

Validation of non-formal and informal competencies

Mobility beyond borders

TG4 Conference

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1995 - White Paper, a new perspective through long life learning

- Validation of non-formal and informal competencies become an important issue for **lifelong learning vision and strategy**
- They are designed 3 main objectives:
 - **to make more visible** what we learn outside formal education and vocational training
 - **to recognise** the diversity of learning situations and settings
 - **to look for credibility and authenticity** of what is learnt outside formal learning and training situations

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Starting with 2000, March - Lisbon process

- An ambitious **strategic goal** for the European Union: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010
- The **development of common European principles for validation** of non-formal and informal learning became an **important element of this strategy**, aiming a better visibility and more balanced valuing of knowledge, skills and competences

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2002, November - Copenhagen Declaration

- 31 Ministers of Education and Training, the European social partners and the Commission stated that there was a need:
“to develop a set of common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater comparability between approaches in different countries and at different levels”.

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Copenhagen Declaration (II)

Objectives

- to strengthen the **comparability** and **compatibility** of approaches at different levels, and in different contexts which have been defined in isolation
- to contribute to **a better communication** across national, sector, institutional borders
- to support and extend credit transfer system developed within formal education and training systems (e.g. ECTS)

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Dublin, March, 2004 - Council of EU and representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting (I)

Draft Conclusions

- *“Common principles are necessary to encourage and guide the development of high-quality, trustworthy approaches and systems for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning”*
- *“They are necessary to ensure the comparability and wide acceptance of different approaches and systems”*

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Council of EU and of representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting (II)

Invites the member states and the Commission:

- to disseminate and promote the use of the common European principles
- to encourage social partners to use and adapt them for the specific needs of the workplace
- to encourage NGOs providing LLP opportunities to use and adapt them as appropriate
- to support the exchange of experiences and mutual learning
- to strengthen co-operation with international organisations to achieve synergies

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Council of EU and of representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting (III)

- to develop and support coherent and comparable pathways of presenting the results of the identification and validation at European level
- to consider how instruments in the Europass framework can contribute to this
- to consider how these principles can contribute to the development of a European Qualifications Framework
- to support the development of quality assurance mechanisms, to disseminate good practices

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Oslo, June 2004 - Conference of European Ministers of Education

(Lifelong learning, from rhetoric to reality) (I)

- *“The EU Council conclusions on European principles for identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should be used as reference point and baseline when exploring and developing suitable practical national solutions”*
- *“The European Ministers support the emphasis of these principles on the entitlement of individual citizens to identification and validation, the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders in this process, and the need for quality assurance mechanisms to ensure credibility and trust”*

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Oslo, June 2004 - Conference of European Ministers of Education (II)

- The need of a joint action Call for proposals for LLP
- Rationale:
 - LLP implies that qualifications and competences acquired at different stages of life and in different settings can be linked together in an efficient way
 - it is agreed in general that existing certificates or diplomas are unable to fulfil this bridging role
 - efforts to increase the visibility and value of informal and non-formal learning highlights this problem even more

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Oslo, June 2004 - Conference of European Ministers of Education

- Proposals were supposed to look at the feasibility of a “credit transfer system”, facing these new challenges and mobilising the experience acquired through Leonardo, Socrates and Youth programmes

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Main concepts Identification

The process by which the candidates analyse their own experience (at workplace or elsewhere)

- produce elements and evidence required by evaluators

This requires them to become conscious of what they have learnt through their different experiences, to verbalise, to formalise, to analyse, to organise

This process creates continuity in what is discontinuous in the candidate's experience

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Main concepts

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

- ❖ The process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences which people develop throughout their lives in different contexts

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Objectives of validation

- The common principles should stimulate validation of non-formal and informal learning at national level and support a voluntary process leading towards more coherent and comparable validation practices in Europe
- The main focus is on three areas of validation :
 - validation of learning taking place in relation to formal education
 - validation of learning taking place in relation to labour market
 - validation of learning taking place in relation to voluntary and civil society activities as well as in community learning

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Main concepts

Recognition

- **Formal recognition:** a process of granting official status to competences, either
 - through the award or certificates or
 - through the grant of equivalence, credit units, validation of gained competences
- **Social recognition:** through acknowledgement of the value of competences by economic and social stakeholders
- **Personal recognition**

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Main concepts

Non-formal learning

- Learning which is embedded in planned activities not necessarily explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contains an important learning element.
- Non formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view, and sometime from provider's point of view

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Main concepts Informal learning

- Learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised and structured (in terms of objectives, time and support)
- Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the “learner’s” perspective

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Why common European principles?

- They are a guide for development and implementation of methods and systems for validation
- They do not prescribe any particular methodological or institutional solution
- They are a set of basic requirements
- They are organised according to 6 main themes

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1) The purpose of validation

Validation of learning outcomes, irrespective of where these have been acquired :

- aims at making visible the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual
- supports lifelong learning, employability and active citizenship
- May provide formal recognition
- May lead to personal recognition

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2) Individual entitlements (I)

- Validation must be voluntary
- In cases where validation is part of a compulsory system arrangements should ensure transparency, fairness and privacy
- In organisations validation should be based on social dialogue
- Individuals must have the right to appeal a validation result

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2) Individual entitlements (II)

- Special provisions should be designed for individuals with special needs
- The results of validation must be the property of individuals
- Where validation is part of human resources management the privacy of the individual must be ensured

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3) Responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders (I)

- Results of validation must be presented in such a way that they can be understood at European and international level
- The privacy of the individual must be respected
- Validation must be supported by information, guidance and counselling services

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3) Responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders (II)

- Education and training systems, enterprises, public organisations and economic sectors, non-formal organisations, including NGOs, should provide a legal and practical basis enabling individuals to have their learning validated
- Validation should be an integral part of human resources development in enterprises and public organisations and should be based on social dialogue

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4) Confidence and trust

- **Transparency of procedures :**
 - to give confidence to all
 - methodologies for validation should be stated clearly
 - clear information on time and cost
- **Transparency of criteria**
- **Availability of and access to information**

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5) Impartiality

- Assessors should operate according to a code of conduct
- Assessors must be professionally competent and have access to systematic initial and continuing training

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6) Credibility and legitimacy

- The development, implementation and financing of a mechanism for validation must involve all relevant stakeholders
- Validation bodies need to be impartial and shall involve all stakeholders significantly concerned without any interest predominating

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Some final questions (I)

- Who will benefit from validation of non-formal and informal learning ?
 - Individuals, companies, NGOs, all of them?
 - Individuals as “producers”, having to maintain their employability ?
- Individuals as “citizens”, as active members of a community ?

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Some final questions (II)

- Common principles for improving results of validation will contribute to:
 - More productivity or better salaries?
 - Better employability?
 - Increased prestige?
 - Improved personal/professional status?
 - Increasing self-esteem ?
 - New challenges?

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