



Building Learning Societies: Promoting Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

Round Table Workshop Report Austria

On September 2 2014 a workshop on validation of informal and non-formal learning with stakeholders was set up in Linz.

Participants were 19 representatives of the Ministry of Education, adult education and vocational education, youth organisations, the chamber of labour, counselling organisations for women and migrants, umbrella organisations for the 3rd sector, vocational rehabilitation and vocational integration organisations.

The purpose was to get informed about the upcoming validation strategy in Austria, recommendations on validation of non-formal and informal learning by the European Council and CEDEFOP, the status quo on validation in Austria and to discuss recommendations.

After a short introduction of all participants, Karin Luomi-Messerer from 3s, a national expert on validation of non-formal and informal learning presented the European Council's recommendations on validation and introduced examples of validation in Austria focusing on identification and documentation of competences and others focusing on validation and certification. She also talked about potentials and challenges in Austria which are: description of learning outcomes, recognition of qualification parts in the formal system, transparency, information and counselling, professionalization of methods and instruments, quality management and standards, needs of different target groups.

Doris Wyskitensky from the Federal Ministry of Education and Women continued with a presentation of the Austrian Validation Strategy and Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy. The basis for the strategy is that the topic is quite controversial as Austria has a strong formal system in vocational education and training. There is no strategic framework so far but a number of bottom-up – driven projects and the topic gained momentum in the last years. The Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy which was established by four Ministries names establishing a validation strategy until 2018 as one of its benchmarks. The Ministry has set up a project on validation of non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups. The results of this project are: There should be a right for validation, it must be part of the NQF, it needs standards and recognition, expertise needs to be built, a communication strategy must be set up and it needs sustainable financing.

Marlies Auer from BFI OÖ then presented the CEDEFOP Recommendations on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

After the presentation there were discussions in three groups to develop recommendations for the Austrian validation strategy.

Recommendations:

- Establish rights but not musts for individuals to access validation initiatives
- Development of simple, easy and clear validation instruments for learners which are also very easy to understand for possible employers – especially for NQF levels 1 to 4
- Rights gained with formal qualifications must also be transferred to qualifications gained by validating non-formal and informal learning (wage schemes, labour rights etc)
- Establish a culture of appreciation and trust in all phases of validation based on the needs of adult learners
- Involve companies and chamber of economy to gain acceptance
- Provide easy accessible and professional information and guidance for validation
- Establish independent, qualified and competent validation organisations (like wba)
- Financing of validation should be carried by all beneficiaries (society, companies, learners) and should be available free for those who need it
- Develop campaigns for validation targeting learners, companies and the general public
- Use existing know-how, lessons learned and good practice schemes for all future developments
- Development of a transparent, coherent, integrated national validation system



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