
synergies

Recognition of Non-Formal and Informally Acquired Competences

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Cooperation Partners:



The following recommendations are the result of the Erasmus “Synergies”¹ project. Project partners from four European countries have responded to the current situation of recognition of non-formal and informally acquired competences in their countries. These recommendations followed research and interviews with stakeholders and involved parties in the partner countries². Despite all the differences in the legal systems and practical approaches of those countries, there are still a number of general problems regarding the implementation of the spirit and content of the relevant European Union documents. These recommendations are understood as concepts that could contribute to enhancing the situation. Many of them are already familiar, and it is not just about bringing new ideas to the table, but to point out which urgent improvements need to be made in this area.

Recommendations in detail

General information

- 1) Intensify the focus on the recognition and validation of non-formal and informally acquired competences. Although all of these countries possess documents and laws to that effect, it seems that none of them has a genuine interest in minimising existing obstacles. The validation of competences is not only important for job-seeking, it is an important part of the relatively young concept of life-long learning. It can and should also give value to the life history of a person – with all its challenges and achievements. And it should give orientation for the future.
- 2) It is important to be aware that the process of validation is an interculturally sensitive issue. It is evident that attitudes within western European countries alone vary strongly as to the validation and definition of a specific competence. This will naturally apply even more strongly to non-member states. Principally, their qualifications are worth less in the eyes of the host society.

Procedures

- 1) Focus on harmonisation of the documentation of validation on the national and European level. The European Qualifications Framework would be a great help in that respect. However, this is largely unknown to employers and employees. Much more needs to be done here to raise awareness.
- 2) Validation should be carried out earlier, more cheaply and more accessibly, above all, with respect to the situation of those seeking protection as well as migrants. Procedures are too lengthy and outsiders are hardly able to recognise and understand them. The system of validation focuses too much on the mastering of language. Other methods should be considered and implemented.

¹ Project partners include: uniT – Verein für Kultur an der Karl-Franzens Universität Graz (AT), LAG Brandenburg e.V. (D), Associazione Alpha (IT) and Associació Baobab (E)

² Please see the relevant results on the homepage of Synergies: www.synergies.online

- 3) Validation should increase the use of tools linked to practice (assessments, internships) and should not be based mainly on interviews. In that respect, some initiatives are already underway in the countries in question. This approach needs to be continued and intensified.
- 4) It is necessary to increase the number of offered qualification programmes to achieve formal degrees as well as to create individualised offers based on competence checks that would lead to a quicker and more efficient formal recognition. There are a number of approaches already in place that need to be developed further.

Raising awareness and exchanging expertise

- 1) Information about the European Qualification Framework and the National Qualification Framework to companies and enterprises to clarify the relevance of these frameworks and the benefits they may gain.
- 2) Information, motivation and support for the target groups – the learners and the employers. It is of interest in this context that very few migrants utilise the existing recognition procedures. It would therefore be essential to intensify the exchange between employers and recognition authorities. Moreover, employers would benefit from publicly accessible databases that provide comprehensible and reliable information on foreign degrees and their domestic equivalents.
- 3) Validation of competences will require more resources – places, train-the-trainers and opportunities.
- 4) The variety of organisations working on validation should cooperate more intensively and be linked on a regional, national and European level. Learners, companies and organisations working on validation should be brought together.