

From personal and vocational skills analysis to accreditation of prior experiential learning



INTERNATIONAL COMPENDIUM

OF METHODS OF IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION OF INFORMALLY ACQUIRED COMPETENCES IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



“From personal and vocational skills analysis to accreditation of prior experiential learning”

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Grundtvig project “IBAK” 2009-2010
Identifizierung, Bewertung und Anerkennung der Kompetenzen
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Introduction

This compendium is addressed to professionals and organisations (institutions, associations, institutes, etc.) working in the field of lifelong learning in the European Union. It was developed by the partners of the IBAK European project (see below).

The intention is to present as fully as possible:

- activities carried out in each of the partner countries in terms of identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences.
- the practice and experience in France (VAE), the Netherlands (EVC) and Switzerland. In fact, the significant progress and the methods put in place in these three countries highlights the key elements of good practices in identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences.

In this respect, the type of relationship or link between the diploma and the job market on one hand, and the work methods of the validating juries on the other, are two essential questions.

They allow the differentiation between methods that are derived from APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning) « VAE » and other similar methods that come from personal and vocational skills analysis « bilan de compétences ».

- a few examples of tried and tested tools.

These tools are also part of the "the virtual toolbox", they can therefore be downloaded, along with the compendium, from websites listed on the last page.

The project "**Identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences**" (IBAK) is a Grundtvig Program for adult education financed by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme. (2008/2010)

The project partners are :

- **HeurekaNet e.V.** (Germany)
- **Burgenlaendische Volkshochschulen** (Austria)
- **Bildungswerk der KAB** (Germany)
- **ROC van Twente** (Netherlands)
- **GIP FCIP Alsace** (France)
- **Lithuanian Association of Adult Education** (Lithuania)
- **Akademia vzdelavania** (Slovakia)
- **Swiss Association for Adult Education (SVEB)**, (Switzerland)- associated partner

The project aims to encourage adult education institutions and their management and pedagogical staff to foster the idea of lifelong learning, to develop specific methodical competences by applying in practice already tried and trusted methods.

The project partners analysed the documents regulating identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences, collected the data for the database on methods used for identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences, and completed "The virtual portfolio of instruments".

Regional and national "methods workshops" were first organised in each country. Representatives of adult education institutions and social partners discussed the situation and prospects of identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences.

Each partner country organised a national seminar in 2010. The series of national and regional events was brought to a close by a two-day International "methods workshop" in Bratislava (Slovakia).

Participants of this forum discussed the practice and experience in identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences, compared the effectiveness of methods used in different countries, obtained ideas for improving or developing new methods.

The practitioners of adult education have discussed country-specific future tendencies reflecting the guidelines of lifelong learning and developed recommendations for improvement of methodologies.

Each partner edited the compendium of methods of national methods used for identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences.

The last product of the project is this international compendium of methods of identification, assessment and recognition of informally acquired competences.

This international compendium is accessible to adult education institutions and professionals.

1.Lifelong learning in Europe

1.1 The situation in Europe

Politicians at the European level have recognised that education and training are essential to the development of today's knowledge society and economy.

Europe's strategy emphasises countries working together and learning from each other.

The long-term strategic objectives of EU education and training policies are making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

The European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme enables people at all stages of their lives to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as helping to develop the education and training sector across Europe.

There are four sub-programmes which fund projects at different levels of education and training: Comenius for schools, Erasmus for higher education, Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training and Grundtvig for adult education.

The Grundtvig programme focuses on the teaching and study needs of learners taking adult education and 'alternative' education courses, as well as the organisations delivering these services. It aims to help develop the adult education sector, as well as enable more people to undertake learning experiences, notably in other European countries.

The specific aims of the Grundtvig programme are to increase the number of people in adult education, improve conditions for mobility; develop innovative adult education and management practices, and encourage widespread implementation; ensure that people on the margins of society have access to adult education, support innovative ICT-based educational content, services and practices.

1.2 Vocational education and training (VET)

Faced with challenges such as intensified global competition, high numbers of low-skilled workers and an ageing population, vocational education and training (VET) is vital to prepare individuals for today's society and ensure Europe's future competitiveness and innovation.

Actions to improve vocational education and training help to provide the skills, knowledge and competences needed in the labour market. As such, they are an essential part of the EU's 'Education and Training 2020' work programme. The European Commission is acting together with EU Member States and other countries to strengthen VET across Europe. The 'Copenhagen Process', established in 2002, lays out the basis for co-operation in VET, with 31 European countries involved.

There are a number of initiatives under development to enhance the transparency, recognition and quality of competences and qualifications, facilitating the mobility of learners and workers.

Countries around Europe are increasingly emphasising the need to take into account the full range of an individual's knowledge, skills and competences – not only those acquired at schools, universities or other formal education and training institutions. Recognising all forms of learning is therefore a priority of EU action in education and training.

Learning that takes place in formal education and training systems is traditionally the most visible and recognised in the labour market and by society in general. In recent years, however, there has been a growing appreciation of the importance of learning in non-formal and informal settings. New approaches are needed to identify and validate these 'invisible' learning experiences.

However, definitions and understandings of what counts as formal, non-formal and informal learning can vary between countries. At the European level, the following definitions are used:

Formal learning is typically provided by education or training institutions, with structured learning objectives, learning time and learning support. It is intentional on the part of the learner and leads to certification.

Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However, it is intentional on the part of the learner and has structured objectives, times and support.

Informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure. It is not structured and usually does not lead to certification. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner.

2 Practices of the different countries

2.1 AUSTRIA

Procedure for the establishment and balancing of competences and skills in Austria

There are several initiatives in Austria practising the procedures for the establishment and balancing of competences and skills.

The “Zukunftszentrum Tirol” (Centre for future development Tyrol) offers a competence balance based on the principle of coaching. The “Kompetenzanerkennungszentrum” – KOMPAZ (Centre for the acknowledgement of competences) of the VHS (adult education centre) Linz offers the competence profile, a variant based on the Swiss qualification programme for careers (CHQ), in two modules. On the one hand, based on a four-step set of workshops on self-management of competences and skills, the self-perception of the participants is surveyed. On the other hand, in addition to the self-perception, the perception by others is investigated in an assessment centre on social and communication skills and competences. The “Burgenlaendischen Volkshochschulen” (adult education centres of Burgenland) have adopted the Linzer variant and have been offering workshops on the CH-Q Competence Management as well as complementary assessment centres for the establishment of a “profile of strengths” (on demand) since 2005. Furthermore, there is a competence-portfolio offered by the “Ring Oesterreichischer Bildungswerke”, in which the voluntary commitment and services are put at the centre of the portfolio. The certification of voluntary work by the “Bundesministerium fuer soziale Sicherheit” (Federal ministry for social security) is part of the volunteer-pass, which aims at the documentation of performed services in this area. Additionally, selected family information centres offer certification of “family competences”, a coaching-programme for people who are willing to return to work after a longer maternity leave or a long-term home care occupation. The WIFI-potential analysis is an instrument for the detection of competence and personality structure by means of psychological tests.

Moreover, there are also experimentally developed instruments and methods for the detection of competences based on projects, e.g. in the field of migrants.

Name of the procedure

«**Kompetenzportfolio**: Erhebung von im Alltag erworbenen Kompetenzen »
Survey of competences/ Making a personal competence-portfolio

Description

A personal competence-portfolio presents or demonstrates the personal, social competences/ soft or social skills, qualifications and abilities of a person which they have learned or developed in their day-to-day life.

Context

People develop soft skills, abilities and competences in their everyday life: at work, in school, through voluntary work in clubs or other institutions and through the daily routine in their families... These competences are usually not demonstrated in a report, certificate or diploma. By contrast a competence-portfolio presents all of these abilities, soft skills and competences of a person.

General Purpose

Demonstration of personal competences, qualifications, abilities and soft skills (to make them visible), personal orientation and guidance, increase of self-esteem/self-confidence

Implementation

You do a personal competence-portfolio in three modules (3-6 workshops) in a group or individually.

Evaluation

People take advantage of this survey because they have time to think about themselves, about their skills and competences, about what they have achieved and experienced up to now and about the goals they want to achieve in the future. They build up self-confidence and become aware of their skills and competences which is very important for their future. Competence-portfolios serve as a tool for orientation before choosing or changing a career, for example.

Target group

Young people, people who are looking for a job or want to work in another area, people who work as volunteers in clubs/institutions, women and men...

Targeted criteria

Everybody has the possibility to do a competence-portfolio. You just have to enrol in the workshops at the Volksbildungswerk.

Number of participants

in a group: 5-25 people, or: individual

Tools

Competence-portfolios can be done (under guidance) individually or in a group. In the first of the three modules you concentrate on your characteristics, abilities, hobbies, your everyday life and on what you have achieved, experienced and learned up to now. You make a picture of your life until now and write a curriculum vitae. The second module deals with the personal competences, social/soft skills and accredited qualifications or abilities of a person. Under guidance you try to identify them and write a brief essay about your self and your competences. In the third module you finish your competence-portfolio and focus on competences which seem to be very important. Furthermore, you add an action schedule for the future. The competence-portfolios are usually handed to people at a ceremony.

Objectives in numbers

The survey of personal competences has increasing importance and we want to make people aware of this fact. In 2010 the Burgenländisches Volksbildungswerk wants to support 70 people creating their personal portfolio.

Results in numbers not specified Rate of withdrawal of applicants/ Achievement of objectives

We helped people to identify and describe their competences/ skills. They got their competence-portfolio which is officially signed by the Volksbildungswerk.

Duration of the process per candidate

4 months

Cost per beneficiary

50 Euros/Person, but you can get funding from the Volksbildungswerk

Contact

Burgenländisches Volksbildungswerk, Joseph-Haydn-Gasse 11, 7000 Eisenstadt
0 26 82/ 62 282 oder office@volksbildungswerk.at, www.volksbildungswerk.at

Downloadable

www.volksbildungswerk.at

Procedure**KOMPAZ Competence Profile**

Run by the Kompetenzerkennungszenrum (Centre for the acknowledgement of competences) at the VHS (Volkshochschule = adult education centre) Linz, Austria

Description

The quality of this method has been assured by the standards of the CH-Q association. The competence profile is a modular programme, which is conducted in groups of 8 to 12 participants, supervised by a professional trainer.

Context

Strategic cooperation with CH-Q

General Purpose

The visualisation of informally acquired skills and competences is designed to form an efficient basis for any further development in your career and in your private life, as well as to improve your labour market prospects.

Implementation

The portfolio work is accomplished by means of a file folder including paradigms, exercises, forms and the filing of evidence. The necessary documents will also be accessible in digital form.

Evaluation

Recognise your strengths and your potential for further development
 Obtain clarity and a realistic evaluation of your professional objectives and development potentialities
 Improve your performance in application procedures
 Restore your self-esteem and boost your self-confidence by visualising your skills and competences

Target group

People who are at a stage of professional and personal (re)orientation and continuing education.

In addition, individually adapted concepts allow for the application of our programme for to several other target groups (e.g. women (returners) returning to the workforce, currently unemployed persons, start-up entrepreneurs etc.)

Targeted criteria

Not specified

Number of participants

8-12 participants

Tools

In order to create your own competence profile, you need to follow a four-step system. The implementation of the programme proceeds in four different workshops, each one consisting of five teaching lessons.

“Stocktaking”

Securing of evidence, history, education, profession, realising and handling unemployment or other special situations in your life and gathering evidence, reconsidering living and learning situations, reviewing your biography.

Potential

Realising and analysing your skills based on the results of your “stocktaking”, analysis of strengths and weaknesses, enabling a third party assessment.

Personal profile

Target-oriented completion of your personal profile, concretion concretization of your plan of concepts and actions, preparation of your self-presentation.

Presentation and reflection

Presentation of your personal profile and your plan of concepts and actions, feedback from the group and your trainer.

Participants will obtain a certificate, attesting to their ability to independently manage their skills and competences.

Objectives in numbers

Not specified

Results in numbers

Achievement of objectives

Rate of withdrawal of applicants/

Not specified

Duration of the process per candidate

Expenditure of time for participants: up to 40 lessons (20 lessons for workshops, 20 lessons for active independent work).

Cost per beneficiary

Depending on the costing of your provider, partly financed by sponsors (project funds, AMS ...)

Agency contact

Kompetenzanerkennungszentrum der VHS Linz (centre for the acknowledgement of competences of the adult education centre Linz)

Partner facilities in Austria: Burgenländische Volkshochschulen (adult education centres Burgenland), ISSAK Volkshochschule Steiermark (ISSAK adult education centre Styria), Ländliches Fortbildungsinstitut LFI Oberösterreich (LFI – rural institute for continuing education Upper Austria), etc.

Downloadable

www.kompetenzprofil.at

Procedure**Competence Balance**

Run by the Zunkunftszenrum Tirol (Centre for future development Tyrol; Austria)

Description

This well-structured coaching procedure for your professional establishment is accomplished within three weeks. Between the lessons, each participant is expected to do a lot of work independently

Context

Developed by the Zukunftszenrum Tirol in cooperation with the Institute for Organisational and Economic Psychology of LMU (University of Munich; Bavaria, Germany).

Goal purpose

The general objective of the Competence Balance is to activate people by means of self-reflection, to strengthen their self-esteem by visualising their competences and help them draft precise objectives and further steps for their future development.

Implementation

The total of four lessons includes an introductory workshop and three coaching conversations.

Evaluation

Your benefit:

Recognise your strengths and your potential for further development

Obtain clarity and a realistic evaluation of your professional objectives and development potentialities

Improve your performance in application procedures

Restore your self-esteem and boost your self-confidence by visualising your skills and competences

Target group

People who are in a stage of personal or professional (re)orientation and/or are planning on returning to work.

Targeted criteria

Not specified

Number of participants

Individual coaching

Tools

The introductory workshop and three coaching conversations consisting of the following steps :

1. Biographical collection :

“How did I become the person I am today?”

2. Your life profile :

Illustrate the most important events of your background in all areas of your life :

- family and close relationships
- (continuing) education
- professional experience
- other fields of interests (leisure activities, hobbies, voluntary service work etc.)

3. Based on your life profile, your abilities and skills will be balanced.

The intention: Finding out, “What am I good at?” and “How do I prove it?”

4. Balance of your competences

The intention: Realising “What was of help in learning what I learned?”. The allocation is based on four areas of competences: social skills, method competence, personal competence and professional competence or expertise.

The Competence Balance will result in the specification of concrete actions and objectives for your professional future.

Objectives in numbers

Not specified

Results in numbers

Achievement of objectives

Rate of withdrawal of applicants/

Not specified

Duration of the process per candidate

Expenditure of time for participants:
Up to 23 hours (8 hours of coaching, 9-15 hours of independent work)

Cost per beneficiary

Depending on the costing of your provider, partly financed by sponsors (project funds, AMS ...)

Agency contact

In the past few years, a great many of competence balance coaches have been qualified by the Zukunftszentrum Tirol. They either provide their courses on a freelance basis or in cooperation with several institutions offering the Competence Balance.

Downloadable

www.zukunftszentrum.at/service/kompetenzbilanz

2.2 FRANCE

Eight years after coming into force, the concept of accreditation of prior-experiential learning (APEL) is completely integrated into the education landscape and lifelong training in France.

"Its importance may be relative in terms of numbers (approximately 25,000 diplomas granted per annum). But this shouldn't affect the legitimacy of the underlying principle, nor, the simplicity of its use. What is at issue for institutions is their ability to listen to, and fairly take into account, a subjective request, without belittling, it nor disqualifying it. The actors, counsellors and juries, know to what extent these moments, where they find themselves face-to-face with these requests, are filled with emotion and humanity. They testify at length to this effect. Thus, the APEL contributes greatly to legitimize the most current movements in the field of professional training."

By allowing everyone to validate all professional experience of at least three years the APEL completes the other methods of obtaining accreditation (initial schooling, continuing education, an internship or work/study programme).

FRANCE	GIP FCIP ALSACE
<p>Project title Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)</p> <p>Description It is designed to allow the entire working population, including the unemployed, to obtain a diploma which corresponds to the professional qualifications which each individual has acquired during his or her professional career.</p> <p>Context 40% of the working population does not have a diploma which corresponds to their professional qualifications acquired in a company</p> <p>General Objective Encourage professional mobility and strengthen individual career paths</p> <p>Implementation The candidates prepare an application form defending their request and file it with the APEL service of the appropriate Ministry. The Ministries, and the Ministry of National Education in particular, propose a number of jury sessions per year. The GIP FCIP Alsace (National Education) proposes to assist candidates in their application process by meeting them at regular intervals in order to evaluate their application documents and provide methodological advice. The total length of these interviews varies from 10 to 15 hours during the entire process.</p> <p>Evaluation <i>The evaluation is both an internal as well as an external evaluation by the development and the monitoring of indicators.</i> <i>Another evaluation is conducted using satisfaction surveys which are carried out regularly with the aim of guaranteeing the quality of the service provided to the public</i></p>	

Target Group

The APEL is an individual right which is guaranteed to everyone who is able to justify at least three years of professional experience. The target is, therefore, the entire working population.

Targeted criteria

The criteria are listed in the 2002 law "Social Modernisation Act": justify at least three years of accumulated professional activity, paid or unpaid, having a direct link with the profession covered by the diploma.

Numbers of participants

957 diplomas granted by the APEL in 2009 in Alsace for the Ministry of National Education, approximately 2000 diplomas granted, for all of the Ministries and Universities.

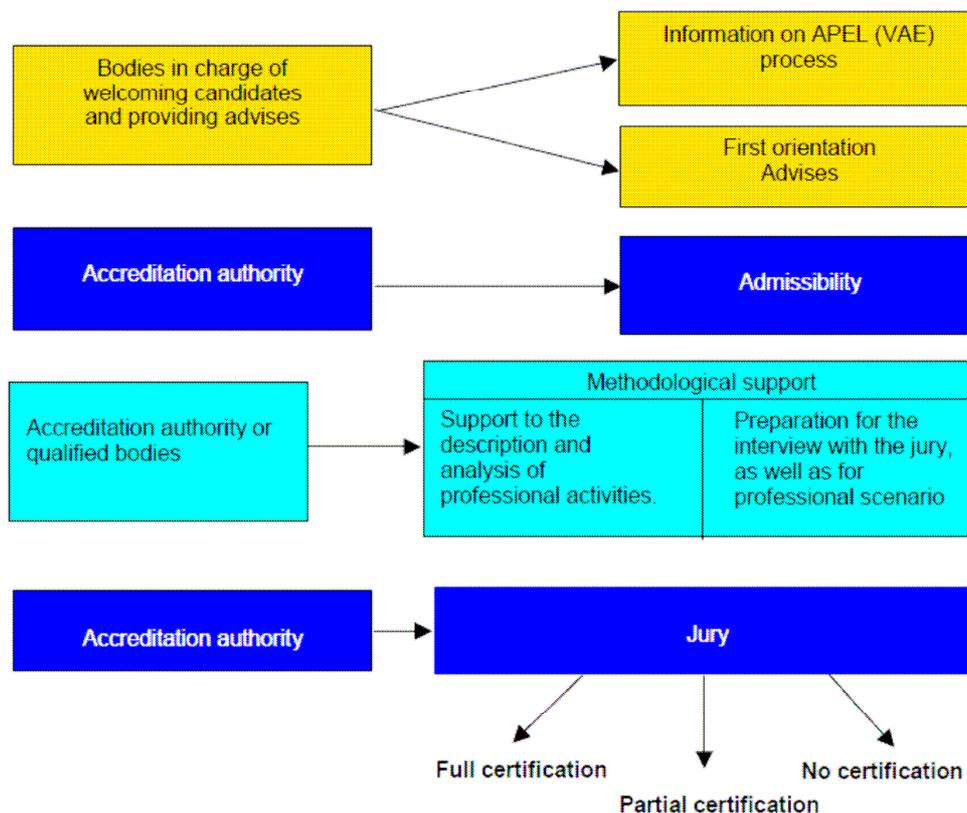
Method, Tools

The candidates complete, in two stages (booklet 1 then booklet 2), a personal file based on a standardised form. The questions focus on an analysis of the jobs and career paths, and on the contextualised description of very focused examples of significant professional activities that have been carried out.

The candidate has complete freedom to choose the examples that are described in the booklet. He or she is also entirely free in the choice of the form and content of his or her answers.

It is a question of individual work that each person completes on their own. Apart from support from close family, the only assistance is that of a service put in place to accompany candidates in the process. The APEL juries have in their possession documentation "a referential" of the professional activity and referentials of the competences expected by the diplomas and they compare these to the candidate's written file.

IMPLEMENTATION of accreditation of prior experiential learning (VAE)



<p>Objectives in numbers Fixed each year at a 10% increase in the number of applicants</p>	<p>Results in numbers 957 diplomas granted in Alsace in 2009 Achievement of objectives objectives achieved Rate of withdrawal of applicants 40% between the 1st application and receiving the diploma</p>
<p>Duration of the process per candidate 8 to 18 months</p>	<p>Cost per candidate About 1000 Euros, this expense is, more often than not, borne by government institutions or the employer</p>
<p>Organisation to contact Dispositif Académique de Validation des Acquis – GIP FCIP Alsace, 16 rue de Bouxwiller, 67000 Strasbourg – Tél. 03.88.23.36.00 - Fax 03.88.23.36.34</p>	
<p>Downloadable Francevae http://www.francevae.fr/ Eduscol : http://eduscol.education.fr/cid47151/accueil-vae-droit-individuel.html</p>	

2.3 GERMANY

Competence recording in Germany - initiatives and approaches

„The recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Germany is represented in different ways as in most of the European and non-European OECD countries". This is in short the situation in Germany, which can be expressed by the statement of Seidel et al. (2009). The situation is characterized that the informal learning or learning by experience is since a long time highly significant during dual professional education and that the results of exams at the end of a professional education are absolutely accepted. When extending the examination objects up to a professional capability to act in § 38 BBiG this trend should even increase.

The discussion, being interrupted since the end of 2009 about the national qualification frame and the large lack of competence oriented profession profiles, allows however the assumption, that furthermore too a training qualification will not be recognized on the basis of a competence profile, but - in an extreme way formulated, - because of the successful participation of a training session.

The professional education reform law from 2005, concerning the crediting of previous professional qualifications on the education period (§ 7 BBiG), concerning the admission to final exams within the dual system after attendance of a vocational school (§ 43 BBiG), and concerning the so-called external examination (§ 45 BBiG) has only undertaken some timid essays to increase the permeability of the vocational training system and to improve access to the employment system. This represents a significant difference of the situation in Germany compared to the Netherlands, Great Britain or France.

However, the European trends will act as influential catalyzer. Since the mid 90's a multitude of projects to informal learning processes in working and social environments are to be observed especially within the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Betriebliche Weiterbildungsforschung ABWF (a working group for vocational training research). A large project on a national and regional level starting in 2003 has examined the feasibility of a German education passport.

At the same time, as a response to the requirements of HRM, of the qualification and employment agencies who are active in the field of integration into the job market, of the scenery of HRM-counseling and single actors in the field of civil engagement, a blooming landscape has been formed of about 100 procedures and instruments of competence recording and evaluation as hardly in any other country in Europe to this extent. The spectrum goes from proof passports to online tests or competence balances by a portfolio, up to action oriented assessments or targeted team competence recording processes. The target groups are accordingly heterogeneous: unemployed people, students, employees, migrants, volunteers, persons in family and household etc. For everybody there is at least one process or instrument.

From this abundance we took three processes, knowing that this selection regarding the abundance of procedures and instruments could also be a totally different sample.

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Seidel, S., Bretschneider, M., Kimmig, T., Neß, H., & Noeres, D. (2008). Stand der Anerkennung non-formalen und informellen Lernens in Deutschland. Bonn; Berlin (Im Rahmen der OECD Aktivität „Recognition of non-formal and informal Learning “). State of the art in recognition of non-formal and informal Learning in Germany.

The results which have been obtained by the program "learning culture and competence development" are recorded on the website <http://www.abwf.de>

GERMANY	HEUREKANET E.V.
Name of the procedure	KODE®X-Kompetenz-Explorer
<p>Description CODE ® X-skills Explorer is evidence of exploring corporate strategy competence requirement profiles of requirement or task-specific competency-target profile and competence of potential employees and managers.</p> <p>Context : Not specified</p> <p>Goal purpose It leads to differentiated and marketable skills profiles and helps in detecting "hidden" potential reserves of workers-inside.</p> <p>Implementation Not specified</p> <p>Evaluation Volker Heyse, John Erpenbeck (Hrsg.): Kompetenzmanagement Methoden, Vorgehen, KODE® und KODE®X im Praxistest, Münster, Berlin u.a. 2007</p>	
<p>Target group : Employees as co-operators in companies Targeted criteria Not specified Number of participants Not specified</p>	
<p>Tools Basis of the procedure is a collection of 64 (interdisciplinary) Part competencies (e.g. excellent acquisition, team player ...), which are arranged in one of four quadrants of a two-dimensional matrix concerning the four basic skills. The KODE®X procedure is performed in a standardized process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constitute the strategy and competency requirements • define identification features • determine Job and functional groups • carry out the evaluation of potential • analysis and derivation of differentiated human resource development measures) 	
<p>Objectives in numbers Not specified</p>	<p>Results in numbers Not specified Achievement of objectives Not specified Rate of withdrawal of applicants/ Not specified</p>
<p>Duration of the process per candidate Implementation of about 20 minutes, optional evaluation interview 30-90 min</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary For the procedure, a training course is necessary. It costs € 1800.00 approx. with the licence.</p>
<p>Contact A-C-T, Regensburg, http://www.act-regensburg.de/index2.html</p>	
<p>Downloadable www.cekom-deutschland.de</p>	

GERMANY	HEUREKANET E.V.
Name of the procedure	ProfilPASS
<p>Description The ProfilPASS is a pass activity for the documentation of skills acquired in different ways. The idea is to take a look at your life. It explores the question: "In what places and contexts has the student previously worked and what seems important about them today?" In terms of a portfolio, certificates, work experience certificates, participation certificates etc. are decoded.</p> <p>Context Not specified</p> <p>Goal purpose The performance rating of one's own skills is a supports to answer questions about the profession and professional reorientation. The ProfilPASS folder is a documentation of one's own reflection process and a paper-based inspiration for personal growth in terms of life-long learning.</p> <p>Implementation The profile passport folder can be worked on independently without other people. We recommend, however, a professional company either as a single consultation or visit to a profile passport course. Working in a group promotes the reflection process and the specification of one's own abilities and competence.</p> <p>Evaluation Possibility to download different tools and results on http://www.profilpass-online.de/index.php?article_id=43</p>	
<p>Target group Possible for everyone Targeted criteria Not specified Number of participants Not specified</p>	
<p>Tools The profile passport folder contains structured questionnaires, self-descriptions, tips to self-analysis and to the portfolio (documents, reports, feedback will be able / are caught up). Accompanying there can be single consultation or the visit of a group course.</p>	
<p>Objectives in numbers Not specified</p>	<p>Results in numbers Not specified Achievement of objectives Not specified Rate of withdrawal of applicants/ Not specified</p>
<p>Duration of the process per candidate Not specified</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary 27.90 € ProfilPASS folder</p>
<p>Contact Further education centres</p>	
<p>Downloadable www.profilpass-online.de</p>	

GERMANY	HEUREKANET E.V.
Name of the procedure	Hamet2 - Action-oriented modules to record and promote professional skills
<p>Description Hamet2 is a method that was designed especially for professional diagnosis of people with special needs, handicaps and disabilities, but is also used in schools and businesses. The results may help all parties during the professional decision-making towards more orientation and transparency.</p> <p>Context Not specified</p> <p>Goal purpose Hamet2 is designed to help identify practical and social resources, in the event of professional decisions (re-orientation, employment, retraining, education to change, etc.) vocational interests and skills. The results may help all of the participants (trainees, employers, employees, benefactors) during the mentioned vocational decision process to increase their orientation and transparency</p> <p>Implementation 3 to 5-day hamet-Assessment is recommended for the completion of all available diagnostics and training modules. On the first day module 1 is carried out. On the second day the differential diagnosis occurs. The social competence and linked-up thinking are checked (module 3/4). On the second day the training programmes can be finished up to the learning ability (module 2). On the final day the repetition of suitable tests from module 1 are completed including the examination of the learning increase.</p> <p>Evaluation Preckel, F. (2002). Handlungsorientiertes Testverfahren zur Erfassung und Förderung beruflicher Kompetenz (hamet 2). In U. P. Kanning & H. Holling (Hrsg.), Handbuch personaldiagnostische Instrumente (S. 259-268). Göttingen: Hogrefe.</p>	
<p>Target group Pupils at different types of secondary schools, general youth with special needs, adults with specific issues (rehabilitation, back-to-work, unemployment), people with disabilities, people with physical, mental, psychological or sensory disabilities</p> <p>Targeted criteria Not specified</p> <p>Number of participants Not specified</p>	
<p>Tools The activity test modules that can be flexibly used in a Hamet assessment record, vocational base-competences, learning skills, social skills and lateral thinking, troubleshooting and problem recognition.</p>	
<p>Objectives in numbers Not specified</p>	<p>Results in numbers Not specified</p> <p>Achievement of objectives Not specified</p> <p>Rate of withdrawal of applicants Not specified</p>
<p>Duration of the process per candidate Three days for the completion of all modules.</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary € 1260.00 (plus tax) for the basic equipment for 20 participants for all modules. Before using the equipment the trainer must participate in an instruction seminar..</p>
<p>Contact Berufsbildungswerk Waiblingen GmbH</p>	
<p>Downloadable http://www bbw-waiblingen.de</p>	

2.4 LITHUANIA

Generally the legislative basis for recognition of prior learning, of non-formal and informal learning is available in Lithuania.

Adult education and VET specialists believe that the present legal base which poses no obstacles to the recognition of non-formal and informal competencies is, in fact, only a fragment of the necessary system. In fact, the issue of recognition of non-formally and informally obtained competencies is not being solved. The State takes the easiest way: introducing equivalency examinations. VET organizations are allowed to organize these examinations.

Scientists state that the legislation does not describe in a precise way the requirements for organizations organizing the evaluation process of non-formally and informally obtained competencies, and for the qualifications of evaluators and consultants. There are no clear procedures and methodologies of evaluation of learning achievements; the responsibilities and rights of employers and employees are not defined. The establishment of the system of information on about and the marketing of evaluation and recognition of non-formally and informally obtained competencies is left to the initiative of the organizations themselves. The evaluators of non-formally and informally obtained competencies usually are teachers of VET organizations or other persons prepared as evaluators by organizations themselves. There is no common system of preparation of evaluators.

The system of evaluation and recognition of non-formally and informally obtained competencies is being created, therefore this area is mostly developed by implementing international projects.

The projects presented in the National Compendium demonstrate that some educational organizations implement activities leading to the recognition of non-formally and informally obtained competencies.

During the implementation of these projects a number of procedures were created for the recognition of non-formally and informally obtained competencies (e.g. for evaluation of adult education practitioners, family, entrepreneurship competencies).

Because of the lack of the system of recognition of non-formally and informally obtained competencies the procedures created by different projects have limited applicability. Organizations which created the procedures face financial problems: the State is not interested and applicants are not able to pay for evaluation and recognition procedure.

The most important achievements in this field belong to Lithuanian universities, which implemented or suggested procedures that we present in this International Compendium.

LITHUANIA	LITHUANIAN ASSOCIATION OF ADULT EDUCATION
<p>Procedure Assessment and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes at Vytautas Magnus University</p> <p>Description The procedure is available to everyone with secondary education wishing to assess the competencies achieved by non-formal and informal education.</p> <p>Context More and more people of non-traditional age are learning in formal education institutions including universities. In the 2003-2004 academic year, 34.7% of students were older than 24. A new role of universities is emerging: ensuring accessibility of studies and answering the requirements of a changing reality. An increasing number of older students in universities demand programmes which should match the learning needs and demands of employers of that target group which is characterised by unpredictability and inconsistency. The programme should include not only professional skills but also team building, communication, problem solving, IT and other competencies.</p> <p>General purpose Creating of opportunities for accessibility to higher education, individualized studies and more flexible organization of a study process.</p> <p>Implementation The candidates learn about the evaluation process, principles, criteria, potential evaluation outcomes (recognition of the qualification or separate competencies). Assessment of the content of the portfolio, sufficiency of evidence for proving the competencies as well as its authenticity are considered. The decision about which candidates' competencies have been recognised is made by the evaluator or Evaluation.</p> <p>Evaluation /</p>	
<p>Target group students</p> <p>Targeted criteria Persons with secondary education and wishing to assess the competencies achieved by non-formal and informal education.</p> <p>Number of participants No information</p>	
<p>Tools : Testing, self description, self-analysis, portfolio</p>	
<p>Objectives in numbers No information</p>	<p>Results in numbers Achievement of objectives Rate of withdrawal of applicants No information</p>
<p>Duration of the process per candidate No data</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary No data</p>
<p>Agency contact Vytautas Magnus University, Donelaičio g.52, Kaunas, Lithuania. Eglė Stasiūnaitienė,</p>	
<p>Downloadable kc@kc.vdu.lt; www.vdu.lt</p>	

Procedure

Assessment and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes at Mykolas Romeris University

Description

Procedure of assessment and recognition of achievements is offered for the people who have secondary education and work experience and want to obtain higher education. After the assessment of achievements the applicants obtain the following possibilities: enter the university, enter the programme of the second or even third year of university, or obtain credits of certain education programmes.

Context

More and more people of non-traditional age are learning in formal education institutions including universities. In 2003-2004 academic year 34.7% of students were older than 24. New role of universities is emerging: ensuring accessibility of studies and answering the requirements of changing reality. Increasing number of older students in universities demands programs which should match the learning needs and demands of employers of that target group which is characterised by unpredictability and inconsistency. The program should include not only professional skills but also team building, communication, problem solving, IT and other competencies.

General purpose

Creating of opportunities for accessibility to higher education, individualized studies and more flexible organization of a study process. Credit award for learning outcomes gained through different non-academic learning environments

Implementation

Candidates are fully informed about the procedure of assessment & recognition, its stages, criteria of assessment, requirements for portfolio design. Proof of the candidate's learning presented in the portfolio of learning outcomes is analyzed and assessed. The main purpose of assessment is to establish if the candidate's learning outcomes are equivalent to the learning outcomes that must be achieved by learners taking traditional study routes. Learning outcomes are understood in terms of knowledge, abilities and competence. Portfolio of learning outcomes is assessed by experts appointed by the university in accordance with their area of expertise in the subject. The final decision is confirmed by the Assessment Commission. As a result, academic credits are awarded or the award of credit is rejected. In the case of a negative decision detailed feedback and recommendations for further actions are presented to the candidate.

Evaluation

No information

Target group employees, persons threatened with unemployment, unemployed, home makers; drop-outs from university studies.

Targeted criteria Applicants must have secondary education and work experience of at least 5 years in the field of credit.

Number of participants no information

<p>Tools Individual interview, action oriented methods of testing. The main method - portfolio of learning outcomes, usually integrated with other assessment techniques (a presentation, essay, test, interview, etc depending on the specificity of the subject).</p>	
<p>Objectives in numbers No information</p>	<p>Results in numbers Achievement of objectives Rate of withdrawal of applicants No information</p>
<p>Duration of the process per candidate No information</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary Assessment of an academic credit - 0,4 of minimum standard of living</p>
<p>Contact Mykolas Romeris University, Nijole Burksaitiene (burksa@gmail.com) , Jolita Sliogeriene, www.mru.lt</p>	
<p>Downloadable</p>	

LITHUANIA	LITHUANIAN ASSOCIATION OF ADULT EDUCATION
<p>Procedure Assessment of assessors of non-formal and informal learning achievements</p> <p>Description The designed APL model will help teachers of professions to assess their prior learning and experience for creation of their personal development plans.</p> <p>Context Assessment and recognition of competencies obtained by teachers of professions non-formally and informally is considered as important activity for professional training system of teachers, but is still not developed.</p> <p>General purpose To make the teaching of teachers more flexible, more effective and more efficient by increasing the accessibility and flexibility of teaching programs, encouraging teachers of professions to participate in LLL process and choosing teaching part of study programs according to individual needs.</p> <p>Implementation At the information phase the candidate has a consultation and conducts a needs analysis. At the ratings phase various assessment methods are used, such as interviews, observations, tests, etc. Recognition and certification: Making a decision based on the assessment results. Preparing individualised study plan. Issuing a document giving full or partial recognition.</p> <p>Evaluation No information</p>	
<p>Target group Teachers from vocational schools (VET teachers)</p> <p>Targeted criteria The APL assessors have to have a subject qualification (which the candidate applies to) as well as s/he has to finish the special training for assessors.</p> <p>Number of participants No data</p>	
<p>Tools Interview, questionnaire, individual interview, action oriented methods of testing, role plays, self descriptions, self-analysis, observation of teaching at a workplace of the teacher.</p>	
<p>Objectives in numbers Procedure was designed in 2007-2010 therefore data is still not available</p>	<p>Results in numbers No information</p> <p>Achievement of objectives No information</p> <p>Rate of withdrawal of applicants No information</p>

<p>Duration of the process per candidate</p> <p>The APL procedure consists of three main parts: informing-preparation, assessment and evaluation. The longest one is informing-preparation. Depends on the case, may vary from one week to several months.</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary</p> <p>Not discussed yet. But if that is the case, that the APL procedure is one of the modules of the study programme (voluntary module), the cost is accordingly.</p>
<p>Contact</p> <p>The copyright is shared between the project partners: Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania), JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Riga Technical University (Latvia) and Tallinn University (Estonia). Contact person: Aušra Fokienė (a.fokiene@skc.vdu.lt), website: www.vdu.lt/tima-balt .</p>	
<p>Downloadable</p>	

2.5 NETHERLANDS

ROC van Twente is an educational institute for secondary vocational education with strong roots in the region of Twente. Companies and establishments in the region participate in a strong network. For that reason ROC van Twente also wants to be a provider of APL procedures, so that the region of Twente can give form and content to the basic principles of Lifelong Learning.

THE NETHERLANDS	ROC VAN TWENTE
<p>Procedure The APL procedure of ROC van Twente</p> <p>Description The APL procedure of ROC van Twente has been described in a handbook. To implement the procedure a large number of instruments have been developed, such as work instructions, agreements and assessment tools.</p> <p>Context The APL procedure of ROC van Twente is based on a nationwide quality code that has been established on the basis of agreements between 10 covenant partners. These covenant partners are organizations that are involved, in any event, in achieving learning and working programmes. They see APL procedures as an important means to achieve that goal. Realising learning and working programmes on the basis of APL routes are an important way to respond to the Lisbon objectives. Especially when it comes to transforming Europe into a competitive knowledge economy.</p> <p>General goal ROC van Twente wants to develop an APL procedure that meets the principles of the national quality code for APL. With this APL procedure ROC van Twente wants to portray the professional skills of workers in firms and institutions and of persons seeking employment.</p> <p>Implementation To make an APL procedure operational an effective APL organization is essential. ROC van Twente made a number of employees responsible for the guidance and support of assessors, who execute the APL procedure. They are also responsible for monitoring and quality assurance of all parts of the procedure.</p> <p>Evaluation The Ministry of Education has appointed an external supervisory organisation to judge ROC van Twente as an APL organisation and the quality of the APL procedure. The supervisory framework is the national quality code for APL. With a sufficient assessment ROC Twente will get formal recognition as an APL provider.</p>	

Target group

All employees of ROC van Twente who are involved in the execution of APL procedures.

Criterion for targeting

The objective of the project will have been realized if the APL procedure of ROC van Twente will be judged with a positive result by the external supervisory organisation and ROC van Twente will have got the formal recognition as an APL provider.

Number of participants

Three employees of ROC Twente are facilitated to implement the project. A multiple of that number is involved in the implementation of the APL procedure of ROC van Twente.

Procedure and tools

The APL procedure of ROC van Twente has been described in a handbook. This handbook is, in its most simple form, a roadmap of activities beginning with information and advice and ending with presenting the APL report to the candidate. For a large number of activities tools have been developed, such as an agreement with the applicant, work instructions for candidates, guidance workers and assessors, formats for the report of the assessment by the assessor, a complaint procedure and a manual for writing the report by the assessor.

Target figure

In 2010 ROC van Twente will execute about 800 APL routes.

Numeric result

In 2009 about 200 APL routes were executed by ROC van Twente. In 2010 until June about 90 have been executed.

Duration of action per applicant

In the agreement with the candidate a clause has been included that an APL route will last up to 60 days.

Cost per person

€ 1200,-

Contact

www.rocvantwente.nl

Downloadable

www.evcintwente.nl

www.kenniscentrumevc.nl

2.6 SLOVAKIA

The main goal of the Strategy of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance of Slovak republic (passed by the Government of the Slovak republic in 2007) is the completion of the system of lifelong learning and the system of lifelong guidance. It is intended that the system make the access to repeated and flexible obtaining of new qualifications for the citizens easier through good-quality education obtained in both formal and non-formal systems of education and in the system of informal learning. This will be done with the assistance of complex counselling and guidance services during the entire life of the person and hence, help people to sustain the highest possible employment level as well as increase the participation of the population in lifelong learning.

The concept of lifelong learning based on the acquisition of key competences has been establishing itself as the leading trend in the Slovak curricular reform and as a significant milestone for successful human resource management and development. The process of recognition of non-formal and informal acquired competences in Slovakia is still very difficult, because there the necessary conditions for fulfilling it have not been created yet. The valid Law Nr. 568/2009 on lifelong learning defined the way that non-formally and informally acquired competences can be recognized, but it cannot be done if there is no National Qualification Framework. And this is still the case in Slovakia. National Qualification Framework (NQF) is missing but the preparation has started and many background documents have been created.

A comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning is currently being developed in Slovakia. It will include qualifications from VET, general education, HE and adult learning. The work is based on the Government decision on EQF implementation in Slovakia, adopted in February 2009. The Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family was signed in October 2009. The development is complemented by adoption of the following acts: the Vocational Education and Training Act No 184/2009, the School Act No 245/2008, and the Lifelong Learning Act No 568/2009, adopted in December 2009. A national register of qualifications is being established with the aim of including all national qualifications from different subsystems of education and training. Development of the national register of occupations is in progress, based on amendment of Act No 5/2004 on employment services valid since May 2008. It is planned that the NQF will be in place by 2011. Development is based on the national project Lifelong learning, lifelong guidance and national qualification system, co-financed by the ESF. Work on the NQF was initiated and is coordinated by the Ministry of Education. An eight-level structure is envisaged to cover the main characteristics of the national qualification system and be compatible with the EQF also in terms of principles, categories and level descriptors. The final number of levels has not been defined yet. University qualifications will be included in the comprehensive NQF.

The learning outcomes approach has been recognised as a part of the reform agenda and is being integrated in all new developments. The modernisation programme Slovakia 21 – reform programme, and the National Reform Programme 2008-10 were adopted by the government of Slovakia to achieve better visibility of learning outcomes in the education system.

The learning outcomes approach is described in some action plans, e.g. related to: the change of the accreditation processes at higher education institutions with the shift of emphasis to the output indicators instead of criteria focused on input. There will be improved employability through increased interconnection between the content of education and the demands of the labour market.

In general education (primary/secondary), learning outcomes are being implemented in line with the School Act No 245/2008. In VET, the learning outcomes approach is being reinforced through the new Vocational Education and Training Act No 184/2009. It is expected that work on the NQF will have an impact on the use of learning outcomes in higher education. The Act on lifelong learning aims to contribute to unified accreditation and certification practices by recognising partial qualifications based on competence acquired regardless of the learning setting. The national steering group for referencing to the EQF was established in 2009. The referencing process will start in mid 2010 and the referencing report will be ready by March 2013.

Procedure**FamCompass**

Assessing and Validating Family Competences

Description

The Family Competences Portfolio assesses family competences: knowledge, skills and attitudes men and women have obtained in family life, in their roles as educators, home makers and care givers.

The FamCompass consists of different parts:

General information

List of family competences

Reflection file

Pieces of evidence as to relevant life experiences in the family (to be attached)

Case studies to be discussed: one taken from family life and one taken from a professional context

Context

The Family Competences Portfolio, in short the 'FamCompass', is the result of a multilateral cooperation « Grundtvig I » project and was realized with the support of the « Lifelong Learning Programme » of the European Union.

General Purpose

Assessment and validation of Family Competences:

obtain clarity and a realistic evaluation of your family competences and development potentialities

recognise your strengths and weaknesses

recognise your potential for further development

improve your performance in application procedures

restore your self-esteem and boost your self-confidence by visualising your skills and competences

to increase orientation and transparency

Implementation

An assessment of family competences is preferably based on the fulfilment of the tasks described in all the parts. However, a flexible use of the instrument is possible. Depending on one's aims, one might focus on some part(s) of the list of competences in part 1 (and, for instance, limit the questions to competences related to one of the topics, e.g. the education and care of children). On the other hand, one might find it necessary to add (a) part(s) (for instance, a personality check list) to the instrument.

Evaluation

Higher Institute for Family Sciences (BE)

Comenius University, Philosoph-Faculty, Department of Andragogy (SK)

Deutsches Jugendinstitut e. V. (DE)

Institute for Creative Proceedings (PL)

Romanian Institute for Adult Education (IREA) (RO)

Västra Nylands folkhögskola (FI)

Vilnius College of Higher Education (LT)

Target group

Institutes offering training programs that seek to attract more adult learners in several fields, e.g. education, social work/psychosocial work, family coaching and assistance, foster care, teacher assistance, family learning, street corner work, etc.

Adult learners who want to apply for these training programs, in view of possible employment in these professions.

Employers in these sectors.

Centres for job coaching.

Targeted criteria no information

Number of participants

individually

Tools

To support the use of the instrument, different manuals were developed. The user's manual gives an overview of the various steps by which the portfolio is to be completed. The criteria that will be used by the assessor are listed to help the applicant to make his/her portfolio as 'strong' as possible. An assessor's manual specifies the general and specific criteria the assessor has to take into account.

Self descriptions, self-analysis, portfolio, essay - questionnaire - five levels are distinguished for each competence:

Level 0: The competence seems relevant to you but you are not familiar with it.

Level 1: You are familiar with the competence from discussions or literature.

Level 2: You have family experience of the competence but you do not, or only seldom, reflect on it.

Level 3: You often apply the competence (independently or otherwise) and from time to time you reflect on how to improve it.

Level 4: The competence is an integrated part of yourself, you use it readily also in an unpredictable situation and you reflect on how to improve it.

If a competence doesn't seem relevant (no level).

Objectives in numbers

No information

Results in numbers

yes

Achievement of objectives No information

Rate of withdrawal of applicants No information

Duration of the process per candidate

Approx. 2 days

Costs per candidate

Contacts

Comenius University, Philosophy Faculty, Department of Andragogy, Gondova 2, 818 01 Bratislava, Slovakia, e-mail: andrea.kovalcikova@fphil.uniba.sk

Downloadable

<http://www.famcompass.eu/index.php/users>

2.7 SWITZERLAND

Many people have difficulties compiling a competency dossier. Therefore, education and training providers have developed a range of guidance services, which are available under different labels. For non-professionals the situation has become rather confusing. Detailed information about the education and training system is often needed in order to find adequate course or guidance offers.

With IBAK we have created a solution that should allow the Cantons to get a quick overview of the guidance and support offers aimed at compiling competency dossiers.

The solution consists of giving providers who offer guidance and support in the field of compiling competency dossiers an additional, free opportunity to advertise their offers on the web-based Valida search engine. This should encourage a certain number of providers to place their offers on the Valida website. The more providers which take up this opportunity, the more complete an overview the clients get thanks to the search engine, and the more likely they are to find offers which suit their needs.

A conference on the topic of «Validation in Switzerland in 2020» is scheduled for November 2010. The agenda provides a presentation of the IBAK project and the search engine which has been developed in Switzerland as part of the project; furthermore, the conference looks at prospects for the validation of prior learning in Switzerland in the next 10 years.

Procedure

Solution oriented flexible system of learning processes promoting sustainable career and life planning (CH-Q System of Managing Competencies). The approach focuses on a **combination of valuation of formal and informal learning and validation**. It is centred around the identification, assessment and recognition of skills and competencies.

Context

The Association CH-Q - Swiss Qualification Program for Career Development is established since 1999 as a non-profit umbrella organization dedicated, on a national scale, to strengthening links between lifelong learning and the individual management of competencies. It does not act as a provider but is responsible for political, strategical and structural functions of the system. In the pursuit of its objectives, the Association CH-Q can count on direct or indirect support from authorities, associations and institutions at the national and regional level.

Description

The CH-Q System of Managing Competencies is integrated in an overarching, open and flexible model. It is aimed at the recording and recognition of performances and achievements in different areas of life. These include achievements in the family, in volunteer work, in civic activities. The Association CH-Q is especially involved in giving these intentions a better chance in education at each stage and in the jobmarket.

Elements

- Contents oriented on target groups, established methods of learning processes, procedures, specific tools and accompanying measurements that are corresponding;
- Strategies and concepts to guarantee quality;
- A frame of reference determine the application and development by experts in training and counseling
 - Regulations and Guidelines (standards, principles) defining the requirements for implementation in education, training, career guidance and in the world of work. These documents are in accordance with the Guidelines and quality criteria on "Recognition of non-formal and informal Learning" issued by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology OPET.
 - Training program with modules
 - System of certification and recognition.

Objectives

The primary goal is to empower individuals or groups of users, clients

- to gain insight into their strengths and consequently build up self confidence and a sense for their valid stake in their professional future;
- to handle the management of their skills and competencies with self-reliance, in a sustainable way and – if it comes to it – translating them into qualifications (validation), thus enhancing their job flexibility and mobility;
- to deliberately use their established record of performance and achievements for shaping their career with purpose, focussed on realistic solutions;

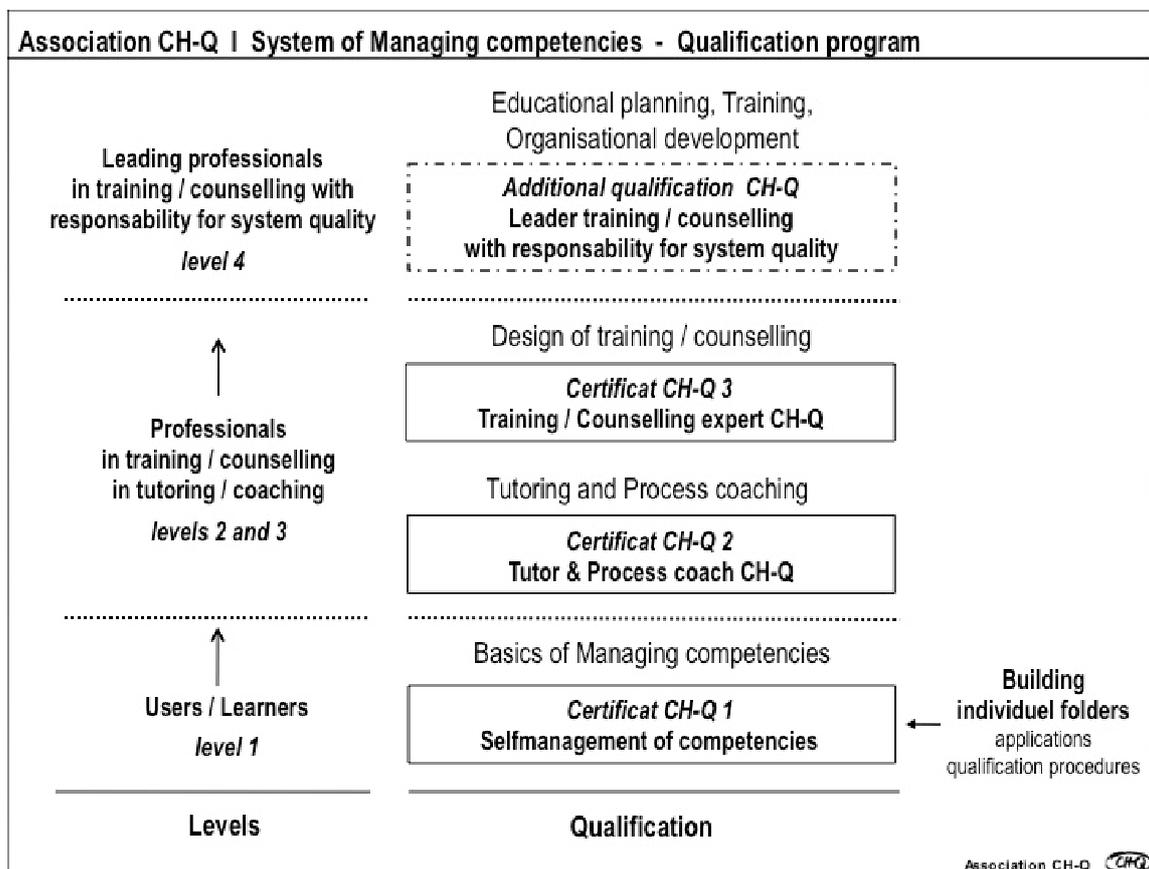
Implementation

The implementation of the system is up to the providers (Institutions in education, administration, labor market). They are responsible for the adaptation and application of the methods, processes, procedures on a operational level in line with their particular needs and in accordance with the quality criteria of the Association CH-Q.

Training

The most important element of ensuring the quality of the system is the qualification of the trainers and counsellors. The training program is modular by design and integrated in the system of certification and accreditation. It implies the awarding of certificates on three levels (users and professional trainers/consultants) and of a additional qualification on level four (see graphic). It includes in a second step the recognition of the programs developed by certified trainers/counsellors on level three which leads to acquiring the label CH-Q. This mark of quality stands for leading-edge quality - both in Switzerland and abroad, with partner organisations in five European countries.

Graphic



Tools

Modular designed products which are coherent in language and content:

- Kick-off instruments for easy application;
- Instruments for documenting the personal strengths and abilities. They are designed as a three-part portfolio-folder for young people and adults (print and electronic version):
 - Folder of competencies* as a continuous collection of information and facts on acquired skills and competencies,
 - Folder of qualifications* as a collection of formal and informal evidence and supporting documents, e.g. diplomas, certificates, references,

Folder of application as a summary of selected professional stations and providing an overview of the current individual competence profile in order to match the requirements of jobs, of admission- or promotion procedures;

- Instruments for validation and accreditation procedures;
- Handbooks/manuals for competence-based training and guidance.

Evaluation

Quality assurance

The Commission of Certification and Recognition is responsible for ensuring the quality of the training and for verifying the correctness of the programs developed by the providers. To this purpose they are controlling the acquired qualifications on level 1-3 and the evidence of quality of the programs developed for level 1 by the providers. Both of the procedures are based on written documents. These are first evaluated by especially assigned experts and then validated by the members of the Commission.

Reviewing the ongoing development of programs and tools

Programs are periodically monitored for their effectiveness and for the tools they include. To this purpose, experts from the labor market, from education, vocational training, applied research co-operate with the Association CH-Q.

Target group

The training programs and counseling/guidance services offered are basically designed for a broad range of users irrespective of their personal background, educational level, occupation or social status.

The programs address young people and adults who are

- attending school, as part of mandatory or post- mandatory schooling
- in vocational and continuing education or training
- at the dividing line between: school/education-job, non-employment-employment or reentry into the labour market
- integrated in the labour market.

Criterion for targeting see above

Number of participants

Since the beginning of the certification over 3000 participants have acquired a certificate (total of 3 levels). This number does not take into consideration the awarding of certificates by licensed European partners of the Association CH-Q.

Duration of the process per candidate

Depending on the program which the provider has developed according to his specific needs.

Costs per beneficiary

Determined by the provider. They generally are adapted to the pricing of the market. Either the beneficiary pays the fee himself or the costs are covered by the employer.

Contact

Association CH-Q - Swiss Qualification Program for Career Development
Office of services, Hansruedi Bott
Südstrasse 55, 2500 Biel 8
info@ch-q.ch

Downloadable

www.ch-q.ch

Procedure

Assessment and accreditation of prior learning to be counted towards the completion of a Federal VET Certificate or Diploma.

Description

The validation procedure is based on the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (Translation from the original German version of the Act):

Art. 9 Section 2

Experiential learning and vocational or general skills that were acquired outside the formal education and training system are accredited appropriately.

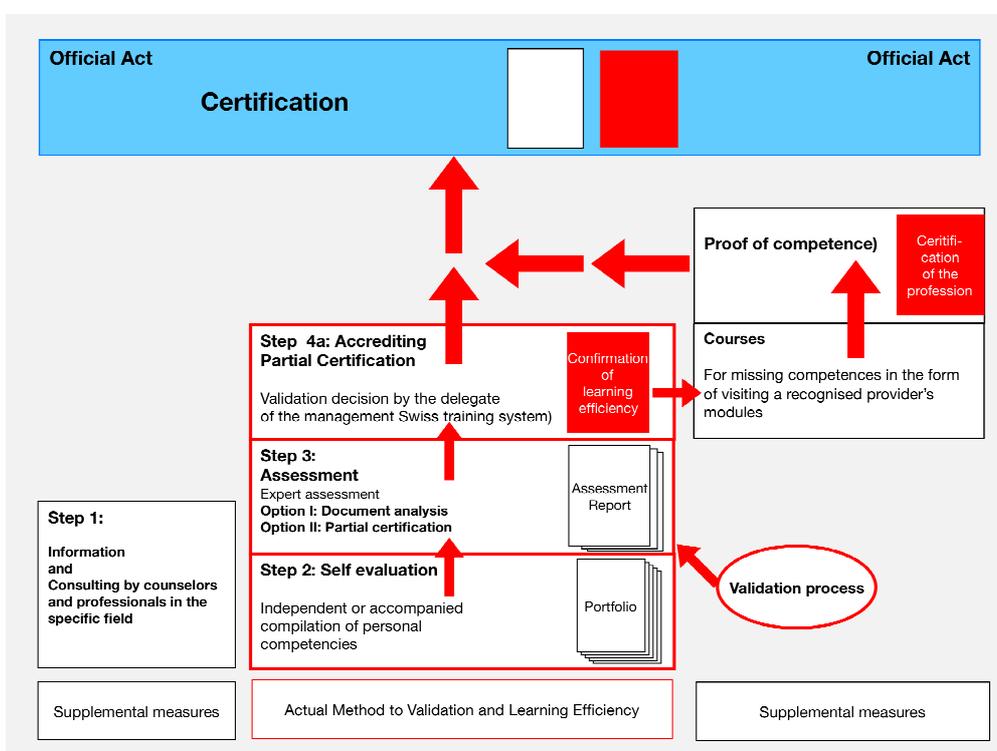
Art. 17 Sec. 5

Basic VET can also be achieved through non-formalised learning; this process is concluded by a qualification procedure.

Art. 33

Professional qualifications are evidenced by means of a final exam, a combination of tests or other forms of qualification procedures that are accredited by the Federal Office (OPET).

Validation processes have to be carried out according to the following schema:



Phase 1: Information and guidance

All applicants attend an informative meeting, which provides information about the whole process (objectives, activities, conditions of admission, fees) and gives them the opportunity to ask personal questions regarding the procedure.

Phase 2: Self evaluation

With the help of a web-based tool, the applicants prepare a standardised dossier to evidence their competencies to be counted towards the completion of a Federal Certificate or Diploma. The dossier contains the CV, evidence of accomplished formal education and training, a self-evaluation, several descriptions of the required professional skills and evidence of any additional competencies.

The description of required competencies has to be done on the basis of guidelines. Additionally, applicants can request a visit at their workplace to evidence specific skills.

Phase 3: Assessment

Experts who are responsible for final exams will also assess the dossier. They will verify the equivalence between the evidenced skills and the competency profile as recorded in the VET decree.

This dossier assessment is complemented by a 30 minute interview (between expert and applicant). The aim of the interview is to clarify topics that have emerged from the dossier. That interview is not a test.

Phase 4: Accreditation

The applicants obtain a validation of their learning achievements, which demonstrates in detail the elements of prior learning that will be acknowledged. Moreover, the validation document draws attention to the areas in which the applicants need additional education and training.

Phase 5: Certification

When all the required professional skills have been evidenced and accredited, the domestic Canton of the applicant issues a Federal Certificate for the respective profession. There is no difference between this certificate and a certificate obtained through formal VET.

Currently, recognition of prior learning can be obtained in the following professional areas: Print media (machinery), metal construction, graphic design, bricklaying, logistics, trade, informatics, cleaning, domestic economy, health care, retail business.

Implementation

The first profession in which validation was available in basic VET on national level was the profession of the health care assistant (pilot project in 2004). Further procedures are being developed by the Cantons.

Evaluation

The cantonal procedures have to be approved by the Federal Office. Additionally, the Federal Office cooperates with the Cantons to develop a quality assurance concept for the procedures.

As the Valida homepage (www.validacquis.ch - in German) states: All project coordinators are obliged to evaluate their pilot projects and report to a national project called «Validation of Prior Learning». Guidelines for project evaluation have been developed within the framework of meta-evaluation.

Target group People who meet the requirements and want to qualify for the respective professional field.

Criterion for targeting The candidate decides autonomously which professional field they want to qualify in.

Number of participants

At present there are no statistics available.

Tools

Candidates may attend a course to learn how to compile a dossier. It is also possible to obtain individual assistance. In both cases, the costs are normally at the candidate's expense.

Some dossiers (web-based versions, for instance) are highly standardised, which means that candidates need the competence to handle the tool.

Target figure

Not defined

Numeric result

Unknown

Duration of action per recipient

The validation procedure usually takes one to three years, depending on the number of competencies the candidate has to acquire by attending supplementary courses.

Self-evaluation (step 2) takes two to three months. For assessment and accreditation (steps 3 and 4) a minimum of six months must be estimated.

Costs

The costs depend on how much assistance a candidate needs to compile their dossier and how many supplementary course modules have to be attended. The investment is normally between CHF 600 and 6000. In individual cases costs may be considerably higher. Some Cantons bear the total costs in cases where the candidate has not previously achieved any formal vocational qualification.

Contact

Links offering information in English

<http://www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/index.html?lang=en>, <http://www.ehb-schweiz.ch/en/continouuseducation/skillsadvisors/Pages/validationpriorlearning.aspx>,

Links offering information in German and/or French or Italian

www.kompetenzenbilanz.zh.ch, www.mba.zh.ch / Berufsbildung / Validierungsverfahren, www.ti.ch/sfc, www.erz.be.ch/bae, www.bildungsleistung.ch, [www.admin.fr.ch/sopfa: prestations - adultes - validation des acquis](http://www.admin.fr.ch/sopfa:prestations-adultes-validation-des-acquis), www.citedesmetiers.ch / Genève / Cite des metiers et de la formation / Trouver sa formation continue, www.vs.ch/orientation

Downloadable

www.bbt.admin.ch, www.validacquis.ch, www.mb.berufsbildung.ch, www.sbbk.ch,

SWITZERLAND	SWISS FEDERATION FOR ADULT LEARNING SVEB AND ASSOCIATION VALIDA
<p>Procedure Internet based search engine offering information about courses and guidance services aimed at people who want to compile a personal portfolio or a validation dossier.</p> <p>Description There are various motivations to compile a competency dossier, for example: achieving a recognized diploma having skills and experience taken into account when following a formal vocational programme preparing a job application dossier etc. Compiling a competency dossier is mainly aimed at maintaining or enhancing employability in the broadest sense. Many people have difficulties preparing a competency dossier. Providers have therefore developed various guidance and support services, which are now available under different labels. For non-professionals the situation has become quite confusing. Detailed information about the education and training system is often needed in order to find adequate course or guidance offers. With IBAK we have created a solution that should allow the Cantons to obtain a quick overview of the guidance and support offers aimed at those compiling competency dossiers. The solution consists of giving providers who offer guidance and support in the field of compiling competency dossiers an additional, free opportunity to advertise their offers on the web-based Valida search engine. This should encourage a range of providers to place their offers on the Valida website. The more providers who take up this opportunity, the more complete an overview the clients will get thanks to the search engine, and the more likely they are to find an offer that suits their needs.</p> <p>Realisation The search engine will be available on the Valida website by autumn 2010 (www.valida.ch)</p> <p>Evaluation Evaluation takes place at the end of 2011</p>	
<p>Target group Any person who needs assistance in preparing and compiling their competency dossier.</p> <p>Criterion for targeting see above</p> <p>Number of participants This will be identified in the evaluation which is scheduled for autumn 2011</p>	
<p>Tools The search engine contains information on courses and guidance offers targeted at people who want to compile a personal portfolio or a validation dossier.</p>	

<p>Target figure Not specified All offers aimed at supporting people compiling their personal portfolio or validation dossier are registered on a search engine.</p>	<p>The search engine will be online by autumn 2010.</p>
<p>Duration of action per recipient Not specified</p>	<p>Cost per beneficiary Not specified</p>
<p>Contact Dr. André Schläfli, Director of the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning SVEB, Oerlikonerstrasse 38. 8057 Zurich (www.alice.ch) Ruedi Winkler, President of the Association Valida, Fellenbergstrasse 288, 8047 Zurich (www.valida.ch) Véronique Hauser, member of the Association Valida steering committee, Plattenstrasse 74, 8032 Zurich (www.valida.ch)</p>	
<p>Downloadable www.valida.ch (from autumn 2010)</p>	

3. Assessment of informally acquired competences

3.1 Jury, accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) in France

3.1.1 General principles

(Extracts from the circular « Organisation de la validation des acquis de l'expérience », Ministry of National Education - CIRCULAR N°2003-12 7 dated 1-8-2003) [...]

The accreditation of prior experiential learning expressed in article L. 335-5 of the Education Code is a substitute for, and constitutes a manner to obtain diplomas and certificates in the same way as the formal education route, apprenticeship or continuing education for adults. [...]

The accreditation of prior experiential learning is carried out by taking into consideration the totality of a candidate's knowledge, aptitudes and competences acquired during the exercise of salaried, non-salaried or volunteer activities that are in relationship with the field of the diploma for which the application is made.

All of the skills, competences and knowledge arising out of a candidate's experience must be taken into account when determining accreditation, whether they are part of the professional domain or general domain of the diploma.

[...]

The conditions governing admissibility of the request

The candidate must prove at least three years of salaried, non-salaried or volunteer activities that are in relationship with the field of the diploma postulated for.

[...]

The admissibility of the request is decided based on the information and documents supplied by the applicant in their file (see infra § 4.2.1), by considering the actual length of all the activities and the relationship that exists between the activities and jobs of the applicant and the field of the diploma applied for.

[...]

The jury, composition

The jury is constituted and presided over in accordance with the regulations governing the specific diploma. It is therefore essential to review the general regulations of each diploma. Concerning the representatives of the profession on the jury, within the APEL framework, there must be 50% employers and 50% employees in order to comply with article 4 of decree n° 2002-615 dated 26 April, 2002. In addition, it is appropriate to try to ensure a balanced representation between men and women.

It is important to ensure that jury members are qualified to analyse the work done, to evaluate skills and knowledge acquired by experience and to conduct interviews with adults. This can be accomplished by putting in place training modules for jury members.

Jury members involved with the company or organization where the candidate exercised or exercises his or her activity may not sit on a jury when considering this candidate and must excuse themselves from the jury during these deliberations.

The jury deliberates in a plenary session.

In an effort to be efficient, the organization of each jury must be flexible enough to permit the regular consideration of requests for accreditation of prior experiential learning. However, if it seems that the number of candidates, the complexity of the files or any other constraint will weigh too heavily on the organization and functioning of the jury, the jury may be split up and organized in groups of examiners. This decision may only be made by the president.

The jury , the interview

The interview allows the candidate to provide additional information and, to explain in greater detail, the information supplied in his file. It is organized at such time as the jury considers that it cannot grant the diploma based only on the candidate's file or on the initiative of the candidate. Whether it is put in place by the candidate or the jury, it allows the jury to complete its file, to understand more thoroughly the actual activities of the candidate and to focus on the most significant elements of information with respect to the requirements of the diploma. In this sense, the interview is not to be in the form of an oral examination testing a candidate's knowledge and skills. The interview is prepared and conducted by the jury based on an analysis of the candidate's file.

A convocation to the interview is prepared and sent to the candidate.

As a guide, the length of the interview is usually between 20 and 45 minutes.

Thanks to questions which are raised after examination of the file, the interview provides jury members with an opportunity to obtain additional information which will help understand more thoroughly the activities described.

The jury , deliberations and decisions

The jury assesses the extent of the accreditation based on:

- an in-depth analysis of the totality of the elements provided by the candidate in his or her file which present, on one hand, his or her career path, especially professional, and on the other hand, describe and detail his or her jobs and activities ;
- an interview, if this is requested by the candidate or if the jury considers it to be necessary.

It takes into account any possible benefits, exemptions or decisions to accredit prior experiential learning that the candidate has asserted in his or her request.

The extent of the accreditation is established by the jury on the basis of its analysis of the activities carried out by the candidate that he or she has decided to present in conformity with his or her application. From this presentation the jury deduces the knowledge, skills and competences mastered by the candidate.

Its analysis is supported by the Referential of Professional Activities when this is set forth in the decree creating the diploma. It evaluates the equivalence between all of the candidate's experience and all or part of the requirements of the diploma which is being applied for.

The jury's decision is in line with the specific rules governing the diploma applied for. That being the case, either it proposes the granting of the diploma, it grants a part of the diploma and indicates what subsequent evaluation is necessary in order to obtain the diploma in full, or it decides that there is no accreditation.

- The applicant's file

The content of the file requesting accreditation of prior experiential learning is defined at the national level and is made up of different elements that do not have the same objective and which are grouped in two booklets which constitute the applicant's file :

- **First series of elements (booklet 1)** : documents which prove the period of time of the activity (work certificates, certificates of activity, salary payslips, any fiscal or social document justifying the length of time and the type of activity), as well as a general presentation of the activities and jobs that permit the verification of the admissibility of the request.

In addition, documents such as training certificates and diplomas obtained previously must be supplied by the candidate. Combined with other information which the candidate wishes to make available to the jury, they clarify the information provided concerning the type of activities of the candidate and their level.

Booklet 1 also permits the candidate to request an interview with the jury.

- **Second series of elements (booklet 2)** : one or more documents describing the typical jobs and activities chosen by the candidate which, when completed, will supplement the first series of elements in order to allow the jury to evaluate the extent of the accreditation.

The file to be completed by an individual candidate is standardized at a national level, at the moment it is in the form of two booklets.

3.1.2 Methodologies and tools

(Extracts from the VAEL jury's guide– Academy of Strasbourg)

Utilization of the file

This step **is at the heart of the jury's mission** because it is a question of accurately determining the career path of the candidate, his or her professional project and identifying evidence of the skills and competences that he or she has applied when carrying out the described activities.

Thus, it is a question of :

- ◆ identifying the request and the candidate's project,
- ◆ identifying the different aspects of his or her career path,
- ◆ proceeding to examine the file :
 - read completely the two booklets,
 - understand the competences and knowledge acquired as compared to the activities presented in the Diploma Referential (first the Professional Activities Referential),
 - construct the different elements of his or her career path, prepare the line of questioning that will guide the interview.

The Diploma Referential

The referentials are tools to be utilized by the different actors involved in training and accreditation : teachers, trainees, candidates applying for diplomas, those responsible for training in different organizations, tutors in professional internships, jury members...

The diploma referentials, developed with professionals, are constructed **on the basis of a Professional Activities Referential** which is combined with an Accreditation Referential.

The Professional Activities Referential (PAR) defines the functions, the tasks and conditions of the professional activity ; it identifies a set of functions and activities.

The PAR serves as a foundation for the Accreditation Referential. The mastery of a professional activity is evidence of the acquisition of practical skills appearing in the Accreditation Referential.

3.2 France, analysis of the work for the «V.A.E.»'s sake a personal point of view arising out of experience in the Ministry of Youth and Sports

Validation of experiential learning “VAE”

Here, I would like to testify how the experience of analysing the activity of a jury has become first, a resource for the evaluation work requested in the "VAE" but, also in other validation situations as well. At the same time, it is a resource to lead and train the juries of diplomas granted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

To begin with, two elements of the context must be taken into account.

Whereas, starting in 1999, the "VAP" validation of professional learning had taken place in a relatively serene way within the Ministry of Youth, sports and associative life, due mainly to the regulations linked to the management of sporting activities and the fear of several professionals, to see the « illegal » activity validated. The law regarding social modernization passed in 2002, enabled the "VAE" to implement practices and, in particular, to legitimize this validation method. This was particularly the case for volunteers, who are quite numerous in our field, bringing their support to associative life, sports or education.

To accompany the implementation of the "VAE", and with the objective of rendering the actors more professional, the Ministry put in place a training process throughout the entire country destined for the facilitators on one hand and for jury members of the diplomas that it grants, on the other. For each actor, two levels of training were put in place, the second level destined for professionals practicing in the particular area.

During the same period, a second element of context to be highlighted in our Ministry is the implementation of the reorganisation of diplomas with the development of a complete course of study in each field and the transformation of state certificates into professional degrees built with units that the individual can capitalize with professional branches that have recently come into our sector. As a result, a redrafting of the applicable reference documentation was necessary.

In order to develop and lead the process of professionalization of the actors, a group of fifteen trainers, educational advisors of “youth and sports” was established. And, at the request of a delegation of Employment and Training of the Ministry, was associated with the research conducted by the "CNAM" (National Conservatory of the Arts and Professions) with respect to the development of training tools.

A first research contract was signed in 2004 with the work and action psychology laboratory of the "CNAM" which focused on developing the ‘profession’ of jury member in the “VAE” process.

Indeed, rather than using their particular activity as the starting point to develop the training course, the participants chose to transform their experience as a jury member into a resource and this became the guide in the development of the training course.

In order to analyze the activity of validation juries, the team chose two steps carried out by a jury:

- the additional interview (this is not systematic for our diplomas)
- and, the reading of the « VAE » file.

Four colleagues volunteered for this research, and two representatives from professional sectors were included in the study.

A brief reminder of the approach used by the « CNAM »:

- first step: the activity of each professional is filmed (for us, this included reading of the file and the interview of the candidate).
- simple self-analysis : each professional watches the film of his or her activity and with the help of researchers' questions "discovers" his (her) activity, his or her gestures etc... and then starts analyzing it.
- analysis, crossing of the two approaches: the two professionals are shown the film of their activity in turn, and open a dialogue about their activity in the presence of the researchers, pointing to the convergent aspects but also, and especially, to the divergent ones and a debate ensues in consequence.
- the last step is the return to the team (group of fifteen trainers) to carry on the debate and, not to find the best way of doing something, the "model". The objective is to exchange ideas about the profession and, in no case to "freeze" it.

So, for the first activity, two thirty minute interviews in situ (in accordance with the regulations) were filmed. The second activity, over two hours spent reading the file and a one-hour exchange between the two members of the commission, was also filmed.

The self-analysis between the two colleagues concerning the additional interview dealt mainly with the way they would conduct the interview (guided or not), the framework of the interview with the candidate, the nature of the various questions and information looked for. This analysis confirmed the difficulty for assessment professionals to conduct this particular type of interview which is neither an examination of competences, nor a remedial oral exam, nor a presentation nor an oral defence but it should enable a jury "to complete elements of the file that are considered insufficient or imprecise" (instructions of the Ministry of Youth and Sports VAE February 2004).

Based on this statement, particular attention is henceforth paid to the information provided to the candidate on the nature and modalities of the additional interview, to help him prepare the interview and also to guide the interview by the members of the « VAE » commissions. This is essential in view of the importance given to this part of the process.

Even though this moment might reassure the juries who observe a candidate for thirty minutes, it cannot be a substitute for the written file that remains the key piece of the assessment and allows the validation of experiential learning.

The activity of reading a file, which might seem, a priori, inauspicious to spotting different practices and to the emergence of controversies, permitted the updating of various evaluation styles.

It is important to bear in mind that the "VAE" file is divided into two parts: in the first part the candidate provides proof of his experience (certificates), and, in the second, he or she provides a full analysis of at least six activities.

The two testers, called A and B, then thought about three other points :

- reading of the first part of the file: A paid thorough attention to the documents providing proof (photocopies of diplomas and work certificates etc...) whereas B seemed to fly over them. During the crossed analysis, A explained that she tried to find the meaning and the coherence of the candidate's background or career path, she did not check the papers (that is what B felt) she looked at them and said "she enters into relationship with the individual"; B said "he won't spend time reading the documents since they have already been checked beforehand, and for him a quick reading is good enough to have a general impression of the candidate".

The two colleagues raised the point that A tended towards objectivity by looking at all of the information from the first part of the file, whereas B was more subjective and quickly formed a general impression of the candidate.

- reading of the second part of the file: the activity of A is intense, she took a lot of notes, underlined, made links and wrote on the file; B read one or two pages and wrote one sentence, a question at the bottom of the page. In the crossed analysis, it is obvious that A spotted systematically whatever she found in the writing and kept track, noting, underlining, she said "I am looking for, collecting information"; as for B, he would rather note whatever is missing (i.e. pedagogical progression?).

Here, we are face-to-face with two different reading or analytical styles. One could be characterised as optimistic, (I note what is essentially positive), and the other as pessimistic (I note what is missing, therefore negative).

- use of the reference documentation: A's intention was to first establish a contact with the candidate and to refer to the reference chart later, whereas for B, the link with the chart was immediate since he was noting whatever was missing.

A second study was conducted in 2006, at the request of the Ministry. It looked at the assessment at the end of a training session, especially the pedagogical situation that takes place in situ (work place of the candidate).

We can understand that driving this second request was an intention to oppose the two assessment methods, a final examination and the VAE process. This desire to oppose the two methods is at the basis of a recurrent question asked by jurors who begin their experience with the validation of experiential learning: can we assess without observing?

For this research study, two exam situations were filmed (one in Lyon and one in Poitiers) each with two examiners (one trainer "Jeunesse et Sports" and a professional). Thus there were four self-analyses and four crossed ones that resulted in numerous exchanges and arguments.

The filmed examination consisted of a session led by a candidate for the professional certificate with a specific public (children in an activity centre) followed by an interview during which the candidate gave feedback about his session and the examiners asked various questions about the session but also his preparation, how to prolong the session, the public, the entire project, the environment ...

The film emphasized the difference of styles between the juries, especially the physical postures that were very different. For example, looking at two evaluating trainers, one stood up at the beginning of the session in order to observe what the children were doing (earth workshop), he looked around, took notes, walked around the room; the other one (environment workshop) remained seated in the distance, took notes, looked at the group of children with the activity leader but would not stand up to have a good look whereas, one could feel, because of his posture, that he would have liked to get closer to the action.

In the situation filmed in Lyon, the professional representative was very attentive to what was going on during the session, got up to observe the children but did not take any notes. When he observed the other juror, he was quite surprised to see her taking a lot of notes during the session.

This observation would be the source of a number of exchanges during the self-analyses especially with respect to three themes:

- the actual experience of the jurors: these exchanges and questionings between the two examiners led them, in order to understand and explain their methodology in this situation, to evoke experiences from the past which had affected them. The first recalled a bad moment when, as a teacher, he was inspected and the inspector remained seated at the back of the room observing him without any positive or negative sign. The second evoked her assessment session (fifteen years ago), a similar type of examination as the candidate today, but with handicapped adults. In this examination, one of the participants came closer to her during the session showing signs of affection and would not join the group even though she kept asking the participant to do so.

The examiner has a bad memory of this moment, she felt embarrassed, destabilised and panics as she thinks her session is being spoilt and she is taking the examination on this very day.

- the relevance of the session in the evaluation: based on these images, the question quickly rose to the surface: "does one have to see in order to assess?". This question made the examiners uncomfortable, as they are strong promoters of the VAE process where evaluation takes place without observing. In fact, the contradiction is not so great. The discussions focused on the importance of the session during the assessment which takes into account what is said during the interview after the session. To make it simple, the examiner who observed the children and the group leader in action said they needed to see in order to assess whereas the examiner who did not dare stand up, said she takes a lot of notes to enrich the questioning in the interview and even confessed "the session is a pretext".

- the decision-making moment: the professional who took very few notes said that he knew immediately, even on entering the room and before the start of the session, that she was a good candidate, a "professional", as he had a good feeling and was almost certain to validate. The examiner who took a lot of notes said she would only give her conclusions after the interview. She thought the interview would enable her to check whatever she saw and felt during the session and would especially allow the candidate to put words to their gestures and analyse what they had done.

The interest for me of these studies has been two-fold. On one hand they have forced me to raise questions, to face dilemmas, to generate discussions that are at the core of jury practices in VAE as well as in other examination situations. On the other hand, the interest in having experimented with this method of analysis enabled me, and still enables me, to develop my role as an examiner and jury trainer.

In what ways?

I shall begin with the form: I do not think there is only one good jury practice but rather multiple evaluation practices that are influenced by our own experience, our thinking about a situation, our personality, our expectations, our mood or desires... let's talk about it.

So, in VAE commissions, in jury situations or training sessions, one gives more weight to the examiners' word, his experiences and the acceptance of his subjectivity and to the analysis of his or her practice. But, we also provoke a group debate and a confrontation of points of view, a jury that doesn't engage in a debate bothers us. The complementary opinions will enable us to tend towards objectivity.

As for the content, we take into account the questions raised by these two studies, as much in the jury sessions as in the training of jurors. I will focus on three aspects :

- the reading of the file (positive or negative): it is not a question of showing how to read a VAE file but only to enable the examiners to realize what they spot in a file. Do they identify the strong points or the gaps (*lacunae*). In any case, whatever their method, we reflected upon the incidence their method could have on the assessment.

During a jury session or commission, when an examiner raises only negative points in a file, another examiner will feel free to ask him to describe any positive points.

This also has to be related to the use made of the reference documentation. We have seen that the tester A centred first on the candidate himself, his activity, background before comparing with the reference documentation, whereas B used it earlier, which allowed him to note what he would have liked to find in the file.

How to use the reference documentation? The new professional diplomas, with ten capitalizable units, have led to an increase in partial validations. We have come to the conclusion that faced with these new diplomas, juries have tended to use the reference documentation as a guide in the assessment, looking in the candidate's file for the full set of expected competences, in other words "the perfect candidate!".

This raises the question of whether this is an exam or an assessment; if it is only a question of identifying the expected competences, we are in the role of verifying; if we place the candidate at the centre of the process, with his own singular experience, we give full value to the acquired learning we find in his written file and then compare this to what is expected. To respect the collective dimension of this assessment process, we put aside some working time with the jury, at each session and before the reading of the file, about the indispensable competences required. It's not a question of creating new reference documentation, but to discuss it, translate it and adapt it to the context. And here, the representative of the professionals has an important role to play as their point of view will come face-to-face with the trainer's. In fact, we must encourage and conduct professional dialogues. As Bernard Prot (CNAM member) said: "the jury is the social workshop where the fine-tuning of the reference documentation takes place."

This difficulty when using the reference documentation was evoked during the examination in situ because the jury in Poitiers conceded that they had ticked nearly all the boxes of the chart positively, whereas they did not want to validate the examination. Maybe there is still some work to be done at the end of the training session with evaluators about the indispensable requirements and the assessment criteria.

Does one need to observe in order to assess? The testers in situ, to start off with seemed to agree that it is necessary to observe in order to assess, then realized it is necessary but not sufficient. They agreed, in fact, on the importance of the interview after the session which will allow the candidate to reconstruct his session, linking it with the environment, previous sessions, with content learnt during the training course etc...

So, what happens in the VAE process, as we don't observe the candidate in action?

The research studies showed us that in VAE, we can 'observe' based on the file itself. We have heard some jury members say: "I can see him, I can feel him through his file". For that to work the candidate must have chosen significant activities which allow him or her to make links with the reference documentation. So beyond the prescribed activity (what he is expected to do in his job, in his function) and the real activity (what he has really done, thus the way he describes his activity) the candidate gives us elements of what we call: "the

reality of the activity", that is to say, what he has not performed, what he could have done, what he has already done in similar situations, what he has done on other occasions, the reasons for his choices etc...

In working through this operation of "thinking» one's experience" (I've taken these terms from Vygotsky) the candidate builds up a daily concept and if he can relate it to what is expected in the reference documentation (scientific concept) he works out a potential concept.

Therefore, we can say that on this occasion, the candidate shapes his own conscience since his experience becomes a source of questioning and, very likely, a means to evolve and develop.

Corinne CURIEN, DRDJS, Rhône Alpes
October 2009.

3.3 The qualification file as a standard for APL in the Netherlands

In secondary vocational education in the Netherlands all courses are described in qualification files. The files specify what subject material the school has to offer and what has to be examined in order to be able to decide if a student complies with the requirements for certification.

For carrying out APL procedures these qualification files are used as standards. In an assessment it is decided which parts of the qualification files a candidate has command of. These parts of a qualification file are then formally acknowledged.

In qualification files the quality requirements are described in the framework of the practical professional field and therefore they are very appropriate as standards for carrying out APL procedures.

The framework within which the professional tasks have to be performed are called core tasks.

The professional tasks that are carried out more or less frequently (e.g. on a daily or weekly basis) are called working processes. For carrying out the working processes competences are required. For assessing if a candidate has sufficient command of these competences performance indicators are required. Performance indicators are forms of observable behaviour, which can be used to assess whether a beginning professional worker has indeed command of the specific competences.

In the following example this is explained.

Example

The qualification file of the course Medical Assistant contains 3 core tasks.

1. Taking care of intake, supervision and advice
2. Contributing to medical care
3. Carrying out tasks related to organization and profession

Core task 2 contains 4 working processes.

- 2.1 Prepares surgery, materials and means for the treatment
- 2.2 Assists the attending doctor with the medical treatment
- 2.3 Performs actions in the framework of individual health
- 2.4 Supports and counsels the patient

Carrying out working process 2.3. requires 4 competences.

- Using professional expertise
- Preparing materials and means
- Producing quality work
- Applying instructions and procedures

In order to determine whether a candidate has sufficient command of the competences the assessor assesses (for example through observation) if the candidate shows the following behaviour when carrying out the working process:

The doctor's assistant is able to calculate accurately, to work professionally, precisely, skilfully and competently when performing nursing actions, so that nursing actions are carried out in a professional way and so that in special circumstances the correct actions are taken.

The doctor's assistant is well-informed of the action of materials and means she uses and she deploys materials and means as efficiently and effectively as possible, so that the nursing actions are carried out responsibly and professionally.

The doctor's assistant concentrates on carrying out nursing actions correctly and in one go and she knows the applicable quality requirements of a doctor's practice and acts according to these requirements, so that the nursing actions are carried out qualitatively and efficiently.

The doctor's assistant carries out actions according to protocols and directives of the organization/practice and acts according to safety regulations and adheres to legislation and instructions as a result of which neither patient nor she herself will run any unnecessary risks during the execution of the treatment.

The assessment

The example shows that in an APL procedure an assessor has to base his judgment on that which is observed during the execution of the working process. This observation has to concur with the performance indicators as closely as possible. Relying on his or her own expertise the assessor determines the minimum observation characteristics for reaching a positive judgment.

Otherwise, it is also possible for the assessor to base a positive judgment on documents in the portfolio. In such a case these documents have to be professional products, with which the candidate proves to have command of a working process and the related competences. From a criterion oriented interview the assessor can try to get even more information to be able to form a precise judgment. A positive judgment of having command of a working process and all related competences is often based on a combination of the above-mentioned assessment instruments.

The assessment of arithmetic skills and Dutch language skills and often Modern Foreign Language skills as well are included in the assessment.

The certificate of experience

The assessor describes the course of an APL procedure in a report called certificate of experience. In this certificate of experience the foundations for the judgment of each working process are given. In it the assessor describes on the grounds of which observation the judgment is formed. For an expert judgment an APL assessor has to be technically competent, has to have sufficient experience in the profession concerned, and has to have a good knowledge of the contents of the specific qualification file.

Assurance of the assessor's expertise

Different from professional groups such as accountants, medical specialists or mediators, there is no central body in The Netherlands for certifying assessors and including them in one register recognized by the professional field. Opinions within the field about usefulness and necessity of personal certification differ strongly. Neither is there a statutory competence profile for assessors. It is, however, possible to use examples. These profiles are based on a fixed number of competences with regard to organizing, observing, assessing, having conversations, interviewing, evaluating and structured reporting.

The assessor executes APL procedures on behalf of an organization which is acknowledged as a provider of APL by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. To receive this acknowledgement this organization will have to assure that the assessors (as well as the counsellors for APL procedures) are competent, independent and impartial. The APL provider will have to arrange this assurance. A judgment about this assurance is given by an organization appointed by the Ministry. A negative judgment will result in loss of acknowledgement. Through courses and training assessors will have to keep up-to-date and, where possible, improve their skills in executing assessments and writing certificates of experience.

References

<http://www.kwalificatiesmbo.nl/introductievideo.html> : an introductory video about the connection between core tasks, working processes, competences and performance indicators.

4 Framework of professional qualification and links with certification

4.1 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), a look at professional certification in France *"IBAK" symposium in Strasbourg 8 and 9 October 2009*

The landscape/environment of French professional certification

It is often broken down into three main categories or groups:

- a first category made up of diplomas and degrees delivered by the Ministry of National Education (national diplomas at both the secondary and post-secondary levels), diplomas and degrees delivered jointly by the Ministry of National Education and other ministries and a part of the diplomas delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- a second category made up of diplomas and certificates delivered under the auspices of other ministries, consular bodies, private or public establishments in their own name. These certifications, their level and training speciality have generally been analysed and positioned by the Technical Ratification Commission.
- a third category made up of certificates created and delivered under the authority of professional/trade sectors.

In the three cases the certification delivered attests to a "qualification", that is to say, the capacity to carry out professional activities within the framework of different situations in the workplace, and this to various degrees of responsibility as defined in the applicable reference documentation, the "referential".

This qualification is recognized in the job market. When looking for a job the diploma reduces the job search time, and contributes to obtaining a higher level in the employer's salary grid.

These three levels of certification represent about 15,000 different diplomas, titles or certificates (11,000 are from the post-secondary system).

The characteristics of French certification

In the French context, the official national certifications attest to the acquisition of individual skills, an outcome, and not to a route/pathway permitting someone to acquire them. For those that are "validating" or "certifying", the accreditation of competences, the certification that they deliver is the same whatever the status of the candidate (someone looking for work or an employee of a company, someone working and studying under an internship programme or an individual). The value of the certification is identical whether the candidate completes his/her studies in a block or through continuing education, whether it is financed by a region, his or her employer or by him or herself, or whether the competences have been acquired by experience.

However, the evaluation methods permitting the verification that individuals have indeed the skills, knowledge and competences described in the certification may vary. Some adjustments may also be considered to facilitate the access of candidates to this evaluation. Each ministry establishes the rules for the accreditation of prior experiential learning and the certification that they deliver. The competences may only be validated and accredited by juries and actors designated as competent and legitimate for this purpose.

The accreditation of prior experiential learning was established in 2002 in a social modernisation law.

The social modernisation law created a new right for each individual: accreditation of experiential learning in order to obtain certification.

It is now possible for every person in France, having three years experience, to have his or her experience recognised, whether this experience was acquired at work or in one's personal life, with the objective of obtaining certification.

The social modernisation law introduced five principal changes compared with earlier texts : It is possible to obtain the totality of a certificate on the basis of experience; the accreditation of prior experiential learning becomes an access route to certification in its own right .

All forms of certification are affected : diplomas delivered by the government, titles listed in the repertory, qualification certificates in professional branches (CQP).

All experience can be taken into consideration, including volunteer and non-salaried activities.

The minimum period of experience required is three years.

Candidates may be exempted from the obligation to obtain pre-requisite diplomas or titles prior to attending a training course leading to the intended diploma.

But what is a diploma ?

The accreditation of prior experiential learning in France permits the granting of all or part of a diploma via the recognition of acquired experience, and, in particular, professional experience.

It is therefore of interest to question the concept of a diploma, and its links with employment and professional qualification. What type of an object are we looking at?

The Commission of Professional Certification receives requests from various training organisations or institutions that solicit it in order to obtain the registration in the national register of the professional certification that they provide. Only the professional certifications registered in this National Registry have a recognized value.

These requests are formulated in a multi-page document and each page can be considered as dealing with one aspect of the definition of a professional certification.

Each page of the file provides us with information about a different facet of the « diploma » as an object. The rest of the presentation considers these different aspects.

A simple reminder that state diplomas are registered in the National Registry by right and, in this regard, are professional certifications.

Identification of the diploma as professional certification

The first characteristic of a diploma is its title, its name, which will, more often than not, refer to a trade or at least an activity, which is representative of a trade, thereby highlighting its professional identity.

The level refers to a classification of professional certifications, different from a classification by the length of the training course, but close to the classification of qualifications and jobs.

The code NSF ("Nomenclature des spécialités de formation") permits the regrouping of certifications by type of activity.

The institution or body delivering the certification obviously guarantees the scope of the certification or diploma.

Institution or body delivering the certification

Any institution, or any body taking part in vocational training can ask for the official recording of a diploma. Then, it will be able to deliver it in an exclusive way.

In that case, the National Committee of the Professional Certification is seized with the request and will verify that the conditions put in place by the law are respected. The body will have, in particular, to bring quality guarantees of its organization and of the management of its certification. It will also have to give evidence of its capacity to insure the corresponding load responsibility. It will have to show that it can adapt its diploma to the future evolutions of the labour market and jobs.

A certification may be the result of a partnership between several institutions, such as two or more universities for example, or a number of training organisations that have formed a network.

A diploma is a living object in the same way as the professions and their mode of functioning is. The certifier must, therefore, conceive and put in place a follow-up procedure to permit future evolution of the diploma.

This monitoring leads to a permanent and formalised reflection process found in the « referential » of the diploma, a key tool in the accreditation of prior experiential learning.

The objective is, of course, to ensure that the diploma is kept up-to-date and that it is closely connected with real jobs.

This connection is essential. It is visible in the links between the certification referential and the professional activities referential.

Professional Activities Referential and Certification Referential :

The job gives the professional orientation of the diploma

There are different professional orientations of the diploma.

It is interesting to note that the elaboration of this orientation focuses on four items

- the description of professional activities,
- the professional milieu (branch, sector, type of company, type and title of the jobs)
the autonomy and responsibility of « positions filled »
- the regulations guiding and limiting the exercise of these activities

The diploma attests to competences (Certification Referential), which are the competences mobilised in the repeated actions and gestures of the trade and which constitute the targeted professional activity.

Conversely, to be able to carry out these activities efficiently and consciously, all the while understanding their impact (or their limits), generally warrants recognition of these global (transversal) skills.

Therefore, the activity referential logically lists the targeted activities and links them to the competences found in the certification referential in accordance with the four items cited above.

Conversely, the certification referential organises, in an analytical fashion, the interpretation of skills utilised in previously listed activity situations, which are then analysed and calibrated in accordance with the specific job.

The criteria and terms of this interpretation are formalized.

Other certifications in Europe

Linked in this way to activities in the framework of trades and professional milieus, the certifications can be validly compared or organized in a hierarchical fashion. For example, one could encompass another.

Here, it is undoubtedly also possible to find a greater legal equivalence between diplomas or certifications delivered by different ministries or countries.

The European Qualifications Framework, whose objective is to encourage the mobility of workers and students within the European Union, aims to facilitate these comparisons and equivalencies. It fits into this logic of professional certification.

Obtaining professional certification

Two routes now exist to obtain professional certification, to be qualified and to obtain official recognition of this qualification :

- by education and training, with its various paths,
- by practice or experience.

Internships work at combining these two routes.

The certification must plan the evaluation of the skills and competences using a methodology that is coherent with the manner in which they were acquired.

In all cases the certifier gives a guarantee of quality by setting and formulating the access conditions to the certification on one hand, and, on the other, by ensuring the independence of the evaluating jury. This is accomplished by setting forth the established rules for the organization of the jury and by verifying that the jury members are representative.

More than meeting the concern of «selling off the diploma cheaply », an independent jury valorises the diploma and is an important part of its value in the labour market.

Benefit of the certification

The connection with the labour market is very clear when the National Commission of Professional Certification form requires that one retrace the career path of those holding the diploma.

It's necessary to highlight the benefit of the diploma by noting the positive evolution due to its delivery.

The follow-up committee *examines the positions and jobs that each qualified person has obtained and also examines the salary level that goes with it.*

Finally, the value of professional certification or a degree is independent of how the skills were acquired. It is obvious to the Commission, which is attentive to the division of the influx by access routes.

Professional certifications are accessible by both higher education and vocational training and the accreditation of prior experiential learning.

This is also the case for individual applicants who are free to follow a career path as individualized as they are able to create.

The essential

We could have contented ourselves with the consideration of the descriptive summary. It is recorded and edited in the National Repertory in the form of a downloadable document, and it contains the essential. The diploma is defined principally by its links to the labour market :

Level and/or domain of activity

Summary of the job reference documentation or elements of the skills, competences and knowledge acquired

Activity sectors or types of jobs accessible to those holding this diploma, title or qualification.

Extract of the presentation at the symposium "IBAK" in Strasbourg 8 and 9 October 2009

www.gip-fcip-alsace.fr/ibak/

4.2 The statutory framework of qualifications in the Dutch secondary vocational education and the relation with APL

The Act on General and Adult Continuing Education and Vocational Education (WEB)

The Act on General and Adult Continuing Education and Vocational Education (WEB) is a Dutch Act from 31st October 1995.

This act contains regulations concerning Adult Education and Vocational Education. The act regulates the clustering of various forms of vocational education and adult education in 44 regional training centres, 18 agricultural training centres, 13 special trade schools (e.g. graphics schools) and 8 other schools. Besides vocational education this act also includes adult (basic) education, vavo (secondary general adult education) and cursory education.

The organization of secondary vocational education

In The Netherlands courses in secondary vocational education are described in qualification files. These qualification files are formally enacted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The files specify what subject material the school has to offer and what has to be examined in order to be able to decide if a student complies with the requirements for certification. The educational institutes are free to determine the way in which the training is given. The qualification files are based on a competence based qualification structure. This means that during their training students are expected to develop professional competences that are important in the framework of lifelong learning. So, it is not amassing knowledge or learning skills that is most important, but the integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal characteristics which enable an individual to adequately perform tasks and find and realize solutions in everyday (professional) situations. This means that training has to take place as much as possible in the practical professional field. Assessment and evaluation of the training should also take place there. A beginning professional worker can be expected to develop into an advanced professional worker in the practical professional field. For that purpose, in secondary vocational education students are given the opportunity to develop competences for study and career. Such competences are also required if having concluded secondary vocational education a student chooses to attend further education in higher forms of vocational education. Finally, secondary vocational education has to enable a student to prepare himself for participating in the society and to develop the required citizenship competences.

The link between the framework of the professional qualification and APL

The qualification files describe the “what” component of courses in secondary vocational education. These qualification files are also used as standards for recognizing acquired professional competences in APL procedures. Thus it is assured that diplomas of regular courses have the same value as diplomas granted as a result of an APL procedure.

Certificates of experience

In The Netherlands APL-procedures do not have a statutory basis. The quality of the procedures is guaranteed by a covenant of 10 organizations with a common interest, which is an optimum quality of the procedures and a great civil value of the final report, the so-called Certificate of Experience. To that end the covenant partners decided on a set of 5 quality standards in November 2006. Organizations carrying out APL procedures are assessed according to these 5 quality standards.

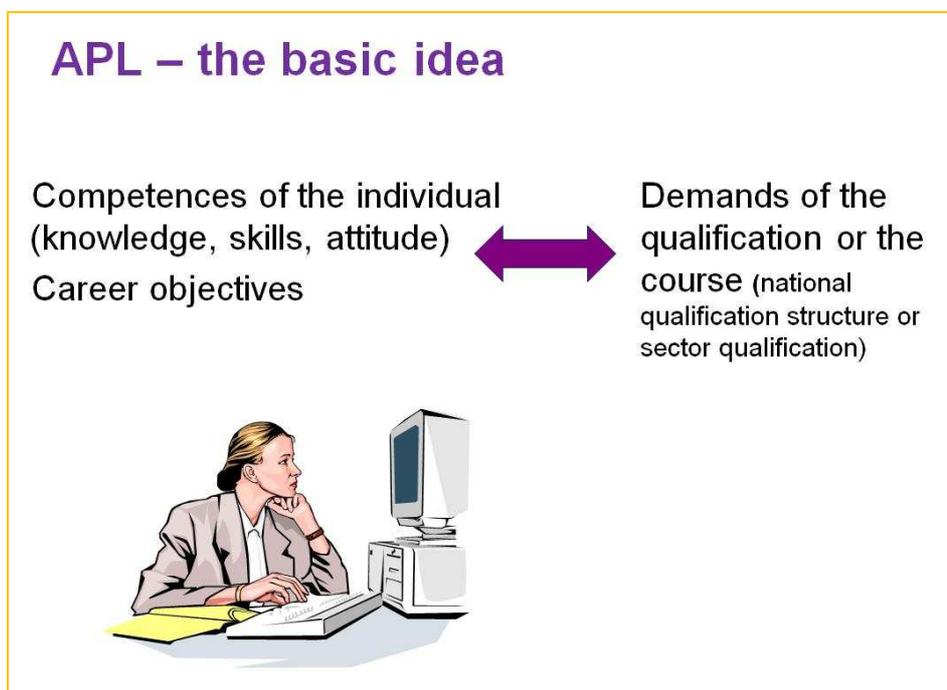
4.3 Background information APL in the Netherlands

(source: ETF study visit 28 Sept – 2 Oct 2009)

4.3.1 Introduction

Accreditation of prior learning (APL) is the common name given to the process of recognising and accrediting the competences an individual has gained through formal, informal or non-formal learning in various settings. This implies that professional competences acquired by learning on the job, in a home setting or in voluntary work are in principle comparable to those acquired in formal learning situations.

Accreditation means awarding certificates or diplomas on the basis of a generally recognised standard, such as the qualification structure for vocational education. Obviously, there are also other standards relating to the labour market, which employers and employees regard as relevant. External legitimacy is the key requirement for accreditation.



The history of APL in the Netherlands starts in the nineties. At that time the Dutch government and the social partners came to recognize that employees could no longer count on life-time employment with one employer. Career steps became normal and national stakeholders thought of defining life time employment no longer in terms of job security, but in terms of work security. In these discussions the idea of recognition of prior qualifications (EVK) was born. A small number of industries made a successful start with this instrument. In 2000, the Dutch government, together with the social partners, decided to stimulate the broader concept of accreditation of prior learning (APL).

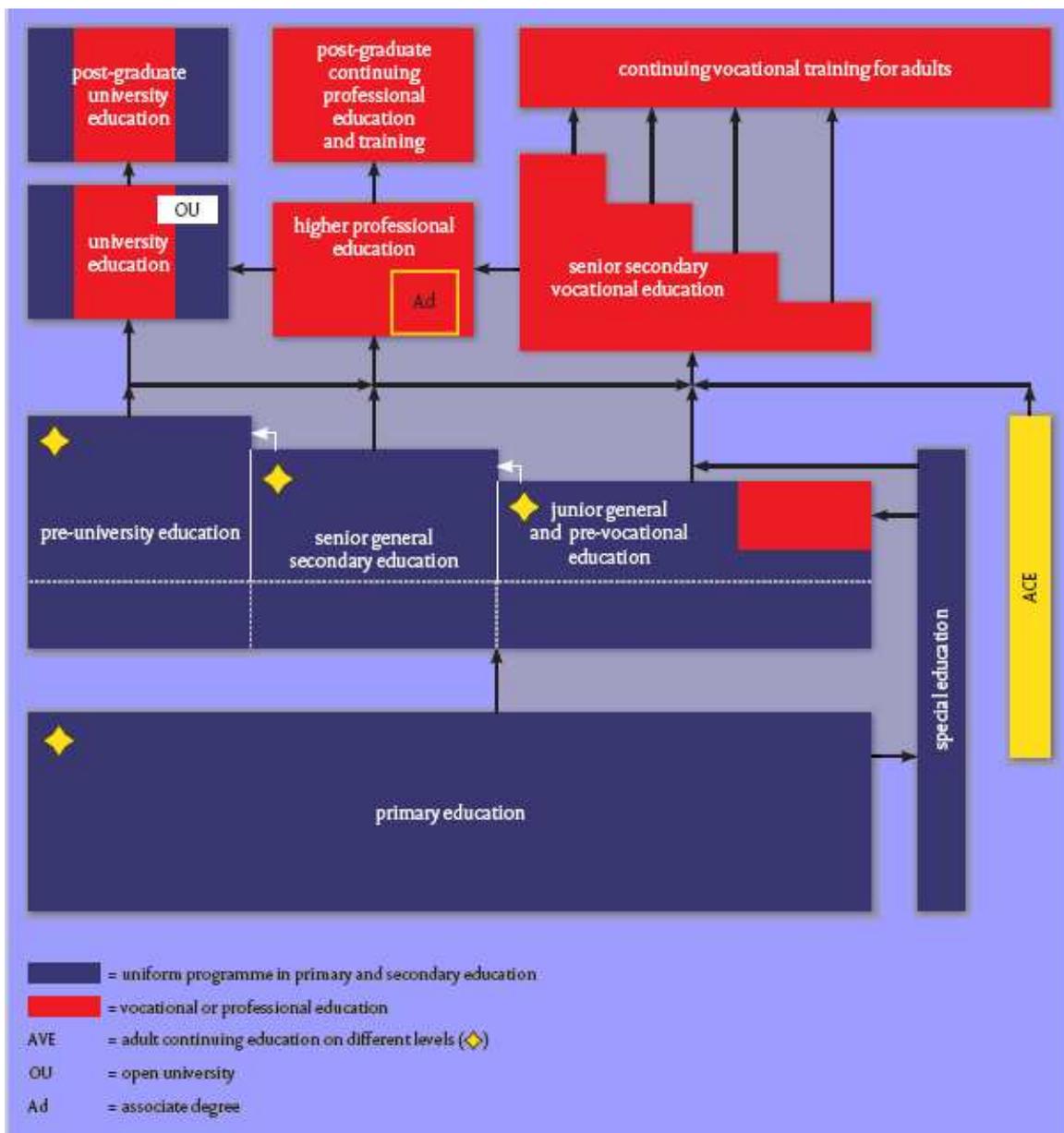
The government stimulated APL but made no regulations. It was expected that the market itself would find out about the best way to develop, implement and use APL. This policy, called 'let a thousand flowers bloom', generated a lot of experience both in educational institutes and in sectors of industry. Recently, larger organizations in the Netherlands have found out about APL. It appears that APL is earning its place in the areas of HRM and reintegration processes. APL gives support to increase the chances and broaden the options of both employers and employees (both job-holders and job-seekers) in the labour market. APL helps people to connect working and learning in new ways.

Since 2005 the wide-ranging experiences have led to regulation of APL, especially regulation of the transparency of results and the quality of procedures. At this moment APL is a broadly stimulated instrument in HRM and Labour market services. A national infrastructure has been built and has been on stream for a year now. A lot of lessons have been learned, but the result is that APL grows to a steady and permanent instrument to build a bridge between education and labour market.

4.3.2 The Dutch qualification system

The Dutch education system

The Dutch education and training system contains several elements, as seen in the table below. APL is possible for vocational and higher professional education (bachelor). APL for masters studies in higher professional education and university programs is still in the making.



Senior secondary vocational education comprises courses for types of work within four sectors: the technical sector, the economic-administrative sector, the service and health care sector and the agricultural sector. The courses vary in level and duration, from assistant to middle management or specialist.

Courses in senior secondary vocational education are run by regional training centres (ROCs), vocational schools and labour organizations. Organizations not funded by the government can also run courses in senior secondary vocational education.

The courses are designed by employer and employee organizations and the educational establishment, which are represented in national centres of expertise on vocational education, training and the labour market. The regional training centres (ROC) also offer courses in general and adult continuing education. The courses are designed along two educational tracks, fulltime and dual.

Higher professional education is also taught fulltime, part-time and dual. The courses usually last four years and exist in bachelor and masters degree. The education is divided into seven sectors: agricultural, teacher-training, technical, economic, health care, social studies and art. Here also, organizations not funded by the government can also run courses.

Qualification system

One of the success factors for APL in The Netherlands is the existence of a national qualification system for vocational education. An important development in the past years, is the implementation of a new national qualification system. By the end of the 20th century an important issue in policy and at the labour market was the match between supply and demand in the labour market. More exchange and co-operation was sought between (vocational) education and industry, to improve the match between educational outcomes and the needs in the labour market. Therefore competence based qualification profiles were developed. The differences and needs are written down in the table below:

	Old	Problems	New
Qualification profiles	(Very) detailed descriptions of tasks and clearly defined modules	<i>Inflexible/too prescriptive and no room for adaptation to specific region</i>	Broadly defined goals without any description of "the proces"
Controlling mechanism	Measuring knowledge and skills	<i>Knowledge and skills for what?</i>	<u>Ability</u> to cope with key problems of the occupation
What to learn?	Just knowledge and skills (Tayloristic principle)	<i>No linking of personal and technical abilities. To few emphasis on soft skills.</i>	Knowledge, skills, generic competencies, attitude, ambition.
How to learn?	Limited practising of key tasks in real work settings	<i>Too few links between the hands and the mind. No real-life experience.</i>	Structural change in amount of work/learning settings.

In higher professional education, the implementation is more difficult since there is no national structure and the competences are more complex. There are general competences for higher professional education (e.g. the competence 'analyse data') but the specific competences differ per educational organization. Fortunately, more and more sectors work together to make the required competences more transparent.

4.3.3 The Dutch APL infrastructure

Knowledge centre for APL

As said in the introduction, APL started in the Netherlands in the nineties, but there was no regulation or any direction provided for all the initiatives. Therefore an important landmark is the national action plan 'Lifelong learning' (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 1998). The national government puts lifelong learning on the agenda, with a central place for APL in the context of accrediting competences acquired in the workplace or elsewhere outside of the formal education system. APL had gained a place in national policy, which paved the way for the publication of a clear vision on the system for APL to be used in education and companies alike (Werkgroep EVC, 2000).

One of the recommendations was to create a Knowledge Centre for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) to make full use of all existing practices and experiences and to bring the use of APL forward in the contexts of education, branches and companies. The Knowledge Centre APL was created in 2001 and collects and shares knowledge and good practices on accreditation of prior learning in the Netherlands.

It stimulates the use of APL practices by developing a sustainable infrastructure for the application of APL in education and the labour market, in regions and in sectors. To bring all practices together, the Knowledge Centre APL has developed a quality framework in co-operation with national stakeholders, which aims at enhancing the quality of the APL procedures.

Quality code

Although Dutch organisations have built up a lot of experience during the last ten years and the structure of APL is settled in the Netherlands, in practice the approach to APL was still too diverse. The absence of regulations made the users of APL start to doubt about the differences in quality of all those APL procedures. "How can I really be sure that I can trust this provider of an APL procedure?" and "Will the results of this APL procedure be recognised everywhere?" are examples of questions posed by employees and employers. The need for a guarantee for the quality of APL seemed unquestionable in order to avoid that buyers and providers would place speed and a low price above quality. In 2005, the Dutch cabinet and government, employers and trade unions therefore agreed as follows:

"The Cabinet will promote the APL Knowledge Centre's development of a quality framework for the APL procedure with broad support across all relevant parties and one resulting in a covenant between the government and the parties on the use of this framework." (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2005).

The framework is inspired among others by the 'Common European Principles for the Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning' (European Commission, 2004) and can be used to assess procedures, create more transparency and set a minimum standard for APL procedures.

In November 2006, a covenant was signed by all parties involved (see box). These parties agreed on the following arrangements:

The use of the code is voluntary, but the signing parties must dedicate themselves to promoting the use of APL. Making its use mandatory would detract from the motivation to work with the APL code.

Everyone who starts with an APL procedure agrees on the reasons for doing so. APL is not a standard process but an individualized series of arrangements customised to the goal and use of APL. Custom work is the standard.

Every APL procedure ends with an APL report. This report states that the individual has documentation of the competences he possesses. This makes APL something independent of the educational provider.

Accredited APL providers are listed in a directory.

The competences of the people supervising these procedures and performing the assessments are documented. Only professionals can be supervisors or assessors.

The quality of APL procedures is always being improved, both at the level of the providers of APL and at the level of the code itself.

Parties signing the covenant on the quality code for APL

- *Stichting van de Arbeid*, the Labour Foundation, is a national consultative body organised under private law. Its members are the three main trade union federations and the three main employers' associations in the Netherlands,
- *Colo* is the Association of Centres of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market.
- *PAEPON* is the Platform of Accredited Private Educational Institutions in the Netherlands,
- *The Centre for Work and Income (CWI)* signs in part on behalf of the SUWI partners UWV (National organisation for re-integration and temporarily income unemployed people), VNG (Association of Netherlands Municipalities) and Divosa (Association of managers with municipal services in the fields of work, income and social welfare).
- *The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO-raad)*, on behalf of all 44 government-funded Universities of Applied Sciences,
- *The Netherlands Association of Vocational Education and Training Centres (MBO-raad)*, on behalf of all 42 government funded vocational education and training centres and all vocational schools,
- *The Council for Agricultural Education Centres (AOC-raad)*, on behalf of all 11 government-funded agricultural education centres,
- *The Open University* is the independent government-funded institute for distance learning at university level,
- *The State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science*, signs partly on behalf of the State Secretary of Social Affairs and *Employment*.

The quality code for APL itself aims to achieve more transparency and comparability and make APL more accessible. It contains the following items:

The goal of APL is to define, evaluate and acknowledge individual competences.

APL primarily answers to the need of the individual. Entitlements and arrangements are clearly defined and guaranteed.

Procedures and instruments are reliable and based on solid standards.

Assessors and supervisors are competent, impartial and independent.

The quality of the APL procedure is guaranteed and is being improved on an ongoing basis.

Transparency and comparability

The APL report is an important part of the APL procedure. The Dutch quality code for APL dedicates the use of a uniform fixed format (see Appendix 2 for the format). The purpose of this format is that the APL report has an independent value to the individual and can result in improvement of the labour market position, exemptions for parts of public or private training programmes or obtaining a diploma accredited by national government or a relevant sector.

Nevertheless, research in the child care sector shows that not all APL providers come to the same results at the end of an APL procedure, even if they use the same APL methodology. For example, an average of 60% of the persons in the research attained a nationally recognised child care diploma without further training. However, the average was obtained by some providers whose success rate was as high as 90%, while other providers were much stricter and had a percentage of 0% diplomas without further training. Therefore, the use of the same methodology is not a guarantee to reach the same conclusions.

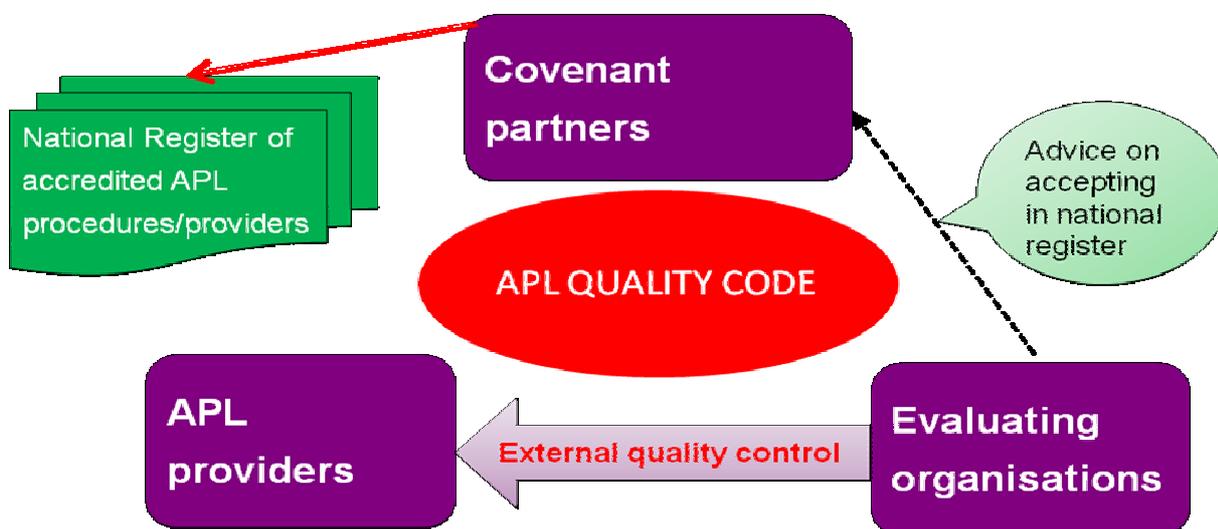
The quality code for APL and the uniform format for the APL report are a start, but more is needed to make APL more transparent and comparable. The aim is to have the APL reports accepted in every educational institution in the Netherlands, without further assessments or testing. This requires trust among the institutions that the APL procedure is of high quality taking into account the same principles, qualification profiles and comparable assessment codes. So a lot of training, development of skills and expertise is necessary to improve reliability of the procedures. Now most of the APL providers have built their procedures, the next step we see is more and more cooperation between providers to improve their expertise and the quality of the assessments.

Involved parties in the APL infrastructure

In many ways a lot of effort has been put into developing the APL infrastructure in the Netherlands. But which parties are involved and how is the infrastructure built?

In the Dutch APL implementation strategy, management and practice come together. At management level educational institutions are encouraged to implement APL institution-wide. They sign agreements with government to complete a certain number of APL procedures within one or two years and to guarantee a minimum quality standard of these procedures. Practices already in use for some years are spreading and the quality of procedures has been raised. The accessibility and promotion of APL were underdeveloped up to now, therefore regional one-stop-offices have been set up to actively promote the use of APL. It is a big step forwards that all local partners in education and the labour market are working more and more together and coordinating their procedures. The aim is that any individual and employer can enter these local one-stop-offices to be guided in their development process. Companies are offered tailor-made solutions for their questions relating to human resources and all regional partners take their share of responsibility to make it happen.

The quality of APL involves the parties in the sheet below:



The APL providers are evaluated by the evaluating organisations, the standard used is the national quality code for APL. This evaluation is demanded once every three years and for every standard of the APL provider. The providers with good evaluation reports, are registered in the National Register for accredited APL procedures. These APL providers are called 'registered providers' and their APL customers receive a.o. tax benefits.

4.3.4 The various contexts of APL

The use of APL

APL is an instrument to make the potential of the individual development visible and to improve the human capital management in companies. This vision laid the foundations for the way the accreditation of prior learning nowadays is seen in various contexts:

to increase the employability of individuals and employees;

to get more insight into employees' capacities to create an optimal match with function profiles, as used in competence management or human resource management in companies;

to accredit prior experience and shorten the duration of continuing training programmes to attain nationally recognised qualifications;

to increase the chances of the (potentially) unemployed on the labour market.

In these situations, the most important result is the increased employability gained by accrediting acquired competences and the focus on ways to further develop these competences. APL experiments in companies show that employees are better motivated, the team spirit is better and employees feel valued for their knowledge and experience. From an individual perspective, all citizens are encouraged to keep learning and make full use of their potential. National government, branch organisations, companies or re-integration organisations promote the concept of keeping competences up-to-date and have them accredited from time to time to ensure a better work security.

The effort of the covenant to create more unity in the quality of APL has also found its way to the financing mechanisms and subsidy schemes. National government has implemented a tax scheme to support the financing of an APL procedure, if it is provided by an accredited APL provider. Companies get a reduction on their taxes of 300 euros per person per year. Individuals who pay for the procedure themselves, can deduct the total cost from their income tax. In collective labour agreements, paragraphs on personal development sometimes include APL as one of the possible instruments to be used and refunded. Some sectoral training and development funds have started promotion campaigns for APL, offering subsidies for APL procedures.

Two years ago there was a shortage on the labour market and APL was used to find employees. At the moment APL is used to make the competences visible of the people who are threatened by lay-offs. The first results show that APL supports finding a new job.

APL providers and customers

Most of the APL providers are organisations for vocational education or for higher professional education, and also private schools. However, there is a growing number of APL providers with different backgrounds, such as reintegration offices and intermediary organizations between local government or employers and the field of education. In the Dutch APL system, every organisation can become an APL provider, as long as they work according to the APL quality code and have, themselves, been evaluated by an evaluating organisation. After the first year when every provider was evaluated, it became clear however that working according to the APL quality code is not very simple and requires adjustments on an organisation level. Consequently, APL providers have some link, most of the time, with developing people and assessing, in their core business.

APL can be bought by an employer and by the employment office or local government. APL can be bought by individuals too, but as the average price is 1000 euro, not many individuals will finance this themselves. At the moment however, there are a lot of governmental and sectoral financial arrangements.

4.3.5 The APL procedure

Working method to assess APL procedures

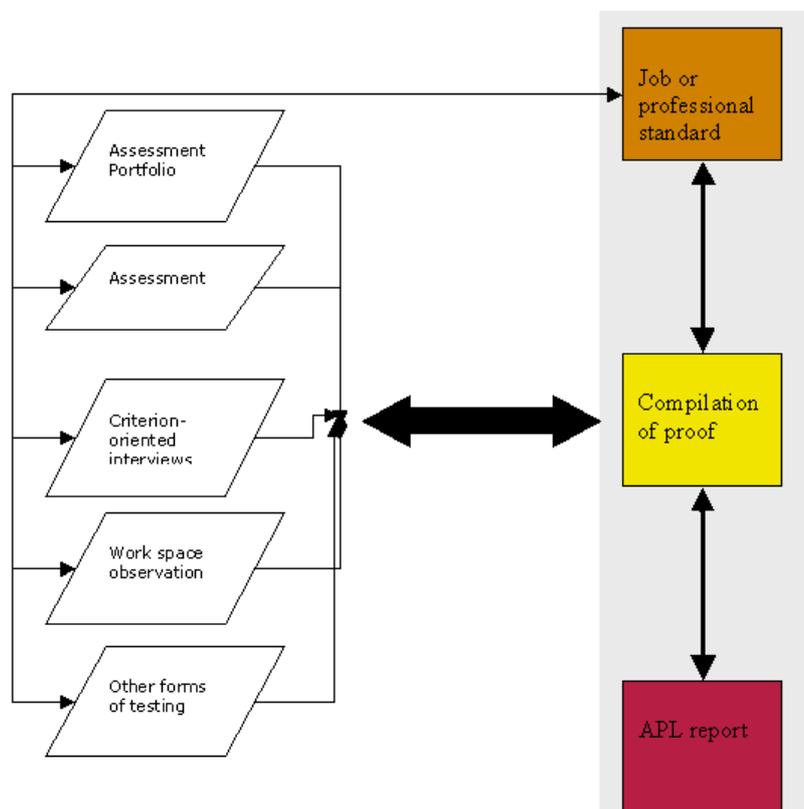
An APL procedure in the Netherlands always contains the same steps:

1. Information and advice for the candidate, the employer or other organisation, etc.
2. Intake of the individual and making individual arrangements. The candidate takes the decision to start the APL procedure or not.
3. Recognition of competences: portfolio (supported by the coach)
4. Validation of competences: assessment (by the assessors)
5. APL report : Description of results and accreditation (by the assessor)

The basic assumption is that the accreditation is made for the candidate with a suitable nationally recognised competency profile and is conducted properly and independently.

Questions are still raised about the comparability of assessments of informally acquired competences (APL) and assessment in formal context (examination). Sometimes the examination forms can be used for APL, sometimes they can't. But the APL candidates always need an assessor who can judge the experience and skills disregarding the educational process. E.g. a student at a technical school can learn to work with a machine of a different type than an APL candidate is used to working with. The examination can include the machine at school. The APL assessment cannot require the candidate to work correctly with that specific type of machine.

The work of the supervisor and assessors is crucial in this respect. Therefore, a lot of attention is paid to the competences of the independent supervisors and assessors, training and certification programmes for assessors and internal, regional or even sectoral coordination of assessment procedures. The quality of assessment is raised when the right mix of assessment methods is used taking into account the aim, the characteristics of the target group and the competences to be assessed. Usually, a mix of methods is used in APL procedures because every situation and every individual is different. The model below describes some examples of methods in a mix of methods that can be used in APL procedures.



4.3.6 Challenges

After ten years of APL in the Netherlands, we have left some landmarks behind us on the road of implementation, but certainly there are still challenges lying ahead of us.

Lifelong learning is getting more and more noticeable, but the paradigm shift still needs to take place in many institutions and in many heads. It requires a culture shift in various ways: from thinking in terms of one education and training programme for all to thinking in terms of tailor-made training programmes on demand of individuals; from institutional perspective to individual perspective on learning throughout life; from focus on the content of learning programmes as truth in itself, to putting the focus on professional performance and competences; from thinking in terms of examination in formal settings to thinking in valuing learning in different contexts.

These desired cultural changes take time to be incorporated in strategic policies, activities at the work floor and individual minds of those working in education, guidance and human resources. We can see positive results in those environments where experiences with lifelong learning, personal development policy, employability and flexible programmes of (accrediting) learning and working have been gained over the past years. The challenge is to embed these results in the whole society and to pave the way for every individual to work on his own personal development and employability.

4.3.7 References

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4.4 The validation procedure in Switzerland

The validation procedure is standardized and defined at the national level, which ensures a strong link between the formal vocational qualifications system and the individual pathways through learning and work experience. Validation can take into account any kind of learning. There are no restrictions as to how and where a candidate has achieved their competences. However, the major part of the competences that are assessed and recognised in the course of validation procedures stem from work experience. A smaller part is based on activities carried out as voluntary or honorary activities and additional jobs. As the competency profiles are developed by professional organisations that supervise VET and are responsible for issuing formal diplomas in their specific field, the link between the formal system and the labour market is also secured at any time.

The Cantons can implement validation procedures based on the national standard in specific professional fields. This has been done, for instance, in the case of health care assistants (Canton of Zurich), where the procedure allowed the Canton to tackle an urgent shortage of skilled personnel in the health sector. In this case, the procedure leads to a Federal VET-Certificate at secondary level. To obtain it, candidates must have worked at least 5 years in the health care sector.

One of the nationally implemented and well established validation procedures is the «Equivalence assessment for the Federal Professional Education and Training (PET) Diploma in Adult Education and Training», which leads to a Federal Diploma at tertiary level of the type B (referred to in Switzerland as professional education and training PET). This equivalence assessment procedure is closely linked with the modular train-the-trainer system run by the national umbrella organisation Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SFAL/SVEB).

In both cases, as in every other officially recognised validation procedure in Switzerland, the procedures are regulated by the guidelines and quality criteria which have been established by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Training (OPET) in close co-operation with the Cantons and professional organisations (see <http://www.validacquis.ch/documents/Grundlagendokumente.php> – documents available in German, French, and Italian).

5 The European Qualification Framework

The EQF aims to relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. Individuals and employers will be able to use the EQF to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems.

Since the agreement by the European institutions in 2008, the EQF is being put into practice across Europe. It encourages countries to relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF so that all new qualifications issued from 2012 carry a reference to an appropriate EQF level.

Descriptors defining levels

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE
		In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).	In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
LEVEL 1	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 1 are	>basic general knowledge	>basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	>work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
LEVEL 2	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 2 are	>basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	>basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	>work or study under supervision with some autonomy
LEVEL 3	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 3 are	>knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	>a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	>take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study >adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE
LEVEL 4	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 4 are	>factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	>a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	>exercise self management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change >supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
LEVEL 5*	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 5 are	>comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	>a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	>exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change >review and develop performance of self and others
LEVEL 6**	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 6 are	>advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	>advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	>manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts >take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
LEVEL 7***	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 7 are	>highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research >critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	>specialised problem solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	>manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches >take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
LEVEL 8****	The learning outcomes relevant to Level 8 are	>knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	>the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend	and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice

6. Perspectives and developments in different countries

6.1 Future prospects for Austria

The educational system is strongly focussed on the initial professional training and refers to job-profiles demanding clearly defined qualifications. It therefore is based on the acknowledgement of formally achieved graduation/certificates/degrees as evidence of skills and competences. Until a few years ago there were few reasons to reassess this system, since it guaranteed the education of adolescent persons and the reproduction of knowledge to a satisfactory extent. Recently, however, indications are increasing that the educational system, in its current form, is only partly able to satisfy the need for new knowledge and new competences.

It has become evident that the current educational system in Austria no longer takes effect universally, due to changes in the population structure, the rapidly changing requirements for jobholders and the dismissal of the “normal work history”. Therefore, the acknowledgement of informally acquired competences and skills has become a necessity.

Until now the acknowledgement of competences in the sense of qualification in Austria (as well as in Germany) means that it is associated with admission requirements of the formal educational system, an external test and the awarding of a certificate. This is due to the extremely formalised vocational education concept. This “qualification-orientation” alone no longer reflects the operational reality. Although certificates and degrees do still play an important role in personnel selection processes in companies, additional professional and non-professional experience is relevant for the evaluation of applicants.

Due to the dynamism of the economic development, demand for a qualificational profile and offers of a qualificational profile no longer necessarily correspond to each other.

This manifests itself in the fact, among others, that certificates are no longer sufficient evidence. Therefore many companies continue to develop new assessment procedures in order to explore that kind of knowledge and skills beyond those, which are documented in certificates.

On the individual’s side this leads to an increasing amount of insecurity – they are expected to present more qualifications than they could possibly have documented in their certificates. Therefore certificates become increasingly insufficient in what concerns the assurance of their professional existence.

This development is especially a “hot topic” for those adolescents who have not completed their education, but still obtain several qualifications throughout their career.

Nevertheless, the initiatives of the European Commission in the course of the EQF (European Qualification Framework), the national qualification frameworks (NQF) as well as the ECVET-consultation process (evaluation system for vocational training certificates and units) have also stimulated several activities in Austria as well: studies have been commissioned; the problem is finally dealt with. Even the current government programme formulates the future acknowledgement of informally achieved competences as their objective:

“In the face of the increasing significance of life-long learning, the networking and permeability between education and further education has to be intensified and the acknowledgement of informally achieved competences and skills has to be expanded. (..) A special focus has to be put on the field of adult education for people with a low qualification level.” (Government programme 2007-2010, page 85-86 – unofficial translation)

In the past few years several foundations for the validation of informally acquired knowledge and for the permeability throughout the educational system have been based on legal grounds. For example the vocational education law permits, under certain conditions, to take an apprenticeship examination, even if the dual apprenticeship has not, or only in part, been completed. According to the amendment of the commercial regulations 2002, the qualification for certain businesses can also be achieved by the provision of an „Individuellen

Befähigungsnachweis“ (individual evidence of qualification) as an alternative to traditional certificates. At the vocational matriculation examination, the practical knowledge gained during an individual career is equated with formally obtained knowledge. Furthermore, especially in the area of technical procedures and products, there are personnel certifications according to European Standard 45013, enabling the attestation of certain competences and skills of persons. Concerning the admission to universities, the entrance examination offers a restricted admission. External applicants' examinations can also be taken in vocational schools, enabling the acknowledgement of informally achieved qualifications by a formal graduation. (Cf. Preißer Rüdiger, *Methoden und Verfahren der Kompetenzbilanzierung im deutschsprachigen Raum, Österreichischen Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung, Vienna 2007, p.7f*)

In the field of the acknowledgement of informally achieved competences and skills, there are only some sporadic experiments in developing new schemes in Austria.

The WeiterBildungsAkademie (wba – further education academy), which started business in February 2007, has to be mentioned in this context. It is a qualification- and acknowledgement-system for adult educators, where existing qualifications are being acknowledged and further education courses for missing competences and skills are offered, up to a diploma.

The first pilot-project for the acknowledgement of informally and non-formally achieved competences and skills for vocational qualifications, which has been implemented in Upper Austria, is also of great interest in this context. The “Du kannst was!” (“You can do it!”) project was launched in 2007. By now there are portfolio-materials for 9 different professions, which are based on the job-descriptions and the examination regulations of the respective apprenticeship profession. At the end of this process is the validation by the apprentice-unit, who will award the apprenticeship-certificate based on the documentation of the results and on two successful performance evaluations. An expansion of this pilot-project to more participants, professions and, above all, provinces would be eligible. This could stimulate the development of formulating the statutory task (on state-level) to establish procedures for the acknowledgement of informal and non-formal learning results.

Therefore, within the framework of a pilot-project, the Burgenlaendischen Volkshochschulen plans to establish a scheme for the acknowledgement of informally achieved competences and skills for a certain occupational image together with the relevant policy-makers in Burgenland. The intention is to perpetuate the first initiatives on this topic and to set further incentives for the state-wide statutory task.

6.2 The prospects in France

The state of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), and different points of view:

The APEL has existed in France for eight years; it's still a young process. Notwithstanding this, it has rapidly found a following, and it developed significantly between 2002 and 2008. However, this development seems to have slowed and we can observe a levelling off.

Two successive reports, a first report provided to Parliament assessing the APEL, then Eric Besson's report on the evaluation of the APEL process, concluded that a better follow-up and improvements were necessary to allow individuals and companies to access the process in greater numbers.

The first report studied the role of the APEL in providing job security. By authorizing the granting of a diploma, the APEL also identifies a professional qualification that is driven by the candidate and facilitates his or her professional mobility. It allows, in fact, the capitalisation on, and the complete valorisation of, the competences acquired, even if the career path was subject to breaks and the professional experience was multiple and diverse. In this sense the APEL provides job security.

This report also distinguished between two types of approaches on the part of the candidates. There is the "acknowledgement" APEL where the candidate wants to obtain proof of his or her

qualifications by the granting of a diploma. The other type, called "career path" APEL, consists in ascertaining the acquired competences in order to concentrate on those competences which are lacking.

Certain orientation services favour this type of reading of the law. They orient candidates to aim for the diploma that corresponds to the job they hold, it is the most directly accessible, and they don't try to encourage the candidates to improve their level. They rely on the positive dynamic created by the obtaining of the diploma to incite candidates to train themselves afterwards. However, to have two relatively long procedures follow one after the other (APEL then training), which are also complex due to the multiplicity of procedures and actors involved, can result in a high rate of withdrawal.

Moreover, the candidates having obtained partial accreditation have a lot of difficulties finding a course and financing which are adapted to their situation. This is especially the case because the APEL budgets are managed separate and apart from training budgets. Structuring such a career path necessitates accompaniment, whereas, "in the manner the process is presently structured, this role doesn't fall to anyone in particular".

The report studies the role of APEL in the management of human resources in companies. "The rollout of the APEL process in companies is still minor", the report recognizes. Nevertheless, one can perceive a "real wave of interest for diplomas in general on the part of economic actors."

Looking at employees, their interest in the APEL depends largely on the recognition given by the company and the work force in general. But the best motor is, above all, recognition in terms of salary or a better status. Nonetheless, the APEL remains attractive even if it doesn't allow progression in terms of level (in the sense of titles given to training levels), if it is recognized by the company or the profession.

Other questions about the APEL form the subject of Eric Besson's report, Secretary of State for Strategic Studies (secrétaire d'État chargé de la Prospective et de l'Évaluation des politiques publiques). He answers essentially questions about the brakes to the development of APEL, on the linking of the APEL with other tools used to develop competences and the best role for the APEL in a career path.

This report based its recommendations on a few observations, after having established the "deficit" of candidates compared to the size of the potential public.

The gamble made by the legislators on the APEL process in 2002 was two-fold:

- The affected working population could hope to see an improvement in their career prospects, whereas the companies could more easily identify the competences of candidates for a specific job. More broadly, the APEL tool was conceived in a context where it was accepted that career paths were becoming more chaotic.
- Finally the APEL opened up new perspectives to improve indicators of competence in a professional world that is constantly changing.

The "Besson" report endeavoured to define the potential working population that was considered to be a priority of the APEL policy. With this in mind four categories of working population were established:

- young people with no diploma having left the education system a few years before;
- adults with basic diplomas who have, or had, a job in a profession in decline;
- people employed in sectors where a diploma is considered by law or by custom as a condition to keeping a job or being promoted;
- adults who have entered the job market without a diploma or with a low-level diploma and who have been successful in obtaining jobs with a much higher level of qualification.

In total, the APEL touches, in this way, 6 million potential beneficiaries. These categories of population would particularly profit from the process and be able to better control and increase their professional mobility in the job market.

The report was conducted six years after the APEL came into effect, and, if one considers that the process has only allowed the certification of 77,000 people since its beginning, questions arise about its ability to constitute an effective tool to facilitate mobility in the job market on behalf of both workers and companies.

At the present rate, the process does not have the capacity to certify the people potentially affected by the process.

Findings :

The number of candidates applying to the APEL is insufficient, because they can be estimated at 75,000 per year. This figure is the result of the fact that a very low number of people try to learn about the process by contacting the information and advisory networks. The public that is considered a priority for the APEL, the working population with the lowest level of certification is not those who know the system the best.

The loss of candidates is also very high at different stages of the APEL procedure. Between the Regions, the certifiers and the public service in the employment field, numerous actors are involved in the process. It takes about eight months between the filing of an application and appearing before a jury. For one out of five candidates it takes more than two years and a number of them give up even though their file is considered admissible.

The development of the APEL is limited by the problems of certification of the titles and diplomas. The certifiers are numerous and, especially grant more than 15,000 titles and diplomas, of which half are in higher education. In spite of the work of the National Commission of Professional Certification (CNCP) the lack of clarity means that the choice of what certificate to validate is particularly complex.

The loss of candidates is especially high because they are only slightly assisted in the APEL process. Only the stage of preparing the file before appearing before the jury is planned. About 40-60% of the candidates benefit from this service. The assistance comes too late in the process and is too sporadic (it stops, more often than not, before the jury examination). Whereas, it is an important element in the success of the application.

In addition, because it is organised around specific networks, the APEL is too far removed from companies and is not part of their employment policy. Because of the lengthy process the APEL is not adapted to the unemployed looking for work. In terms of companies, they have difficulty in understanding that the process conceived in an individual perspective could have an impact on the employee's frame of mind in the future.

The solutions :

They are aimed to improve the process, but also to deal with other dimensions which interact with the APEL.

Communication must be reinforced at the national level, in a general way but also better targeted to the public who is a priority, especially those who are the least certified. This action is essential because access to information is recognized as the triggering element before committing to the process. A publicity campaign will be the most effective if it comes after efforts to reinforce the reception of candidates and the orientation towards the APEL.

The next step is to improve the clarity of the process by simplifying the certification process. The modular thinking around titles and diplomas should be developed in parallel with the thinking at the European level. It would also be advantageous to be able to reduce the number of certificates available in the job market. In the perspective of shortening the APEL procedure from the time of filing the application to the granting of the diploma, it is important to reduce the period prior to the examination.

This supposes the possibility of simplifying the organisation of juries, notably by reinforcing the financial reward for professional jury members. The eventual constraints in terms of human resources for decentralised certifiers should be dealt with by a better allocation of existing resources.

Finally, the development of the APEL requires a better accompaniment of the candidates, especially those that are the least certified.

This accompaniment would be improved if reinforced for the latter group, as well as for those that are a priority (young people starting out, those working in declining professions and workers that are changing professions, the unemployed...). In order for these actions to be successful there must be an improvement in the quality of the service offered and the offer to accompany must be better controlled.

In addition, while the initial impetus is based on the individual it is important to promote a collective approach to the APEL in order to increase the investment made by companies in this area. Numerous examples of good practices highlight the benefits of this process for the company as well as the individual, notably in the perspective of adapting to change.

By reinforcing the APEL, it's a question of contributing to job security to encourage mobility in the job market. This should facilitate the modernisation of the labour market and its fluidity. Both of which are proof of an economy that is more responsive and more competitive in the context of an aging population.

In any event the two reports converge on a crucial point, the need to develop a reinforced support system for candidates, from the beginning of the process through to the end. This must include a counsellor dedicated to a particular candidate; with an upstream preliminary study, financing of the mixed career path (including training modules), follow-up post-jury in the event of partial accreditation. This reinforced support will increase the success rate, total accreditation and acquisition of a diploma, but it will also significantly reduce the rate of withdrawal during the process.

The most up-to-date actions strive, not only, to propose this reinforced support, but to develop a documentary resource, an APEL "referential of good practices" (co-developed by the Ministry of National Education and AFNOR). This referential is designed to guarantee the quality of the service provided to the public.

6.3 State of developments in the Netherlands

State of affairs concerning formal recognition, valuation and acknowledgement of gained competences in the Netherlands

The quality code for APL

In The Netherlands the term APL, which stands for Appreciation of Prior Learning, is used for recognizing, valuating and acknowledging gained competences.

On November 14th 2006, the covenant partners mentioned below signed a covenant in which they subscribed to certain principles and starting points of APL.

The Labour Foundation, Stichting van de Arbeid (STvdA),

The Association of Centres of Expertise on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market, Vereniging kenniscentra beroepsonderwijs bedrijfsleven (Colo),

The Centre for Work and Income, Het Centrum voor Werk en Inkomen (CWI),

The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, De Vereniging van Hogescholen (HBO-raad),

The Netherlands Association of Vocational Education and Training Centres, De brancheorganisatie voor middelbaar beroepsonderwijs en volwasseneneducatie (MBO-raad),

The Council for Agricultural Education Centres, De brancheorganisatie voor agrarisch middelbaar beroepsonderwijs (AOC-raad),

The Open University, Open Universiteit Nederland (OUNL),
The State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science also on behalf of the State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment, De staatssecretaris van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap mede namens de staatssecretaris van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid,
The Netherlands Association of Examinations (new partner as per February 2007), Nederlandse Vereniging voor Examens (NVE),
The Platform of Accredited Private Educational Institutions in The Netherlands, Platform van Aangewezen/Erkende Particuliere Onderwijsinstellingen in Nederland (PAEPON),.

In the covenant, the partners declare among other things their intention to execute APL procedures on the basis of a quality code for APL.

This quality code is composed of 5 standards:

1: The goal of APL

The goal of APL is to recognize, value and acknowledge individual competences. Acknowledgement of gained competences has a value in itself and contributes to employability. In many cases APL leads to further career related personal development.

2: Rights

APL answers the needs of the individual Rights and agreements are clearly expressed.

3: Procedure

Procedures and instruments are reliable and based on proven standards. Trust is the key concept. Trust is concerned with civil effect, well-defined standards, clear information about how assessments are executed and based on which arguments, conclusions are drawn.

4: Assessors and supervisors

Assessors and supervisors are competent, independent and impartial. Independence and impartiality are crucial factors in the assessment and are incorporated in the roles and responsibilities of the assessors concerned. It is extremely important to avoid unnecessary mixing of roles. Impartiality can be strengthened through training and the use of networks.

5: Quality

The quality of the APL procedure is assured and will be improved continually. The quality of the procedure and of the instruments employed in it is assured. Regular evaluations will take place. The results will be incorporated into actions for improvement.

When assessing the APL procedure the assessing organization employs a certain standard. This standard is composed of 26 standard texts and is based on the APL Quality Code.

In November 2006 the covenant partners decided to sign a covenant based on the following grounds, which were valid at that time:

1. The use of APL grew steadily as well as the diversity in APL procedures. At the time it was important for everybody involved in an APL procedure that prior to the start of the procedure the quality of the procedure would be clear. The partners wanted to establish agreements on the quality of APL procedures.

2. At the Labour Summit on December 1st 2005 cabinet and social partners agreed that “the cabinet will promote that the APL Knowledge Centre develops a quality framework for the APL procedure with public support from all relevant parties concerned, which would result in a covenant between government and parties concerned about the employment of this framework”

3. At an earlier stage The Netherlands had formulated, on a European level, objectives for improving the educational level of people aged between 25 and 64, the Lisbon objectives. These objectives were drafted in 2000 to turn Europe into a competitive knowledge economy within ten years. APL was considered one of the methods to realize these objectives.

4. Parties found it advisable to establish an APL code. They wanted to stimulate, but not oblige, the application of it.
5. As of January 1st the government has made APL fiscally attractive as long as the APL procedure is executed by an acknowledged APL provider.

Developments since the introduction of the APL quality code

The number of realized APL procedures in The Netherlands is steadily increasing. This is shown in the report "APL in numbers" which the research institute Ecorys has held by order of the project management Learning and Working.

The project management Learning and Working is a collective initiative of the Ministries of Social Affairs and Employment and Education, Culture and Science and it is assigned to establish dual courses. Dual courses can be established in two ways, namely through a dual course on the shop floor (learning and working at the same time) or through APL procedures.

The research institute Ecorys has done a quantitative measurement of APL procedures resulting in a Certificate of Experience according to the APL code and with acknowledged APL providers.

The numbers of realized APL procedures according to the APL code have risen from 9,900 in 2007 to 12,500 in 2008 and 15,700 in 2009. Also, in 2005 3,100 procedures were realized and 5,100 in 2006. In 2005 and 2006, however, APL according to an APL code did not exist yet.

These numbers are based on statements by 85% of the acknowledged providers. Other sources were case studies, an inquiry among Education and Development funds and the quantitative monitor of dual courses and APL procedures carried out by echo (Centre for Expertise in Vocational Education and Training).

The increasing demand of for APL procedures is mainly caused by factors such as interest of individual employees, stimulating government measures and interest of employers.

In the near future, (the next two or three years) the acknowledged APL providers expect in 2010 almost double the number of APL procedures compared to 2009. This means an increase to 33,000 procedures. In the years 2011 and 2012 this level will remain roughly the same, but will not increase further.

From the case studies it appears that the candidates' goals for having their competences acknowledged is often certification. Providers state in the inquiry that more than half of the APL procedures results in additional schooling. This can be at the institution itself or elsewhere.

An estimated two thirds of additional schooling at the institution itself, leads to certification. Two thirds of the number of training courses are carried out according to individual needs..

The civil effect (social value) of the Certificate of Experience

The certificate of experience does not have a statutory basis like a diploma or certificate granted by an educational institute. Although, in 2006, the covenant partners had in mind that the certificate of experience should have the same civil effect in the long term as a diploma or a certificate with a statutory basis, this goal has not been reached yet.

This is caused by, among other things, unfamiliarity in the professional field and by a lack of assurance of the quality of the executed APL procedure.

In The Netherlands qualitative improvement of APL procedures is an important issue. For that purpose, APL providers are periodically assessed by an assessing institute appointed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The assessment framework used is the national APL quality code. When positively assessed, the APL provider is acknowledged for a period of 1 or 3 years.

To increase the civil effect of a certificate of experience, accreditation of the acknowledged parts of the standard by the examination board of an educational institute is required. Regulated by law the examination board of an educational institute is authorized to grant diplomas and certificates. Of course, the examination board will have to answer the question whether all conditions laid down in the qualification file have been met with. The examination file of a regular student of the educational institute has to contain all relevant evidential materials.

An APL candidate has only one piece of proof, the certificate of experience. Based on this certificate of experience an examination board has to be convinced that the APL procedure was executed carefully.

It should not be necessary for the examination board to check the portfolio assessed by the assessor or to check reports of a criterion-related interview or research of a work station. Having positively assessed the quality of the certificate of experience, the examination board will accredit the acknowledged elements of the standard (i.e. the qualification file) by granting exemptions. After granting exemptions for all elements of a qualification file, the examination board will decide to grant the diploma.

6.4 Situation in Switzerland

Until now, in Switzerland, 13 basic education degrees can be validated. The professional federations are obliged to elaborate training acts "compatible to validation" on their next revision. The cantons are obliged to adapt the existing validation procedures to other professional fields. There are attempts and discussions in progress about the integration of the Higher Education (tertiary level) into the validation

Currently, 13 basic VET programmes can be validated. The professional organisations are obliged to ensure the compatibility of their VET decrees with the validation scheme on the occasion of their next decree amendments.

The Cantons are expected to adapt the existing validation procedures to further professional areas. Discussions and efforts are under way in order to extend the validation process to the professional education and training area (PET, tertiary level).

7 Links and references

The following addresses allow you to visit the websites of the IBAK-project partners:

www.competences.info

AUSTRIA	www.vhs-burgenland.at
FRANCE	www.gip-fcip-alsace.fr/ibak/
GERMANY	www.kab-muenster.de
GERMANY	www.heurekanet.de
LITHUANIA	www.lssa.smm.lt
NETHERLANDS	www.rocvantwente.nl
SLOVAKIA	www.aveducation.sk
SWITZERLAND	www.alice.ch

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