

Special Interest Group (SIG) 2

Validation,
recognition (and evaluation)
of informal and non-formal
language learning

SIG 2: Background

Council of the European Union
Recommendation on validation of non-formal
and informal Learning, 20 December 2012

(Member States shall) have in place, no later than 2018, in accordance with national circumstances and specificities, and as they deem appropriate, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

SIG 2: Starting Point 1

SIG introduced at last year's ELC General Assembly with a presentation by Chiara Riondino from European Commission, DG Employment

SIG 2: Starting Point 2

- Eurobarometer skills and qualifications survey:
 - 24% believe Foreign language skills to be one of most important skills provided by education and training
 - 54% believed Foreign language can be acquired outside formal education

SIG 2: Starting Point 3

So, there should be general availability to assess language expertise gained outside the formal education systems and to recognise this competence.

European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning (update 2014)

EU MS + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey

- Comprehensive validation strategy in place only in Finland, France and Spain
- Varied legal frameworks covering validation

European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning (update 2014)

Most frequent methods of assessment and validation in Education and Training:

- Formal examinations leading to award and certification
- Some portfolios, declarative methods, simulations, evidence (dossier)

European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning (update 2014)

Most frequent methods of assessment and validation among private sector employers:

- Qualifications and Certificates
- References
- CV (showing competences)
- Interviews

European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning

The process of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is typically based on:

- The existence of a standard that describes the expected knowledge, skills and competence of a person (this can be a job description, the qualifications standard, or the learning outcomes description of a unit);
- A process by which the individuals' learning outcomes are identified and compared to the standard: i.e. assessment and validation.

Table 3.3 Progress towards key principles in arrangements for validation (2010-2014)

	Trends –number of countries			
	Good development	Efforts need to be stepped up	Urgent action is needed	No information
Information, advice and guidance on benefits, opportunities and procedures	12 (+7)	14 (=)	5 (-6)	5 (+1)
Guidance and counselling is readily accessible	19 (=)	9 (+4)	4 (-3)	4 (+1)
Links to NQFs and in line with EQF	19 (+7)	17 (-1)	0 (-4)	0 (=)
Compliance with agreed standards equivalent to qualifications obtained through formal education programmes	20 (+6)	13 (-4)	2 (+1)	1 (-1)
Transparent QA measures are in line with existing QA frameworks to support reliable, valid and credible assessment	15 (+4)	13 (+2)	8 (-3)	0 (-1)
Provision is made for the development of professional competences of staff across all sectors	7 (+1)	2 (=)	26 (+3)	1 (-2)
Synergies between validation and credit systems (ECTS and ECVET)	27 (+6)	5 (-1)	4 (-3)	0 (=)
Disadvantaged groups are particularly likely to benefit from validation	8 (+3)	12 (+2)	12 (-4)	4 (+1)
Individuals who are unemployed have the opportunity to undergo a 'skills audit' within 6 months of an identified need	0 (n.a.)	17 (n.a.)	19 (n.a.)	0 (n.a.)
The use of EU transparency tools is promoted:				
■ Europass Framework	7	10	13	6
■ Youthpass	3	8	17	8

Source: 2014 European Inventory for validation. Key= (n.a.) information not available. Data on performance comes from the country fiches and country reports (see Annex 1, Synthesis Report).

European Inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning (update 2014)

- Awareness of benefits, opportunities and procedures of validations is medium-low in 19/33 countries
- Less than half the countries covered had transparent QA measures
- There is poor use and recognition of Europass system

SIG 2: Problems of Validation

- Need to define clear standards to guarantee quality and promote trust
- Little development of general strategy across Europe
- Current proposals still seem to present validation of NF/IN in terms of formal validation criteria (i.e. examinations, etc.)

SIG 2: Problems of Evaluation/Assessment

- Difficulties in finding forms of assessment more suitable to evaluation NF/IF
- Will self-assessment ever be taken seriously (see Europass)?
- The importance of cultural differences in assessment/recognition practice – the question of trust
- Does assessment of NF/IF depend on a fundamental change in teaching and learning practice?

SIG 2: Challenges of Recognition

- Lack of awareness of alternative forms of assessment and certification/validation among main stakeholders
- Lack of willingness to recognise NF/IN expertise gained through IF/IN learning – it is more difficult than recognition of Formal outcomes
- Will NF/IF learning ever be recognised (with or without certification)?

SIG 2: Objectives

- Raise awareness – disseminate and promote understanding and knowledge of how to evaluate, and hence recognise, more fully language skills, competence and expertise
- Encourage more informed matching between work-based language needs and available language competence
- Exploit current interest on recognition of NF/IN learning to the advantage of recognition of NF/IN language learning