, more flexible and quality-based criteria.
- Formal recognition of alternative formats is uncommon and not transferable across countries. Specifically, the recognition of international MOOCs is still inconsistent and often blocked by national regulation.

These findings establish the structural backdrop for the following sections. The findings show that CPD systems differ widely in how they are organised and what they recognise, but they do not yet tell us *how* these systems work in practice and are experienced. The interviews presented in the following section take up that question.

Interview Results: Insights into how national bodies define, organise, and incentivise CPD

To understand how the structural picture mapped in the previous section translates into the dynamics of each system, the ContinueUP project conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with experts representing seven teacher CPD accreditation bodies and/or Ministries of Education. The interviews aimed to surface the rules, routines and decision logics that determine which CPD counts, for which teachers, and on what terms.

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection method based on a set of open-ended questions where the flexibility to explore participants' answers in depth is ensured. They function as guided conversations designed to elicit participants' interpretations, experiences, beliefs, and meanings in relation to a topic under research: teacher CPD formats, processes and regulation. All the interviews followed a protocol ensuring that all relevant aspects were always addressed, while

follow-up questions and probes allowed the interviewers to pursue unexpected but relevant insights¹. The interviews focused on the following topics:

- a. how teacher CPD is defined and organised nationally;
- b. what are the formal formats of CPD available to teachers;
- c. who are the teachers' CPD provider;
- d. whether teachers' CPD is obligatory and/or what incentives are available for teachers to engage in CPD activities;
- e. how alternative formats of CPD (such as MOOCs or international mobility activities) can be recognised formally, and what the benefits and risks would be involved in such formal recognition.

The countries and organisations participating in the interviews were France (Digital Directorate for Education - DNE), Greece (Institute of Education Policy - IEP), Croatia (The Agency for Science and Higher Education - AZVO), Spain (National Institute of Educational Technologies and Teacher Training - INTEF), Portugal (Regional Department for Education, Science and Technology of Madeira), Türkiye (General Directorate for Information and Educational Technologies - YEGITEK), and Czechia (National Pedagogical Institute of the Czech Republic - NPI). The individuals who were interviewed had a variety of managerial or administrative roles in the relevant institutions and departments responsible for the recognition of teacher CPD, ranging from department directors to project coordinators.

The main results are presented below.

Institutions providing CPD and accreditation bodies

French CPD providers are predominantly public and Ministry-linked institutions, including regional CPD schools (EAFC), media literacy centres (CLEMI), digital training providers (DANE), universities (INSPE), the ministry of education operated teacher training organisation (Canopé), and the inspectorate. All providers are approved by the Ministry. In France, teachers' professional development is considered a citizen right, and therefore, there are no private providers.

In Greece CPD is delivered by the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP), the ICT in education focused branch of the Ministry of Education (CTI Diophantus), universities, and school advisors, who organise training within their disciplinary domain or by teachers for their colleagues in their own initiative. Private providers may exist, but their activities are not formally recognised.

In Croatia, five national agencies are authorised as CPD providers: Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), Vocational Education and Training Agency (ASOO), External Evaluation Agency (NCVVO), CARNET (digital education network), Agency for Higher Education (AZVO). Universities and NGOs may also deliver CPD if approved by the Ministry. Schools can host CPD, and county-level CPD is organised by teacher leads.

Spain has both national and regional provider structures. Nationally, INTEF (the National Institute of Educational Technology and Teacher Training) designs training programmes, digital competence frameworks and online courses. Autonomous regions have their own teacher training centres, which accredit and deliver CPD. Universities, teacher unions, and private institutions may also offer teacher training, but must request recognition from INTEF. Schools also run internal CPD activities (working groups, projects) that regional authorities can accredit.

¹ Given, L. M. (2008). Semi-structured interview. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopaedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 811-812). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n420>

Portugal has a structured provider ecosystem, centred on 272 accredited CPD institutions, including, 91 regional teachers training centres (CFAE), 80 Higher Education Institutions, 57 Professional Associations, and 44 additional accredited bodies. Recognition, accreditation, and system oversight are handled by the Scientific and Pedagogical Council for Continuous Training (CCPFC). In Madeira and Azores, however, it is the Regional Directorates for Education that regulates and accredits teachers' training.

In Türkiye, CPD is provided mainly through state-run agencies under the Ministry, particularly the recently established national professional development academy, provincial directorates, and the national online 'OBA' platform. Only international CPD providers that have bilateral agreements with the Ministry (e.g., Council of Europe, Canva) can offer accredited CPD. There are private schools, who are completely depending on their own ecosystem or resources, because they are responsible for providing CPD activities to their teachers. Teachers working in private schools cannot participate in onsite professional development activities organised by the state-run agencies, but they can access the online teacher training platform.

Czechia has a decentralised and quasi-privatised environment. CPD providers are initial teacher education providers (faculties of pedagogy), private organisations, NGOs (e.g., Učitel Naživo) and state or semi-state agencies (e.g., National Institute for Continuous Teacher Training). Any individual or organisation can become a provider if accredited by the Ministry's accreditation committee; under recent reforms, accreditation is no longer needed for a "continuous training activity".

Incentives for continuous professional development

Across the seven countries examined teacher incentives for engaging in CPD vary widely. Some systems rely heavily on mandatory requirements, others on career- and salary-linked rewards, and a smaller number on softer or indirect incentives. In practice, most countries combine elements of all three, but the balance and emphasis differ.

Mandatory requirements are the most common lever. In France, CPD is mandatory for primary school teachers, who must complete 18 hours per year of legally required training as part of their working time; it is not mandatory for secondary teachers. In Greece, newly appointed teachers must complete a 100-hour induction training required by law, alongside mandatory CPD activities tied to curriculum reforms or other Ministry-mandated changes. Türkiye similarly requires CPD of newly appointed teachers and introduces mandatory training weeks at the start or end of term, commonly delivered as self-paced online courses or lecture sessions. Croatia obliges teachers to participate in CPD at state level at least once every two years and at county level at least three times per year, with schools free to add further requirements aligned with their annual CPD plan. In Czechia, teachers are granted 12 paid study days per year for CPD and are required to use them.

Career- and salary-linked incentives create a stronger pull in Spain, Portugal, Croatia and Türkiye. In Portugal, CPD is both mandatory and tied directly to career progression: teachers must complete 50 hours every four years to advance, with strict rules on what kind of training qualifies (e.g. 50% must be pedagogical or scientific, and most must be CCPFC-accredited). In Spain, teachers must complete 100 hours of recognised training every six years to secure a salary complement, and CPD credits also influence mobility between schools and access to leadership roles. Croatia embeds CPD into career advancement through three formally distinguished stages - Mentor, Advisor and Excellence Advisor - each requiring between 100 and 150 hours of CPD over five years. Türkiye offers two milestone-based incentives: after 10 years of teaching, teachers can request expert teacher status after completing a 70-hour online self-paced training, leading to a salary complement; after 20 years, an 80-hour training provides a further salary increase. These programmes are co-developed with universities or other types of ITE providers and cover both subject content and pedagogy. They do not affect school appointment or transfers but provide a meaningful financial reward for sustained professional growth.

Softer and indirect incentives appear in some systems and can play a meaningful role even where the main lever is mandatory or financial. In Türkiye, teachers report being motivated by increased visibility, opportunities to present at national conferences, and eligibility to run extracurricular courses requiring certificates. In Croatia, interviewees highlighted incentives that speak to teachers' desire for tangible benefits rather than purely procedural ones, such as ready-to-use teaching materials and reduced teaching hours.

Challenges to formally recognising alternative forms of teachers' CPD

Across Europe, alternative forms of professional development are increasingly common. Yet, the recognition remains difficult for a consistent set of reasons. Below we examine the main challenges identified in the interviews.

Strict accreditation frameworks where alternative forms of CPD do not fit

Several countries maintain regulatory requirements for what counts as teacher training. These frameworks are often designed around traditional formats (onsite courses, seminars, workshops), making it difficult to incorporate emerging ones. This means that recognition systems are not designed for flexibility, making innovations structurally difficult to validate.

In Spain, the law only recognises five modalities of CPD (courses, seminars, working groups, projects in schools, congresses). This forces alternative formats to somehow adapt so they correspond with the five given modalities (see the MOOC pilot below). Similarly, in Portugal, the challenge to accredit national MOOCs is based on the requirement to have a tutor-trainee ratio of 1-to-15, formal assessment requirements (individual and on a written form), and a minimum of hours.

In Croatia, the law specifies that CPD providers offer detailed information regarding their offer (topic, purpose, competencies, methods, evaluation, certification format, number of participants), which international or alternative CPD formats sometimes cannot provide in the way or timeline foreseen, or national bodies cannot easily review.

Linked to this idea, some interviewees referred to the rigidity of mindset. Many countries operate within hierarchical or traditional teacher-training cultures. In France the system is described as hierarchically organised, making inclusion of informal or bottom-up CPD difficult. In Greece the system is structured around centralised, heavy formal procedures. In Portugal and Spain long-standing regulation creates a barrier to recognising alternative forms of CPD.

Lack of mechanisms to evaluate the quality of external or international CPD

A recurring barrier is that ministries and agencies cannot reliably verify the quality, relevance and authenticity of CPD undertaken abroad or online.

In France, the absence of any monitoring procedure for online or international CPD means these activities cannot be recognised. Greece raised a similar concern about verifying whether teachers had genuinely participated.

Croatia illustrates a more open but resource-intensive approach. CPD agencies are willing to review and recognise international offers but must do so on a case-by-case basis which can be a slow process whose outcomes depend on the subjective judgement of individual staff. Croatian interviewees also flagged a quality concern regarding online formats which do not require active participation by participants. More broadly, where online platforms operate as closed communities, national bodies cannot independently verify what teachers actually did.

Misalignment with national curriculum priorities or values

Countries worry that international or external CPD may not align with their national educational frameworks. This was raised as a concern for France, Greece and Türkiye.

In Türkiye each CPD activity is reviewed for alignment with the national curriculum, and international CPD additionally requires a bilateral agreement and localisation of content to ensure contextual relevance. It was also emphasised that international CPD could be irrelevant if it refers to digital tools that are not available to Turkish teachers.

The interview with Greece emphasised that if a teacher participates in an international CPD activity that is not relevant for their curriculum, then it would be a relatively worse way to invest their free time in CPD.

Bureaucratic and administrative burdens

Formal recognition of alternative forms of CPD requires administrative machinery that many national systems lack.

In Greece, bilateral agreements must be drafted course by course, similar to Türkiye. In Croatia recognition through agencies is slow, dependent on the individual advisor, and can feel arbitrary. In Spain, teachers must apply for recognition through regional or national bodies, and cross regional portability is inconsistent.

In Portugal, national accreditation rules are highly structured, making it difficult to adapt to new CPD formats without major legal changes. It takes long to receive a response to an email request for recognition, and the request is often rejected in the end.

Along the same lines, current processes were described as time consuming, paper heavy, and overly demanding (e.g., requiring detailed syllabi or certified translations). Moreover, applications for formal recognition in some countries are processed according to a fixed schedule that might not correspond with the timing of the training completed by a teacher.

Absence of recognition pathways for teacher-initiated or self-directed learning

Many systems only recognise centrally provided or formally accredited CPD. In France and Türkiye, there is no formal recognition process for teacher-chosen CPD. In Greece voluntary CPD has no formal recognition procedures unless it is part of postgraduate studies or long university programmes. In Spain individual learning activities are rarely recognised; only one example was mentioned of an individual research project being accepted. Teachers working in mainland Portugal cannot have MOOCs formally recognised unless routed through accredited institutions.

Benefits and risks of recognising alternative forms of CPD

Interviewees were asked what the risks and negative or unexpected effects could be if countries formally recognised alternative forms of CPD at national level. At the same time, interviewees were asked to identify benefits.

The table below summarises the main risks and benefits associated with the formal recognition of international, informal or less conventional forms of teachers' continuous professional development, based on the information provided.

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Dimension	Risks	Benefits
Equity and access	Unequal access: Recognition may favour teachers with stronger digital skills, English language proficiency, motivation, or access to resources, potentially increasing inequalities between teachers and schools.	Greater flexibility and choice: Teachers may gain access to a broader range of professional learning opportunities that better match their needs, interests, contexts and professional goals. Potential scalability: Online CPD and MOOCs can reach large numbers of teachers quickly, making professional development more widely available across education systems.
Teacher engagement	Superficial participation: Strong incentives may lead some teachers to participate mainly to obtain certificates, without meaningful engagement or professional learning.	Increased motivation and engagement: When teachers can choose CPD activities that are personally relevant and professionally useful, they may be more motivated and active in their own development.
Quality and relevance	Misalignment with national priorities: International or external CPD may not fully correspond to national curricula, pedagogical priorities, accreditation criteria or educational values.	Exposure to innovation and new perspectives: Teachers may access new methodologies, international practices, emerging trends and innovative approaches that are not always available in national/local CPD systems.
Interaction and professional networking	Limited control over participation quality: In online formats, it may be difficult to ensure that teachers are actively participating, collaborating or applying what they learn.	Higher interactivity and networking: MOOCs, online communities, forums, live events, TeachMeets and international training can create opportunities for collaboration with teachers from other contexts and countries.
Administrative feasibility	Administrative burden: Formal recognition may require complex validation, bilateral agreements, new accreditation procedures, assessment rules and system-level reforms.	
Cost and sustainability	Need for system reform: Recognising new CPD formats may require major changes in existing accreditation systems, which can be slow, costly and difficult to implement.	Cost-effectiveness: Online and international CPD can provide access to high-quality or free learning opportunities, reducing dependence on traditional state-funded or local training models.

Table 1. Risks and benefits associated with the formal recognition of international or less conventional forms of teachers' CPD.

Taken together, the interviews painted a cautiously optimistic picture. The benefits of recognising new forms of teachers' CPD were mentioned more frequently and with greater emphasis than the risks, indicating a generally positive perception of their potential value for teachers and education systems. At the same time, risks and benefits were not presented as separate or opposing categories, but rather as part of a continuum of similar dimensions. For example, greater flexibility and choice may increase motivation and access to innovation but may also raise concerns about unequal access or superficial participation; internationalisation may enrich teachers' professional learning but may also

create questions about alignment with national priorities. This means that the same features that make alternative forms of CPD valuable can also generate risks if they are not properly regulated, supported and quality assured.

The MOOC Pilot: A summary of the challenges in accrediting a MOOC

While the previous sections mapped the recognition mechanisms from the perspective of the systems that produce it, the MOOC pilot outlined in the following section tested what happens when those mechanisms meet a concrete CPD activity seeking formal recognition. The ContinueUP Project brought ITE and CPD providers together to co-construct and deliver an education and training programme consisting of an ITE course and a CPD MOOC, each responding to national and local realities while contributing to a shared European vision of teacher professionalism. As part of running the CPD MOOC, the project also examined how formal recognition processes for CPD currently operate and explored how teachers can obtain formal recognition for participation in a MOOC within existing accreditation systems in some of the partner countries: Croatia, Portugal and Spain.

The project partners representing Ministries of Education from Croatia, Spain and Portugal identified the requirements and processes necessary for the accreditation of the CPD MOOC to be developed in the project. The ContinueUP MOOC was offered in a national version in the respective national language, as well as in a European version in English, offered by European Schoolnet. All three countries attempted to achieve formal recognition of both the national and the European versions of the MOOC. These requirements were considered when developing and delivering the MOOC, to be able to offer teachers formal recognition of their participation. The three 'case studies' below summarise the results of this exercise.

Country	Main problems / Enabling conditions
Spain	National MOOC had to be adapted into a tutored format; legal tutor/participant ratio created staffing challenges; professional status of participants had to be verified; accreditation created additional workload; recognition of the European version depended on the autonomous regions.
Portugal	Mainland Portugal does not currently accept MOOCs as formal teacher training; accreditation rules are oriented towards traditional formats; the accreditation application was therefore rejected; Mainland teachers received no certification for both MOOCs; recognition differs between mainland Portugal and the autonomous regions of Madeira and the Azores; It was therefore possible to offer recognition for the national and European versions of the MOOC to teachers from the Madeira region.
Croatia	Few procedural barriers; CPD legislation is broad and principle-based; different providers can offer recognised CPD; Agency for Education (AZOO) has discretion to accredit programmes; accreditation is based on qualitative alignment; flexible framework enabled accreditation of both national and European versions.

Table 2. Comparative table of the main issues found on MOOCs accreditation pilot.

The three cases show different levels of openness to recognising MOOCs as valid teacher continuous professional development. Spain and Portugal faced significant regulatory and procedural barriers, while Croatia benefited from a more flexible accreditation environment.

Despite their differences, the three cases reveal a common underlying issue: MOOCs challenge traditional CPD accreditation systems. In all three countries, recognition depended primarily on the flexibility of national or regional regulations. The cases also show that European or international CPD are harder to recognise than less-conventional but nationally developed CPD, specifically because national accreditation systems are not prepared for considering cross-border and/or online learning

formats. Spain and Portugal reveal the difficulties created by rigid or fragmented recognition systems, while Croatia illustrates how broader criteria and institutional discretion can facilitate recognition.

The European Dialogue Lab: recommendations & actions for updating national accreditation frameworks

After mapping the recognition gap through literature, interviews and the MOOC pilot, the project sought to investigate the surfaced issues with a wider stakeholder community and to gather concrete proposals for addressing the challenges at national and European level. The project therefore organised a European Dialogue Lab about the formal recognition of teacher learning on April 21st, 2026, in Brussels. A Dialogue Lab is a multi-stakeholder workshop designed to generate concrete ideas through the open exchange of all stakeholders. The aim of the workshop was to bring key stakeholders together to discuss how to modernise national teacher CPD accreditation systems and what actions at European level could be taken to support this. Based on the contacts established during task 4.1, the ContinueUP Project invited policy makers and administrators involved in the accreditation of teacher CPD at national level to this one-day workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were the following:

1. Identify opportunities and challenges in national systems for recognising and accrediting international forms of CPD as well as national forms of CPD that are outside of traditional quality assurance and recognition frameworks.
2. Develop recommendations for updating national accreditation frameworks, systems and processes to include these forms of professional learning.
3. Propose concrete actions at national level to enable formal recognition of such CPD.
4. Suggest actions at European level (short- and long-term) that can facilitate reform of national recognition frameworks, including links to Erasmus+ and other European initiatives.

The Dialogue Lab involved 31 participants organised in 5 tables with 5-6 participants each. 26 participants came from different national or European organisations and 5 were members of the European Schoolnet, acting as facilitators at each table.

Entities (n=26)	Total
European organisations/institutions	4
ITE providers (Universities)	4
Ministries of Education	8
National teachers CPD regulatory bodies	7

Table 3. Entities represented in the Dialogue Lab event.

In line with the guidelines for Dialogue Labs and to facilitate a fully open and unconstrained exchange, anonymity of participants in all reporting from the Dialogue Lab was guaranteed. Therefore, no specifics are provided here in regard to countries or organisations participating in the Dialogue Lab.

The Dialogue Lab was organised in such a way to provide participants with time and space to interact with multiple perspectives of stakeholders from different contexts and engage actively in exchanging views and ideas, actively listening to each other, generating new ideas and developing a knowledge community through interaction. A rotation system was implemented to enable that as many stakeholders as possible would engage with each other. Each table was managed by a facilitator to support but not to direct the discussion. There were four main sessions, involving small group discussions that were followed by feedback plenaries. Based on the discussions and the notes

provided by the facilitators, it was possible to organise the main ideas shared at the Dialogue Lab into three main areas.

Main challenges for the recognition and accreditation of teachers CPD

The Dialogue Lab discussions confirmed all the challenges for accreditation systems already identified as part of the interviews but added two additional considerations:

- **Decentralised systems:** In decentralised countries, accreditation can be a regional competence rather than a national one, leading to an "uneven landscape" where accreditation and recognition depend entirely on the specific autonomous region. A teacher coming from one region to another may find their previously formally recognised CPD no longer recognised. This creates practical barriers to teachers' mobility even inside countries.
- **A 'credential accumulation' mindset vs. meaningful learning:** There is a widespread risk of credential accumulation where teachers' CPD focus shifts from genuine professional growth to the mere gathering of certificates/credits/points to ensure career progression. In some countries a legacy mindset persists where teachers "chase points" through seminars rather than engaging deeply the subject of learning. This risk should be carefully addressed in any framework for the recognition of teachers' CPD. While credits, certificates or badges can support transparency and portability, they may also encourage an instrumental approach to professional development if they become detached from meaningful learning outcomes. To avoid this, CPD recognition should be based not only on inputs such as hours or certificates, but also on evidence of competence development, classroom application, professional reflection and, where possible, impact on students and school improvement.

Recommendations and concrete actions for developing national accreditation frameworks or systems and processes

- **Implement outcome-focused rather than format-focused evaluation:** National systems should transition from merely verifying attendance (e.g. total number of hours) to evaluating the actual learning output of teachers training activities, its impact on schools or classroom practice. This includes using reflective components where teachers document how specific experience developed their professional competences and how such development has been applied (evidence-based) in real situations.
- **Establish a dual-track accreditation framework:** Countries could create two distinct pathways: Track 1: Nationally accredited activities provided by recognised national entities; Track 2: A flexible category for international programs, mobility (Erasmus+), and self-directed learning, validated directly by schools-related authorities to ensure relevance to the school's specific contexts.
- **Integrate teacher professional portfolios:** Portfolios should be used as a lifelong tool (starting in Initial Teacher Education and continuing through induction and career progression) to capture a teacher's professional evolution.
- **Align with teacher competence frameworks:** Accreditation should be built upon clearly defined teacher competence frameworks. CPD programs should be organised around key teacher competences and literacies that are themselves mapped against the required competences of pupils.

- **Empower school leaders:** Since many systems place recognition responsibility on headteachers, it is vital to provide them with clear quality criteria, checklists, and training to become "good evaluators" of what can be considered accredited training, also to act as someone who can guide teachers in choosing high-quality professional development initiatives.
- **Establish national repositories of teacher professional development:** Creating a national open repository of teacher professional development activities can help track previously approved programmes and create precedents for automatic recognition (for example of EU-funded projects CPD-related activities).
- **Recognize teacher agency:** Providing teachers with the agency to select CPD activities that are relevant to their specific needs raises intrinsic motivation and therefore professional engagement.

European actions to facilitate updating national accreditation frameworks

- **Launch a structured dialogue between accreditation bodies:** Establishing a European network of regulatory bodies would facilitate the exchange of best practices and build the mutual trust necessary for the reciprocal recognition of teacher CPD across borders.
- **Develop a European accreditation reference framework:** The European Commission (EC) should devise a framework with minimum quality criteria and guidelines for teachers CPD. This would serve as a voluntary model for countries currently struggling to set up their own schemes, similar to how DigCompEdu has been successfully adopted across various Member States. Ongoing reforms in countries provide windows of opportunity to formally integrate international experiences and mobility into new career progression systems.
- **Consolidate transparency and portability tools:** Existing conceptual tools for measuring training activities should be unified and more clearly communicated (such as ECTS or micro-credentials). A central platform or repository for registering teacher CPD would enable the portability of credits between different national systems. The development of a digital infrastructure for credentialing was also pointed out as relevant.
- **Expand and align Teacher Academies:** The 'Erasmus+ Teacher Academies' programme should be extended to increase the visibility of teachers CPD relevancy and to serve as a primary vehicle for sharing innovative pedagogical practices across European member states.
- **Raise visibility through a "European Year of Teachers' CPD":** Declaring a dedicated year for teacher professional development would highlight the topic at international conferences and motivate national authorities to prioritise accreditation reforms.
- **Highlight the benefits of exposure to innovation and networking:** International CPD provides exposure to new methodologies and perspectives that help teachers "get out of their bubble". It also fosters peer networking across borders, offering benefits that extend beyond the specific training topic.
- **Highlight cost-effectiveness and scalability:** Formats like MOOCs allow for training thousands of teachers rapidly at a low cost on shared-relevant topics. Internationally offered CPD is particularly cost-effective because it reduces the need for every country to develop its own materials on a specific pedagogical topic.

Conclusion: A set of strategic recommendations at the national and European levels to facilitate framework updates and reciprocal recognition

The activities of the project clearly pointed out the need for (re)defining many national accreditation frameworks for teacher CPD. The findings point to a consistent set of barriers: strict regulatory frameworks designed around traditional formats, an inability to verify quality and participation in online or international CPD activities, heavy bureaucratic burdens, and a lack of pathways for teacher-initiated learning. At the same time, the collected evidence pointed to clear benefits to invest in such changes, such as greater teacher agency, exposure to international pedagogical perspectives, increased motivation, and significant cost-effectiveness gains through scalable online and international delivery. On this basis the project has formulated the following recommendations for national and European policy makers & stakeholders.

Recommendations for national policy makers & stakeholders

The findings of this report point to a reform agenda that requires action from multiple actors including ministries, accreditation bodies, training providers and schools.

1. **Establish and progressively align national CPD frameworks:** Countries without an accreditation framework for teacher CPD should establish one, drawing where useful on lighter recognition tools as a starting point. Countries that already have a framework in place should keep it under review and revise it as the CPD landscape evolves. Over time, European countries should converge on a 'minimum common ground', a shared baseline of principles and quality criteria that would make teachers' CPD more comparable and portable across borders, while leaving each country free to determine how recognition is integrated into its own career and accreditation system.
2. **Anchor frameworks in teacher competences and a lifelong-learning logic:** Accreditation systems should be built on teacher competence frameworks (ideally aligned with European frameworks like DigCompEdu) and reflect a lifelong-learning view of the teaching career that deliberately connects initial teacher education, induction and CPD as one continuum rather than three separate phases.
3. **Integrate European CPD activities by default:** National frameworks should explicitly include the formal recognition of European-funded CPD, such as Erasmus+ projects, eTwinning and Teacher Academies, from the outset, rather than treating it as informal "add-on" learning to be validated case by case.
4. **Link CPD to career progression, and protect the conditions that make it possible:** Accreditation should be tied to career progression to ensure meaningful participation, while remaining flexible enough to accommodate evolving forms of CPD. National policies should also guarantee that CPD takes place during working time and address the wider working conditions that determine whether teachers can engage in professional development in practice.
5. **Shift to outcome-focused evaluation:** Evaluation should move from verifying the format or duration of training to assessing learning outcomes and impact on classroom practice.
6. **Map offers to competence frameworks:** Training providers should map their offers to relevant teacher competence frameworks and make this mapping transparent to teachers and accreditation bodies, so that activities can be assessed by what they develop rather than by their delivery format.

7. **Build transparency infrastructure:** A national open (but secure) repository of CPD activities, linked to competence frameworks, would allow systems to track activities and establish precedents for automatic recognition. Standard evaluation procedures and clear assessment checklists should accompany this, to reduce reliance on the subjective judgement of individual assessors.
8. **Empower schools to validate international and self-directed CPD:** School authorities should be given a formal role in validating international and self-directed CPD, providing a flexible recognition pathway at the local level for learning that may not fit national accreditation categories.
9. **Equip school leaders to drive the shift:** Principals are central to changing the prevailing mindset towards teacher-led, outcome-focused CPD, and should be supported with the training and tools to play this role well, including clear quality criteria for the activities they are asked to validate or recommend.
10. **Embed reflection in CPD design:** Mandatory self-reflection components should be built into CPD activities, allowing teachers to document how the learning has influenced their practice and providing the evidence base that outcome-focused accreditation depends on.

Recommendations for European policy makers & stakeholders

The recommendations above identify what national actors can do within their own systems. The European level has a distinct but complementary role: not to harmonise national accreditation arrangements, but to provide the shared infrastructure, reference points and political momentum that make national reform easier to undertake and its results more portable across borders.

1. Develop European guidelines and quality criteria for teacher learning

There is a clear need for a flexible, non-prescriptive European framework describing the competences required of teachers in contemporary education systems. Such a framework should function as a set of guidelines rather than a regulatory instrument, allowing each Member State to adapt it to its own national, regional and institutional context. Working together with its Member States, the European Union could define the competences expected of teachers across career stages (before entering the profession, during entry, during established practice and during advanced practice) providing a shared European language for teacher professionalism and supporting coherence between initial teacher education, induction and CPD.

This competence framework should be accompanied by a European quality assurance and recognition framework for teachers' in-service training, clarifying the conditions under which CPD activities can be considered valid, credible and portable across Member States. Such a framework should define common quality criteria, including relevance to teacher competences, clear learning outcomes, transparent workload, credible providers, evidence of learning, and mechanisms for certification or digital credentialing. At the same time the framework has to respect the authority of Member States to determine how recognised activities are integrated into national accreditation, career progression and professional development systems.

A framework of this kind would be particularly valuable for CPD developed through Erasmus+ mobility programmes, Teacher Academies, eTwinning and other EU-funded initiatives. At present, teachers may participate in high-quality international professional development that is recognised in one national context but not in another, limiting the value of European cooperation and reducing incentives for transnational professional learning.

A European-level framework should act as a reference model and as the basis for reciprocal recognition between countries. The successful adoption of frameworks such as DigCompEdu in a

significant number of Member States demonstrates that European frameworks can have meaningful national impact when they remain adaptable.

Finally, such a framework must be designed with strategic foresight: future-oriented, responsive to the evolving demands on the teaching profession, and capable of anticipating technological transformation, demographic change, emerging competences and new educational models. Regular review cycles should be built in from the outset, so that the framework remains relevant as the CPD landscape continues to evolve.

2. Establish structured dialogue, working groups and networks

Progress on the recognition of teachers' CPD cannot be achieved through regulation alone, it requires collaborative governance, mutual understanding and sustained dialogue across countries. In particular, a structured network should be launched between national accreditation bodies for teacher CPD - the institutions responsible for recognising, accrediting and validating CPD in each Member State. Such a conversation is not yet established, and without mutual trust between these bodies it remains difficult to understand how CPD recognised in one country could be interpreted or accepted in another.

A network of this kind could help to compare national regulatory practices, identify common quality criteria for CPD, discuss the recognition of international mobility, webinars and micro-credentials, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and support the portability of teachers' CPD across Europe. The intended outcome is not full harmonisation but greater transparency and guided convergence through shared guidelines, common terminology, examples of good practice, and recognition templates, all of which can lead, in time, to the basis for reciprocal recognition agreements between countries.

3. Build digital infrastructure for credential portability

European action is needed to develop the digital infrastructure that supports visibility, transparency, portability and recognition of teachers' CPD across Member States. This could include a transnational platform for digital credentials that can serve as a repository of teacher CPD activities (with EU-funded training automatically integrated) and stronger, more coordinated use of existing instruments such as Europass, digital badges and micro-credentials. The rationale is to make teachers' learning pathways more visible, simplify cross-border recognition, reduce administrative friction in accreditation processes, and ensure that CPD participation is clearly linked to competences and professional progression. At the same time, digital credential systems should be designed to support meaningful representation of professional learning outcomes, not to reinforce the credential-accumulation mindset that the report has identified as a risk in its own right.

4. Raise the political visibility of teacher professional development

Teachers' professional development remains politically under-prioritised: international education debates focus heavily on students, while the conditions and recognition of teacher learning receive comparatively little attention. Several actions can address this. Awareness should be raised among ministries and regional authorities, both about the importance of CPD itself and about the evidence on its formal recognition. CPD should feature more prominently in European education-related conferences and policy forums. A European "Year of Teachers as Professionals" could anchor this attention and motivate national authorities to prioritise accreditation reform. Equally important is sustained dissemination of what is already working: successful practices exist in many countries, but they remain insufficiently visible, poorly connected at European level, and therefore harder to learn from than they should be.

Annex

Definitions

Teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD): all the training activities (formal, informal, and non-formal) that take place after completing initial teacher education. It also refers to in-service activities aimed at enabling teachers to “improve or update their knowledge and/or skills; to acquire new skills for a career move or retraining; to continue their personal or professional development” (European Commission, 2015, p. 151). Different formats are offered such as courses, seminars, workshops, degree programs, peer-learning, self-observation and/or reflective practices, support from teacher networks, observation visits, etc. In certain cases, CPD activities may lead to supplementary qualifications (OECD, 2016).

Accreditation (of teachers' CPD activities): relates to the formal processes that focus on the evaluation, acceptance and official certification of teachers' CPD activities. It involves all stages of official processes of identification, documentation, assessment and crediting of training activities. Requirements to achieve an accredited status involve workshops, courses or programmes demonstrating that they meet defined quality criteria and legal standards of a country. In this report, accreditation refers primarily to the approval of the CPD offer itself, rather than to the assessment of an individual teacher's learning outcomes.

Formal recognition (of teachers' CPD activities): the official acknowledgment of the acquired knowledge or skills through teachers' CPD activities. It therefore has a formal impact on teachers' career progression (if a career progression system is in place and if that system considers it) or on other processes such as requesting transfer to work in another school, or simply on the required number of hours of CPD from the teacher by the state. In this report, formal recognition refers to the status granted to the teacher's completed CPD activity within an existing national or regional framework.

Alternative forms of CPD: This refers to more flexible, collaborative, digitally enabled, practice-based, or cross-border forms of teacher professional learning that go beyond traditional stand-alone courses, seminars, or workshops. These may include MOOCs, webinars, online communities of practice, peer learning, lesson study, action research, international mobility activities, and other forms of self-directed or networked professional learning. The term is used in this report as an analytical category to describe formats that are increasingly common in practice but are not always well accommodated by existing accreditation and recognition systems.

Teachers' career progression requires the existence of a career structure with a formal progression pathway within the teaching profession. Career progression represents a rise in a teacher's qualification category usually connected to promotion, salary increment, and/or access to other incentives (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023). In Europe, teachers' career structures are generally divided single or multi-level (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021). In a single-level career structure, there are not formally defined and distinct career levels. There may be one or more pay scales or coefficients associated with different salary levels (e.g., related to the number of years' experience). A multi-level career structure involves several formally distinct career levels (e.g., teacher, senior teacher, master teacher, etc.). It is usually defined by a set of progressively sequenced competences, responsibilities, hierarchical status and, in most cases, a higher salary.

Teacher CPD provider: any entity, agency or organisation with a legal status allowing them to design, implement, and assess teachers' CPD activities. The legal status tends to be provided by a top-level education authority that may or may not provide them with access to funding for such activities.

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