

Raising Quantity  
and Quality  
of Work Placements  
in Europe



# EUROPE MOBILITY NETWORK

## THE VALIDATION OF LEARNING MOBILITY

A TOOL TO SUPPORT AND  
PROMOTE THE VALIDATION AND  
RECOGNITION OF A LEARNING  
MOBILITY ABROAD

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# INDEX

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Background: the Thematic Commissions on the recognition and validation of mobility	3
1.2 A short overview of existing EU Transparency Tools	4
2. Validation tools	7
2.1 Recognition of non-formal and informal competences	7
2.2 Level 5	7
2.3 MobilityExcellence	8
2.4 Certification of Executives and Volunteers of NGOs	8
2.5 PROFILPASS	9
2.6 T-tactic @school	9
2.7 Flexi-Path	10
2.8 MoVET	10
2.9 Kode-NQF	11
2.10 IMPROVE	11
3. Applying a validation strategy in your mobility project	12



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

**EuropeMobility** is an European network that aims at stimulating both the quality and quantity of work placement abroad by establishing a pan European network of professionals, experts and mobility coordinators responsible for planning and accomplishing learning mobility initiatives. Europemobility Network supports mobility in the context of an internship, work placement or volunteer service by promoting awareness on the obstacles as well as on the tools, methodologies and solutions available. Five Thematic Commissions focus on different aspects of mobility:

- TC 1: Quality
- TC 2: Cooperation Models
- TC 3: Funding Schemes
- TC 4: Impact of mobility
- TC 5: Recognition and validation.

For further information, visit <http://www.europemobility.eu>.

### 1.1 Background: the Thematic Commission on the recognition and validation of mobility

Increasing the transparency of qualifications is an essential step in European lifelong learning policy to facilitate greater flexibility in individual learning pathways, thus fostering learner mobility both on an institutional and geographical level. Efforts have been undertaken by the Member States to connect their national qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), a process that is still ongoing. In the context of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) for the higher education sector and the European Credit System for Education and Training (ECVET) in the vocational sector were developed to allow for a greater transparency and comparability of degrees and qualifications. They are valuable tools in the recognition and validation of learning acquired abroad.

In the application of these different transparency tools, the focus has shifted to 'learning outcomes', which describe the knowledge, skills and competences obtained by an individual, rather than the 'learning inputs' given by the context where the learner obtained them.

In this focus on learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning gained new importance. In order to achieve the ET2020 Strategic Objectives and make lifelong learning a reality in Europe, the European Union has recognised the importance of flexible learning pathways that validate and recognise learning, which took place outside the formal system. Parallel to the development of the different EU Transparency Tools, European policy also seeks to expedite the validation of non-formal and informal learning. CEDEFOP published the European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in 2009, which are to be revised for 2014, and the European Inventory of VNFIL in 2010. The European Council adopted its Recommendation for VNFIL in 2012 to encourage Member States to implement national validation systems by 2015. This deadline, however, has been delayed by Member States to 2018, illustrating

the need for further political pressure in this field.

The Europemobility Thematic Commission on the recognition and validation of mobility has thus set its focus on the validation of non-formal and informal learning highlighting the transversal scope of the EUM Network. The aim of the current publication is to introduce a number of valorization tools in the field of NFIL, which help to identify, document and assess the learner's knowledge, skills and competences acquired during learning mobility. Not all tools have specifically been developed for mobility contexts but they are all applicable for the valorisation of the learning that took place abroad. They constitute a toolbox that helps to make visible learning obtained through non-formal and informal learning, which is a necessary step in the achievement of NFIL certification.

## 1.2 A short overview of existing EU Transparency Tools

European Union countries are cooperating on several specific instruments aimed at facilitating mobility in Europe – for individuals, businesses and other organisations. Currently there are several EU initiatives put in place, that intend to make qualifications, experiences and skills better appreciated and easier to be recognised throughout the EU, while giving a greater access to learning and employment opportunities in different countries. These instruments are being developed on behalf of the Ministries responsible for vocational education and training in 34 European countries and social partners at European level. The participating countries are the EU Member States, EEA/EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein) and the candidate countries, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. This cooperation has, among other things, resulted in agreements on quality, guidance and validation, on founding a European Qualification Framework (EQF), on the development of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and on the development of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET). These agreements mean that the participating countries commit themselves to continue their national implementation efforts.

### EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION SYSTEM (ECTS)

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was introduced as part of the Erasmus framework in 1989. It is the only credit system which has been successfully used across Europe, and began life solely as a credit transfer system. In helping European countries to mutually recognise periods of study abroad, it assists student mobility. It allocates credits to course components based in the student workload required to achieve the objectives of the particular course of study. The objectives are usually described in terms of the learning outcomes of the course and the competencies to be acquired. Each learning outcome is expressed in terms of credits, with a full-time student workload ranging from 1500 to 1800 hours for one academic year, and one credit generally corresponds to 25-30 hours of work. ECTS has developed into a credit accumulation system to be implemented at institutional, regional, national and European level and ties in closely with the Bologna Process objective of establishing a system of credits for the European Higher Education Area.

More information: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf)

### EUROPASS

In order to match people's skills with those needed in the labour market, the European Commission has developed several tools to make it easier. One tool to foster the transparency of qualifications and competences is Europass, an online Curriculum Vitae (CV) service, helping individuals to make their professional experience and skills clearly and easily understood. The Europass CV draws attention to people's skills and abilities, including those acquired outside of formal education and training. The webportal is run by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and is available in 26 languages, providing an interactive tool to complete the Europass CV and the Europass Language Passport. In addition, three other documents are available:

- Europass Mobility - records a learning experience abroad, such as an academic exchange or internship in a company or organisation;

- Europass Diploma Supplement – developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO - this describes in a standardised way the nature, level, context and status of any higher education course that an individual has successfully completed;
- Europass Certificate Supplement – explains vocational training certificates in terms of skills and abilities, enabling employers to appreciate better what their holders can do.

More information: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>

#### EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (EQF)

A European reference framework for qualifications for lifelong learning (the European Qualification Framework, EQF) is a tool to enable qualification levels (course certificates, professional certificates, etc.) to be better understood and compared, both by individuals and employers, across different European countries. The purpose of EQF is to make it easier to compare educational and professional qualifications by linking examination and educational levels in different European countries to a common European framework. It serves also to increase, ease and stimulate the mobility and facilitate lifelong learning. Greater awareness of the knowledge, skills and competences of a person with a specific qualification increases his or her opportunities to work and study in another country. Agreed upon by the European institutions in 2008, the EQF is being put in practice across Europe. The countries are encouraged to relate their national qualification systems to the EQF, so that all new qualifications issued from 2012 onwards carry a reference to an appropriate EQF level. EQF national coordination points have been designated for this purpose in each country. The EQF is divided into eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do – “learning outcomes”, where level one is the lowest and level eight the highest (equivalent to a doctorate degree). This approach shifts the focus from “learning inputs” to “learning outcomes” as it encourages lifelong learning by promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Levels of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) should be placed at one of the central reference levels, in order to enable a much easier comparison between the different national qualifications. It also means that people do not have to repeat their learning if they move to another country. The EQF applies to all types of education, training and qualifications, from school education to academic, professional and vocational. The aim is that in the future it will be simpler to acknowledge learning in other environments, such as in the workplace, and that the national systems will make it easier to determine the level of both formal study programmes and of knowledge gained during a person’s working life.

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/eqf>

#### EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (EQAVET)

To promote and monitor the improvement of national systems of vocational education and training, a European Quality Assurance Reference framework (EQAVET) was adopted by EU Member States in June 2009 as the reference tool for policy-makers. The system is based on a four-stage quality cycle that includes goal setting and planning, implementation, evaluation and review. When respecting the autonomy of national governments with regard to education, this voluntary system is meant to be used by public authorities and other bodies involved in quality assurance. Member States are encouraged to use this instrument, and develop a national approach to improving quality assurance systems that involve all relevant stakeholders. It should include funding the national reference points for quality assurance, as well as active participation in the European level network. The European Commission supports the Member States in this process, especially through facilitating cooperation and providing information.

More information: [www.eqavet.eu](http://www.eqavet.eu)



## EUROPEAN CREDIT SYSTEM FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ECVET)

A European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is currently being developed along the lines of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The various instruments delivered as a result of the Copenhagen Process do not define qualifications on the basis of learning inputs (duration of learning process, type of institution) as it has traditionally been the case in the past, but rather on the basis of learning outputs (learning results such as knowledge, skills and competences). This enables training centres to adapt their training plans to the needs of the labour market. It also becomes easier to recognise non-formal and informal learning and encourages mobility between various countries and training systems. The various Copenhagen Process instruments thereby create favorable general conditions for lifelong learning.

More information: [www.ecvet-team.eu/en](http://www.ecvet-team.eu/en)

## YOUTHPASS

Developed within the 'Youth in Action' Programm, Youthpass aims at the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the youth field. Especially catered to its subprogrammes, it confirms participation, describes an activity and validates learning experiences. It helps the learner to lead a reflection on personal learning processes, thus be aware of personal developments, skill and competence improvement. It wants furthermore to foster active European citizenship and help the employability of young people

Organisations or young people setting up projects within 'Youth in Action' can issue Youthpass Certificates. The Salto-Youth network offers training courses and publications (i.e. Youthpass Unfolded, Unlocking Doors to Recognition) for youth workers on the facilitation of the learning process.

More information: [www.youthpass.eu](http://www.youthpass.eu)



## 2. VALIDATION TOOLS

### 2.1 Recognition of non-formal and informal competences

DGB-Bildungswerk (project leader), SOLIDAR, the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS), Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (ABF), Fagligt Internationalt Center (FIC) and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) worked on the project "Promoting the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: Strengthening individual learning pathways by developing skills assessment tools for workers" aiming to support social partners in the development of taxonomy of personal skills and competences and innovative assessment tools that could enable workers to bridge the skills mismatch and offer them individual learning pathways.

This project specifically focused on integrating learning and career guidance, lifelong learning pathways of workers that are vulnerable to economic restructuring. More specifically the project focused on re-skilling and up-skilling of adults, especially those with low-level qualifications, who seek for a continuing improvement and recognition of their skills, competences and knowledge in order to increase their labour market participation and facilitate development of further learning pathways.

One of the important achievements of this project is that it brought together a wide range of stakeholders who are involved in education and training on a daily basis – workers, representatives of Trade Union education institutes from different EU countries. Throughout the course of the project, the partners helped to find common notions of understanding on the different aspects of recognition and validation mechanisms. All of them were offered a possibility of starting a dialogue and find answers, and possible areas of cooperation with similar problems with which they are confronted.

Nevertheless, the most significant accomplishment of this project is the development of the working assessment methodology that will have a considerable impact on improving career and further learning perspectives of workers who are vulnerable to economic restructuring and require skills upgrading. The developed assessment programme is unique in its approach to skills and competence assessment due to its focus on the 'general scope' of competences and including the 'soft skills' that are an essential part of the qualification portfolio. This approach has the potential of being for people an empowerment tool and assessment instrument in one.

Final publication: [www.solidar.org/IMG/pdf/kompetenzf\\_finalpublication.pdf](http://www.solidar.org/IMG/pdf/kompetenzf_finalpublication.pdf)

### 2.2 Level 5

REVEAL is a transnational network of European experts from grass-root projects and universities working on the question of measurement and visualisation of the impact of informal learning.

The network has developed an innovative evaluation system and software – Level 5, which enables organisations active in learning mobility to assess and display the impact of their work on their learners.

This evaluation tool helps to outline the informal learning process, i.e. transversal skills, self-esteem, empowerment, civic knowledge..., of each individual. It focuses on the assessment, providing evidence and validation of the cognitive, actively related to the effective competences developed. Furthermore it raises awareness about central learning processes and competences and helps to develop individual reference systems in accordance with project objectives. Moreover, the system covers the aspect of certification – the web-based three-dimensional visualisation and documentation system and, if desired, a personal certificate can be issued. Additionally, REVEAL offers its own accreditation label after conducting an external evaluation of the learning project.

More information: [www.reveal-eu.org/index.php?id=58](http://www.reveal-eu.org/index.php?id=58)

## 2.3 MobilityExcellence

MobilityExcellence is an initiative of five European partners from Northern Ireland, France, Malta and Germany dedicated to facilitate the recognition of competences acquired during mobility experiences within Initial Vocational Training. It aims to give added value to mobility projects by enhancing quality and transparency through evaluation and validation of intercultural, linguistic and vocational competences.

The Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation project transfers the CEMES(R)-method<sup>1</sup> and adapts its platform to validate and recognise learning outcomes which have been acquired during mobility experiences abroad.

Evaluation of the learning outcomes at the end of the mobility programme became a corner stone for the development of competence recognition, at first with a special focus on the one developed in the vocational area. The procedure takes into account the mix of the vocation-specific competences originating from formal training regulations and 'informal' aspects such as personal, intercultural and language skills. The methodology uses a knowledge-based questionnaire with open-ended questions encouraging showcasing of the actual application of the appropriate skills and competences, to be examined in a work-specific context. This leads to the formulation of a competence-oriented learner-profile that, apart from showing the test results, captures the non-formal learning outcomes and right at the end of the three-stage assessment, issues a final certificate.

The project, following the ECVET recommendation, assesses the skills acquired by a learner, in addition to the provision of the description of the learning outcomes that are evaluated. This provides a basis for the subsequent validation and recognition of skills and competences acquired in mobility.

The procedure comprises the identification of the professional activities by project partners, creating VET-profiles and modular units of learning outcomes to be used flexibly by the sending and hosting company. The pre-defined learning outcomes serve as a reference base and are enriched by the non-formal vocational competences and informal skills. The process starts with the selection of the host company, followed by the signing of a learning agreement and the CEMES test and concluded by Europass. Throughout the apprenticeship process each learner is accompanied by a mentor who supports him/her and later becomes an assessor. The assessment of skills and competences acquired in the company is followed by the test. The combination of both results is documented in a final evaluation document and concluded in Europass. Moreover the validation and formal recognition is conducted by the coordinating institution in cooperation with a Chamber of Commerce and/or another competent authority.

More information: [www.mobilityexcellence.eu/](http://www.mobilityexcellence.eu/)

## 2.4. Certification of Executives and Volunteers of NGOs

The Project 'Certification of Executives and Volunteers of NGOs' aims towards the development of a certification system for executives and volunteers working for NGOs in particular to evaluate and accredit non-formal and informal education and training (knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired through their experience).

Non-governmental organisations play a significant role in social problem-solving and public affairs and an increase in voluntary activities in all parts of the EU can be observed. Due to the specificity of the sector, it is impossible to obtain formal education and training in this field. As a consequence, a vast majority of executives, employees and volunteers lack any form of formal recognition of the knowledge, skills, and competences they have developed. Hence, the project aims to counter this by certifying and validating these obtained informally through work (or volunteer work) over the years. The aim of the project is the development of a process of certification which gives employees or volunteers of NGOs the possibility of accrediting their competencies across Europe, particularly those acquired at work. The accompanying objectives are:

- To give a chance to people who work or perform volunteer work for NGOs to get their competencies recognised and valorised, which has a clear added value

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<sup>1</sup> The CEMES-Method, Competence evaluation method for European specialists [www.cemes.eu/](http://www.cemes.eu/)

- To facilitate the recognition of the competencies in the third sector (non-profit)
- To help the development of professionals of NGOs
- To establish European standards and relevant training for individuals working for NGOs
- To facilitate the comparison of the knowledge, skills and competencies of persons working for NGOs and volunteers beyond national frontiers, contributing to geographic mobility
- To obtain higher transparency and efficiency in the selection processes and recruitment of NGOs
- To raise awareness of the social dimension relating to NGOs and the third sector, integrating gender equality.

The project developed a European Certificate for Executives and Volunteers of Non-governmental Organizations that can be obtained following successful achievement of the process of certification. Each candidate has to go through three main steps: CV evaluation, on-line test and case study presentation – this is to test the knowledge, skills and competences acquired informally throughout the work experience.

More information: [www.ngo-s.eu/artykul/43,certification.html](http://www.ngo-s.eu/artykul/43,certification.html)

## 2.5 PROFILPASS

ProfilPass is an assessment tool, which helps to establish a systematic overview of personal strengths, skills and competences. It comprises professional experience as well as experiences gathered through family, leisure time or volunteering, thus combining formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Developed by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF) and the Institute for Development Planning and Structure Research and financed by the German Ministry for Education and Research as well as the European Social Fund, the tool was established in the context of the lifelong learning policy with the aim to help

- personal and professional (re)orientation,
- (re)integration into professional life,
- planning of professional evolution,
- planing of future learning aims.

ProfilPass is structured on several levels. A personal assessment tool is available online, eProfilPass, or in the form of a printed publication. It can be used individually but guidance is available from a network of consultants. Training courses on the efficient use of the tool are organised on a regular basis. ProfilPass can also be used by companies in the context of their human resource development.

Professionals working in the field of education can take part in training sessions in order to become consultants or integrate the tool into their learning strategies.

A second ProfilPass for youth has been developed especially catering to the circumstances of young people.

Available in German at the moment, efforts have been made to transfer the tool to other contexts as with the European project 'Valid-Info'.

More information: [www.profilpass-online.de](http://www.profilpass-online.de)

## 2.6 T-tactic @school

T-Tactic @ school stands for 'Transfer of tools for managing and mentoring the international work placements to guarantee the recognition of the competences acquired and the quality of the learning process in the school system'. The project is based on the needs of secondary schools and vocational training centres to benefit from a strategy, systems and tools for managing and mentoring international work placements as well as for recognising, certifying and validating the competences acquired by the students during the international mobility project.

The projects' main aim was to support secondary schools and vocational training centres with knowledge on how to conduct a complex process of managing and mentoring international work placement mobility projects, improving and sharing the experiences with regard to the recognition of the competences acquired by learners and defining methods to certify and validate what participants have learnt.

A handbook for teachers and tutors on the transfer of tools for managing and mentoring international work placements to guarantee the recognition of the competences acquired and the quality of the learning process in the school system has been developed. This handbook has been made available in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. It comprises a detailed manual on how to implement the exchange programmes and follow them up as well as an insight into the question of certification.

More information: [www.tacticschool.eu/documents](http://www.tacticschool.eu/documents)

## 2.7 Flexi-Path

The Flexi-Path project aims to facilitate the transparency and recognition of adult educators' qualifications across Europe by enhancing the comparability of their credentials by setting up a common reference framework and Master adult educator profile which is based on the European Qualification Framework and promotes the idea of mobility through standardised educational programmes and qualification levels.

With an aim to enhance the recognition and valorisation of learning outcomes of learning in non-formal and informal settings, the project developed an instrument for validation. The Flexi-Path is meant to raise awareness of adult educators on their knowledge and skills, and to support them in planning their further professional development. It focuses on the competences acquired outside of the formal education system that are valuable for the work of an educator.

The developed tool focuses on measuring and describing skills and knowledge of adult education in accordance with the level 7 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) in the form of a competency profile. This can be created as a result of the self-evaluation process that can be conducted by the adult educator himself. The person can use the self-evaluation toolkit that has been developed, to support recording and documentation of both formal and non-formal competences. The toolkit is available in German, Estonian, English, Spanish, Italian and Romanian language.

More information: <http://flexi-path.eu/>

## 2.8 GoMOVET

MOVET is an EU-funded project focusing on the vocational education and training, and developed in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci, Lifelong Learning Programme. Its first cycle MOVET I has been awarded as the best German Lifelong Learning project in the category "Transparency of qualification".

MOVET project focuses on transparency and acknowledgement of competences within the European context. This project explored the ways how the ECVET system can be used in practice in order to verify, certify and accredit competences acquired during participation in the transnational training modules. At the end of the modules, each student has an opportunity to participate in the specially designed assessment process that focuses on the learning outcomes. Other participants in the assessment process are training providers, companies, competent bodies and other protagonists of vocational education which validate the acquired learning outcomes as relevant for the training profile and award credit points. A signed memorandum of understanding of all involved partners serves as a basis for the acknowledgement of learning outcomes.

The second cycle of the project - MOVET II (Modules for Vocational Education and Training for competences in Europe II) focused on transparency and recognition of learning outcomes (LO).

To assess better certified and recognise the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by students within transnational modules, a Competence Matrix and a Taxonomy Table had been created in order enhance transparency of learning outcomes and promote mutual trust between training providers. This was developed as modules for students in Initial VET in the field of mechatronics and engineering with specially designed assessments of learning outcomes.

More information: [www.gomovet.eu/](http://www.gomovet.eu/)

## 2.9 Kode-NQF

“Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competencies in the contexts of National Qualification Frameworks’ – project Kode, adapted and modified the system KODE (Kompetenz-Diagnostic und –Entwicklung) to the EQF and NQF systems in project countries.

The project was developed by the consortium consisting of partners from Germany, Poland and Italy: VHS Cham, Heyse Stiftung Menschenbilder-Menschenbildung, Fundacja Forum Inicjatyw Rozwojowch, Narodowe Forum Doradztwa Kariery, METID, EUROPOLIS Lombardia.

KODE is a scientifically established system for skills analysis – diagnostic, training and coaching system developed in 1997 by Erpenbeck/Heyse and constantly being developed. It covers 64 fields of competencies that are the foundation of the systems for staff development in business or within public sphere.

This project provides VET counsellors, advisers, and consultants with a set of training guidelines that are adaptable to individuals’ and country-specific needs. This material will support them in measuring and assessing skills and competences acquired in a non-formal and informal learning setting, and validate them in accordance with NQF and EQF standards.

The main outputs of the project are the KODE-NQF tool/converted questionnaires for the measurement and validation of non-formally and informally acquired competencies according to the levels of EQF and the relevant NQFs. In addition there are handouts with the training pack to inform users how to implement the tool in the counselling process.

More information: [www.kode-project.eu/](http://www.kode-project.eu/)

## 2.10 IMPROVE

IMPROVE is an international project co-financed by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig. The IMPROVE project includes the development and testing of a guide for the validation of competences acquired by career guidance practitioners through non-formal learning. This guide is to be coherent with the European guidelines on the matter.

The consortium of project partners is composed of organisations from six countries (IT, CZ, ES, EL,RO, DE) involved in research and training in the field of career guidance and in the delivery of career guidance services which through IMPROVE seek:

- to understand better how the existing frameworks for validating the competence of career guidance practitioners work,
- to evaluate how effectively the frameworks assess non-formal learning,
- to identify how the efficacy of the frameworks can be improved,
- to identify how the recent CEDEFOP Guidelines on assessment of non-formal learning and work and can be applied to the existing frameworks.

More information: [www.improveguidance.eu/what-improve](http://www.improveguidance.eu/what-improve)



## 3. APPLYING A VALIDATION STRATEGY IN YOUR MOBILITY PROJECT

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When applying a validation strategy in mobility projects, it is most important to develop and select a methodology that fits most appropriately to the specific nature of the project, or training scheme provided.

It is important to give a few preliminary definitions of the elements to be taken into account, even though the definitions and the situations may vary from one European country to another.

**Learning outcomes:** a particular knowledge, skill or behaviour that learners will know or be able to undertake as a result of a learning activity taking place at a defined period of time.

**Learner:** the person (young person or adult) undertaking the mobility, as a student, an intern, a volunteer.

**Provider:** education and training providers, civil society organizations, NGOs, cultural associations etc.

**Certifying authority:** there are different kinds of certifying authorities. Depending on the country, they can be State Authorities such as Ministries (Youth, Education) but also Authorities from the professional field such as Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Unions, Chambers of Crafts, Educational Institutions...

**Recognition:** the recognition by relevant stakeholders, ie employers, education and training providers, certifying authority, of certain ranges of skills, knowledge and competences.

**Validation:** is the formal recognition of a range of learning outcomes leading to a document which is more than a sector-specific certificate. It can be for example a diploma, an authorisation to practise a certain type of activity...

Validation and Recognition depend on several factors:

- identification of learning outcomes;
- reality/practice of certifying authorities
- the value granted to the validation and/or recognition

The validation framework should be developed on the basis of the anticipated needs of learners and education and training providers – in the case of VET chamber of commerce, crafts, and professional association to comply with the specific requirements that need to be met. The framework should consider some of the key elements such as the selection of the categories: understandability, ease of use and usefulness, user acceptance, role of stakeholders, as well as all possible limitations and constraints that can occur.

The validation strategy should take several elements into account like the nature of the project and of the mobility, the typology of the people involved in the project and the type of learning activity undertaken.

The needs of each of the partners (learners, providers, recognised national or transnational certification bodies) of the mobility have to be adjusted to each other, so that when the mobility starts, they all know what learning outcomes should be expected. Most importantly, mutual trust and recognition should be established between the parties involved to ensure a successful validation/recognition process.



*The actors of mobility*

In order for the validation strategy to work out, it should not be about only the definition of the learning outcomes or only about the employer/provider, or the validation frame, which differs in each country.

The three corners of the “partner triangle” should be aligned. In some European countries such as the Netherlands or France, the balance between these three players does exist. One of Europemobility network’s aims is to help the different players find a point of balance between the different needs not only at a national level, but also at a transnational level.

Once these three players are identified and acknowledged, the validation process can start and follow different steps.

### **3.1. Identification of the learning outcomes by each of the partners and setting up a partnership**

This step can either take place before or after the mobility period.

The learners should identify what they want to learn in the frame of the mobility. The provider should express what they expect from the learning outcomes in order to meet their needs from the point of view of the mobility. Finally, the certifying authority should define their requirement in terms of learning outcomes to reach a given level of recognition.

Once this is done, all partners can work in partnership.

### **3.2 Setting up the learning objectives**

The partners should compare their expectations and define a grid detailing the different levels of learning outcomes. Example: a first level of learning outcome could be: to have a basic knowledge of the language of the mobility country and to acquire basic intercultural skills.

The accepted levels will then form a reference scale and should be discussed at a transversal level, with other providers of mobility and the stakeholders involved in the process.

### 3.3 Decision about recognition/validation

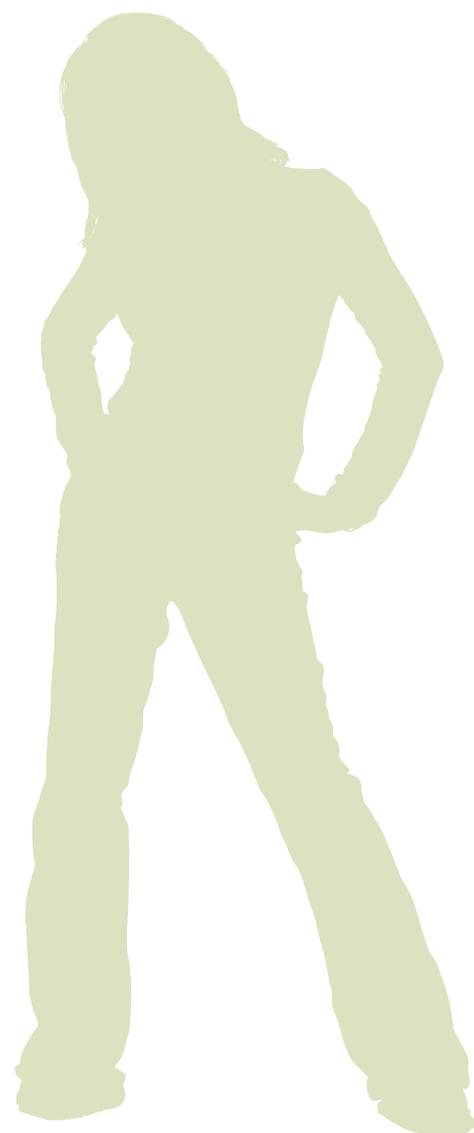
One of the main steps of a validation strategy is to decide whether the learning outcomes of the mobility would be recognised or not and whether they should be validated more formally.

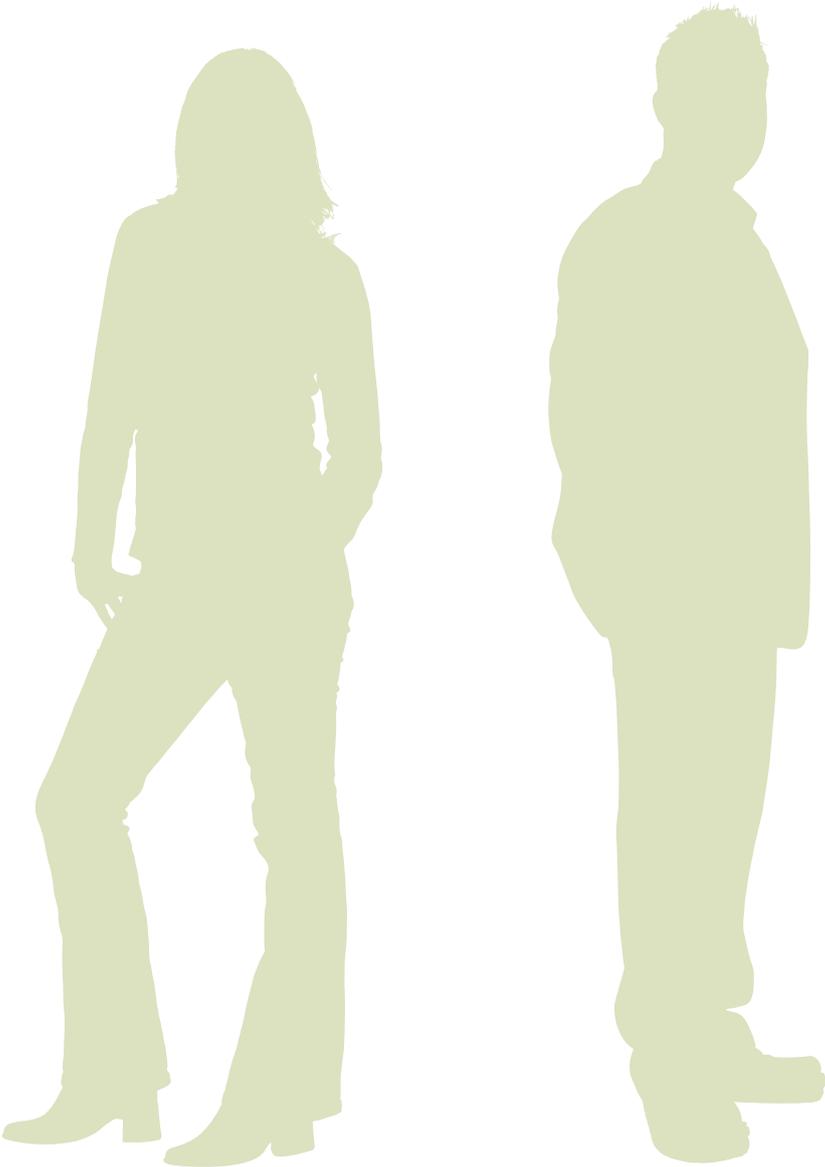
It seems essential that one should always seek for the recognition of mobility. But when it comes to validation the answer is not as clear. One of the remaining questions in the area is whether there should be a validation specific to mobility and informal learning outcomes. But the tool for a "mobility specific" validation is still to be invented in the field of non-formal learning.

For professional-specific profiles, a possible option would be to validate the learning outcomes of mobility using a tool from the formal system, such as the VET or ECVET systems. This possibility does not seem to be the best solution. Indeed, although it offers undeniable advantages for the learners (enhanced employability, official recognition of learners in a formative context...), it also has the disadvantage of putting aside the specificity of non-formal and informal learning and to put the learners in an utilitarian situation, as there is the risk that they will then only be seeking validation when going on a mobility.

These questions about recognition/validation are fundamental in order to go further in the definition of learning outcomes, which can then be more precise.

The validation strategy should be of a formative approach. What matters is indeed the process which will involve all the actors of the mobility, keeping the learning outcomes and the learners at the centre of the process.







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