

Blog: Make it visible. Improving validation and recognition of learning outside of formal education and training

Type:	Blog
Language:	
Sources:	
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Topics:	
Publication Date:	18 Oct 2021

Opinion by Antonio Ranieri is Head of Department for Learning and Employability at Cedefop. There are so many ways to learn. Formal education and training is only one of these, especially when it comes to acquiring knowledge, competencies, behaviours, and values necessary to perform a job properly. However, if people cannot document the “worth” of their skills, the learning acquired is often accounted as worthless in principle and also in practice by the labour market.

Validation is the process that makes learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings visible and ‘usable’ for the individual. Whatever they may call it - accreditation of prior learning, prior learning assessment – the underlying principle in validation is that all learning is valuable, irrespective of how or where it has been acquired. As learning is both a process (how it happens) and a product (the outcomes), by shifting the focus from the learning process to the learning outcomes validation makes visible and provides currency to the knowledge, skills and competences acquired out of the formal settings. This approach has much to commend it. Today’s European labour market must confront with a continuous and accelerated process of transformation of the economy, as well as growing disparities between and within countries that have marginalised and impoverished specific groups of the population. As we know, it’s not just about young people out of the labour market, but also long-term unemployed, displaced workers, and low-skilled adults more generally. Validation has a major role to play especially for people with low levels of formal education and training who may have acquired valuable skills and competences throughout their working life or even other experiences such as volunteer work. Identification, assessment and certification of their skills may be

effective to tailor their training needs and make them more attractive to the labour market. Since 2004, through the European Inventory Cedefop has been monitoring and analysing developments in validation of non-formal and informal occurring in EU Member States. Initially conceived as a way of opening up and making formal education and training more flexible, especially vocational education and training, validation is increasingly seen as a tool to make economies more competitive, encourage labour market participation, and combat social exclusion. **To continue reading the rest of this Blog, download the PDF found immediately below.**

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