1. What is the validation of informal and non-formal learning?
The process to validate informal and non-formal learning entails the identification, assessment and recognition of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts such as in work, education and leisure activities.

2. What is the purpose of validation?
The purpose of validation is to formalize the level of qualification acquired through the knowledge and experience of an individual. Validation values and rewards all learning, raises the visibility of employability, and promotes participation in lifelong learning.

3. What is lifelong learning?
Lifelong learning involves all kind of learning activities that an individual undertakes throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, acquiring qualifications that enhance the individual's personal and social dimension as well the prospects of a better career.

4. What is informal learning?
Informal learning is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning, and can to a degree, be understood as accidental learning.

5. What is non-formal learning?
Non-formal learning consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designed as learning, but which contain an important learning component.

6. Are there any guidelines for the validation of informal and non-formal learning (VINFL)?
Yes, there are the European Guidelines for the Validation of informal and non-formal learning. The aim of these guidelines is to provide expert advice in the field of VINFL.

7. Is informal and non-formal learning recognized in Malta?
There are quite a number of learning activities that are recognized by public and private educational institutions and employers locally. The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA), the Department of Youth Studies at the University of Malta, are among public institutions that recognize prior learning. However, the Malta Qualifications Council will be undertaking a more formal approach to legally recognize informal and non-formal learning activities that respond to nationally agreed criteria of occupational standards.

8. Is validation intended to replace continuing education?
No, on the contrary, the validation of informal and non-formal learning should be complimentary to the formal education and training system.

9. What is the ultimate aim of the validation of informal and non-formal learning?

The individual is the ultimate aim of the validation of informal and non-formal learning and therefore all people should have access to the validation process on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, individuals should be supported by information, advice and guidance.

10. Who benefits from the validation of informal and non-formal learning?

The individuals, the employers, the community, the third sector/voluntary sector, training providers and society (economy) all benefit from the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Such processes enrich Malta's workforce and make our Nation more competitive and closer to achieving levels of excellence in key economic sectors.

11. What are the benefits for the individuals?

People who have their learning recognized (in a qualification – full or partial) have improved opportunities in the labour market (when compared to people without qualifications) as long as the certificate/qualification received has value in the labour market.

Motivation and confidence is improved. This leads to some further benefits such as the fact that people are inclined to continue formal learning and can have a more positive attitude towards their job. There is evidence that some people, had they not had the guidance and the possibility to validate their informal and non-formal learning, would have never considered returning back to formal education and training.

The duration of education and training following validation is shorter thus reducing costs. Even if learners do not pay for the training it can reduce the time they are not in employment. Reduced training time also improves motivation as people recognise that they need not have to start the learning process from the beginning.

Making people aware of what they know and can do enhances their careers and their education and training.

12. Will it cost money to validate informal and non-formal learning?

Yes, there will be costs incurred in the validation process. This is because qualified and trained people are required in the guidance and assessment areas. However such costs may be shared by learners, national public authorities, local public authorities, employers, private sources, the EU and other donors.

13. How long does it take to validate informal and non-formal learning?

The recognition process might take from a few weeks to a few months depending on the availability of information from the individual.

14. On what basis are individuals assessed?

Individuals would be assessed against the standards set in the Malta Qualifications Framework. Both the validation of informal and non-formal learning and the Malta Qualifications Framework have a common objective – that of enabling individuals to advance on the basis of their learning outcomes.

15. What are learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes include the knowledge, skills and competences an individual has acquired and is able to demonstrate after completing a learning process.

16. Should we support such a process?

In the long term, support for this process, leads to the realisation of a knowledge-based society, sustainable jobs and better salaries.