

# AFFORDING THE DESIRE TO LEARN

*Personalised Lifelong Learning Services (PL2S)  
for adult learners in Higher Education Institutes*

Ruud Duvekot & Kees Schuur





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The design, test and evaluation of  
Personalised Lifelong Learning Services (PL2S)  
in Higher Education Institutes

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*The 'Series VPL Biennale' promote initiatives in the learning arena enabling people to be(come) empowered and participate actively in shaping an open and dynamic learning society.*

# Preface

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*I want a reason to be proud.  
I want to see the light.  
I want the future now,  
I want to see it on the screen,  
I want to break the bounds:  
make life worth more than dreams.*

Peter Hammill  
*The Future Now* (1978)

Learning is more than ever important or valuable. People are encouraged to invest in their potential throughout their lives, taking into account their prior learning. According to policy papers of the UNESCO, European Union (EU Inventory, 2014; UNESCO, *et al.*, 2015; Singh, 2015; Duvekot, 2016), this should also concern the underrepresented groups and non-traditional learners with regard to higher education because the global knowledge-society needs more participation from all citizens.

The overriding goal of ALLMEET is to build the capacity of the Russian partners in higher education with respect to understanding and managing on-going conflicts and to prevent the growth of a xenophobic attitude within the Russian society. The other partners from Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and United Kingdom will assist the Russian higher education institutes (HEIs) in planning, implementing and evaluating actions in the field of Intercultural Education and Lifelong Learning Strategies. Through networking and lifelong learning approaches, Russian HEIs gain a key role in enhancing mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue not only among their students' multicultural population, but within society at large.

The focus of the project is the establishment of Intercultural Education Platforms that are supported by personalised lifelong learning services.

To contribute to the objectives of the project, an orientation on self-steered learning is important. The aim of the work package that was managed by the Dutch partner, the European Centre Valuation Prior Learning ([www.ec-vpl.eu](http://www.ec-vpl.eu)), was built on a set of interlinked assumptions and risks factors:

- The problematic of raising awareness of added value of PL2S amongst citizens, HEIs and companies.
- Financial constraints and lack of internet-access for citizens.
- Lack of open-mindedness and wholeheartedness amongst the concerned professionals in HEIs.

This second handbook on personalised learning, entitled 'Affording the Desire to Learn', is about creating a common theoretical background on concepts regarding personalising learning. It is the first book in a series on personalising learning that is produced for this project to fill in the need to articulate and ground the features of personalised learning in higher education.

It is both a result of the project ALLMEET as well as an agenda for further exploring and paving the way for personalising learning, not only in higher education but also in other qualification-levels and – even better – in contexts of work, volunteering, citizenship, inclusion-activities and leisure. With this book, the first step is made in showing that lifelong learning is possible in any context, country and culture, and that there are always shared elements that make it possible to make a manageable tool for lifelong learning out of the methodology that underpins personalised learning.

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# Introduction

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Building up a supportive infrastructure in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) for offering personalised lifelong learning services (PL2S) to adult learners is deemed essential. HEIs need to be able to deal with a diversity of learning objectives of citizens. For this reason, it is essential to 'practice what you preach': filling in PL2S for the own staff and students as role models for all citizens in their regions. PL2S takes a holistic view of the adult learner: learning styles, skills, competences, strengths and weaknesses and prior learning.

Work package 4 in the ALLMEET-project is focused on the design, test and evaluation of PL2S-centres. The main objective is to create so-called 'do-it-yourself teams (DIY)' in HEIs for implementing the kind of PL2S that match the need of adult learners and their need for lifelong learning. In this way, the HEIs will be positioned as sustainable and independent lifelong learning-centres that afford people's desire to learn.

In order to learn how to deal with the learning-demand from society, the project activities concentrated on designing, testing and training of university-staff and students, making sure that they can sustainably offer PL2S in their own (regional) context. They will also act as rolemodels for all citizens. The activities consist of a chain of six interlinked process-steps, all designed and tested by the partner-universities with their own staff and students during the project and sustainably managed after the lifetime of the project.

The concept of PL2S adopts a holistic view of adult learners, taking into account their previous learning experiences, learning styles, skills, strengths and weaknesses. The Dutch partner offered its expertise for training the so-called 'do-it-yourself teams (DIY)', which are integral teams able to design, test and implement the kind of PL2S that match the local lifelong learning needs of individuals and social groups. In this way, HEIs are positioned as sustainable, independent and self-managed lifelong learning-centers for the citizens and target groups in their regions. Through the PL2S-centers, the Russian HEIs can act as innovative agencies on issues related to migration, social cohesion, intercultural education, human rights and individual empowerment. They cooperate with civil society, policy and decision makers, offering their tailor-made services to develop a culture of dialogue and peace. Together the HEIs create Intercultural Education Platforms for exchanging knowledge through the organization of seminars, workshops, counselling services and training courses addressed to researchers, students,

representatives of ethnic groups, associations, trainers, policy makers, administrators, practitioners and social workers.

Looking at the present stage of participation of its citizens to lifelong learning – especially in higher education - there are still main deficits apparent:

- a. research on lifelong learning strategies is still marginal; the challenges have only been addressed in research on adult learning groups. Moreover, it has hardly been addressed in university teaching.
- b. Mainly through lifelong learning strategies the opening up of the university still has to be fostered and systematically developed,
- c. Personalising learning by means of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes has to be further improved and implemented in lifelong learning-policies and –curricula of universities, both for the groups of young learners (for preparing their lifelong learning-challenges) and adult learners (for maintaining their lifelong learning-perspectives).

Strengthening VPL-systematics is at the heart of creating a personalised learning concept in HE. VPL aims at helping practitioners to explore pedagogies and practices and develop their own practice, within their own organisational context, for their own specific purposes. VPL is also about making a personal inventory of learning outcomes so far and being able to decide on the need for further learning. Moreover, VPL-systematics are suitable for practitioners (professionals in HE and all learners) operating in lifelong learning contexts and wanting to enhance learning opportunities and VPL experiences.

This book provides the building-blocks for enhancing such a HE-based approach towards VPL-enhanced personalised learning strategies in different chapters:

1. The first chapter aims at raising awareness amongst Russian HEIs on the benefits of PL2S-centres by providing a practical overview of applications of the Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) systematics in national profiles and case-studies with different institutional backgrounds. The objective is to use these practices for raising awareness of the potential of personalised learning services in Russia as well.
2. The second chapter fills in the need for a modular, basic programme for practitioners to prepare for and to strengthen their personalised lifelong learning-approaches. The programme consists of 4 modules that are interlinked. Following up on these modules will result in a personal portfolio, a personal action plan and a reflexive approach to lifelong learning opportunities of adult learners.
3. Chapter 3 provides the building blocks for setting up supporting policy and DIY-teams for PL2S-centres. It offers a blueprint of the tasks, functions and professionalism that such teams should be able to master and demonstrate:

- The design of DIY-teams in HEIs with all functions filled-in (guiders, trainers, manager, assessors, counsellors, developers, researchers).
  - Final design of PL2S-centres in HEIs with business plan and marketing-strategy.
4. The final chapter sets out the course for PL2S-centres for working on their quality assurance system. The objective is to create *a zone of trust* around the activities of a PL2S centre for (1) adult learners, attracted to the perspective of tailor-made learning on HE-levels, (2) university staff designing the kind of tailor made learning programs for adult learners and (3) society with all its organisations (profit and non-profit) that will prosper once adults can invest more effectively and inspired in their skills and competences for the sake of social and economic growth for all.



# Models and Perspectives of PL2S

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# 1

The central question in work package 4 is 'how to activate VPL as an effective instrument for linking competences and credits in lifelong learning that appeals to citizens, strengthens their empowerment and is beneficial to the other stakeholders in society?'. With this question in mind, the ALLMEET project aims at showing the potential of VPL as a matchmaker between these stakeholders and the critical success factors for developing and implementing PL2S centres in Russian HEIs.

PL2S can in the respect of the activities of PL2S centres best be explained in the following statements:

- PL2S opens up the real human potential on the basis of the analysis and validation of personal competences, preferably by documentation in a portfolio.
- PL2S is the process of assessing and valuating/validating personal competences within a specific socio-economic context and offering a personal development strategy.
- Organisations benefit from VPL since individuals develop within their context.
- The PL2S process in general consists of five phases: commitment and awareness of the value of one's competences, validation of personal competences, valuation and/or assessment of these competences, (advice on the) development of one's competences and finally structurally embedding this competence-based development process into a personal or organisation steered and owned policy.

## The perspectives of PL2S

Crucial in practising VPL is acknowledging the self-managing role of the 'empowered' learning individual in making lifelong learning a reality! The active participation of individuals in decisions about form and content of lifelong learning and the implementation of lifelong learning strategies from work-based or school/university-based is supported by PL2S for many perspectives:

- 1 ... *for improving opportunities for empowerment and deployment*: improved empowerment and deployment of individual talent is the most important motivation underlying PL2S. It increases the opportunities for the individual in one's private life

and on the labour market by highlighting the competences he or she already has and how these competences can be deployed and strengthened. This can apply both to the employed as well as to jobseekers. For employers and trade unions, the emphasis lies on improving the employability of employees within the working context.

- 2 ... *for creating a more demand-led labour market*: improving the match between the learning system and the labour system is essential for the organisation of VPL. In order to improve “deployability”, labour market functions must be expressed in terms of competences. These competences must in turn be linked to a demand for learning. The learning system must be receptive, transparent, flexible and demand-led in order to be able to provide the customised approach required.
- 3 ... *for making learning more flexible*: the validation of informally and non-formally acquired competences will boost people’s desire to keep on learning, i.e. will promote lifelong learning, since the accreditation of competences can lead directly to an award of or exemptions for qualifications. The validation approach can also make visible or recognisable existing competences and qualifications within or outside the labour process. This promotes the transparency of the many opportunities for learning. The learner will not only want to learn in a customer-oriented fashion but will also know better than now how, what and when to learn, and why he is learning.
- 4 ... *for optimising other forms of learning*: other learning environments and forms of learning must be formulated and/or utilised more effectively, since VPL also shows which learning environment and/or form of learning is best for the adult learner. This could include (combinations of) on the job training, mentoring/tutoring, independent learning, distance learning, and so on. The validation of competences and qualifications will inevitably lead to an adjustment of the existing qualification structure in professional education. The existing description of exit qualifications in the current qualification structure for professional education does not always tie in with the competences required on the labour market.

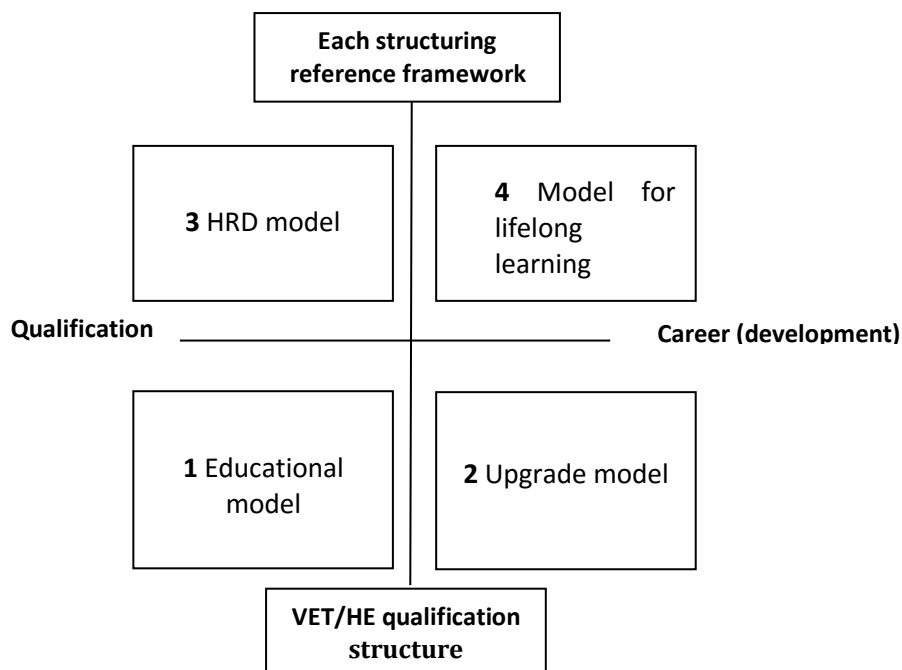
So, it seems there’s a lot to gain with VPL when applied as the instrumentation of PL2S centres in HEIs. Before moving towards the practice of VPL, it is useful to describe a framework for the models of PL2S-enhanced lifelong learning strategies that can be used for describing and analysing practical case studies in a diversity of contexts: across sectors, types of organisations and learning environments; with different target groups, personal approaches and goals; in the diversity of dialogues between the learner, the learning system and the labour system. The ‘practice’ of VPL is revealed in four main strategies.

## **Four models for personalised learning strategies**

Personalising Learning is intended to recognise and to value both visible and invisible skills of people. It is not focused on highlighting the lack of knowledge and skills but precisely the opposite – to take stock of existing knowledge and skills. In PL2S-practices this vision is always acknowledged; the ‘face’ of PL2S may differ however and shows itself in four main models of Validating Learning as:

1. an *educational model* for initiating a specific qualification.
2. an *upgrade model* for determining educational/training needs of organisations or individuals.
3. a *HRD model* for matching employees' competences to organisational aims.
4. a *lifelong learning-model* for supporting personal development.

**Figure 1: the models for Personalising Learning**



Source: Feenstra et al, 2003.

Personalised Lifelong Learning Services (PL2S) are implemented in a variety of ways. Three steps can always be distinguished: identifying competences and raising awareness (recognition), assessing competences (assessment) and planning new learning activities (personal development). Possible implications of these procedures are promoting personal self-management of competences and personal development activities. Apart from building bridges between non-formal and formal learning and between education and the labour market in order to facilitate lifelong learning from the diversity of perspectives on the four models is at the heart of implementing Validating Learning as a principle in VET and HE.

Despite the diversity, a structure can be defined for the demand and supply sides within the broad field of validation-services. The structuring is based on *the objective* (what is

the expected effect?) and *the context* (which reference framework or benchmark is applied?).

Interpreting the two lines in figure 1 as a pair of axes, this gives us four fields in which Validating Prior Learning can be used to serve a specific goal within a particular context: the four models of Personalised Learning.

A short typology of the four models produces the following description:

1. *Personalising Learning as a bridge between VET/HE and the labour market: the educational model*

The function of validating learning in this model is aiming primarily at providing qualification on the levels of VET and HE. The two most important forms in which this model occurs:

- Traditional exemption policy based on previously acquired qualifications, which looks only at prior formal education and the relevant certificates;
- Exemption policy based on broader evidence; competences acquired non-formally or informally are also assessed.

A proper quality of the qualification is the primary benchmark, as it must be *recognized* and *accredited* on the responsibility of the provider (the qualifying educational institution). The goals that applicants aim to achieve by obtaining qualifications, and whether qualification is the best way to reach these goals, are not the provider's primary concern. In this model, the provider supplies a good quality product: qualifications and diplomas for competences acquired elsewhere.

Development is offered in this sphere by providing a customized, educational package.

2. *Personalising Learning as model for acquisition of initial qualifications: the upgrade model*

Validating Learning in this model focuses on the contribution made by accreditation and certification to obtaining or retaining employment. Forms that occur in this sphere are:

- Validation and accreditation of competences that have been acquired (formally and informally) in the context of the occupation pursued by the candidate. The procedure and tools used are tailored as far as possible to the individual work environment.
- Validation and accreditation of competences that have been acquired (formally and informally) in the context of the occupation that the candidate intends to maintain or pursue.

Validating Learning is tailored to the employment goals of the candidate. The competences in his/her specific context are tailored to that objective. Obtaining initial qualifications in an effective and efficient way is at the heart of this model: only the necessary training – if needs be – has to be formulated.



Providers select and design the way in which the whole process is shaped, and within that process educational institutes act as suppliers of all or part of the services. Development is provided by offering customized forms of both formal learning and informal learning.

*3. Personalising Learning as model for upgrading competences within any structured context: the HRD model*

In this model Validating Learning is aiming primarily at the validation of competences (provision of diplomas, qualifications or partial certificates) outside the context of VET/HE.

People acquire competences that cannot always be related to existing VET/HE-qualifications in a variety of ways, in formal and informal learning and/or in work situations. Sector training institutes, company schools and voluntary organizations with a high professional content (sports associations etc.) are examples of organisations (or providers) that work with validation of competences based on other standards. The aim of Validating Learning in this model is to upgrade individuals within their specific context in order to keep them employable and provide them with concrete career opportunities. The provider supplies a good quality product: certificates and diplomas for competences acquired elsewhere. Personal development is offered by providing validation and learning at the workplace.

*4. Personalising Learning as model for lifelong learning*

The fourth model may be viewed as the integrated model within which the other three spheres are subsumed. 'Lifelong learning' outlines the situation of members of our society who are engaged in a process of self-development in line with their own development requirements on the one hand and the demands of their environment on the other. This model shows the learning individual who is developing himself or herself continuously and in that process makes use of the facilities provided for the validating the competences that he or she has acquired personally or professionally. He/she might also use them to make it clear what he or she has to offer to employment organizations and other collaborative efforts.

The many forms in which this model emerges are offered by providers (employment organizations, head-hunters for senior posts, employability coaching) who guide individuals in the development of their portfolios. Where necessary, teachers and trainers act to certify competences. The characteristic feature is that the development programme is determined and controlled by the person in question. While institutions facilitate and provide support, they do not set the direction.

## **PL2S in national practices**

The first level of interpretation of the PL2S-model in its variety of contexts, target groups, modes of learning and learning objectives is on the level of nationally describing and analysing the macro-, meso- and micro-levels in which PL2S operates. This national context can best be described by focusing on the systematics of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) which forms the basis of understanding the kind of services that a PL2S centre can offer. PL2S can therewith best be understood when examining good practices from a variety of countries and case-studies on VPL.

The second level is the level of good practices that illustrate the way to act in the different modes of the PL2S enhanced learning strategies, for the benefit of employees and employers as well as learning facilitators and society as a whole. Several countries present a clear picture of the different national levels in which PL2S can and/or needs to operate in case of a building up PL2S centre in Russian HEIs, based on the systematics of VPL.

### **National practices**

On the first level of practice a number of national practices is introduced. These practices explain the variety in legislation, regulation and stakeholders involved in making PL2S a reality in learning, social and working spheres by focusing on the systematics of VPL. VPL offers the working floor for building up PL2S centres.

### **France**

On a macroeconomic level, the national strategy driving the legislation has started in France since 1934 when a specific procedure was set up to allow “home engineers” working for a firm without having the diploma of “engineer” to reach this diploma. In the seventies, and the improvement of continuous education, it appeared that it would be more economical to set up curriculum according to the needs of the target groups concerned, by taking into account their prior learning. In the eighties a national policy trend proposed to increase the number of people entering into higher education and so open the doors to direct access to Higher Education without having the Baccalauréat (compulsory diploma in the first place). The Law n°92-678 of the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1992 promoted by the Ministry of Labour created the “Validation des acquis professionnels (VAP)”. Ten years after, was adopted a new national legislation with the Law n°2002-73 of the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2002 so-called as “Loi de modernisation sociale “ setting a new paradigm named “Validation des acquis de l’expérience” or VAE.

Since 2002, many points have been integrated in the VPL process focusing on the profiles of the candidates (house keepers, engineers, volunteers...) and/or on the kind of activities (paid, unpaid or voluntary activities such as family duties, volunteering...) in

order to be as comprehensive as possible in the non-formal and informal learning perspective. It can be used as a basis to award full qualifications, rather than just units or “parts” of a full diploma and so can be equivalent to a complete assessment leading to an award of formal qualifications. Five main points are underlined: VPL for access to diploma or certification with a professional goal (Labour Code & Education Code); VPL for access to national diploma of Higher Education (Education Code); VPL for mothers or any person with family duties in order to have an access to a national diploma of Higher Education (Education Code); a special “holiday” is offered in order to follow the process of VPL; a special point is underlined for engineer with a State Diploma.

On a meso-economic level, the national guidance on VPL is provided by the National Vocational Certification Commission (CNCP-[www.cncp.gouv.fr/](http://www.cncp.gouv.fr/)). It was created with the 2002 Law in order to provide information about the process of VPL, to decide the validity of the application, to propose a portfolio or “file” to be filled by the candidate describing her/his experience, to provide information on the “jury” to be constituted. Some documents or practical guides are also provided by trade unions and training bodies. In complement, a public portal on VPL was implemented explaining the different ways to have an access to VPL for VPL candidates but also for organisations in charge of VPL.

The main organisations in charge of implementing VPL in France, on the ground, are: the Association for Vocational training for adults (AFPA) (<http://www.afpa.fr/>) ; the National Employment Agency (<http://www.pole-emploi.fr/>); the VPL network among Universities (<http://francevae.fr/>) ; the regional councils (26 in France) responsible for Employment and Training (list provided on: <http://www.arf.asso.fr/>); the Chambers of Commerce also proposed supports for candidates to VPL (<http://www.cci.fr/>) ; some Ministries are directly involved in VPL such as the Ministry for Education and Higher Education (<http://www.education.gouv.fr/>), a special organisation called GRETA is also responsible for VPL among the National Education ; another Ministry involved in the VPL process is the Ministry for Labour , Employment, Vocational Training and social Dialogue (<http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/>) ; training bodies such as Astrolabe provides training for target groups with special needs.

On a microeconomic level, the information for VPL candidates is accessible mainly after an interview with a counselor at the National Agency for Employment or at the Cité des Métiers. It is not very accessible without any support from a professional in the first place. The information through Internet may be very administrative and the presentation may be partial or unclear for a candidate. Especially the information provided by the CNCP is not so easy to understand or use. The individuals may also obtain support from other candidates to VPL they have met in a professional context but also a family context or social context (association for instance) and from trainers in the training bodies they are paying to support them in the process.

There isn't any training for self-management of competences available but there are many books on competences (Human and social sciences) such as the ones written by G. le Boterf in France. There are also many grids offered on competences such as the

referentials in different economic sectors (référentiels métiers). There is an existing repertory for competences: the so-called ROME (Répertoire Opérationnel des Métiers et de l'Emploi) together with a description of the diploma/certification provided by the RNCP (Répertoire National des Certifications professionnelles). There is also software to identify skills and competences. All these references may be quite inspiring to express one's experience in terms of competences and so to prepare or to implement a VPL process. The VPL process may be financed within the institution in different ways: depending of the profile of the candidate: if they have received a financial support (by the National Agency or the regional council): the financing is given to the institution in charge of the VPL. It may also depend on the nature of the institution: if it is a public authority or receiving public support for the VPL process for instance the Cité des Métiers, the support is free for the candidates

The national perspectives on VPL in France are good in general despite some remaining obstacles. On the one hand, the main barriers perceived by the implementation of VPL are the lack of financing provided by public institutions to support the candidates; the lack of information on the VPL process and sometimes the misinformation provided to the candidates; the lack of motivation or discouragement of the candidates as this is a long and demanding process. The main institutional barriers are, in a learning context, the length of time to have an access to the expected diploma/certification which may be long and uncertain. In a working context, the reward after having achieved a VPL process may also be deceiving for the candidate (no increase of salary nor better position). On the other hand, the main successes reported for VPL: speaking the language of competences; being aware of education/training opportunities; being able to express an experience in terms of competences; being more flexible in a professional career (changing the sector or the position); being more confident in one's professional potential.

## Switzerland

On a macroeconomic level, Validation is admitted by the Federal laws regulating VET and PET<sup>1</sup> as a means for gaining a qualification. The fundamental legal basis for VPL is provided by the Vocational Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA - 13.12.2002) – art. 9, 32 and 33, concerning qualification processes and procedures in VET<sup>2</sup>. This act regulates VET and PET pathways (Tertiary B sector). VPL procedures for VET qualifications are regulated by the National Guidelines for validating prior learning outcomes (NGVPL) ([www.validacquis.ch](http://www.validacquis.ch)). These guidelines were conceived as general guidelines for the development of VPL in any educational sector. They were recently confirmed by the Federal Authorities of VET (BBT/OFFT). Concretely, VET, PET (Tertiary B sector) and higher education (HE) are submitted in Switzerland to different regulations, involving diverse actors and stakeholders. The tertiary A sector (Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences - UAS) is regulated by a Federal law only considering

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<sup>1</sup> VET is Vocational Education & Training ; PET is Professional Education & Training.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/c412\\_10.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/c412_10.html)

UAS. Universities are practically free to self-organize themselves. The act contains some principles that are referring to the need of taking charge of prior learning outcomes, acquired in different settings, opening the road in this way to integrating VPL. A federal act aiming at coordinating HE in this respect is under discussion. Existing rules give a relevant autonomy to the Institutions as far as admission is concerned (including validation of prior learning). Nevertheless, at the moment VPL is only marginally practiced in this sector. A new federal act – expected to be in force in 2015 – will define general rules for the Continuing Training sector, including a general right to accreditation of non-formal learning outcomes, in order to transfer and value them in formal learning pathways.

On a meso-economic level, organizations responsible for VPL are the same organisations that are responsible for managing VET, PET and Tertiary A sector (see the above mentioned legal framework). In VET/PET sectors the overall supervision and coordination of VPL procedures, as far as they are linked to a qualification process including the official validation of qualification profiles, standards and requirements, is managed by the Confederation. Actual implementation of VPL is a responsibility of the cantons with the social partners (OdA – *Organisationen der Arbeitswelt*) being in charge of defining profiles and requirements for each qualification and deciding whether or not to apply VPL procedures. The tertiary sector is practically free in defining its own rules in this respect, on a case-to-case basis. More in general, VPL procedures give the task of deciding issuing of certificates or credits to Commissions representing sector-based social partners and Institutions. These are the same boards that are issuing certificates and diplomas at different levels. Private organizations that launched competence management systems defined their own rules for issuing certificates, normally involving their management board.

On a microeconomic level, as far as accompaniment to the learners is concerned, Cantons are responsible for assuring information and guidance, but accompaniment is left to individual decisions (applicants are free to decide whether use it or not). There's a great offer of accompaniment measures assured by professional coaches, trainers and tutors, VPL specialists, normally acting as private providers. Sometimes accompaniment is partially or totally financed by public authorities, in different forms (demand or supply oriented). A certain number of NGOs are active in accompaniment, mainly addressing specific target groups (such as migrants, disadvantaged groups, etc.). In general, however, accompaniment is not mandatory; according to the NGVPL the constitution of a personal dossier (phase 2 of VPL process) is under the responsibility of individuals, who can autonomously decide to claim for support or not. Beyond information and first advice, this support is normally provided by private actors (institutes, centres, etc.). Sometimes – at least considering VET qualifications - support is financed by Cantonal authorities and by Bilateral Funds managed by the social partners, considering HE accompaniment. Financing VPL is normally a responsibility of applicants.

As far as the threats for VPL are concerned, the following barriers have to be overcome.

A rigid focus on structured and complex pathways (Quality Assurance) could hamper the Multidimensional VPL legitimization (Complexity discourage learners → traditional paths conceived as easier). Thinking VPL as an alternative to continuous vocational training. Marginality of VPL in the political debate

Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for VPL in Switzerland. We might underline the following points. There is a slow but stable growth, enlargement of educational sectors adopting VPL. We can notice a growing sensitivity, institutional engagement, implementation of existing legal frameworks. The point is to make validation visible. More information should be provided to potential users, also through NGOs and stakeholders. The idea would be to make implementation strategies multidimensional and more flexible. VPL should become a main component of a lifelong learning perspective (integration between formal and informal learning) with methodological and didactical innovation.

## **Slovenia**

On a macroeconomic level, there are three main acts that govern VPL in different areas of education: National Vocational Qualifications Act, Higher Education Act and Higher Vocational Education Act. The procedure of assessment and validation of national vocational qualifications is carried out in accordance with the National Vocational Qualifications Act.

The procedure of Validation of non-formal knowledge on the level of tertiary education is carried out by individual faculties or by individual higher vocational schools, in accordance with the Higher Education Act and on the basis of accepted criteria. The higher vocational schools carry out the procedure in accordance with the Higher Vocational Education Act and on the basis of accepted criteria (determined by the Common guidelines and standards in procedures for validation of previously acquired knowledge in higher vocational education).

In the year 2000, the National Vocational Qualifications Act (NVQA) was passed. With the acceptance of this act – which introduced a system which provides access to nationally recognized certificates, enabling validation of prior learning (certification system) – actually began the development of the VNIL. The NVQA regulates the procedures and bodies for the preparation and adoption of vocational standards and of catalogues of standards for professional knowledge and skills – which are developed on the basis of the vocational standards and determine the knowledge and skills required to acquire NVQs – and conditions and procedures for the acquisition of NVQs. It was first amended in 2006; in 2009 the novel of this act was passed. This novel is consequence of the results of the permanent evaluation of the system of NVQs, which is in charge of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training

On a meso-economic level, the responsibility for development and implementation of processes of validation of non-formal and informal learning is in hands of different institutions. The most important are the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and

the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport. The main development organization is the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training. There are also other institutions with important roles, mainly on the operative level - the National Examinations Centre, chambers, enterprises/employers, the Employment Service of Slovenia (or local employment services), educational institutions, including universities, and trade unions.

The validation of non-formal knowledge on the level of tertiary education is carried out by individual faculties in accordance with the Higher Education Act and on the basis of accepted criteria or by individual higher vocational schools in accordance with the Higher Vocational Education Act and on the basis of accepted criteria (determined by the Common guidelines and standards in procedures for validation of previously acquired knowledge in higher vocational education). Until now the most in this field was done by the Faculty of Management Koper. As a member of the University of Primorska this faculty performs the validation of non-formal knowledge on the level of tertiary education in accordance with rules passed by the Senate of the University of Primorska in the year 2009 and which are also the newest rules of this kind in Slovenia. However, the newest regulation in the field of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Slovenia are the above mentioned "Common guidelines and standards in procedures for validation of previously acquired knowledge in higher vocational education", passed by the Commission for accreditation of higher education study programmes in 2010. On a microeconomic level, information for candidates in relation to VPL is provided mainly by institutions themselves, on their web pages. There is also word of mouth and information from candidates that already did it successfully. The information is accessible if the candidate is aware of this opportunity but there is no systematic approach for promotion of the approach and for awareness building. The main motivation for interest in VPL is the actual validation of prior learning to shorten the length of the studies or training. This is mostly interest of individuals while organisations tend to avoid this as it is additional burden to their routine. The institutional barriers to VPL address two dimensions, learning and working. In learning the main obstacle is the length of the process for validation, and lack of belief in results, while in working there is in particular the lower value of the acquired qualification using this route comparing to the formal education. An important issue is also that it is not recognised in the collective agreement (provided by trade unions) and automatically having a lower status. However, there are also some additional personal barriers: lack of awareness of VPL, lack of information, lack of confidence and lack of understanding of the process of VPL.

There are some threats on the VPL process, to be overcome. The social value of non-formal knowledge is low. The impact of the formal education sphere is too big. The validation of non-formal knowledge is not contained in collective agreements and doesn't have the same value as formal education and degrees together with a non-validation (of national vocational) qualifications by employers.

There are still many opportunities for VPL in Slovenia with the growth of the VPL in both

VET and HE sectors. VPL becomes an opportunity and not a threat to formal education. Experiences of adult learners provide an added value to the teaching and learning process in educational institutions. The legal framework follows the development and enhances the validation of prior learning. The financing of education doesn't discriminate between formal and non-formal/informal education. Validation and validation procedures become less complex and more flexible. The focus of validation moves from the validation of theoretical knowledge towards validation of competences.

## Romania

On a macroeconomic level, validation and validation of vocational competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts are performed by the assessment centers authorized by the National Authority of Qualifications – Adult Professional Training (department) (NCQAPT) in accordance with the *Procedure of the assessment and certification of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal contexts (Procedure)*, approved through the Joint Order no. 4543/468/2004 of the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sport and of the Minister of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family, with subsequent modifications and completions (3329/81/2005). <http://www.anc.gov.ro>. However, such procedure is not yet formally implemented for access to higher education as well. The National Qualification Framework adopted in Nov. 2013 (H.G. 918/2013) is a good reference for implementing the VLP at all levels, but the National Authority for Qualification decided to limit the VPL only till 3rd NQF level. Thus occupations like “trainer” for instance, possible to get validated previously are now not possible, unless it is about a trainer till level 3 of qualification. Therefore, a lot of centres of validation of competences aimed for occupations related to higher education are now closed down. The National Authority for Qualification is coordinating the whole process, and also the occupational standards based on which the validation process can take place are listed on their webpage.

On a meso-economic level, National Authority of Qualifications offers counseling for the assessment centers. They are responsible for the (re)accreditation of each evaluation center, as well as for the accreditation of the evaluators of competences. On their webpage is the national register or the assessment centers, together with the occupations there are accredited for. Staff working in adult education institutions and assessors from the assessment centers guides the candidates-local level.

On a microeconomic level, the Law of education 1/2011 mention the possibility of VPL for upper levels of qualification. Therefore, universities, according with their willingness, and based on their autonomy, might try to implement such procedures. But such attempt might be only a bottom-up initiative, as formally such service is not foreseen for higher education. The recently elaborated methodologies of the ministry of education for implementing the Law of education, regarding career counseling and the one regarding integrated services for the disable persons cover the possibility of VPL as well



(www.edu.ro) However, the VPL is not financially supported (no active measure of employment), and the procedures are sometimes too bureaucratic (see Sava/Crasovan/Siliman 2012). The lack of information about this possibility is also a serious barrier. It might be possible that the Law of volunteering (2014) stipulating the validation of voluntary work to increase the use of VPL as well, this being a helpful stipulation for the elderly people also, while striving to access to higher education, to labor market.

The VPL process has had a good development in Romania in the last 10 years, since it was implemented. But one can say that in the last two years, it is a slight decreasing, and the National Authority for Qualification pays a less attention to the further development of this experience than the former National Adult Training Board. Surprisingly, the adoption of the National Qualification Framework (2013), and the reunification of the national agencies within the National Authority for Qualification, meant to make a better connection between the different levels of qualification, did not lead to a higher use of VPL. Further legislation is needed in this respect, to ensure the use of this certification path for all levels of qualification. It is better to say “integration” of the different legislative stipulations, and their better articulation and clarification, as stipulations exists even in the Law of education (2011), but not detailed till the end. However, the awareness for VPL has been created in these 10 years, even more information is needed about this alternative path, and also further improvements of the methodologies for VPL, for increasing its quality and credibility. As a positive trend, the efforts for elaborating the national strategy for VPL, as well as the ex-ante evaluation and proposal for the 2014-2020 ESF programs are specifically including the stipulations for VPL, hoping therefore in the enlarged use. The universities also, step by step are increasingly aware and open to such solution, and small bottom up initiatives can be noticed, contributing to the slightly improved situation.

## **South Korea**

Although the Republic of Korea has a Korea Qualification Framework (KFA, National Qualification Framework in Republic of Korea), VPL has not connected to KFA. Republic of Korea has yet established a nation-wide framework for VPL and legal basis, there is no visible policy and process related to VPL at work.

The National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) and the Korea National Open University (KNOU) are interested in applying the practices of VPL in higher education on a pilot basis.

In addition, some universities that have been involved in Lifelong Learning-Centered University, a government-sponsored project, have implemented VPL in order to offer an opportunity for the adult on a pilot basis. In 2011, 25 colleges and universities in order to be designated as a Lifelong Learning-Centered University and, eventually getting government funding declared that they would apply the notion and practices of VPL to their credit system. Among them, only three colleges and universities actually

implemented the practices of VPL. The colleges and universities of Lifelong Learning-Centered University project are neither legally nor practically connected with KFA and any type of national authorities. Yet, there is no coordinating body which is responsible for launching and operating a nation-wide VPL system in Republic of Korea. In particular, while the government agencies and universities somewhat recognise the significance and practical use of VPL, other stakeholders such as trade unions, industries, and sector councils have shown little interest in VPL.

On a pilot study base, several universities are operating VPL for adult learners; their target groups vary. In case of Lifelong Learning-Centered University project, there are two tracks: a degree programme and a non-degree programme. While adult learners with secondary diploma and those who wish to obtain a second HE degree are eligible for a degree programme, females with career discontinuity, retirees, the elderly are eligible for a non-degree programme. For an individual learner, only an individual department at a college or university provides a limited information about VPL such as what they need to prepare for an oral interview and presentation and what kind of documents they have to hand it. Regarding a Korean pilot study, we interviewed North Korean (NK) refugees in South Korea. As NK refugees have not brought any document that proves their educational attainment, South Korean government adopted a policy to validate their education from North Korea. It is by and large a summative-validation of formal education. There is no validation of non-formal and informal learning yet but we found reflective- and formative-validation of non-formal and informal learning are indeed a necessary instruments to empowering NK refugees.

Since the Ministry of Employment and Labour announced that VPL will be employed by the year of 2017, there is an increasing possibility that VPL will be implemented in Korea HE institutions. In addition, some researchers and government officials are well aware that, for successfully putting a pledge into effect, several critical issues must be addressed and clarified such as training VPL professional for supporting individual candidates, preparing relevant documents and application process, proving benefits from participating in VPL for individual learners, universities, industries and other stakeholders, sharing the cost for operating VPL.

## **The Netherlands**

A national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Netherlands started up in 1998. Under the umbrella-term 'EVC' – which stands for 'Erkenning van Verworven Competenties' or in English 'Validation of Prior Learning' - such validation was [and still is] intended to take stock of existing knowledge and skills: in other words, rather than being half empty, Dutch VPL takes the view that the glass is half full! This motto is based on a number of basic principles underlying this kind of VPL.

On a macro-economic level, different phases in the development of the validation system in the Netherlands can be distinguished. Until 2006, the main objective was to

encourage the take up of VPL. Government, schools/colleges/universities and social partners focused on creating favorable circumstances for developing and implementing EVC in as many contexts as possible: in work, in voluntary work, in reintegration and job-seeking, in education and training. This approach was the initial responsibility of the Dutch Knowledge Centre on VPL (' Kenniscentrum EVC') and focused on the change of the learning culture in general. From 2006 a greater focus was put on quality assurance to increase the accessibility, transparency and to guarantee the summative effects by means of certification or qualification. The role of the Kenniscentrum EVC changed from the overall responsibility for all features of VPL to supporting the quality-focus. Since 2013, a new change of strategy for validation is taking place in relation with the government's drive to move towards 'a participation-society' in which all stakeholders have to take ownership and responsibility for their own role in (lifelong) learning. Focus will be on using VPL as a formalised instrument for Validation of Learning Outcomes linked to not only national qualifications but also too sector standards (sector level training, or in Dutch post-initial or non-formal learning). This means an enlargement of the scope of the two formal terms 'Ervaringsprofiel' and 'Ervaringscertificaat'. The new policy is expected to be presented in early 2014 and should broaden validation opportunities for Dutch citizens. The outcome of this reorientation is closely linked to making EVC a successful tool in both learning and working processes and is aiming at sharing ownership of the method and its instruments, such as the portfolio, the assessment and validation. From 2013, the focus in the government's role is changing towards overseeing the quality of and access to VPL towards a system focusing on validating learning outcomes for three VPL-perspectives: VPL for formally validating a personal portfolio, without linking it directly to a national qualification standard; VPL for career steps on the labour market and access to non-formal training (sector standards) ; VPL for career steps aiming at formal learning (national qualifications)

This broad focus on the formalised use of VPL entails a major change in the national strategy, since with this triple focus the balance of responsibilities in a multi-stakeholder involvement in VPL can differ, the learning objectives as supported by VPL can also differ and the outcome of VPL can have both a formal and non-formal learning impact (further learning). These three forms of VPL can be considered as different kinds of skills audits since they focus on the validation of prior - formal, non-formal and informal - learning outcomes for the reason of finding out if there is a possible link between a personal learning biography and a social-economic purpose in society. In the Netherlands it would be better to speak of a competence-audit since competences embrace skills, knowledge and attitude, including ambition, as denominators.

On a meso-economic level, responsibilities are divided amongst a diversity of stakeholders. Firstly, the government focuses on the infrastructure and on the quality of VPL and the VPL system. The government stimulates the use of VPL with a communication campaign on the *Ervaringscertificaat*, a fiscal facility for VPL, the *Kenniscentrum EVC*, platforms with experts and companies, research and broadening the scope of VPL. With the exception of the fiscal facility, these tasks are shared with the social partners (the 'covenant-partners').

Secondly, the social partners in the Netherlands traditionally negotiate with the government on all aspects concerning the regulation of the labour market. This includes division of responsibilities in the learning market; initial education and training of jobseekers are the primary responsibility of the government and the training of employees is the primary responsibility of the social partners. This therefore also affects the introduction of VPL-systems for employees and job seekers. The social partners are so-called 'covenant-partners', meaning they take responsibility together with the government for promoting and maintaining a high quality national system of VPL. Social partners stimulate the use of VPL through collective labour agreements. Employees have the right to VPL in certain collective labour agreements. In collective labour agreements the social partners in specific sectors also agree that Training and Development funds can be used for the valuation of personal competences of employees. Sometimes they even agree on using the fund for giving learning vouchers to the employees. The Training and Development fund provides the portfolio models, internal assessors and guidance. Since the end of the 1990s, many sectors (e.g. house painting industry, meat industry, construction industry, process industry, education, public services, the care sector), have set up initiatives regarding VPL at their (sector) level. In most cases social partners, sector organisations and accredited VPL-providers are involved in setting up VPL-procedures.

Thirdly, the education associations (The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen), the Netherlands Association of Vocational Education and Training Centres (MBO-raad), the Council for Agricultural Education Centres (AOC-raad) and the Open University stimulate the use and the quality of the *Ervaringscertificaat*. The Foundation for Cooperation on Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (Stichting Samenwerking Beroepsonderwijs Bedrijfsleven SBB) steers the agreements on the degree requirements of VET which are set out in qualification dossiers. Educational institutions in VET base their qualifications on these dossiers. The dossiers are used for tasks in vocational guidance, formulating vocational training (internships) and linking in to the *Ervaringscertificaat*.

On a micro-economic level, a VPL-procedure in the Netherlands always contains more or less the same steps (Duvekot, 2009; Kenniscentrum EVC, 2009): Information and advice for the candidate, the employer or other organisation, etc. ; Intake of the individual and making individual arrangements linked to the individual's defined career goals. The candidate decides on the choice of qualification and whether to start the EVC procedure or not ; Recognition of competences: portfolio (supported by the coach) ; Validation of competences/assessment (by the assessors) ; VPL report: Description of results and accreditation (by the assessor), compared with the individual career goals, together with advice on further personal development in the direction of the individual defined career goals.

A candidate, who wants to reflect his/her prior learning outcomes in relation to a qualification, has to fill in a portfolio (showcase) in which s/he can demonstrate how his/her learning experiences match with the competences in the qualification s/he has chosen. In an assessment s/he is judged and is given a report (Certificate of Experience)

stating all the learning outcomes that match with the learning outcomes that are defined for the chosen qualification. With this Certificate of Experience (*Ervaringscertificaat*) s/he can turn to an awarding body (the exam committee) of a school or university. In this way it becomes clear that the outcome of a VPL procedure is foremost an official advice for the candidate with which s/he can go to the awarding body. Only the awarding body is allowed to turn the advice into an official exemption. This awarding body can decide on exemptions in the learning programme. On the basis of these exemptions it is possible to achieve a (partial or full) qualification.

Usually, a mix of methods is used in VPL procedures because every situation and every individual is different. The model illustrated in the diagram below describes some examples of methods that can be used in EVC procedures: portfolio-assessment (of and for learning), criterion-oriented interviews, observations, and other testing.

As a conclusion, on the basis of analysing the development of VPL in the Netherlands the following general conclusions can be drawn: VPL has everything to do with the use of the possibilities that lifelong learning has to offer to individuals and organisations in the fields of employability and empowerment. Organising responsibilities in VPL is a crucial part in this: the individual is in charge of putting together and maintaining the portfolio. The portfolio is the basis for the formation of a lifelong learning strategy; the organisation is responsible for asking the organisation's competence questions and to facilitate investment in its own learning employees; the learning facilities (professional education, schooling and training) must be able to respond to the various learning needs of the learning individual, in other words be able to offer educational programmes that have been custom-made both structurally and in content.

There is support for the idea that the individual takes a central place in establishing, designing and implementing lifelong learning. This investment in human capital calls for co-makemanship of the learner him/herself. At all times the principle process here is the process of moving towards the desired learning goals, both when determining an individual's starting situation and during an individual's development course.

The portfolio is a powerful way to give structure and content to this co-makemanship. Guidance from within the labour market organisation could be a welcome push in this direction by offering: training in self-management of competencies. This is a useful way to start the formation of the desired portfolio help in putting together a portfolio in the work situation. An expert on the subject, easily approachable, who can offer help in designing a portfolio, is of great value in actually realising portfolio formation, self-assessment tools, for instance, to help determine the competence and ambition level. This could be of great use in determining goals and direction in lifelong learning.

In the light of the different goals needed to make a start in lifelong learning, further research is needed into the motives for and the desired design of lifelong learning strategies. The variety of lifelong learning models (educational, upgrade, HRD and career models) can then be taken up on the basis of their own dynamics, in which the three actors (see 1a, b, c) can deal with varying responsibilities.

VPL as a bridge between the individual/organisation and professional education/schooling only becomes relevant when concrete learning questions have been

formulated, which then need to be answered by professional education/schooling. The basis for all learning questions is, after all, deciding what the starting situation of the individual is. In addition, on the basis of a specific learning question a lifelong learning trajectory is offered; this could be a diploma trajectory but could also be enrichment learning in the form of modules, action learning, distance education, work guidance or otherwise.

VPL may serve as a bridge between the competence needs of, on the one hand, the organisation and, on the other hand, the individual. This calls for two forms of VPL: Synchronizing competence systems of labour market organisations on the one hand, with their competence management or HRM, and on the other hand schools and institutes, with their competence-focused curricula and training programmes. The goal of this synchronization is to determine which competencies and learning environments can be added to the portfolio; in this way the portfolio of the working individual can be fed and upgraded from within the HRM and the (professional) educational and schooling system. This form of VPL is top-down oriented and strives for a harmony between competence systems in the areas of supply and demand.

Through this synchronisation the learner can make clearer choices with regards to enriching his/her portfolio. The appreciation and recognition the learning individual seeks (partially dependent on the goals that have been set) can then be supported by two competence systems. VPL can provide concrete indications of what the most appropriate learning route for personal development is. In doing so, they can also make use of the competence acquisition that can be supported from within the own organisation or through external organisations. This form of VPL is bottom-up oriented VPL and looks for the balance between personal development questions and the most appropriate learning content and design.

## **Finland**

On a macroeconomic level, the Finnish system is connected to the European level development of Higher Education (HE) as well as national higher educational regulations. In legislation related to education VPL is understood as a learner's subjective right. These regulations take into account all students including diverse learners. Recommendations about implementation of VPL and efficient ways of recognizing prior learning when students move from further to higher education are in place. In addition, national and international good practices of VPL as well as recommendations for common principles are highlighted and disseminated

On a meso-economic level, in Finland, VPL practices exist within educational institutions i.e. schools, colleges and higher education institutions as a fixed part of educational system and curriculum. Each institution determines how VPL practices are implemented and who is responsible for them. VPL quality-assurance is connected with the quality system of educational organizations.

General information about VPL and curriculum are available on universities' web sites, and it is also provided by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish Board of Education.

Pedagogical management team of the university offers guidelines for VPL. Decisions relating to VPL are made by lecturers / tutors, in some universities also by student counsellors or head of programmes. These procedures are indicated in the University's Degree Regulation, and are assessed by universities quality management systems and student feedback practices. Amongst the latest developments and initiatives concerning VPL in Finnish HE has been understanding work as an element of the learning process.

On a microeconomic level, in Finnish HE organisations VPL processes underpin the idea that not only the learning experience itself but the outcomes, application and reflection of prior learning to professional life are even more important. All students have the right but no obligation to apply for VPL. The student may apply for accreditation of higher education studies completed elsewhere or competences he/she has acquired in other ways.

Students have a possibility to discuss recognition of prior learning with their tutors or student counsellors. Support is provided by lecturers/tutors and student counsellors at the educational institutions. Considering the target groups (SEN and 50+) three important elements were noticed. Firstly, tutors should be able to allocate enough time for personal guidance and discussions to help students to recognize their skills and competences as well as areas of learning that they find challenging. Secondly, special attention should be paid to inclusive pedagogy. Teaching and learning should be student-centred and relevant to adult learners. Thirdly, the VPL process in itself should be clear and straightforward to both tutors and students.

As a conclusion, the VPL system as a whole poses great challenges for higher educational institutions, pedagogical solutions and individuals. It requires particular flexibility from educational providers at the time when resources are already scarce. It is important to develop modules into which the VPL system is incorporated and make sure that these are up-to-date in order to guarantee a high quality VPL system. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the approach, idea, tools and methods of VPL are important elements in student guidance systems. It is also useful to think about the steps of the learning process more widely.

The same principles should be applied to all students; VPL methods and procedures are likely to be as applicable for all learners as they are for other target groups. The successes or failures of any target group can offer insights into where VPL as a whole stands. Amongst the latest developments and initiatives concerning VPL in Finnish HE, work has been acknowledged as a factor in the learning process. In addition, co-operation with educational and work organizations will be important in relation to VPL, especially when first of all skills and competences are highlighted and not the PL2S process itself.

## Denmark

On a macroeconomic level, the validation of non-formal and informal learning has been on the policy agenda in Denmark in about 20 years. The key legislation on validation of prior learning in Denmark is Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007, entitled “Development of the recognition of prior learning in adult education and continuing training” (Udbygning af anerkendelse af realkompetence på voksen og efteruddannelsesområdet mv.). The legislation has been effective from 1 August 2007.

The legislation gives each individual (from 18 or 25 years depending of the educational field), the right to have his/her prior learning experiences validated in relation to specific goals of adult education and continuing training. It focuses on the needs of the individual and aims to make the process as accessible and flexible as possible. Developing practice in validation takes time. The key points for strengthening the effort are: Further developing the use of RKV/IKV at the educational institutions / VEU centres (adult education and training) ; Making the recognition of prior learning a task for relevant stakeholders: companies, job centres, unemployment funds, trade unions, educational guidance offices, third sector ; Creating a holistic approach  
Supporting the effort to strengthen the recognition of prior learning and making the effort more visible

Strengthening the co-operation between central stakeholders in the work relating to RKV, i.e. educational institutions, job centres, unemployment funds, trade unions, third sector etc. ; Working for a cohesive perspective for education, jobs and employment ; Improving the quality and the professionalism of the work for recognition of prior learning ; Contributing to the overall awareness and development of concepts and understanding in theory and in practice ; Supporting development initiatives related to ordinary educational activities.

On a meso-economic level, validation is developed in an interlinked process within a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. Great differences still remain between the educational institutions with regards to their level of activity. Some institutions are very active, others to a lesser extent. Different circumstances influence how each individual institution treats the subject of validation. It is the educational institution which is responsible for conducting prior learning assessment on the basis of the educational standards, admission requirements and competence objectives against which the candidate wishes to be evaluated. After identifying one or more study objectives or admission requirements against which a candidate is to be evaluated, the educational institution is responsible for the specific counselling and guidance relating to the process of prior learning assessment. Other bodies can be in charge of information, identification, guidance and counselling, in a broader perspective, in the phase leading up to the assessment process (“the pre-phase”). These include trade unions, employers’ associations, job centres, unemployment insurance funds, civic education institutions, study committees and “*eVejledning*” (online guidance service), who can all take care of this part of the process and often in collaboration with the educational institution.



Focus in the “pre-phase” is on establishing objectives, identifying needs, direction and wishes. Among other things, companies can do so by defining new tasks and future business plans with matching competence profiles. For individuals, both employees and jobseekers, this part of the process may include documentation of what they have previously learnt. For both companies and individuals, the pre-phase helps clarify and identify objectives and the direction for career development, and it helps create a potential plan for the types of formal education which would be relevant in future. If, in “the pre-phase”, a need for formal education is identified, and the individual candidate possesses knowledge, skills and competencies within the area concerned, without having any documentation to the fact, prior learning assessment may be relevant. In the processes of documentation and assessment at the educational institutions, the documentation work is narrowed against the specific educational objectives and requirements. Both the applicant and the educational institution contribute to the documentation process. According to Danish law, the assessment must be conducted solely by the educational institution offering the study programmes to which a specific assessment is related.

On a microeconomic level, educational institutions are obliged to inform the public about recognition of prior learning on their websites. But there is still an inadequate level of information about the possibilities of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark and too many people are not aware of the opportunities available to them. This is an issue that needs to be addressed by the Government, social partners and stakeholders. A counselling web portal provides general information about prior learning ([www.ug.dk](http://www.ug.dk)). The guidance institutions provide information, support clarification and documentation concerning the validation process, and provide guidance to the individual about choice of further learning and career. In the fall of 2012, the Danish Ministry of Education launched an information campaign on prior learning assessments (RKV). The purpose of this campaign was to increase the awareness of and promote the use of RKV. The campaign was carried out by the VEU centres at the local level. Both online and offline platforms were used to communicate the campaign's messages. The idea behind using different online platforms was to increase the visibility of the campaign and to generate traffic to the websites of the VEU centres. The campaign had a positive effect and improved the awareness of the potential of RKV considerably.

As a conclusion, the SWOT analysis applied to VPL in Denmark could be synthesized as follows.

As far as strengths are concerned: widening access to education and learning and a method for competence development; value for the society, organisations and individuals. Improving opportunities for employability and empowerment.

As far as opportunities are concerned: a more demand-led labour market; a more flexible and tailor made learning culture; a lifelong learning approach to optimise different forms of learning; To value VPL in respect to society, organisations and individuals.

As far as weaknesses are concerned: VPL is not economical sustainable; VPL is time-consuming; Competences for VPL staff need to be developed; the collaboration between stakeholders is weak. The VPL in practice is not yet standardized; the collaboration between educational institutions to build common methods is weak. VPL is still relatively unknown by stakeholders and individuals.

As far as threats are concerned: the economic investment in VPL is reduced because of the economic crisis; the need for competence developments is not a priority; collaboration and synchronizing competence systems in different organisations and educational systems are not developed.

## **United Kingdom**

On a macroeconomic level, the population of the UK is around 63 million, with 53 million people (84%) living in England. The 126 universities in the UK are divided among its four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; some laws are shared across all four countries, while some differ from country to country and education policy is largely devolved to each of the four countries. Whilst the UK was one of the original countries that signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999, many universities have not fully aligned their practices to the Bologna process; the terms 'Accrediting Prior Learning' (APL) and 'Accrediting Prior Experience and Learning' (APEL) tend to be the terms used, rather than VPL. Students who do not gain enough qualifications at school for HE entry can enter HE through Access to Higher Education courses. In the UK, aspects of VPL are influenced and affected by the dialogue and legislation surrounding inclusion, diversity and equality. Nevertheless, current education policy in England is highly regressive, being subject to neo-conservative influence.

For a pilot, 8 representative Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were sampled and a synthesis of the UK legal, cultural and policy framework relevant to VPL suggests that all HEIs adhere to anti-discrimination law and policy used to protect people from discrimination, but they do not all refer explicitly to specific laws in their policy documentation (for example, Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 1998). Nevertheless, all HEIs have plans in place and they act to promote equality and diversity policy and legislation and to protect diverse groups of people whom the legislation is designed to protect. All sampled HEIs have procedures in place to check legal compliance at management level in regard to the legal framework on VPL.

A government paper issued by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills in 2011 stated an intention to put 'Students at the Heart of the System', yet student fees have tripled in England since the release of the paper and socio-economic disparity in England is widening at an alarming rate.

On a meso-economic level, VPL tends to be administered in a top-down, rather than bottom-up manner in UK HEIs but the nature of that administration is otherwise variable. Institutions require data from candidates, though the precise nature of the evidence that students must submit is highly variable, according to individual institutions. Nevertheless, most HEIs want data that are current, valid, authentic,

sufficient to cover the learning outcomes of a unit/units or parts of these and relevant to the module for which the candidate seeks VPL. Responsibility for the management of VPL varies between HEIs, for example, it may be an Admissions Policy committee, a student and academic services department, a university accreditation board, the programme leader and admissions tutor or the faculty management team. Equally, each HEI designates different groups or individuals to make the decision to award VPL; these vary between an accreditation panel comprising programme leaders, a Head of Department, and a committee of an APL tutor with an Admissions team. Support and guidance for candidates seeking VPL also varies across HEIs in the UK. Whilst one HEI has a specified APEL champion who advises, mentors students producing portfolios, supports the assessment and validation process, sits on the APL Sub-group and provides training for students in the process, this is rare. All institutions provide some support in online form and most additionally provide student advisors or programme leaders and teams assume the support role for VPL. Admissions Appeals processes are generally available for appeals, and in some cases, candidates can resubmit their evidence and request for VPL.

On a microeconomic level, the UK target groups were 50+ and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). Among the 50+ group, the main motivation for interest in VPL was personal development; the most significant institutional barrier to VPL was that some HEIs do not transfer qualifications and experience between disciplines but personal barriers were highly variable, according to individuals. Most 50+ candidates identified that their best source of support when making applications for VPL is the HEI though none in this group saw themselves as an independent, strong, co-producer in the VPL process, possibly because the HEI holds greater power in the UK. Whilst there was no evidence of cost incurred by individuals in the VPL process, successes reported by the 50+ group for VPL were highly variable. They included: release from study time, fulfilment of ambition and access to HE for non-traditional students. Amongst the SEND group, the main motivation for interest in VPL was the need for recognition, especially in a regulated activity such as teaching or social work. For this group, institutional barriers to VPL included the HEI's weak retention of support staff, poor employability post-university and lack of access to support services in the HEI. Personal barriers to HEI were highly variable, according to individuals. Only one respondent in this group saw herself as an independent, strong, co-producer in the VPL process, again, possibly because the HEI holds greater power in the UK. Similarly to the 50+ group, for the SEND group, there was no evidence of cost incurred by individuals in the VPL process. Successes reported by the 50+ group for VPL were different for individuals but a few patterns emerged: VPL may enable a SEND student to complete a nationally recognised degree and make a career move, give access to specialist support tutors for academic and moral support, lead to additional time to complete and submit assignments and complete tasks and may provide access to a laptop and software.

As a conclusion, England is one of four countries that comprise the UK. The four countries adopt different approaches to their education policies but England's population is the most significant, at around 84% of the UK population as a whole.

English policy indicates that England is keen to promote higher education with the student at its heart, yet in practice, unlike the other UK countries and most EU countries, England has seen student fees increase threefold since 2012. Moreover, England is a country where socio-economic disparity dominates and this is on an upward trajectory. Alongside this context, the UK signed up to the Bologna Declaration in 1999, but many of its universities have never fully aligned their practices to the Bologna process. Equally, while UK HEIs employ managers to assure legislative compliance with regard to equal opportunities, in regard to VPL per se, individual HEIs tend to retain considerable autonomy in decision-making, supporting and managing the process, which makes transparency difficult: in other words, the UK VPL model is decidedly top-down. In the current policy context, it is difficult to see how a bottom-up model may emerge change in the next decade, particularly in England where education policy is currently highly regressive and influenced by neo-conservatism. All of this indicates that rather than a move towards increased VPL as part of an expanding learning society, in England – the most populated country of the UK - we are likely to see a narrowing of HE participation, and if this continues, potentially a return to elitism.

## **Case-studies**

Several case studies also shine their light on the many ways PL2S can and/or needs to operate in case of a multi-targeted VPL-approach. In these cases the link with the four models for lifelong learning strategies becomes clear. The target groups of the diverse *pilot*-projects reported here, were and are central in these cases: 50+ employees, migrants and special needs groups.

### **Rockwool, the Netherlands**

The Rockwool Group in the Netherlands is the world's leading supplier of innovative products and systems based on stone wool. This case offers a good example of the HRD-model, using also the benefits of the Educational model.

Since the 1990s learning is a key element in the human resource management-policy of Rockwool. In the plant in the Netherlands this HRM-policy can be regarded as an on-going process of linking learning and working for each individual employee by means of competence-steered assessment methods and work-based development-programmes:

- Assessment is considered as a summative and a formative method for enhancing performance of not only the employees for the company but also of the company for the employees.
- Learning goals are oriented towards employability and qualification on the one hand for strengthening the working-processes, and on the other hand for creating empowerment and opening up internal/external career-opportunities for the employees.

- Development is focused on facilitating learning trajectories that are beneficial for employability, personal development and internal/external career-steps of the employees.
- VPL is the method for linking the potential of employees with the need for competences. It is utilised as a multi-targeted method for sustainable HRM.

On April 11, 2014 Rockwool was awarded in Rotterdam, the Netherlands at the 1<sup>st</sup> Global VPL Biennale the International Prize 2014 for Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. ([www.vplbiennale.com](http://www.vplbiennale.com)).

## Immigrant women, Switzerland

An interesting Swiss case on multidimensional and multi-target approaches to VPL (Bednarz & Bednarz, 2014a) focused on the group of HE-qualified immigrant women, having difficulties in valuing their prior learning and competences in the local job market. The case analysed three different aims addressed by activating a VPL path: *individual empowerment*, through the self-recognition of competences, as a means for better planning redeployment and spend one's own skills and competences in the job market; *access to lifelong learning*, through the valuation of prior learning as a means for overcoming barriers and reducing the duration of a formal tertiary education path; and finally *access to an official qualification*, as a means for achieving visibility and accountability of skills and competences via recognition and Recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Different VPL modes, often coexisting ones, could be identified in practices focused on:

- *reflective VPL* comes always to the fore, as far as the reflective elaboration of life, work and learning biographies of individuals is the basis for building up personal portfolios and for designing action plans
- *formative VPL*, enables learners decide what/where/how to spend their prior learning, both for valuing it in the job market, for further developing their profiles or formulating a career-step with the portfolio as a starting point
- *summative VPL* finally plays a central function, both in access to lifelong learning and to a qualification, where personal portfolios are built up against pre-set standards, looking for an official diploma or for exemptions.

This Swiss case shows to which extent heterogeneity is the key word explaining how VPL works, confirming therefore the usefulness of multidimensional and multi-target approaches. Goals of VPL-users largely depend on the kind of VPL targets (empowerment, recognition, certification), as well as from the positioning of the persons in the life cycle, by their biographical background and professional identity. Local learning cultures and traditions also play a fundamental role. Diverse dimensions and VPL modes appear to be integrated, and should be considered under the lens of crosscutting links: between personal and professional goals, formative and summative meanings of VPL, roles of education, training and experience in formal

and informal learning settings, targets of empowerment (individual), social and institutional recognition.

### **IVC, the Netherlands**

The International Women's Centre (IVC) in Den Helder, the Netherlands provides an, almost identical to the Swiss, example of the lifelong learning model ([www.int-vrouwencentrum.nl](http://www.int-vrouwencentrum.nl)).

VPL at the IVC aims at contributing to the emancipation, participation and integration of migrant women in the Netherlands. One of the activities of the IVC is a training for self-management of competences. The aim is to teach the women to get a good grip on their personal skills and competences for the sake of empowerment and to find their way in Dutch society. The outcomes of the training can be used for setting up career opportunities in further learning, in volunteering and paid work and for embedding their personal life in a country with different cultural customs. During the training the awareness of their personal values is strengthened.

The training is arranged according to the Swiss CH-Q method (a Swiss vocational qualifications programme that has developed tools to document skills). CH-Q follows the steps of the VPL-procedure: raising awareness, documentation, presentation, assessment and certification.

The main focus of CH-Q is to enable individuals to manage their own careers, articulate their own development needs and build up their own competences.

After passing the training and presenting their personal action plan, the students receive an approved certificate. The CH-Q training has been offered since 2009 and is successfully continued every year (see [www.ch-q.nl](http://www.ch-q.nl) for more detail). The training is offered twice a year; since 2009 45 women participated in the training; of this group, many found jobs (paid and voluntary work) or started up a study program at a VET-school or university.

### **Knowledge Centre Mid-West, Denmark**

A Danish case study focused on the Knowledge Centre Mid-West (Ecotec, 2007). The main focus of this Centre was to bring competence assessment into real life conditions and assess skills and competences in the workplace, where the competences can be demonstrated and where they are normally used. The main reasons for such a choice were: the fact that the vast majority of the target group (immigrants) did not have any previous work experience and the view that the best way to assess a person's skills was to do that in the workplace. Moreover, since most of the immigrants did not have any previous education, assessment by educational institutions was not considered to be as relevant as an assessment by companies. In this sense this is a case in which the HRD model is very functional with both the Educational as well as the Upgrade model supporting the success of VPL for the target group.

The unemployed immigrants are supported by consultants at the job centers for a

workplace competence assessment. After the assessment period is finished, the immigrant is issued with a 'competence card', which describes actual competences as they are observed. The competence card can be used as a recommendation when looking for another job (or being recommended by a job consultant to on-the-job training).

Assessment, through observation, is carried out in the workplace by a mentor. The process is facilitated by an online tool, which specifies which skills and competences are to be assessed for a particular job. The tool contains descriptions for each job and specifies the range of skills that ensure proper execution of tasks envisaged by a given job function. The development of standards was based on the existing national occupational standards. However, the process of constructing job descriptions went further by breaking down the skills and competences into functions.

During the three to four week assessment period, personal competences, professional, language, computer and basic skills are assessed in relation to the tasks performed. The reasons for prioritizing these competences was the fact that the employers often perceive immigrant workers as lacking key personal competences needed in a Danish workplace.

Due to the initial low or no level of education of the target groups, the types of jobs that are performed are those corresponding to an unskilled labour level, such as cleaner. In some cases, the skills acquired can correspond to qualification levels and are usually complemented by vocational training in an education institution. Whenever the qualification serves the purpose of getting a person into employment, this option is chosen. This is especially relevant to the social services sector where the demand for labour, especially at lower skill levels, is high and offers a very effective bridge into employment for immigrants.

During the assessment period the employers can be compensated with a wage subsidy for a learner. In many cases learners are offered further training in the company, where companies can benefit from training subsidies and a learner is paid a minimum wage for their work.

The system is also useful for other target groups which lack proper professional experience. It receives considerable support from employers who are, first of all keen to take on new trainees and secondly, satisfied with the new standardized tools that minimize their time spent on giving feedback while at the same time allowing for comparability of the assessment results.

### **Koskisen Oy, Finland**

In Finland, Koskisen Oy has been developing training and assessment methods in order to recognise and, at the same time, broaden the skill levels of its employees since the early 1990s. Their initiative has not only benefited the employees and the company itself but it has had a wider impact on the industry sector. This is a case (Ecotec, 2007) that shows how the lifelong learning model works in the context of profit-sectors. This is absolutely the case for the company itself. For the employees, employability was their primary target to be reached with the assistance of qualifications. But in the end, it

turned out to be more a kind of an empowerment strategy for the employees since VPL helped them to learn and work on the basis of their own strengths and talents.

Koskisen Oy is a manufacturing company in the field of wood production. During the past 10 years some 400 employees (approx. 37% of all employees) have been able to validate the skills and the learning they have acquired at work and have obtained an official qualification.

The company offers 'in-house' training, which together with work experience provides employees with an opportunity to attain one of a range of nationally recognised competence-based qualifications (e.g. various wood production and management qualifications).

The skills are assessed by a team that consists of an external assessor and employer and employee representatives. The assessment is made up of practical and written skills tests. All the participants are required to possess 1-2 years of work experience.

The validation and certification has had significant individual, company and industry level effects, both for the employees as well as for the company.

### **Welfare sector, the Netherlands**

The Welfare sector in the Netherlands finally provides a good example of VPL embedded in the HRD-model on sector-level, using the educational model for standard setting. In 2011-2012 a pilot project on VPL and tailor-made learning was initiated. The project focuses on the mobility/promotion from group leader to senior group leader in the Welfare sector. Prior work experience and learning outcomes are assessed and recognised in an VPL procedure, using both sector standards as well as HE qualifications (Ervaring, 2012).

An examination committee of the university evaluates the VPL-report of the candidate that he/she obtained in the APL-procedure as part of the intake for a qualification-programme (incl. portfolio and assessment). The aim of this evaluation is to either obtain directly the HE-qualification that is linked to the sector-standard for senior group leader or obtain a tailor-made learning programme, taking into account prior learning outcomes and filling in the remaining learning targets in the HE-programme.

Fifteen candidates from one youth care institute participated in the VPL-programme. Of these, 13 received an VPL-report (or in formal Dutch procedure 'a national experience certificate' that is obligatory when accessing HE by means of VPL). This report is the basis for programming further development and learning for the candidate. On top of this, the candidates could also receive a sector-certificate if they complied with all criteria in the sector-standard. Only one candidate received this certificate during the pilot-phase.

The VPL-procedure was managed by an VPL-manager from the university, two portfolio-advisers (from the university and from the employer) and two assessors (internal-university and external-sector).

The exam committee from the department of Pedagogics (Professional HE) acknowledged the sector-standard as a relevant standard to match with the HE-standard of Pedagogics. A matrix for general comparison was designed and used by the exam committee.



Furthermore, all stakeholders also acknowledged the relevance and value of both standards (sector and national) and the steps in the VPL-process.

This project is interesting because it offers validation in higher professional education qualifications for experienced youth workers. Furthermore, because of the use of VPL in a multiple targeted policy for employability (formative) and qualification (summative).

This multiple-targeted VPL is used at the welfare-institute for linking two purposes:

1. the purpose of addressing an employee's learning needs (knowing how to invest best in yourself),
2. for creating horizontal and/or vertical employability chances (knowing where to come to your best).

## **Marginalised groups, United Kingdom**

A UK case study on VPL for marginalised groups [students with 'special education needs (SEN)' and students aged 50-plus] (a, 2014) is an example of the educational model. The UK picture of VPL supporting access to HE is varied. Policy, practice and culture affect VPL at a national level and HE institutes view their own VPL provision, policy and practice positively.

The majority of individuals in the UK case study were able to report at least some level of success in regard to VPL. The data indicate two major focus points where VPL is applied at least some of the time in the UK HE institutes, resulting in some satisfaction for individuals: prior learning or experience reducing or eliminating entry requirements and allowances during the programme to ease individuals' progress through the degree.

The case study indicates that once equality legislation is accounted for, the UK government tends to devolve many of the VPL processes relating to access to HE to HE institutes. Whilst aspects of the VPL processes are evident in most HE institutes, there is a lack of consistency and transparency so that individuals attempting to access HE often find it difficult to navigate their way through the VPL processes. In regard to access to HE and VPL processes, an unequal power relationship exists between HE institutes and individuals, weighted towards HE institutes; this especially disadvantages marginalised groups who are likely to be in the greatest need of access to VPL processes in order to access HE.

## **Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, Finland**

The case of Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences in Finland (Lepänjuuri & Burns, 2014a) provides insights that addressing learning needs of learners in special education needs (SEN) and 50-plus groups and applying VPL in HE can be challenging. It sets an example of the educational model in which VPL is both used for summative as well as for reflective purposes.

In particular applying VPL approaches to learners in the SEN group seemed difficult. This was due to them having had difficulties in the past which had led to patchy educational backgrounds and employment histories. It cannot be stressed enough that paying

attention to guidance and inclusive pedagogical practices that value diverse ways of learning enhances everybody's learning but more so with these kinds of learners. Students with SEN may not always have a clear idea about their own learning needs and competences, and therefore discussions about individual strengths and abilities may offer a way to think of alternative ways to learn in HE. Dialogues and discussions with the tutor seem to be effective methods and, therefore, they should be used throughout the studies. This kind of approach puts students at the centre of learning and encourages them to reflect on their individual needs and competences more deeply.

However, the VPL system poses great challenges for HE institutes, pedagogical solutions and individuals. It requires flexibility from educational providers at the time when resources are already scarce. It is important to develop modules into which the VPL system is incorporated and make sure that these are up-to-date in order to guarantee a high quality VPL system. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the approach, idea, tools and methods of VPL are important elements in student guidance systems.

It is also useful to think about the steps of the learning process more widely. This case describes this as follows: *"[Generally in education] it would be important to bring forward diverse types of learners and test, discuss and bring up alternative ways of learning. That is to say that teachers and students should consider together what the best way to learn is. Learning new things shouldn't be too difficult at beginning or otherwise one might give up. Clarifying things that's unclear; re-doing, recapping and practical application are important parts of the learning process. It would be good to gain positive experiences along the way."* (ibidem, p. 188).

The same principles should be applied to all students; VPL methods and procedures are likely to be as suitable for all learners as they should be for SEN and 50+ groups. The successes or failures of these two special groups can offer insights into where VPL stands.

## **National learning culture, South Korea**

The National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) in South Korea provides insight in the learning culture of South Korea in which the further development of VPL could go well together with the present reforms in vocational (higher) qualifications systems (Lee and Ko, 2014a). The gap in South Korea between the labour market and HE creates societal instability and unemployment and ironically, this enhances a skills mismatch that forces young people to seek more education and forces employers to invest more in job training for new recruits. The links amongst vocational (higher) education, the labour market and industry could be strengthened in South Korea. It is known that the learning culture of a country determines strongly how RPL/VPL is conceived and operated (Dukekot et al., 2005). The learning culture of South Korea is in this respect predominantly perceived as a model of social selection.

Experts believe that the reform of vocational qualifications systems such as the National Competency Standards (NCS) and the National Qualification Framework might play a critical role in adopting VPL. However, with respect to this reform several issues require

attention such as the modularisation of learning programmes/courses comparable to NCS, the development of learning outcomes-based curricula and assessment tools and the development of a transfer system amongst NCS-based academic programmes/courses and the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS).

The ACBS of South Korea is a multifaceted system: it serves to help learners progressing toward higher education, assessing various types of learning experiences, and acquiring vocational qualifications and HE degrees. The ACBS is a key policy of lifelong education that allows any learner to obtain, accumulate, and transfer HE-level credits. The ACBS is an open system in constant evolution. The driving forces for the evolution have been derived from various roots. For instance, stakeholders with different purposes and interests exist for the evolution of the ACBS. The following are the several features and benefits using the ACBS associated with various stakeholders (Grubb et al., 2006; NILE, 2013).

First of all, traditional HEIs of South Korea have established on- and off-campus, and online lifelong education centres that function separately within their offer. HEIs, as VET providers, have offered various programmes for traditional and non-traditional learners. These campus-based lifelong education centres for non-traditional students should be accredited by NILE to be part of the ACBS. Once accredited, an HEI becomes more flexible in assessing and recognising both academic and non-academic experiences from various sources. In addition, the ACBS has helped HEIs to induct credit accumulation and transfer system for non-academic experiences into a HE area. For traditional HEIs, the connection with the ACBS is regarded as an instrument to open to non-traditional learners and to change their academic-oriented curriculum. Moreover, the ACBS has had an influence on modifying the practices of education, assessment, and entrance requirements, and recognising non-formal and informal learning outputs that the adult learners possess. At a local level, the ACBS also helps local governments expand the accessibility to the HE for local constituents. Once a Local Lifelong Learning Centre established by local governments is accredited by the ACBS, it becomes part of the HE system.

Secondly, South Korean government departments, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment and Labour have recently put pressure on traditional universities. Traditional HE institutions are being asked to change their structure and policies so as to embrace labour market relevance, lifelong learning orientation, and greater accessibility. Since 2013, the newly formed government has asked HEIs to transform their academic-oriented curricula to the NCS-based models. As the ACBS system is currently the only experienced system in terms of recognising non-formal and informal learning, it serves as the only system for the South Korean governments to pursue quality assurance and monitoring the implementation of NCS including VPL.

Third, a VET provider accredited by the ACBS awards a HE degree. A VET provider offers programmes usually relevant for the demands of labour market. In order to be

accredited, a VET provider should follow the Curriculum Standards set by the ACBS. From 2014, the South Korean government initiates an incentive that an accredited VET provider adopting NCS on its curriculum might be eligible for public funding such as the Employment Insurance Fund.

Fourth, an employer or a firm may be a key stakeholder in the ACBS system. A firm may want its in-built training programmes to be accredited by the ACBS. With its programmes accredited, a firm can make a step towards its employees obtaining HE degrees through its own firm-specific training programmes, alongside vocational qualifications. By linking a firm-specific training programme to the HE system, the ACBS plays a role in establishing a bridge between the outputs of a competence-oriented training, on-site/non-formal learning and a formal HE system.

Last but not least, the ACBS is a part of lifelong education policy and also a part of the HE system in South Korea. An individual learner views the ACBS as a second chance to further his/her study at HE level or to obtain a vocational qualification. To an adult learner, the ACBS might seem attractive, since it has no rigid pre-requisite for admission, it is flexible in terms of time management and credits for a semester, and it offers chances to pursue career development as well as a HE degree at the same time. It is also easier for learners to change their speciality or major, which would be difficult in a traditional HE institution. It is important to note that, by law, a learner is not allowed to enrol in the ACBS and a traditional HE institution at the same time. A traditional HE institution only accepts a certain number of the credits that an individual learner has obtained in the ACBS (Grubb et al., 2006).

### **Workshops for migrants at the Cité des Métiers, France**

A main added value of the personalising learning is to “open doors” and to take into account special profiles and expectations of VPL candidates. The “open door” strategy is to be understood in many ways. Combining the top-down approach (EU and States providing legislation and financial support for VPL) and the bottom-up approach (individuals and organisations willing to be better supported for the access to Higher Education and proposing tools & methods to do so) may be a challenging one.

The diversity of the national legislation on VPL, together with the diverse profiles of VPL councillors and various expectations of VPL candidates are main issues to be taken into consideration if we really want to promote an “open door” approach. At any level many obstacles may be raised. On a macro-level, there might be a misunderstanding on the VPL framework combined with a difficult access to VPL information. On a meso-level, professionals working with publics with special needs (50+, migrants, disabled people) are most of the time not connected with VPL councillors. This lack of connection might be a main obstacle to make VPL be accessible. On a micro-level, public with special needs are not properly informed according to their testimonies: the information exists but they don’t feel concerned by the VPL device because they think they are too old (50+), other devices are offered to them (disabled people) or they thought the VPL process was designed for nationals (migrants).

Equality of chance to have an access to VPL, whatever the age, the profile, the professional or social background could be a challenging goal, in Europe, for the ten years to come. There are many ways to achieve this challenge. Involving of the actors at all level (macro, meso and micro levels) is a main issue. Enhancing transparency is another crucial issue as information seem to be differently understood depending on who is explaining the VPL process: institutional speech focussed on the general framework (general principle) on a macro-level, technical speech focussed on the different steps to go through (process) on a meso-level, personal speech focused on the many barriers to overcome (sometimes deception compare to the original hope) on a micro-level.

As far as France is concerned, since 2012, a concrete support to be informed and to understand the VPL process has been provided to migrants and councillors by the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) in partnership with the Cité des Métiers in Paris. Monthly workshops are offered to migrant publics whatever their country of origin, qualification or gender. The learning process combines a macro-level, a meso-level and a micro-level approach. As far as the macro-level is concerned, the 2002 law, setting the VPL process in France (access to a diploma or certification on the basis of a professional experience combining paid, unpaid and voluntary work) is explained. The idea is to make the migrant publics understand that this is not a national process but a “universal” process (open to anyone living in France). For the meso-level approach, the main organisations in charge of VPL in France are explained with a focus on the National Commission in charge of implementing a national repertory with all the diploma and qualification accessible through VPL (CNCP). In complement, potential VPL candidates are given some explanation on the organisations in charge of supporting them on the ground: either to finance their VPL process (regional councils), or to prepare them to fill the required documents (training bodies) or to make them pass the exam (organisations habilitated to deliver diploma or certification). As far as the micro-level is concerned, a special tool is explained to the participants at the workshops: a portfolio implemented in the framework of a previous European project (*Migrapass* portfolio). This tool is useful to prepare the VPL file they will have to fill as the portfolio integrates the identification of the experience (paid, unpaid, voluntary), the expression of this experience in terms of competences (on the basis of 12 selected competences, together with a self-evaluation of the achieved level of competence) and the action plan to be offered (direct access to the labour market, training for assessing competences or VPL process when a diploma or qualification is needed to work).

## **Conclusion on the cases**

These examples show that large groups from very different contexts and with different objectives can use VPL when offered and facilitated in a PL2S centre. The bottleneck for making use of Personalising Learning is less the knowledge infrastructure or organizations and more the individual's unfamiliarity with Personalising Learning. This means that it is primarily the transition to individual empowerment that is causing the present underutilization of Validating Learning as gateway to employability and lifelong

learning strategies of social partners and schools/institutes. Additionally, the examples show that the reason for this does not by definition lie in authority relationships. The individual is given adequate leeway to arrange a personal track with the individual learning biography, even if that lies outside the individual's own professional column. This stimulation of the learner offers opportunities for capacitation at sector levels since it's at the level of the work environment where learning strategies come to full bloom, both in terms of looking backwards into a learner's biography as well as forward when formulating further learning tasks for employees. The sector level is best situated to enhance this since the sector has the best view of the organisation's needs of capacitation within the sector and the network with learner providers for linking the worker's prior learning to efficient, further learning strategies. The HE-sector reveals itself in this way as *the bridge builder* between learner and organisations by stimulating PL2S-enhanced learning strategies on HE-levels.

## **A roadmap for PL2S-centres**

When answering the question 'What to do when implementing VPL in a PL2S centre, on an individual level with linkages to sector/national levels?', it becomes apparent that much work still has to be done, both on the levels of policy-making and research as well as in communicating and practising the value of VPL for any target group in society. Both conclusions and critical success factors regarding the implementation of VPL-systematics from a PL2S-perspective in a sector/national context, as well as a roadmap for using general guidelines for this purpose, are offered in this synthesis.

PL2S means that any organisation on sector and national levels acquires a clear picture of their competency demands and requirements, work on the formulation of their demand, and invest in their 'human capital'. For the learning system PL2S means acting as a 'listening' partner, initiating and offering PL2S *and* custom work. The learner has to prepare/be prepared to explore, identify and develop his or her personal competences so that he or she can work proactively on enhancing personal empowerment and development, employability and further career development. PL2S and custom work are outstanding tools with which the individual can attain this enhancement.

## **Building blocks**

In order to be able to recognise the developments regarding VPL within the transitional society and within the variety of goals and contexts more clearly, four different PL2S-steered models for lifelong learning strategies were introduced. On the basis of these models the following general conclusions can be drawn:

1. PL2S has everything to do with the use of the possibilities that lifelong learning has to offer individuals and organisations in the fields of employability and empowerment. Organising the 'Learner' him- or herself as well is a crucial part in this:

- a. the learner is in charge of putting together and maintaining the portfolio. The portfolio is the basis for the formation of a lifelong learning strategy,
  - b. the sector/organisation is responsible for formulating the organisation's competence need and to facilitate investment in its *learning* employees,
  - c. the learning facilitators (professional education, schooling and training) must be able to respond to the various learning needs of the learning individual, in other words be able to offer educational programmes that have been custom-made both structurally and in content.
2. There is support for the idea that the learner takes a central place in establishing, designing and implementing lifelong learning. This investment in human capital calls for co-designing responsibilities of the learner him/herself. At all times the principle process here is the process of moving towards the desired learning goals, both when determining an individual's starting situation and during an individual's development course.
3. The portfolio is a powerful way to give structure and content to this co-design. Guidance from within the sector and companies could be a welcome push in this direction by offering:
  - a. training in self-management of competences. This is a useful way to start the formation of the desired portfolio,
  - b. help in putting together a portfolio in the work situation. An expert on the subject, easily approachable, who can offer help in designing a portfolio, is of great value in actually realising portfolio formation,
  - c. self-assessment tools, for instance, to help determine the competence and ambition level. This could be of great use in determining goals and direction in lifelong learning.
4. In the light of the different goals needed to make a start in lifelong learning, further research is needed into the motives for and the desired design of lifelong learning strategies. The four models (educational, upgrade, HRD and lifelong learning) can then be taken up on the basis of their own dynamics in the dialogues between learner sector/organisation and learning facilitators, in which the three actors can deal with their varying responsibilities.
5. PL2S as a bridge between the individual/organisation and professional education/schooling only becomes relevant when concrete learning questions have been formulated, which then need to be answered by professional education/schooling. The basis for all learning questions is, after all, deciding what the starting situation of the individual is. In addition, on the basis of a specific learning question a lifelong learning trajectory is offered; this could be a diploma trajectory but could also be enrichment learning in the form of modules, action learning, distance education, work guidance or otherwise.
6. PL2S may serve as a bridge between the competence needs of, on the one hand, the organisation and, on the other, the individual. This calls for two forms of PL2S:
  - a. Synchronizing competence systems of labour market organisations on the one hand, with their competence management or HRM, and on the other hand schools and institutes, with their competence-focused curricula and training

programmes. The goal of this synchronization is to determine which competences and learning environments can be added to the portfolio; in this way the portfolio of the working individual can be fed and upgraded from within the HRM and the (professional) educational and schooling system. This form of PL2S is top-down oriented and strives for a harmony between competence systems in the areas of supply and demand.

- b. Through this synchronisation the learner can make clearer choices with regards to enriching his/her portfolio. The appreciation and validation the learning individual seeks (partially dependent on the goals that have been set) can then be supported by two competence systems. PL2S can provide concrete indications of what the most appropriate learning route for personal development is. In doing so, they can also make use of the competence acquisition that can be supported from within the own organisation or through external organisations. This form of PL2S is bottom-up oriented VPL and looks for the balance between personal development questions and the most appropriate learning content and design.

### **Critical Success Factors**

Various critical success factors (csf's) concerning the further implementation of PL2S in the HEIs can be distilled from the policy-development and the practical evidence presented in this report.

Concerning the subsequent phases in the HE-sector-driven PL2S-process these csf's are:

#### *Phase 1: Preparation and recognition of competences*

- Concentrating on marketing of PL2S is highly important. The learner should be addressed especially, because if he/she fails to see the need for learning, there will be no lifelong learning at all!
- Collection of practical examples from all levels: individual, organisation and system levels.
- Macro level: more stimuli in legislation, financial arrangements and regulations.
- Educational awareness should be raised in an organisation or company.
- Information provision must be made crystal clear to the individual (employee or job-seeker).
- Self-management of competences is crucial: in the division of roles between those involved, the emphasis for the individual is on personal process management; for the organisation on the formulation of aims and the accompanying formulation of demands for competency development; and for the educational institution it is on the development of flexible learning-made-to-measure programmes. This step involves the creation of personal portfolio-formats and – possibly – structured portfolio training and portfolio-guidance for employees.



#### *Phase 2: Recognition of competences*

- A candidate must work with a clear portfolio(format). Depending on the goal and the context there are three main forms available.
- Training-programmes for self-management of competences must be offered. Such training is very helpful in designing, filling and managing one's portfolio.
- Setting standards involves selection of a standard from educational or human resource systems by the candidate dependent on goal & context of PL2S.
- The function of guidance should be strengthened, especially in the 'empowerment-model'.
- The accessibility of a chosen standard is extremely important in the candidate's self-management.

#### *Phase 3: Valuation and Assessment of competences*

- more transparency, uniformity, harmonisation and collaboration at sector level and create linkages with national qualifications.
- match competency systems from organisations and educational systems. VPL is the bridge.
- VPL procedures must take place independent of training-programmes.
- No distinction between diplomas acquired on the basis of formal, informal or non-formal learning.
- PL2S should be possible at all qualification levels.

#### *Phase 4: Further development of competences*

- Organisations have to facilitate personal development plans, provide guidance and make the competence management transparent; creating work based-learning situations also helps.
- Education must value the workplace as a rich learning environment.
- Employees need to self-manage their personal development programmes following a VPL procedure. In this sense, learning-made-to-measure means that it is up to them to make choices in the degree of self-determination or external direction within their development. These choices range between 100% self-management of form and content of the programme (*empowering*) and 0% (*pampering*).

#### *Phase 5: Anchoring PL2S*

- Organisations must ensure that their formulation of demands is effective. Clear formulation of demands means that there is clarity concerning (1) the competences that are present within the organisation, and (2) the required competences within the framework of the organisational aims. 1 and 2 can be combined to ensure the development of (3) the competence demands within the organisation, and ultimately (4), an action plan for the validation and development of available and required competences.
- Research into the effects of PL2S: research is needed into the added value of PL2S, among other things focussed on its economic, financial and social effects.

- Integration of PL2S in HRM-systems: there must be a better integration of PL2S into HR policy and practice, aimed at enhancing employability and mobility, increasing voluntary participation and working towards achievable goals.

## Roadmap for further action

It's evident that more research is needed to make clear how the practical use VPL in the context of national strategies for PL2S-implementation can come to full bloom. Relevant questions are: how to activate all stakeholders? Which problems and which ambitions can be made transparent? Who does what and with what motive? Which learning-demand is relevant and with which intended learning outcome? How does lifelong learning refer to the general framework that authorities and social partners are maintaining?

In answering these questions the general focus should be on:

- a. Use national and sector policies as a starting point for designing a sector-based framework of VPL-systematics that favours the four main VPL-models which all four stimulate different learning-strategies within the sector,
- b. Put the learner with her/his portfolio in the position of co-designer,
- c. Focus on learning outcomes instead of learning-input,
- d. The total PL2S -process is portfolio-based; i.e. validation, accreditation and development. So make sure the bottom-up process of PL2S is as well organized as the top-down process of PL2S,
- e. Make sure the standards for qualification and/or competence-management are transparent and interchangeable between sector standards and national standards. The job profiles of the sector and the qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework offer good reference material to set up levels in standards, both in education and training as well as in human resources management,
- f. Competence-systems (qualification-standards & competence-management) must be linked in order for the individual to take a pick where, how and why to employ and enrich one's portfolio,
- g. Learning/training is about stimulating the learning triangle of the learner (portfolio-build up), sector/organisation (competence-based HRM) and education (learning-made-to-measure).

By answering these questions a more transparent image can be made of the broad supporting role of PL2S centres for:

1. PL2S as an educational model for initiating a particular diploma-programme;
2. PL2S as an upgrade/update model for determining an individual's educational and training needs for obtaining initial qualifications,
3. PL2S as a HRD model for matching and upgrading employees' competences to match organisational aims;

#### 4. PL2S as a lifelong learning model for supporting individual career-opportunities.

More knowledge in the actual use of validation is needed in order to adapt, develop and strengthen the necessary services; for, so much is clear now, PL2S centres connect all stakeholders in lifelong learning strategies! Short-term goals are:

- Stimulating the awareness of the learning individual by offering courses in self-management of competences & portfolio-build up,
- Helping organisations to articulate their need for competences and embed this need in pro-active competence-management,
- Making a match between the already articulated demand for competences on the labour market and the already developed supply of competences in education/training/guidance,
- Preparing the development of new supply of learning-made-to-measure in order to make better matches with the learning-demand deriving from one of the perspectives of lifelong learning-models

When the roadmap is followed, commitment amongst the stakeholders will develop fully. There will be plenty of space to build strong commitment for new ways of learning both within circles of government, education sector and social partners as well as among the citizens. Commitment after all is the most essential precondition for making use of prior learning assessment and thereby changing the 'looks' of the formal learning system. Commitment means that all parties involved will take up their own responsibility.

Last but not least, competence-based learning and PL2S might contribute to making learning more a matter of fun again, since learning will be made more to measure. The motivation of learners will therefore be higher. For employers, managers, HR-staff, counsellors, recruiters, teachers, trainers, guides, and others, this will as well be stimulating and inspiring. In this sense one could state that learning will not only be a matter of *employability* but also of "*enjoyability*"!

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# Professionalising the staff of PL2S-centres

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## 2

This chapter fills in the need for a modular, basic programme for practitioners to prepare for and to strengthen their personalised lifelong learning-approaches. The programme consists of 4 modules that are interlinked. Following up on these modules will result in a personal portfolio, a personal action plan and a reflexive approach to lifelong learning opportunities of adult learners:

1. One module on self-management of competences, aiming at training the generic competence of portfolio build-up & maintenance for (personalised) lifelong learning-strategies. This module leads to a personal portfolio and a personal action plan.
2. Two modules on (A) assessment and (B) counselling/guidance for teachers/trainers and human resources-officers in order to support their students, staff or others in building up their portfolio and advising them. Assessment will be taught as assessment for, of and as learning. Counselling and vocational guiding, for career guidance (summative and formative) of and for learning of adult learners.
3. One module on management of validation of prior learning methodology and processes, for managing universities and other organisations to deal with the management of learning professionals and human resources-officers in order to arrange access to adult (higher) education and lifelong learning strategies.

The following four sections represent the respective modules as separate study units with their own programme, learning outcomes, working materials and study load (ECTS).

## **STUDY UNIT 1**

### **SELF-MANAGEMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

Module	<b>Self-assessment and validation of personal learning experiences</b>
Author(s)	<b>Kees Schuur and Ruud Duvekot</b>
ECTS	<b>3</b>

#### **1. Introduction**

Lifelong learning is about making use of personal competences. Everyone should be aware that people are always learning everywhere, and above all, not always in a conscious or self-chosen context. Research shows that 70-94% of the learning by adults takes place informal and the rest in a formal and non-formal way. The degree in which people are consciously building on this is still strongly underexposed and under-utilised. In the modern learning society, the focus is or should be on these individual learning and valuation processes. A complicating factor in dealing with this focus is that the formal procedures of teaching, training and assessment describe only a very limited part of the individual learning potential or competences. Competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning environments are however essential for optimal performance on the labour market and/or in social functions. It is in this informal and non-formal learning that the so-called learning individual demonstrates his/her potential; it's up to lifelong learning strategies to value this learning and valuation processes. Only by focusing on the total learning potential of the individual the road is paved for lifelong learning that connects this potential with society's needs; after all, if the learner him- or herself can define, value and develop the full potential, he/she will be more flexible, employable and supportive to his personal well-being and to the economic and/or social goals of society.

#### **2. Aim of the course**

The aim of this course is to train students to and make them understand to *self-manage their competences* for Personalised Lifelong Learning.

#### **3. Learning outcomes**

- a structured personal portfolio or dossier, including descriptions of all relevant learning outcomes (so far) and the proof or documentation of these outcomes.
- a personal action plan in which the next objective for his/her personal learning 'road' is described.

#### **4. Work environment**

For the training: the training consists of 5 sessions of each 4 hours with intervals of 1 week for self-study.

After the training: the portfolio serves as a holistic tool for utilizing validated learning outcomes in different contexts, like:

- At work (get a job, keep a job, development towards a higher function, change of employer, etc.).
- In education (entrance, exemption for exams, banking the diplomas, management of study / learning pathways, etc.).
- In volunteer settings (apply for a function, prepare for specialised functions, career planning, show dossier for paid work, etc.).
- In private life (self-esteem, choices in phases of life, stress management, etc.).

## 5. Objectives of the module

The training gives insight and provides the basis for self-managing one's personal career in learning, working and living. Furthermore, it motivates maintaining one's personal portfolio, setting-out a course for personal goals in learning and for work- and life-career-orientation, and to be(come) an active citizen in society (e.g. volunteering, citizenship) and in personal life.

## 6. Introductory paragraph:

- Outline of study unit's subject.
- Definition of central term 'self-management of competences'.
- Naming of sub-sections.
- explanation of the content structure.

## 7. Content

1. Introduction: competences and learning outcomes.
2. Personal life documentation.
3. Creating a portfolio.
4. Creating a personal action plan.
5. Presenting personal portfolio and action plan.
6. Extrapolating findings to other elements of adult education and learning
7. Understanding the holistic approach and its effects

## 8. Homework Assignments

Before module 1:     Preparing exercises on personal learning experiences  
                               Starting up a personal log  
                               Reading the Level 1 documents

## 9. Documents / Links

**Level 1 Documents** (= Obligatory reading, available in English; print or online)

- Calonder-Gerstner, A. & Schuur, C.C.M. (2007). The benchmark tool as testing instrument within a frame of VPL: Towards a sustainable Competence Culture to achieve Lifelong Learning. In: Duvekot, R.C., Scanlon, G., Charraud, A., Schuur, C.C.M., Coughlan, D., Nilsen-Mohn, T., Paulusse, J. & Klarus, R. (eds.) (2007). *Managing European diversity in lifelong learning. The many perspectives of the Valuation of Prior Learning in the European workplace*. Nijmegen, HAN & EC-VPL.pp. 191-212.

<http://www.ec-vpl.eu/a-benchmark-tool-for-vpl/>

- Quality Handbook CH-Q1 (2010) Foundation CH-Q NL/B
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<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>
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[http://www.euroguidance.nl/uploads/Sustainable%20self%20management WEB 201206150417.pdf](http://www.euroguidance.nl/uploads/Sustainable%20self%20management_WEB_201206150417.pdf)
- European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/node/11010>

**Level 2 Documents** (= Optional reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- Werquin, P. (2010). *Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes, Policies and Practices: Country Practices*. Paris, OECD.  
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**Further Links** (to institutions and/or web portals)

- [www.ec-vpl.eu](http://www.ec-vpl.eu)
- [www.ch-q.com](http://www.ch-q.com)
- <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

## 10. Assessment

Both portfolio and action-plan are evaluated and assessed in the final session of this module by the trainer and an external assessor.

**The competences the participant will have at the end of this module**, in terms of competences, are:

- Register, value, proof and document her competences and qualifications.
- Estimate her achievements in all learning environments.



- Formulate her personal strengths and (core) competences within a specific situation.
- Draw conclusions about designing her career, based on learning experiences.
- Recognise perspective of her career and formulate plans for further personal and professional development.
- To manage her competences durable by using portfolio-methods.
- Evaluate the training.
- Extrapolate the learning outcomes to different situations in adult education and learning environments

Furthermore, the student obtains knowledge of:

- Different portfolio systems, online and on paper.
- Connections between CVs like the Europass (and its supplements) and her portfolio.
- The use of portfolios in different contexts (work, study, volunteer, private life).
- The integrated use of instruments for self-assessment, peer-assessment, portfolio building,

#### **11. Corroborations with labour market, professional associations, scientific community**

- Accreditation bodies / exam committees.
- Branch and companies in a specific sector.
- Quality auditors.
- Assessor accreditation bodies.

## Study Unit

## 2A

### ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Module

Assessing prior learning

Author(s)

Kees Schuur and Ruud Duvekot

ECTS

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Linkage with unit 2B

#### 1. Introduction

There has been a shift in the philosophy of human learning the past few years. While the focus used to be on accumulating knowledge mostly through formal education and training (input) and to measure these against a certain national or educational institute standard (output). The emphasis has increasingly shifted toward developing competences, so the actual learning outcomes, as their real and potential values are measured against a combination of personal, social, work and framework standards. Competences combine knowledge, skills and attitude and are action-oriented. In supporting someone's development it is important to know the competences he or she already possesses. Testing someone's competences in relation to a qualification, certificate or curriculum chosen in advance is referred to as assessment. The role of the assessor is vital for starting up personal development in any kind of form and to ensure a reliable, unbiased and transparent value of the learning outcomes. Reliable assessment builds the links between a portfolio, including a personal action plan, and the specific development steps advised by the assessor. In any given model for validating prior learning outcomes (formal, non-formal and informal outcomes) guidance and assessment have several functions: (1) providing information, (2) raising levels of achievement, (3) measuring this achievement reliably and (4) organising the assessment effectively.

Unit 2A provides the training for the assessors; it also includes the quality criteria for assessment processes that deal with the accreditation of prior learning outcomes. Unit 2B is designated for the guides and is linked to this unit.

#### 2. Aim of the course

The aim of this course is to ensure the capacity-building of quality-proof, transparent and unambiguous assessors for the recognition, accreditation and or validation of all prior learning outcomes (formal, non-formal and informal), independent of the learning pathway and contexts and including VET and HE.

#### 3. Learning outcomes

The assessor will possess the competences as mentioned in the section *"The competences the participant must have at the end of this module"*, according to the competence-profile of the assessor.

A capacitated assessor for assessing adult learners on their prior learning outcomes is able to manage the process of portfolio-assessment, assess portfolios, write transparent reports on the outcomes of the assessment of adult learners and optionally to give further development advice to the adult learner.

Furthermore the assessor is able to manage/create the following preconditions for assessments:

- *An assessment standard aiming at 'a qualifying effect'*. Assessment standards must meet the requirements of validity, acceptance, feasibility and functionality. Standards must be the 'property' of employer and employee. Correspondence with existing national qualification structures for vocational training should be sought. This offers the best possible assurance of the civil effects of qualifications acquired through prior learning assessment procedures, ranging from admissions to and exemptions from particular training courses, to further steps in the career development path.
- *Quality assurances of the assessment procedures*. In most countries, governments are directly or indirectly responsible for assuring the quality of the assessment standard. The quality of the standard can be controlled by establishing procedures for standard development and by using a programme of requirements for the design of standards (or qualification structures). The key quality criteria are validity, acceptance, functionality, transparency and comparability of structures.
- *Accessibility of procedures*. Prior learning assessment procedures must be accessible to individuals and companies. Accessibility is determined by the recognition and acceptance of the accreditation. It is also determined by the accessibility of the organisations that implement the assessment procedures and their affordability. Access to competence recognition systems is determined by the features of the system itself and by the availability of financial resources. Decentralised supply of assessments increases the accessibility of the system. 'Decentralised' refers to the regional distribution of prior learning assessment and implementation of the procedures at the employee's place of work or training course.

*Specific requirements for assessors:*

- Expertise on VPL and on procedure and instruments used
- Expertise on broad relevant (professional) practice
- Expertise on all assessment criteria used
- Capability to use a variety of counselling and techniques

#### **4. Work environment**

Before the training: the training consists of 6 sessions of each 3 hours, within 5 study days or one week.

After the training: each assessing and accrediting body (university, training institute, organisation, etc.) is obliged by law and/or by obligation to those being accredited, to assure and further increase the quality of the assessments of their candidates. The assessor is able to advise and implement the best assessment procedures, methods and instruments. The accrediting body chooses the best way for the assessment and assurance of the accreditation and is able to define quality demands and be able to prepare an internal audit.

## **5. Objectives of the module**

After this module the participant:

1. knows what is going on competence-based assessment methods, and they understand the concept of assessment in procedures for Validation of Learning Outcomes.
2. can identify, select and apply different competence-based assessment methods, like for instance portfolio-assessment, criterion based interview, practice Simulations (performance assessment)
3. can develop and implement an assessment procedure, including a quality assurance system.
4. has knowledge of competence-profiles and responsibilities of the guider and the assessor.
5. has personally experienced what it means to be assessed (composing a portfolio and undergoing the prevailing assessment).
6. knows the different phases in the assessment process; s/he worked with the in her country prevailing assessment model(s), and they know the characteristics of this model and they can review the application within three competence-based assessment methods.
7. is aware of her own assessment style and pitfalls.
8. can conduct a criterion-based interview on basis of the portfolio to determine the competence level
9. knows what the criteria are for writing a competence-based assessment report writing according to the nationally applied format.
10. is able to give development-focused feedback and to discuss an assessment report with a candidate
11. Is able to inform/instruct guiders how support a candidate, including assessing a quick scan and helping to build up a good portfolio (optional).
12. Is able to connect the formal recognition with different ways of non-formal and informal recognition.

## **6. Introductory paragraph**

- Outline of the study unit's subject.
- Definition of central term.
- Description of sub-sections.
- Explanation of the content structure.

## 7. Content

This module is covered in 6 sessions of 3 hours each:

### *1: Towards a competent assessor*

- Introduction, goal, definition
- Competence profile based on learning outcomes
- Formal, non-formal and informal validation of competences
- The competences and responsibilities of the assessor (and guider)
- Competence, competence-based assessment methods and competence tests
- Introduction: Assessing competences (traps, observation techniques, methods, etc.)
- An example of a VPL-procedure.

### *2: Portfolio assessment*

- Introduction "What is the portfolio"
- Inventory of experiences with assessing portfolios
- The role of the assessor in assessing the portfolio (assessor versus guider)
- The evidence matrix for assessing the portfolio
- Assessing the portfolio on the basis of the evidence matrix (exercise)
- Tips for portfolio assessment

### *3: The criterion based interview*

- Background criterion based interview (CBI)
- Characteristics of a criterion based interview
- Analyzing the characteristics of a recorded conversation
- The STAR(RT) interview method, incl. examples
- Listening – Summarizing – Demanding (LSD)
- First plenary exercise with criterion based interview (carousel)
- Preparation and execution of criterion based interviews in pairs with changing roles
- Plenary feedback exercises
- Tips for criterion based interviews
- Homework assignment: perform and record a criterion based interview according to the STAR(RT) method.

### *4: Performance Assessment*

- Characteristics of a performance assessment (versus a call)
- Example of a performance assessment (*Youtube*)
- The use of assessment-techniques in a performance assessment
- Practicing assessment-techniques

### *5: Reviewing assessor experiences*

- Dilemmas of reviewing
- Reviewing and evaluating the own material (film clips with interviews)
- Giving and receiving feedback

### *6: The assessment report*

- Assessing and reporting findings in a final report
- Giving Feedback
- Looking back at the own log and looking forward to the assessor-certification process (audit)

## 8. Homework Assignments

- Before module 1: building the own portfolio, including two competences from the assessor profile.
- Before module 3: adding two more competences to the portfolio  
studying articles previous modules  
updating personal log
- Before module 6: recording a competence base interview  
studying articles day 2  
enhancing and complementing portfolio with two competences  
updating log

## 9. Documents / Links

**Level 1 Documents** (= Obligatory reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop.  
[www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4054_en.pdf)
- European Commission (2015) The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report Bologna Process. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. doi: 10.2797/128576. Chapter 3 and 4.3;  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/182EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/182EN.pdf)
- Council of the European Union. (2012). Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Official Journal of the European Union, (2012/C 398/01) Available at:  
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>
- Duvekot, R.C., Training the assessors and guides for validation of prior learning. In: Duvekot, R.C., Kang, D.J. & Murray, J. (eds.) (2014) *Linkages of VPL*. Vught: EC-VPL, Series VPL Biennale 2, pp. 45-69. [http://www.vplbiennale.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2\\_linkagesofvpl.pdf](http://www.vplbiennale.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2_linkagesofvpl.pdf)
- Otero M.S. (2014) European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: Thematic report: validation methods.  
<https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/87240.pdf>

**Level 2 Documents** (= Optional reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- Werquin, P. (2010). *Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes, Policies and Practices: Outcomes, Policies and Practices*. OECD Publishing.
- Natalia Alvarez Bermúdez N.A. (2014) European inventory on validation of non-

formal and informal learning: Thematic report: competence assessment in the private sector.

- Duvekot, R., Schuur, K. & Paulusse, J. (2005, editors) *The unfinished story of VPL; Valuation and validation of prior learning in Europe's learning cultures* Utrecht, Foundation EC-VPL & Kenniscentrum EVC. <http://www.ec-vpl.eu/vpl-unfinished-story-europe/>
- Cedefop (2014) European Inventory validating non-formal and informal learning. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

**Further Links** (to institutions and/or web portals)

- [www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)
- [www.ec-vpl.eu](http://www.ec-vpl.eu)
- [www.vplbiennale.com](http://www.vplbiennale.com)

## **10. Assessment**

After the training the trainee executes an assessment of a portfolio of another trainee. The presentation of the written report takes place in a 30-minute session with the trainer and an external assessor.

**The competences the participant will have at the end of this module:**

1. Know what is going on competence-based assessment methods, and understand the concept of assessment in procedures for Validation of Prior Learning Outcomes.
2. Apply the following competence-based assessment methods:
3. Perform portfolio-assessment.
4. Use criterion based interview-techniques / STAR(RT) method.
5. Practice simulations (performance assessment).
6. Have knowledge of the competence-profile and responsibilities of the guide and the assessor.
7. Have personally experienced what it means to be assessed (composing a portfolio and undergoing the prevailing assessment).
8. Know the different phases in the assessment process; they worked with them in their country's prevailing assessment model(s), they know the characteristics of this model and they can review the application within three competence-based assessment methods.
9. Awareness of her own assessment style and pitfalls.
10. Know what the criteria are for writing a competence based assessment report writing according to the nationally applied format.
11. Are able to discuss an assessment report with a candidate.

## **Competence-profile of the assessor**

Below is the description of the competences of an assessor; a good assessor also needs to know how a candidate for an assessment is prepared best.

### *Reviewing*

The assessor is able to adequately provide an assessment of the competences of the participant, using a number of common competence-based assessment forms such as the portfolio, the criterion based interview and practical simulations. S/he can apply these assessment forms integral within a VPL procedure. The assessor is able to perform an assessment on the basis of a standard (competence-profile), to assess the provided evidence of the candidate on the basis of the prevailing assessment-criteria and to assess answers of a participant using the standard.

### *Observing*

The assessor can adequately observe the participant and to link an assessment-report to this observation, in relation to the standard that was used as a basis for the assessment.

### *Interviewing*

The assessor is able, by using specific questions and interview techniques in an assessment-situation, to make the competences of the participant transparent and to compare these competences in the interview with the standard. The assessor asks questions to investigate the value of the personal experiences (competences, knowledge and skills).

### *Providing feedback*

The assessor can provide feedback to the participant in a constructive and motivating way and indicate the results of the assessment, customised to the level of the participant. The assessor can explain and substantiate the decisions based on the assessment and indicate at which points the participant is competent. Note that only if this is part of the procedure; however, the guide may also do it.

### *Written communication*

The assessor is able to write a clear, detailed and structured assessment report. The assessor describes the competences of the participant that are valid for the used standard. Personal characteristics are only added when applicable.

### *Technical competence*

The assessor is technically competent and must have sufficient professional experience and qualifications in the appropriate discipline. The assessor can prove that he has sufficient technical skills and is willing to keep abreast of developments in the sector. The technical level of the assessor must be at least as high as that of the participant. The assessor is familiar with the assessment (VPL) procedure and objectives, the assessment tools and the methodology. The assessor is familiar with the sectorial or company standards (job descriptions, qualification profiles) and has knowledge of the labour market and vocational education programs in respect of the assessment.



**11. Corroborations with labour market, professional associations, scientific community**

- accreditation bodies / exam committees in VET and HE
- branch and companies in a specific sector
- quality auditors
- assessor accreditation bodies

## Study Unit

## 2B

### GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING in VPL

Module

guidance & counselling for portfolio-assessment

Author(s)

Kees Schuur and Ruud Duvekot

ECTS

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Linkage with unit 2A

### 1. Introduction

There has been a shift in the philosophy of human learning during the past few years. While the focus used to be on accumulating and testing knowledge, the emphasis has increasingly shifted toward acquiring competences and assessing learning outcomes. Competences combine knowledge, skills and attitude and are action-oriented. In supporting someone's development it is important to know the competences he or she already possesses. Testing someone's competences in relation to a qualification, certificate or curriculum study described in learning outcomes and modules in advance is referred to as assessment. The role of the guide is vital for starting up personal development in any kind of form. Transparent guidance builds the links between a portfolio, including a personal action plan, and the specific development steps advised by the guide/counsellor. In any given model for validating prior learning outcomes (formal, non-formal and informal outcomes) guidance has several functions: (1) providing information, (2) raising levels of achievement, (3) measuring this achievement reliably and (4) organising the assessment effectively.

Unit 2B provides the training for guides and counselors in portfolio-assessment; it includes the quality criteria for assessment processes that deal with the accreditation of prior learning outcomes. Unit 2A is designated for the assessors and accompanies this unit.

### 2. Aim of the course

Guidance and counselling services and programs promote the personal/social, educational, and work career development of adult learners. Trainees become aware of their skills and qualifications and their self-responsibility to work on their career steps in accordance with their own potential, in order to guide others as well ('practice what you preach').

The guide/counsellor combines giving advice on expertise in portfolio-assessment with counselling techniques that support adult learners in preparing themselves for a portfolio-assessment on the basis of their prior learning outcomes. The focus of counselling is on issues such as motivation, exploration, documentation, personal development, making choices and other related issues.

The competences of a guide/counsellor as mentioned below refer to the support to adult learners and more specific in guiding them in the process of validation of prior learning, portfolio management and decision-making in learning, work, and private life.

### 3. Learning outcomes

The guide/counsellor is able to:

- (individual level:) assist adult learners with study/work/career planning, study preparation, assessing and choice of best learning environment,
- (organisational level) assist trainers, teachers, assessors and administrators in designing, implementing and evaluating a “learning-outcome-based” learning program and implementing standards in specific learning environments for adult learners.
- comprehend the VPL process as a whole with its benefits and challenges, understand the terminology related to VPL and depict the developmental outlines of the VPL process
- analyse the VPL process from the viewpoint of the national as well as the European frame of reference
- develop and analyze his/her competences and support the process of validation of prior learning
- reflect the effect of the VPL process to his/her own professional development and context
- Interpret scientific outcomes related to adult learning and to use them in her daily work.
- Behave accordingly to existing ethical standards and legal requirements
- Provide learning and assessment counselling at the workplace
- Provide intervention
- Guide and counsel an adult learner in systematically assess and document her learning outcomes, to develop her portfolio and to prepare the individual for a VPL-assessment.
- Interpret the outcome of the assessment and to support the adult learner in developing her development goals and pathways and action plan to reach these goals.

Guides/counsellors have:

- A profound knowledge of counselling theories and techniques.
- A thorough understanding of human development and specific needs for counselling and guidance in different phases and situations in life.

*Specific requirements for guides/counsellors:*

- Expertise on VPL and on procedure and instruments used
- Expertise on broad relevant (professional) practice
- Expertise on all assessment criteria used
- Capability to use a variety of counselling and techniques

The generic competences that can be expected from a guide are:

- Excellent communicative skills
- Supportive and empathic attitude

- Broad-minded, self-reflective personality
- Positive attitude towards recognition
- Intrinsic motivation for being an counsellor

Furthermore, the guide/counsellor is able to manage/create the following preconditions:

- *An assessment standard aiming at 'a qualifying effect'*. Assessment standards must meet the requirements of validity, acceptance, feasibility and functionality. Standards must be the 'property' of employer and employee. Correspondence with existing national qualification structures for vocational training should be sought. This offers the best possible assurance of the civil effects of qualifications acquired through prior learning assessment procedures, ranging from admissions to and exemptions from particular training courses, to further steps in the career development path.
- *Quality assurances of the assessment procedures*. In most countries, governments are directly or indirectly responsible for assuring the quality of the assessment standard. The quality of the standard can be controlled by establishing procedures for standard development and by using a programme of requirements for the design of standards (or qualification structures). The key quality criteria are validity, acceptance, functionality, transparency and comparability of structures.
- *Accessibility of procedures*. Prior learning assessment procedures must be accessible to individuals and companies. Accessibility is determined by the recognition and acceptance of the accreditation. It is also determined by the accessibility of the organisations that implement the assessment procedures and their affordability. Access to competence recognition systems is determined by the features of the system itself and by the availability of financial resources. Decentralised supply of assessments increases the accessibility of the system. 'Decentralised' refers to the regional distribution of prior learning assessment and implementation of the procedures at the employee's place of work or training course.

#### **4. Work environment:**

Before the training: the training consists of 2 sessions of each 2,5 hours spread over of 2 days.

After the training: each assessing and accrediting body (university, training institute, organisation, etc.) is obliged by law and/or by obligation to those being accredited, to assure and further increase the quality of the assessments of their candidates. The accrediting body chooses the best way for the assessment and assurance of the accreditation and is able to define quality demands and be able to prepare an internal audit.

## 5. Objectives of the module

After this module the participant:

1. knows what is going on competence-based assessment methods, and they understand the concept of assessment in procedures for Validation of Learning Outcomes.
2. can train with different competence-based assessment methods, like for instance portfolio-assessment, criterion based interview, practice simulations (performance assessment)
3. has knowledge of competence-profiles and responsibilities of the guider and the assessor.
4. has personally experienced what it means to be assessed and guided (composing a portfolio and undergoing the prevailing assessment).
5. knows the different phases in the validation process; s/he worked with the in her country prevailing assessment model(s), and they know the characteristics of this model and they can review the application within three competence-based assessment methods.
6. is aware of her own assessment style and pitfalls.
7. knows to transfer the outcome from a competence-based assessment report to the student.
8. is able to give development-focused feedback
9. Is able to inform/instruct guides how support a candidate, including assessing a quick scan and helping to build up a good portfolio (optional).
10. Is able to connect the formal recognition with different ways of non-formal and informal learning.

## 6. Introductory paragraph

- Outline of the study unit's subject.
- Definition of central term.
- Description of sub-sections.
- Explanation of the content structure.

## 7. Content

There are 3 sessions of 3 hours each, in 3 days:

### *1: Introduction VPL*

- Introduction VPL: Knowledge about VPL, aims and VPL-procedures; 1. Orientation: what does VPL mean, VPL terminology, the development of VPL; European frame of reference: EQF, NQFs, ECVET, CS ; VPL and quality (according to the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal training) ; VPL in the national context
- Organising and facilitating the VPL-procedure, the assessor, the planning, the instruments

## 2: The role of the guide (2 sessions)

- Differences, similarities and dilemmas in the roles of guide versus assessor
- Practising the role of guide in difficult situations
- Going through the entire process of guiding, assessment by the assessor and aftercare

## 8. Homework Assignments

Before module 1: building the own portfolio, including two competences from the assessor profile.  
updating personal log  
reading the Level 1 documents

## 9. Documents/Links

**Level 1 Documents** (= Obligatory reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- Duvekot, R.C., Training the assessors and guides for validation of prior learning. In: Duvekot, R.C., Kang, D.J. & Murray, J. (eds.) (2014) *Linkages of VPL*. Vught: EC-VPL, Series VPL Biennale 2, pp. 45-69. [http://www.vplbiennale.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2\\_linkagesofvpl.pdf](http://www.vplbiennale.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2_linkagesofvpl.pdf)
- NICE Handbook for the Academic Training of Career Guidance and Counselling Professionals  
[http://www.eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/members/attachments/handbook\\_for\\_the\\_academic\\_training\\_of\\_guidance\\_and\\_counselling\\_professionals.pdf](http://www.eunec.eu/sites/www.eunec.eu/files/members/attachments/handbook_for_the_academic_training_of_guidance_and_counselling_professionals.pdf)
- Ten Creative Counselling Techniques for Helping Clients Deal With Anger.  
[http://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/vistas\\_2011\\_article\\_53.pdf?sfvrsn=14](http://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/vistas_2011_article_53.pdf?sfvrsn=14)
- Rickabaugh, J.R. (2012) *The Learning Continuum*. Wisconsin, CESA.  
<https://cesa1transformation.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/learning-independence-continuum/>

**Level 2 Documents** (= Optional reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- Werquin, P. (2010). *Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes, Policies and Practices: Outcomes, Policies and Practices*. OECD Publishing.
- European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop.  
[www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4054_en.pdf)
- Council of the European Union. (2012). Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Official Journal of the European Union, (2012/C 398/01) Available at:  
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>
- Cedefop (2014) European Inventory validating non-formal and informal

learning. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

- Otero M.S. (2014) European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: Thematic report: validation methods. <https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/87240.pdf>

**Further Links** (to institutions and/or web portals)

- [www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)
- [www.ec-vpl.eu](http://www.ec-vpl.eu)
- [www.vplbiennale.com](http://www.vplbiennale.com)

**10. Assessment**

After the training the trainee is assessed (performance assessment) in a 30-minutes session on guiding/counselling another trainee in portfolio-build-up or any other assignment given by the trainer. Furthermore, the trainee is interviewed on his/her 'guiding competences' in an extra 30 minutes; the trainee presents his/her guiding competences (5 minutes). The performance assessment is executed by the trainer and an external assessor.

**The competences the participant will have at the end of this module:**

The guide/counsellor is able to:

- Understand the need and abilities of a person in a learning and/or evaluation/assessment and to lead them to the power of control on her own competence and career development
- To systematically capture, appreciate, evidence and documentation his/her skills and qualifications
- Assessing performance-achievements in all learning environments
- in a particular situation and personal strengths (core) appoint competences
- pull-based learning experiences conclusions regarding the design of career
- recognize career prospects and plans. SMART draw up an action plan for further personal and professional development
- sustainable management skills using the portfolio of instruments

**The guide/counsellor embraces the following values:**

- Judging capability: holistic assessment of the tailor made process where the learner is the centre
- Attention to detail: keen powers of observation; knows how to deal with details
- Cultural and linguistic sensitivity: the guide has or develops a multicultural attitude toward people with different cultural and linguistic background
- Integrity: the guide is very honest and trustworthy and can comply with ethical standards in occupational activities. S/he respects the learner's private life.
- Sensitivity: the guide can deal with verbal and non-verbal interpersonal communication and can put themselves in the learner. He has respect for the

feelings of the learner.

- Impact: The guide is aware of the impact of his behaviour on other people.
- Willingness to listen: the facilitator will ask relevant questions so that is vague, it is clarified. Listens attentively to the participant.
- Empathy: the guide is empathetic and supports the learner support in such a way that learners feel at ease as much as possible.
- Perseverance: the facilitator goes on for as long until a problem is resolved or a question has been answered.
- Stability: the facilitator can present stable under pressure and/or opposition
- Readiness to collaboration: the guide communicates regularly with the assessors of the procedure so that he is well aware of the progress of the tailor made procedure.
- Positivity: the guide has the ability to build a positive working environment with learner
- Neutrality: the guide is able to occupy a neutral position in the guiding process and is able to minimize its own influence.
- Motivational: The guide is able to stimulate the motivation and confidence of the learner. The guide is able to motivate the learner to take responsibility in the assessment process.

#### **11. Corroborations with labour market, professional associations, scientific community**

- Branch and companies in a specific sector.
- Assessors.
- Quality auditors.
- Teachers/trainers.



## Study Unit

## 3

### MANAGEMENT OF VPL-PROCESSES

Module

**Validation of Prior Learning – processes and management**

Author(s)

**Kees Schuur and Ruud Duvekot**

ECTS

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#### 1. Introduction

Throughout history people have prepared thoroughly for strengthening and practicing their skills in a profession. The prevailing systems of professional training and education do require adjustment and even innovation, because they are part of the changing socio-economic and socio-cultural landscape. Nowadays, in the on-going transition to the learning society flexible, continuous and more adaptive learning is required to keep the citizen viable on today's labour market. Staying on top of this development is vital for all actors: individuals, trade unions, schools, universities, employers, legislative and regulatory bodies. Never before in history the individual - or the citizen - got the chance to gain so much control in steering one's career through learning as is the case in the learning society. It is the systematic of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) that offers this 'window of opportunities' with its focus on opening up learning opportunities on people's own demand. This contribution seeks to answer the crucial question how to activate VPL as an effective instrument for linking competences and credits in lifelong learning that appeals to individual learners and the other stakeholders in learning and working contexts?

#### 2. Aim of the course

Learning in the 21st century is outcome based, is formal, informal and non-formal, is about linking individual engagement and the organisation's affordance, and the role of [higher] education is to support the shift in the learning paradigm towards personalised lifelong learning.

The aim is to capacitate experts in the area of the portfolio training system to being able as well to set-up, manage and maintain large-scale systems for personalised lifelong learning within their own organisation. They also need to be able to capacitate others. This module takes approx. six months since the final assessment consists of three parts: reflection on the training, building-up a personal portfolio and setting-up and evaluating a VPL case-study in the own organisation or context.

#### 3. Learning outcomes

After attending this learning unit the student is able to:

1. Demonstrate systematic understanding of managing personalised lifelong learning systems and programs, including portfolio-management instrumentation.
2. Deploy established and new learning theories and strategies.
3. Critically validate portfolio management systems.
4. Develop and apply portfolio management strategies in lifelong learning contexts.

5. Autonomous implementation and management of portfolio-management instrumentation.
6. Develop a certification-programme for VPL-trainers.
7. Manage national/regional portfolio-trainings.
8. Recruit asp. trainers for capacitation in the management of VPL-processes
9. Develop proof of authentic national / regional administration.
10. Develop peer-assessment procedures within personalised lifelong learning systems.

#### **4. Work environment**

Each assessing and accrediting body (university, training institute, organisation, etc.) is obliged by law and/or by obligation to those being accredited, to assure and further increase the quality of the assessments of their candidates. The VPL-expert is able to develop, plan, organise, and advise and implement VPL-processes and management and procedures, methods and instruments.

#### **5. Objectives of the module**

The training capacitates the trainee in developing and managing personalised lifelong learning systems, in the own context for the many lifelong learning perspectives.

#### **6. Introductory paragraph:**

- Outline of study unit's subject.
- Definition of central terms.
- Naming of sub-sections.
- Explanation of the content structure.

#### **7. Content**

The module has seven sessions of 4 hours each with home-work assignments and an individual case-study exercise:

1. Introduction: what & why of VPL
2. Competences & learning outcomes; ownership, co-design; national/sector output
3. Policy: 'the pendulum of VPL'
4. Quality-system, do's & don'ts
5. Contextualisation
6. Procedures
7. Follow-up: blended personalised learning
8. individual case-study exercise

#### **8. Homework assignments**

Before session 1:     reading the level 1 documents  
                               Providing a learning environment in the own organisation where  
                               the setting up of a personalised lifelong learning systems is  
                               customised.

Before the final assessment:

A case-study needs to be developed in which the integral VPL-process within her own context/organisation is set-up, procedures designed and implemented and an evaluation is processed. The outcome of the case-study is a report with description, analysis and recommendations on VPL-processes in the own context. The recommendations are to be formulated in terms of a management-letter. This assignment may take 3 months and is supervised by a peer-group from trainer and other trainees in this module.

## 9. Documents / Links

**Level 1 Documents** (= Obligatory reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- Billet, S., Workplace Pedagogic Practices: Participation and Learning. In: *Australian Vocational Education Review* 9 (1) 2002, pp. 28-38.  
<http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/6599/AVERMAY02final.pdf?sequence=1>
- Duvekot, R.C., Breaking ground for Validation of Prior Learning in lifelong learning strategies. In: Duvekot, R.C., Halba, B., Aagaard, K., Gabrscek, S. & Murray, J. (eds.) (2014) *The Power of VPL. Validation of Prior Learning as a multi-targeted approach for access to learning opportunities for all*. Vught: EC-VPL, Series VPL Biennale 1, pp. 21-39. [www.ec-vpl.eu](http://www.ec-vpl.eu)
- Leadbeater, C. (2004) *Personalisation through participation. A new script for public services*. London: Demos.  
<http://www.demos.co.uk/files/PersonalisationThroughParticipation.pdf>
- Rickabaugh, J.R. (2012) *The Learning Continuum*. Wisconsin, CESA.  
<https://cesa1transformation.wordpress.com/2012/08/16/learning-independence-continuum/>
- Tawil, S. & Cougoureux, M. (2013) *Revisiting Learning: The treasure within assessing the influence of the 1996 Delors Report*. Unesco Occasional Papers, 4/13.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002200/220050E.pdf>

**Level 2 Documents** (= Optional reading, must be available in English; print or online)

- European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop.  
[www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/4054_en.pdf)
- European Commission (2015) *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report Bologna Process*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. doi: 10.2797/128576. Chapter 3 and 4.3;  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/182EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/182EN.pdf)
- Council of the European Union. (2012). Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Official Journal of the European Union, (2012/C 398/01) Available at:  
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>
- Cedefop (2014) *European Inventory validating non-formal and informal learning*.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non->

#### formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory

- Otero M.S. (2014) European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: Thematic report: validation methods.  
<https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2014/87240.pdf>
- Werquin, P. (2010). Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes, Policies and Practices: Outcomes, Policies and Practices. OECD Publishing.
- Natalia Alvarez Bermúdez N.A. (2014) European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: Thematic report: competence assessment in the private sector.
- Duvekot R.C. a.o. (2010) Managing European diversity in lifelong learning,  
<http://www.ec-vpl.eu/managing-european-diversity-in-lifelong-learning>.
- Duvekot, R., Schuur, K. & Paulusse, J. (2005, editors) *The unfinished story of VPL*;  
<http://www.ec-vpl.eu>

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- [www.ec-vpl.eu](http://www.ec-vpl.eu)
- [www.vplbiennale.com](http://www.vplbiennale.com)

### **10. Assessment**

The trainee will be required to complete a *Portfolio of Evidence* for summative and formative assessment purposes. A portfolio is a collection of different types of evidence relating to the work being assessed. It will include a variety of work samples in which the ability to develop and manage personalised lifelong learning systems within the organisation can be assessed.

Furthermore, a case-study has to be developed in which the integral VPL-process within her own context/organisation is set-up, procedures designed and implemented. The outcome of the case-study is a report with description, analysis and recommendations on VPL-processes in the own context. The recommendations are to be formulated in terms of a management-letter.

The competences the participant will have at the end of this module:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the conceptual underpinnings and purposes of the validation of prior learning (VPL).
2. Investigate current VPL practice and opportunities in an organisation or sector.
3. Develop VPL policies, procedures and plans for an organisation.
4. Provide VPL advice and support.
5. Promote VPL practices.

### **11. Corroborations with labour market, professional associations, scientific community**

- Management team(s).
- Accreditation bodies / exam committees.
- Branch and companies in a specific sector.
- Quality auditors.
- Assessor accreditation bodies.

# Policy and DIY-teams

# 3

A university needs to have a policy and a manual for Personalised Lifelong Learning Services to provide the adult learner with flexible access to the institute for higher education and for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The policy documents show in detail how the institute for higher education responds to the need for lifelong learning. The functionality of DIY-teams as operators in the field of the PL2S-centres depends on this policy and its supportive manuals. This chapter provides the stepping stones for this policy and the setting-up of DIY-teams.

## **Eligibility and admission examination (Access to HE)**

To be admitted to university the candidate needs to fill-in formal requirements concerning pre-university learning or another (non-formal or informal learning) equivalent for a recognised national diploma. The legal basis for this is admission policy is part of national laws on higher education. The concrete rules for admission are therefore related to the country and region to which laws a university is related.

## **Business Plan**

Possible activities of a PL2S centre that need to be addressed in a business-plan for setting-up and implementing a functional PL2S-centre are:

1. Policy and strategy development
  - a. Concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in the institutes policies
  - b. Professional development of staff
  - c. Validation of Prior Learning (VPL)
  - d. Quality assurance of lifelong learning
2. Research and development of lifelong learning
3. Knowledge, expertise and advise center in the field of lifelong learning
4. Development of learning outcomes / competence based, modular teaching programmes
5. Support/providing lifelong learning
  - a. Bachelor or Master at your own pace / part-time
  - b. Part-time degrees through work-based learning
  - c. Creating online continuing professional development (including alumni)
6. VPL / assessment centre
7. Professional development

- a. Counsellor; Coaching and mentoring; Career coaching
- b. Assessment / evaluation / feedback
- c. Teaching approaches / Teacher (re-)training
- d. E-learning for teachers and trainers
- e. Teaching and learning strategies and approaches
  - i. For students (initial students)
  - ii. For adults
- 8. E-Learning / E-portfolio unit
- 9. Development of partnerships
  - a. Internal within the university
  - b. Regional with all stakeholders in LLL
  - c. National, cooperation between PL2S-centers

### **Shifts in organisation and learning**

During the ALLMEET training in Volendam (November 2014), drs. Cor de Raadt described the development of a new school of education at the Inholland University of Applied Sciences in the period from 2004-2012.

In 2004 there was a strong need of new teachers and education was in a process of change from curriculum-steered education (input-driven) towards competence based learning (learning outcome driven). In professional education (EQF level 2-4) in the Netherlands the national Qualification Structure was in place, based on competence profiles. The change took place in close cooperation with schools as representatives of labour market. Especially the Validation of Prior Learning, pushed by the Dutch Government (Project “Learning and working”), in other European Countries (a.o. Norway, Finland, Denmark, UK, France, Portugal) and at EU-level in the European Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning, Cedefop, 2009)<sup>34</sup>. The program was accessible for students with prior experience in other sectors of society (for instance with a BSc or MSc in another subject).

A flexible program focused on the personal development of the student and hold a strong combination of learning and working. The teacher-training department became an expert centre on:

- Competence based learning programs
- Validation and assessment
- Personalised learning systems
- Became as such the knowledge centre for PLS for the rest of the university.
- Raising awareness in university of the importance of competence based learning, validation of prior learning and flexible programs
- Developing a systematic program and instruments to organise:

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission & Cedefop, 2009. European Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning. [Online] Available at: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054\\_fr.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054_fr.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture. Common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications. Brussels: European Commission, 2005a. Available from Internet: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/principles\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/principles_en.pdf) [cited 4.5.2007].

- Competence based programming
- Portfolio development
- Assessment methods and instruments
- Support on flexible study programs

Cor de Raadt gave the following conclusions/advice:

- Start with stressing the importance of lifelong learning and prior learning for the knowledge society
- Make sure that you are supported by boards of the university and the faculty
- Make very clear that validation of prior learning is not in conflict with the quality level of higher education you want to reach
- Make therefore the procedures and processes on PL2S extremely transparent
- Use the possibility of constantly monitoring and auditing your activities by an external auditor
- Combine top down and bottom up strategies
- put a lot of effort in educating your own staff in the same philosophy.

## The shifting learning paradigm

Ruud Duvekot described the change from traditional learning towards “New Learning” as:

<b>Traditional learning</b>	<b>Competence-orientated learning</b>
Content of knowledge and specialist skills are starting point	Realistic practical situations are starting point
Educational process is central	Learning process is central
Driven by the teacher, student is passive	Driven by the student, teacher as coach/supervisor
Modules are derived from separate disciplines	Modules are largely interdisciplinary
Separate knowledge and skills modules	Integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes across the curriculum
Testing is a task for the teacher only	Self-reflection and testing by oneself and peers play a role

The same shift can be seen in the testing of learning results:

<b>Traditional testing</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Single test/exam	Variety of tests and assignments
Objectivity: assessment is the result of a score on standardised items	Objectivity: assessors must be able to justify the assessment and equality (each student to be treated in the same manner)
Standardisation of tasks and scores	Not all tools of assessment have reached the same extent of standardisation

Construct is basis for development and validation of test; different dimensions of a construct are measured in isolation (knowledge, skills, attitudes)

Teacher is test-developer and testing authority

Assessment poses complex, often multidisciplinary problems and is orientated toward competencies (as a whole)

Multiple assessors

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## Agency and accountability

Important for PL2S-centres is the acceptance, quality, impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness. Therefore as base for this exercise the outline of a business plan has been used to structure the ideas and suggestions.

In the course of the project this plan must be further developed and be adapted for each of the PL2S-centres in the ALLMEET project.

### Statement

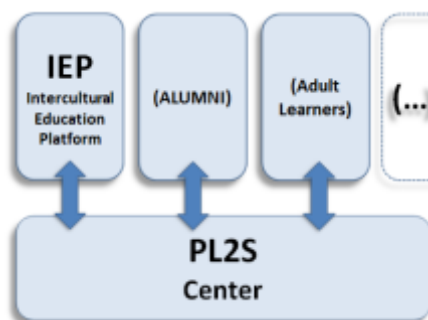
**CHANGE → Flexibility + Adaptability**

Due to the increasing speed of change in society the need to be more flexible in learning grows. This has to be analysed more to widen the view:

- The roles of each of the stakeholders in the learning process
- The external influences
- Competence assessment
- Next development
- How can a person prove his/her competence?
- Sustainability
- Outdating / change of value

Reasons for personalised lifelong learning for everyone can be:

- Want to get a job
- Want to keep a job
- Career development
- Personal development
- (Re-)action to change present situation
- Wants to earn a fortune / change
- Want to be(come) active and have influence
- Want to be present





- Want to score high marks
- Do new things, innovate
- Increase networking and contacts
- Increase learnability

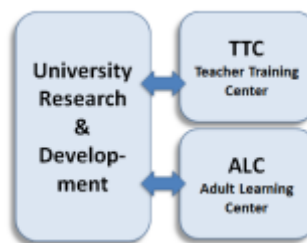
### *Goals*

- Connect activities (LLL methodologies, etc.) from departments and faculties (integration) in an ALLMEET centre/program
- Andragogical map: what is already there?
- Connected to tolerance
- Foster the informal learning culture
- "Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL)" as neutral base for Respecting/Cooperation
- Quality improvement and increase quantity of all kind of evaluation methods / instruments

### *The services that could be offered by PL2S*

Teaching / educational programs: on:

1. Counselling / guiding
2. Coordination of VPL/LLL/assessment activities (research, development, implementation, training)
3. Access to information about VPL/LLL/assessment
4. Diagnostic testing (Person, organisation, environment, psychological, assessment/VPL))
5. Research



### *Environment*

Universities / Education is a very strict, regulated and controlled environment of teaching and testing / exams. It is a teaching-culture

It is a 5 year development and conditioning through (re)training and tests and formal certification / diploma.

It can lead to a certain salary level and to motivation for further development.

The POLICY stimulates to take in consideration all forms of learning (formal, non-formal, informal), in all forms, anywhere (home, work, school), anytime, any pace.

### *Markets*

- There where the benefits are
- Where high fees can be earned back
- Government who wants to steer/change things
- Employers (in need for...)

- Commercial banks (sponsors) who want to contribute in changing the local/regional social situation
- Where the ROEBELS are...!!!

#### *Customers*

- Students
- Migrants
- Unemployed
- Employed

#### *At universities*

- Teachers at universities
- Researchers
- Administrative and technical staff

#### *At decision level:*

- Rector, managers, investors
- Ministry / Government
- (Migrant) unions

#### *External influences*

- Family
- (Social) contacts / networks
- Role model
- Negative influences such as colleagues, change of work / place

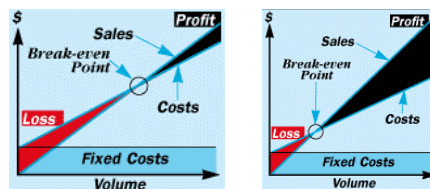
#### *Cost-benefit / break-even*

##### *Costs:*

- Development
- Initial / implementation
- Running costs

##### *Benefits*

- Money
- Individual
- Social
- Society



N.B. take notice of four dangers of over-investment:

1. Too long and too much subsidies
2. Too long and too much PR
3. Too much and too long Education/Explanation
4. Enforcement by law and regulations

### *Next steps*

1. Improve business plan
2. Make SWOT analyse
3. Develop an action plan
4. Change from re-act to pro-act → Empowerment

## **Organisation of PL2S centres**

### **Tasks**

The tasks of the PL2S centre in an institute for higher education include:

- (Co-)facilitate the faculties in the development of VPL methods and instruments.
- Offer VPL procedures, in collaboration with the faculties.
- Promoting the expertise of VPL, including training of guiders and assessors.

### **Governance**

The PL2S Centre at an institute for higher education functions for the entire University. This "upper school" status is guaranteed by a Steering Group which is responsible for VPL implement the policy. This group can consist of the directors of all faculties involved in VPL . The chairman of this group is also responsible for organizing the meetings. The Steering Group PL2S meets three times a year.

### **Partners in Learning**

Partners in Learning of a PL2S centre are internal and external: staff of the centre, the university to which the centre is attached and external partners like employer associations, trade unions, VET-schools, authorities, etc. These partners meet at so-called VPL-meetings where they can align their demand and supply of competent people needed to be trained on HE-levels. The PL2S centre acts as the linking pin between the partners.

The meetings are held with:

- PL2S coordinators and staff
- Partners of the PL2S Centre (external)
- Developers and educational staff involved in Personalised Lifelong Learning and VPL in university

The partners in learning meet two-monthly and are chaired by the coordinator of the PL2S Centre.

The meetings address:

- Business Alignment
- Implementation of policies decided by the Steering Committee
- Analysis of returns received evaluation forms of candidates

- Designing, testing and implementation of dedicated VPL procedures
- Making proposals to the Steering Committee for adjusting the VPL policy
- Educational matters (particularly with regard to developing the VPL instruments)
- Implementation of VPL Projects

### Linkage with lifelong learning

Within the institute for higher education a substantive dialogue around Personalised Lifelong Learning and VPL is started between developers and educators involved in VPL. The focus of this consultation is on sharing of knowledge and experiences. This dialogue is managed by the PL2S centre.

### Stakeholders

The table below shows the division of roles that needs to be addressed when setting-up a PL2S centre. It indicates who bears ultimate responsibility for the above tasks. This can be the PL2S centre, the university or other partners (authorities, employers, etc.)

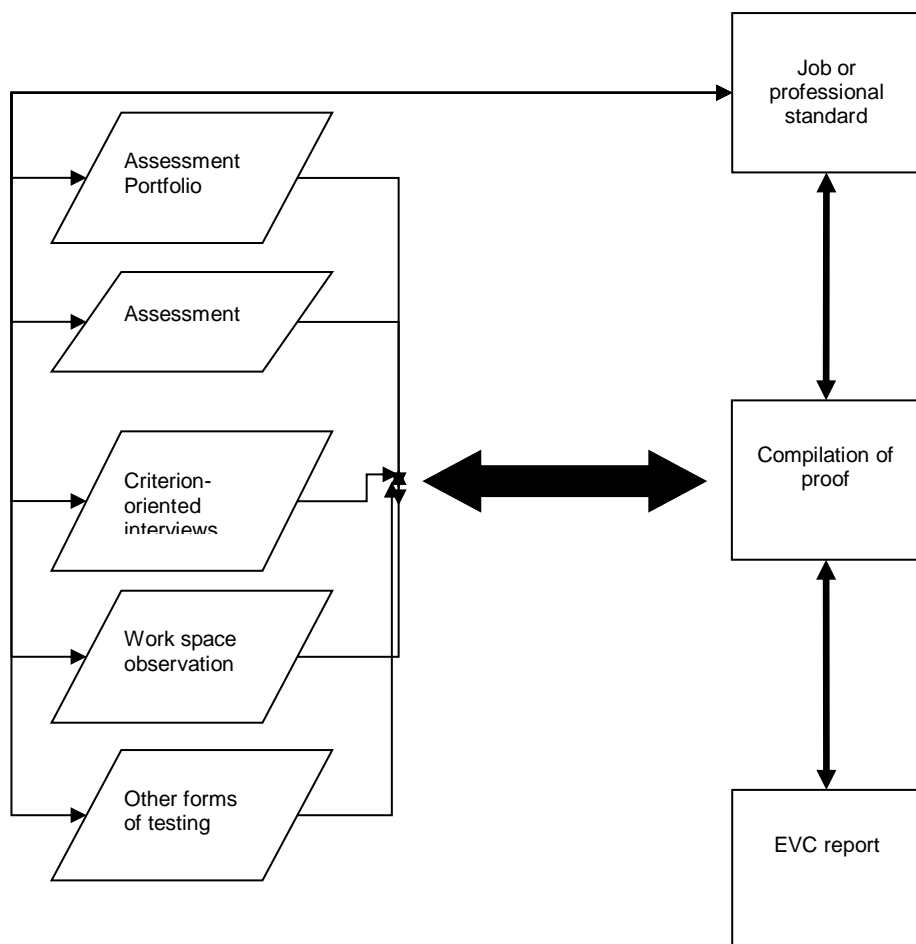
Task	Responsible		
	PL2S centre	University	Other
Maintenance externally oriented VPL-website by the institute for higher education			
Information and recruitment (acquisition)			
Formalisation VPL-procedure			
VPL procedure execution (parts vary by methodology): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intake</li> <li>• self-assessment</li> <li>• Portfolio</li> <li>• criterion based Interview</li> <li>• Drawing (draft) VPL reporting</li> <li>• evaluation with client</li> </ul>			
Formal issuance VPL- report			
Invoicing			
Perform general evaluation among customers (through evaluation).			
Quality of assessors and guiders			
Training and expertise assessors and guiders			
Develop and maintain network of assessors			

Task	Responsible		
Manual VPL (updating)			
Documents relating to VPL methods			
Development of VPL methodologies and guaranteeing its quality through PDCA cycle			
Maintenance Intranet ALLMEET VPL			
Joining national developments			

### VPL procedures

One of the services of a PL2S centre is the offer of VPL procedures. Such a procedure always contains more or less the same steps:

- Information and advice for the candidate, the employer or another organisation, etc.
- Intake of the individual and making individual arrangements linked to the individual's defined career goals. The candidate decides on the choice of qualification and whether to start the VPL procedure or not.
- Recognition of competences: portfolio (supported by the coach).
- Validation of competences/assessment (by the assessors).
- VPL report: Description of results and accreditation (by the assessor), compared with the individual career goals, together with advice on further personal development in the direction of the individual defined career goals.



### Education and recruitment

Information about VPL and recruitment of candidates is a shared responsibility, both by the PL2S Centre and the faculties. The PL2S Centre maintains an externally oriented website on VPL within the institute for higher education and establish contacts with potential organizations that can provide possible (groups of) candidates.

### Formal customer contacts

The PL2S Centre attached to the institute for higher education holds the formal customer contacts with candidates. This means that the centre customers applications and brings them in contact with one of the faculties for an interview. The PL2S centre is also responsible for the dispatch of official VPL reports and billing at the end of the procedure. The centre also provides transmission of an evaluation form, see Appendix 7.

## Intake

The start of an VPL procedure is an interview of the customer with a guider of the PL2S centre. The purpose of this interview is to verify whether the objective of the customer is in accordance with what the institute for higher education can provide in the framework of VPL. Participation in a VPL procedure is voluntary and on a personal basis. The customer will be informed about the admission requirements for the university and the regulations within the institute for higher education, to avoid confusion.

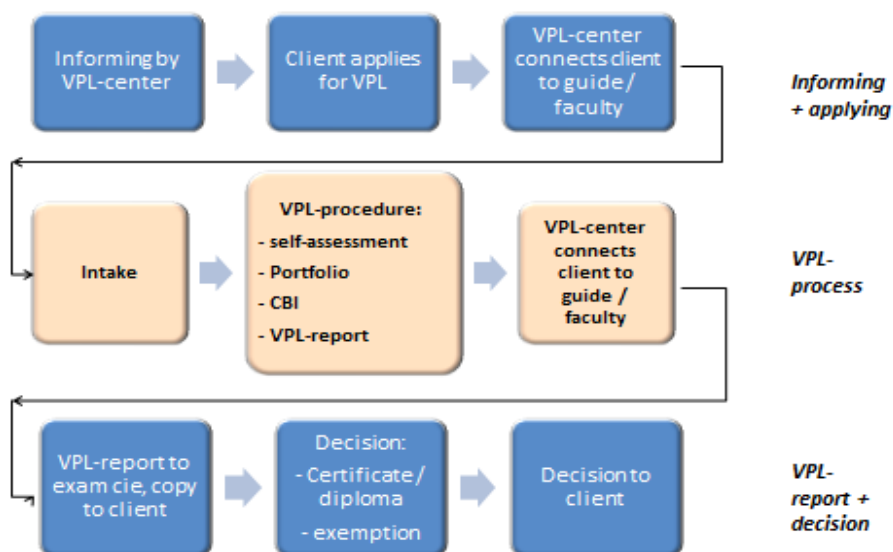
In consultation with the client a planning for the various steps in the VPL procedure will be made. The guider indicates as to the time that is needed on average to go through the various steps and consults with the client how they can be incorporated into his or her situation. The agreements are to be recorded and monitored by the guider. If necessary, the planning can be adjusted during the VPL-procedure.

## Exporting the VPL procedure

The university is responsible for guiding the client in the VPL procedure. This task is assigned to a guider or the VPL coordinator. For an objective assessment the role of guider and assessor are divided. In addition, the assessment is performed by two assessors, one internal and one from outside the volunteer organisation (e.g. industry, local government, school).

The assessors are responsible for writing a clear and complete VPL report with the results, understandable for all parties. There will be a final meeting, conducted by the guider or by the assessor. Further description of roles guider and assessor are described in the first ALLMEET PL2S-handbook.

See below for a schematic representation of the VPL procedure.



### **Quality Assurance of VPL**

The quality assurance system for VPL within the institute for higher education follows the organizational choices made the university: a combination of centralized and decentralized organized processes. Starting point is as much as possible the existing quality assurance within the university.

The external validation takes place through the appropriate procedures and in the framework of the university.

### **Quality VPL methods**

Each VPL methodology within the institute for higher education consists of a set of coherent tools developed by staff from the faculties. This decentralized approach offers the opportunity to optimally use the methods in (national or regional) developments within the sector of education where the methodology is applied.

Given the fact that VPL is considered as a form of testing, the usual procedures within the faculties are in force. This means that the VPL instruments for review are submitted to the examination of key committees (depending on how it is arranged within the faculty).

### **Quality assessors and guiders**

The quality of the assessors and guiders is secured primarily by the (compulsory) training. All assessors and guiders who are engaged in VPL, have received specific training in VPL procedures by the institute for higher education. This is taking care for by qualified external training institutions. In addition, within some peer reviews are applied for a further deepening of expertise.

### **Audit**

To improve the quality of the coherence between all the processes around VPL and to determine whether compliance with the European guidelines for the Validation of non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2009) and with VPL-rules and regulation with the country, a regular audit of the manuals, instruments and processes will take place.

### **Evaluation with the customer**

Every client will receive after the VPL-procedure, an evaluation form. The forms will be send to the PL2S centre, where the results will be discussed and actions for improvement will be taken.

### **Further training**

Every year a number of training courses will be realized. These include, among others:

- Assessor Training.
- Master classes for members of examination boards.
- Education and career training portfolio.
- Training focused on writing VPL reports.



### **Role of examination and key committees**

Examiners (and by extension the key committees that carry out delegated tasks on behalf of the Board of Examiners in the university) are involved in the VPL procedures within the institute for higher education.

First, the examination committees are responsible for defining the key policies and controls that are used within a faculty. The examination board of the university also plays a role in determining the VPL instruments.

### **Costs of VPL**

The costs for offering VPL-services need to be concrete and accountable. Different scenarios are possible:

- The customer pays the real costs for going through a VPL procedure.
- An external partner of the PL2S centre pays the costs for a specific target group
- The costs for VPL are integrated in the university programmes to which the customer gets access. In case of no admission this is part of the policy: 'no cure no pay'.

### **Appeal Procedure**

The results of the VPL procedure are recorded in a personal report. The procedure and the draft report will be discussed at the final meeting between customer/candidate and assessor(s). If there are errors in the reporting or procedural failures which can be adjusted, the VPL-report can be adjusted accordingly.

The assessors sign for the accuracy of the content, the conclusion and the recommendations. If agreed, the client countersigns the VPL-report.

If the customer/candidate does not agree with the report, (s)he can appeal, by sending, within four weeks after the date on the VPL-report, a written letter of appeal, with clear substantiation of the objectives. This letter of appeal, including a copy of the report and other relevant documents, has to be send to the board of appeal of the PL2S centre:

- Name of board of appeal: *To be decided*
- Address: *to be decided*
- The board of appeal for VPL consists of a chairman and two members. The chairman is a person, outside the VPL-organisation, one member is staff member of the university for the accreditation, but not working for the PL2S Centre and the third member an assessor who did not assess this client.
- The appeal procedure must be in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Board of Appeals for Examinations of the university.
- If the participant does not agree with the report, s/he can appeal within four weeks of the date of the report. The appeal must be in writing and explaining the objections and this will be forwarded to the Board of Appeal. The appeal must be accompanied by a copy of the report and, if available, copies of other relevant documents that serves the appeal.

### Internal communication

Relevant information about VPL for staff members and external interested can be found at the ALLMEET-website: [www.allmeet.org](http://www.allmeet.org)

Information for staff members from the VPL-organisation who are directly involved in VPL, there will be a protected area on internet that serves as a central source of information for example, policy documents, reports, VPL methodologies, etc.

### External communication

The VPL-model, VPL-procedure, and all relevant information and documents are available at the ALLMEET-website.

A brochure will be available, online and in print. His brochure explains the VPL-procedure and what is expected from the participants.

### PL2S-year planning

Within the institute for higher education there must be a planning for the university-wide activities of VPL.

Month	Meeting	Agenda items (including)

### Moving to DIY-teams

As lifelong learning is still under debate and changes in the structure and organisation of academic education first need recalibrating the university's mission and approach to lifelong learning in order to start up offering learning outcomes based and modular learning, including facilities for recognition of prior (formal, non-formal and informal) learning experiences. Therefore, the function of this work package is about providing practical examples, material and – above all – role models as a preparatory activity for creating PL2S-centres within the university.

The training material that was designed, produced, debated and trained within the ALLMEET-partnership has been tested in Russian universities for creating role models for setting up PL2S-centres. The input for this testing came from:

- In work package 4.1 a handbook for creating a common theoretical background for “Building up Personalised Learning” has been written and published. Next to the theory of Personalised Lifelong Learning (PL2) and Validation of Prior Learning (VPL), the handbook provided different approaches, methods and instruments as example for implementation.
- In work packages 4.2 and 4.3 the instruments for Portfolio, sustainable self-management of competences, support to personalised lifelong learning have been further developed / adapted.
- In two sequential training courses in the Netherlands, staff members of the six Russian universities and of two partner volunteer organisations have been trained in the theory, background and application of portfolio, VPL and PL2 approaches, methods and instruments.

This work package shifted the focus decisively to a bottom-up approach for creating favourable conditions and testing of the kind of personalised lifelong learning services that are central in PL2S-centres. The reflection on creating the necessary role models in the practice of Russian universities was the central focus. The main involved target groups in this deliverable were the learners (students, employees, teachers-as-learners) within the ALLMEET-partners in Russia.

The outcomes of this testing for creating role models were:

- With 12 heads of departments PL2S and VPL have been discussed.
- 63 teachers have followed a 1-day or 2-day training course; many more wanted to come.
- 227 Students followed from 1-day to 6-day training courses (high interest for awareness of competences and self-management of competences and career. One of the universities measured the response on articles about the training courses: 350 (constructive) comments.
- 6 employees of a consultancy company had a 6-day training course about portfolio and the sustainable self-management of competences and personalised lifelong learning.
- An estimated 1.700 persons were informed at seminars and conferences.

## **Setting-up DIY-teams**

The bottom up strategy and using motivated students as agents, proved to be working well. At practically all universities a small informal team was formed for the purpose of the project ALLMEET, consisting of PL2S/VPL-contact persons, trainers, assessors and guiders, fulfilling the different roles needed for exploiting a PL2S centre, so that the services of the PL2S-centre can work effectively:

1. **Raising awareness** of the potential of personal learning results for individuals can be at the heart of the process of validating prior learning outcomes for personalising one's learning process. Without this, any further learning strategy cannot effectively be based on individual talents nor will it start because it will lack personal ambition.
2. **The portfolio** is *the red thread* in the process. When the portfolio is designed and built-up, its content can be assessed and an advice added on possible qualification- and/or career-steps; it is subsequently enriched by tailor-made or blended learning options and finally when new learning results were achieved, updated. Therewith, the portfolio is both the starting as well as the end of individual learning processes. Any end however may again be the starting point of a new learning process. This is called a *portfolio-loop*.
3. **Self-assessment** as the vital step in PL2S because this strengthens her ownership of the learning results acquired so far and will stimulate her 'drive' towards co-designing her new personal development steps. There are various methods available for self-assessment, such as the Swiss *CH-Q* instrument (Schuur, *et al*, 2003). This is a structured training scheme building up a portfolio, (self-) assessment, career- & action-planning, quality-control and articulation of specific learning needs.
4. Reliable **assessment** is about bridge building between a portfolio and the specific development steps. In any given context, assessment has three main functions: (1) raising levels of achievement, (2) measuring this achievement reliably and (3) organising the assessment cost-effectively.  
 Assessment in this context is the judgement of evidence submitted for a specific purpose. It requires input - proof of learning outcomes by the individual - and a standard scale for the expected output of the assessment. (Ecclestone, 1994). Proof is provided with the portfolio of the candidate. The standard depends on the specific learning objective. The assessor has to be independent and flexible with regard to the individual input and the learning objectives in order to be able to provide a personalised learning advice as the outcome of the assessment. Moreover, the assessor needs to be an expert in the field(s) of learning where the individual needs or wants to be assessed in.
5. To guarantee 'quality' of the assessor and the guider on the one hand and prevent a quality control-bureaucracy on the other hand, it is recommended to formulate a quality-proof validation-process by securing the quality of the assessor(s) and guider(s). This entails:
  - an assessor/guider should fill in a personal portfolio herself as well.
  - A professional register for assessors/guiders should guarantee their expertise and competences.
  - Every year an assessor/guider needs to be re-accredited by means of refresher and updating courses and at least performing ten times a year as an assessor/guider. This new accreditation could be carried out by an official national agency.

- The quality of assessors/guiders implies being able to refer to a standard for assessors: this standard needs accreditation and linked to a national qualification framework.
6. Regarding the **development-steps** PL2S calls for a clear responsibility of not only qualification-systems but also from human resource systems.
  7. Proper **evaluation** and **feedback** is necessary to structurally embed the process into personal behaviour and therewith linking outcomes of VPL processes to lifelong learning strategies that matter to all actors in the process: the learner, the organisation where the learner is active and the school/university where the learner can learn further and/or be upskilled, upgraded and developed.

How the DIY-team will be staffed, assessors and guiders form the core of the team and of the PL2S-centre. They work together with other staff functions in legal, administrative, management and marketing domains. The most important challenge of the DIY-team is to end out the positive message that **one way or another, PL2S-centres open new and exciting ways for creating more tolerance in society through simulating and servicing personalised learning!**



PL2S-centres focus on the matchmaking of the ambition of adult learners in investing in their skills and competences and the learning opportunities a university can offer. A PL2S-centre acts in this way as a linking-pin between someone's portfolio – as a personal learning biography and collection of his/her prior formal, informal and non-formal learning outcomes – and the supply (or offer) from a university of lifelong learning programs. Assessment and guidance of someone's portfolio are at the heart of the services of a PL2S-centre and in the functions of assessor and guide they form the core of the professionalism a PL2S-centre. Quality-assuring and certifying these professionals therefore is crucial for the design, development and implantation of the kind of linking-pin activities that a PL2S-centre offers.

## Preconditions

It should be noted that the necessary competences to be developed for assessors and guides possibly need to be contextualized according to the variety in socio-economic and –demographic structure in which a specific PL2S-centre operates. A successful set-up and usage of the professionalism of a PL2S-centre depends on dealing with three preconditions:

### 1. *Providing assessment and guidance standards aiming at 'a qualification effect'*

Standards for assessment- and guidance-services of a PL2S-centre must meet the requirements of validity, acceptance, feasibility and functionality of the learning programs of a university to which the centre links someone's learning demand. These standards for assessors and guides must correspond with existing national qualification structures. This offers the best possible quality assurance of (1) the professionalism of the assessors and guides working at a PL2S-centre and (2) the civil effect of the assessment and guidance services, ranging from admissions to and exemptions from particular training courses to any other further step in someone's career development path within the programs of the university to which the PL2S-centre is attached.

This precondition will strengthen the embedded role of the PL2S-centre in the university on the one hand. On the other hand, it will help the university's qualification system to open up and be responsive to the learning needs of adult learners.

## 2. *Quality assurance system for assessment and guidance procedures*

The quality of assessment and guidance – as offered by a PL2S-centre - can be controlled by establishing quality-assured procedures for assessment and guidance. The key quality criteria are validity, acceptance, functionality, transparency and comparability of structures.

The quality of the services of a PL2S-centre affects various parties with an interest in the assessment results. The university to which the centre is attached must supervise the quality assurance system (validity, reliability and fairness) of the assessment and guidance results. In principle, such a system is part of the overall quality system of all university's procedures, aiming at any kind of validation of learning outcomes and qualifications. The university can delegate these responsibilities to third parties, but the university remains answerable for quality supervision of the PL2S-centre.

The quality assurance system for assessment and guidance procedures can include an audit of the assessment centres' internal quality assurance systems (as in the case of ISO certification), together with a system of random investigations of the validity and reliability of assessment results, conducted by independent research institutes. Criteria for the quality of assessment results can be drawn from the general requirements for assessment: validity and reliability. Naturally, both concepts must be operationalized specifically for the kind of prior learning assessment and guidance procedures of the PL2S-centre.

## 3. *Accessibility*

Assessment and guidance procedures must be accessible to adult learners and the organisations where they work (and learn). Accessibility is determined by the recognition and acceptance of the outcomes of the services of the PL2S-centre. It is also determined by the accessibility of the university that implements the assessment procedures and their affordability. Access to qualifications (and other forms of civil effect) of universities is determined by the features of the qualification system itself and by the availability of financial resources. Quality-assured supply of assessments and guidance increases the accessibility of the university. 'Decentralised' refers to the regional distribution of assessment and guidance services of the PL2S-centre and the implementation of the centre's procedures at other locations than only at university, e.g. the employee's place of work or training course.

Another condition for accessibility is that the system is workable and efficient for users. Time-consuming and bureaucratic procedures are disastrous to accessibility. The funding of prior learning assessment procedures is a fundamental condition for the use of the system. A decentralised and workable system that nevertheless costs the users too much will reduce access to the procedures.

To conclude, when these three conditions are met, *commitment* can develop fully. There will be plenty of space to build strong commitment for new ways of learning, within the network of universities and its external learning partner. Commitment after all is the most essential precondition for making use of the assessment and guidance services of the PL2S-centre. Commitment means that all parties involved will take up their own



responsibility. For the university, this will be a challenge since education is traditionally more supply-oriented than demand-oriented. Competence-based learning and prior learning assessment will however make learning more 'made more to measure'. The motivation of the adult learners will therefore be much higher.

## **Accreditation of PL2S professionals**

The accreditation of the PL2S professionals aims at safeguarding the quality of the services of the PL2S-centre. Through this *personalisation* of the quality of the PL2S-centre, all services of the centre can be quality-assured offered on three levels by:

- adult learners, who use their prior learning outcomes as input for getting access to tailor-made lifelong learning programs of a university through the intermediary role of the PL2S-centre.
- university-staff, who needs to be able to respond to the need for tailor-made learning of the adult learners, therewith providing the throughput that the adult learner is looking for in university.
- society, where the output of the lifelong learning programming of the university needs to be grounded.

The accreditation of the PL2S-professionals is organised according to the following stepping-stones:

### *1. Certificate of participation in the training for PL2S-professionals (internal certification)*

The PL2S-professionals need to be trained in an accredited training programme for assessor/guide. They will receive after completing all required modules of the training a certificate of participation if the following conditions are met:

- The PL2S-professional has actively attended all training sessions.
- The PL2S-professional has actively prepared him-/herself for the meetings by reading the material and working on home-work and other exercises.
- The PL2S-professional has built up a personal portfolio as much on the basis of assessment-experience and the feedback on these experiences during the training.

The required modules are dedicated to self-management of competences, portfolio-assessment, guidance and management:

- i. on self-management of competences, aiming at training the generic competence of portfolio build-up & maintenance for (personalised) lifelong learning-strategies. This module leads to a personal portfolio and a personal action plan.
- ii. On portfolio-assessment, for teachers/trainers and human resources-officers in order to support their students, staff or others in building up their portfolio and advising them. Assessment will be taught as assessment for, of and as learning.
- iii. On counselling and guiding, for career guidance (summative and formative) of and for learning of adult learners.

- iv. On management of prior learning methodology and processes, for learning professionals and human resources-officers in order to arrange access to adult (higher) education.

With issuing the certificate of participation the university declares that the participant is competent and capable to start - with an experienced assessor – to perform services within the PL2S-centre. Note that the official examination body of the university is the only body that can award these certificates.

### *2. Participation in the audit (external certification)*

The start-competent assessor/guides of the PL2S-centre holding a certificate of participation can prepare for the external audit. They can start preparing when meeting the following conditions:

- The assessor/guide has assessed/ guided a number of personal assessment processes (more than 1) in his/her domain (portfolio, simulations, competence based interviews) in which the standard of the assessor/guide training is applied.
- The assessor/guide has conducted a number of assessments and/or guiding sessions (more than 1) in his domain (portfolio, simulations, competence based interviews) in which the standard of the assessor training is applied.
- The assessor/guide has acted in a number of assessments and/or guiding sessions (at least 2) as 2<sup>nd</sup> assessor or 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion guidance.
- The assessor/guide has built up a portfolio in which the assessor's/guide's competences are demonstrated and substantiated with evidence.

### *3. Preconditions for certification*

In order to train assessors and guides successfully and allow them to finalize the training with an external certification, the following conditions have to be met.

Participants are expected to:

1. Have sufficient time available to prepare and visit the sessions.
2. Have sufficient time available to practice as a guide and as an assessor within the assessor training and act as a 2<sup>nd</sup> assessor.
3. Build up a portfolio in which they demonstrate their competences in preparation for the audit (external certification).

The organisations of participants are expected to:

- Have a clear image of the alleged qualities of the participants on the basis of the internal profiles to be used as standards.
- Have the participants well informed before they start training and have clarified why the participants are registered as trainees.
- Participants are granted absence-of-leave during the training sessions and allowed time to do their homework and practice the assessments.

- Preferably, several participants from the same team allow entering the assessor/guide-training.

## **Basics of the audit**

Guiding principle for the audit of PL2S-centres is that not only the justification is given of the implementation of assessment- and guidance-procedures but also the advisory function of the audit itself is organised. In this paragraph the general principles are formulated on which the external quality assurance is based on. The basics of the audit are derived from the requirements in the application process for PL2S-centre to be allowed to perform their procedures in linkage with the HE-learning programmes of the university they are attached to.

### ***Function of quality assurance: monitoring and advising***

The audit is focused on accountability and advice so that it provides added value compared to traditional quality assurance systems of the university to which the PL2S-centre is attached. The audit visualises how the procedures of the PL2S-centre function, what is going well and where there still exist problems or is a need for new initiatives. It is expected that an audit report in which suggestions are made to improve the implementation of the procedures, the response of the PL2S-centre will be to implement the suggested improvements.

### ***Balance between internal and external quality assurance***

An accredited PL2S-centre uses an internal quality assurance system to ensure a transparent, qualitative and efficient implementation of its staff in executing PL2S-services. This internal system is based on the following **principles**:

- 1) The services of the PL2S-centre can only be passed through voluntary by adult learners.
- 2) The privacy of adult learners is respected and guaranteed.
- 3) Equal access to the services and fair treatment of adult learners should be guaranteed.
- 4) Stakeholders can be involved as 'partners in learning' for purposes of offering tailor made learning opportunities, e.g. learning at the workplace.
- 5) All services of the PL2S-centre should contain mechanisms for guidance and counselling of individuals.
- 6) The process, procedures and criteria of assessment and guidance by the staff of the PL2S-centre must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance.
- 7) The services of the PL2S-centre should respect the legitimate interests of stakeholders and seek a balanced participation.
- 8) All services of the PL2S-centre must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest.
- 9) The professional competences of the staff of the PL2S-centre is assured by their professional certification and the yearly review of their activities.

The added value of an external audit consists of:

- Offering a review and an advise on the quality of the services of the PL2S-centre.
- The external audit presents opportunities to align internal and external quality assurance mutually alike and offers tools for improving internal quality assurance.
- An external audit provides insight in how the PL2S-centre can manage its responsibility for the quality of its staff.
- An external audit can be an efficient way to identify options for improvement.

An important advantage of a sound internal quality assurance of the services is that a PL2S-centre can involve specific criteria or aspects of its work as part of the external audit. These are criteria that one wants to test, in the context of the improvements that one might have already set out at the centre.

Finally, it will be necessary to organise some form of external quality assurance for strengthening the credibility of the specific criteria. Attention to the coordination of internal and external quality assurance therefore is obvious.

### ***Public character of the findings***

In the perspective of the accountability and consultation of the PL2S-centre, it is important to publish the findings in a good way. Needed is a form of transparency that is informative to external stakeholders and for the internal stakeholders creates a sphere in which there can be a confidential exchange about problems and dilemmas. Because the focus of the audit also aims at showing potential improvement in the services, the emphasis in the final audit-report will not be on demonstrating shortcomings but on the formulation of proposals for improvement.

The external audit is using two reports: one confidential management-letter for the PL2S-centre whose procedures are audited and one general report that is publicly available. Public reporting of the audit includes a general summary of the findings, recommendations and overall descriptions of good practice. It is to decide by the PL2S-centre whether the management letter is also going to be publicly available.

### ***Audit team: expert and independent***

It is preferable to work with an audit team that is independent from the PL2S-centre and the university to which the centre is attached.

The required expertise of the members of the audit team covers both the managerial as well as the assessment/guidance aspects of the PL2S-centre. With a view to national and European developments in lifelong learning, it is recommended to also include an expert with knowledge (and experience) of the international developments in this field in the team.

The size of the team needs to be agreed on with the PL2S-centre; the bottom-line however is an audit team of at least three members. In this way all necessary expertise can be included in the team. Apart from these experts, one secretary needs to be appointed.

## **The audit**

The process concerning the audit is presented in this chapter. Subsequently, the composition of the audit, the audit process and the step by step procedure are presented.

### ***Composition of the audit team***

The audit team is subject to the following requirements:

- The audit team consists of minimal 3 and maximal 5 members, depending on the specific audit to be carried out. The decision on the size and composition of the audit team is taken by the appointed chairperson of the audit team.
- None of the team members are employed by the PL2S-centre being audited nor by the university to which the centre is attached.
- The audit team has expertise in the field of the services offered by the PL2S-centre and expertise in the area of quality assurance and auditing. Also, the audit team has deep knowledge of national and international developments in the field of lifelong learning, assessment and guidance. These abilities can be grouped into at least three members.
- The audit team is independent and has authority.
- The audit team treats all information confidentially.
- The audit team is assisted by a secretary, dealing with the reporting and communications (before, during and after the audit) to the PL2S-centre.
- The chairperson of the audit team, in consultation with the secretary, manages the audit process. He/she is responsible for the writing of the final audit report and the confidential management letter.

### ***Audit process and procedure***

The main principles of quality assurance system of a PL2S-centre is that it is efficient and effective. The audit carried out according to the procedure described are executed in a concise way, inviting and flexible in adapting to the wishes of the PL2S-centre. A proper balance should be established between the expected yield, the result and the amount of work involved. The structure and content of the audit activities provide a number of improvements that could be addressed the audited PL2S-centre.

Important points are:

- The audit will take place on a single day.
- The audit can be performed with an efficient preparation time of the PL2S-centre and the audit team. "Efficient" means that the audit can take place in a time- and cost-extensive way of working.
- All staff-members involved in the services and procedures of the PL2S-centre are also involved in the audit-process as objects and sources.

### ***Brief description of the audit process***

The process starts with an invitation to the PL2S-centre to participate in the audit under

the grant or renewal of its accreditation for performing services and procedures as linked to the learning programmes of the attached university.

The audit schedule will be determined in consultation with the PL2S-centre. The PL2S-centre prepares the audit and provides a self-evaluation and relevant documentation. Then the audit takes place. The audit will be finalised with a confidential management letter and a public report. The audit team expresses whether and to what extent the PL2S-centre operates in accordance with the principles for services and procedures of a PL2S-centre (see § 2.2).

At the end of the audit day a short, verbal feedback is given by the audit team. This addition to the main discussion points this feedback also refers to the preliminary findings and recommendations. The team then writes the letter and the report.

### ***The procedure for the PL2S-centre***

The audit procedure is to test the procedures and services of the PL2S-centre. For the centre concerned this entails these steps:

- 1 The **date** for a site visit is recorded and the internal contactperson is appointed (*when*).
- 2 **Agreement** on how, within the framework conditions, the audit preferably will take place. This partly depends on how the services and procedures in the concerned centre take place and which staff members are involved (*how*).
- 3 **An agenda** for the site visit is set (*what*).
- 4 The **audit framework** is discussed and together with the PL2S-centre it is determined which audit criteria are interesting for the PL2S-centre to audit more specifically (*what*).
- 5 The PL2S-centre performs a **self-evaluation** and provides any other relevant **documentation** relating to the individual subjects of the audit framework and makes this available to the audit team. These documents are provided with a brief **tassel** in which the subjects of the audit framework are accounted for, the PL2S-centre addresses the specific concerns and reflects on its strengths and weaknesses of their activities (*what and how*).
- 6 The **site visit** takes a full day. Two weeks in advance the audit team informs the PL2S-centre with which staff members they want to speak. This could be for example: guides, manager(s) and assessors (*when, who*).
- 7 On the basis of the provided material the audit team may choose to **zoom in** on specific subjects or aspects. They can opt for this if material provided by the centre doesn't convince the audit team if the audit criteria are met correctly (*what, how*).
- 8 The audit team formulates a **report** on all topics and rates every topic that was audited, decides whether improvement is needed. The audit team can impose additional critical notes and/or give compliments to any criteria, subject or aspect. The audit team works with a five-point scale and can add a qualitatively weighted evaluation of the subjects.
- 9 The **planning of all steps in the audit process** is determined in consultation with the PL2S-centre.

- 10 The **draft report** will be submitted to the PL2S-centre to correct inaccuracies.
- 11 Once the corrections have been studied and implemented the **final report** is drawn up. This report is presented to the PL2S-centre and its attached university in order to carry out any decision of the audit team regarding the (re)granting of the accreditation of the PL2S-centre and to ensure the implementation of possible improvements by the PL2S-centre.

### ***The procedure for the audit team***

The audit procedure consists for the audit team of the following steps:

- 1 Potential audit team members and a chairperson are invited to **participate** in the audit team. In case of the absence of a national audit structure for PL2S-centres, every single PL2S-centre is obliged to start up this audit-process by itself since the audit is the only way for obtaining an independent accreditation to carry out the kind of services and procedures that the PL2S-centre is offering to adult learners. This accreditation therefore is needed to make sure that the PL2S-centre works in accordance with all principles pertaining to this field of work.
- 2 When participating in an audit the audit chairperson and the other members of the team will receive a formal confirmation letter with **details** of the planning/timetable and their mandate (and payment).
- 3 The audit team receives the documentation of the PL2S-centre and they arrange their own pre-consultation.
- 4 The **pre-consultation** can take the form of a (telephone) meeting in which also the secretary of the audit team participates. The chairperson of the audit team chairs this session. Purpose and ways of working are considered, the documentation is reviewed on the basis of the audit framework and questions are formulated. The division of tasks is discussed in the team.
- 5 The secretary makes an overview of the **questions** that came out of the pre-consultation.
- 6 The **site visit** takes place.
- 7 The audit team can choose two methods:
  - The team chooses – apart from the regular requested information (see the template in section 4) - central themes and questions they submit to the PL2S-centre.
  - The team can also choose to – apart from the regular requested information (see the template in section 4) - zoom in on specific aspects or on a specific theme. That means for example, they only subject one or two topics to a critical analysis. They can only opt for this approach if the provided material from the PL2S-centre is very convincing on the audit criteria.
- 8 The audit team presents at the end of the visiting day a brief **oral feedback of the preliminary outcomes** of the audit.
- 9 The secretary writes the **draft report and management letter** and submits them to the audit team. The chairperson of the audit team supports this process and monitors the timing. The audit team values and rates all topics in accordance with the template for the report (section 4) and formulates desired or needed

recommendations for aspects that need improvement.

- 10 The audit team gives a qualitative **review** in accessible, non-formal language. The audit team can give additional compliments to aspects that can be regarded as good practice.
- 11 The chairperson provides the draft report and management letter to the PL2S-centre for **verification** of factual errors and if necessary additional information.
- 12 After processing the information from the PL2S-centre the **final audit report and the management letter** is determined by the audit team.
- 13 The chairperson sends the final report and the management letter to the PL2S-centre. The PL2S-centre is responsible for the enforcement of the assessment of the audit team and carrying out possible improvements as suggested by the audit team.

## Audit Findings

The audit team gives a qualitative **review** of the services and procedures of the PL2S-centre in accessible, non-formal language. The audit team can come up with additional compliments to aspects that they perceived as a good practice. The review takes the form of a formal public report and a confidential management letter.

The audit **findings** are reflected in a rating (on a scale of 1-6) on which the (re)accreditation of the PL2S-centre depends:

- Average score between 5,0-6,0 on all aspects/criteria: good quality without improvement needed. Grant/renewal accreditation for 3 years.
- Score between 4,5-5,0: good quality for improvement grant/renewal accreditation for 3 years, with a requirement to report improvement on the aspects mentioned in report and letter.
- Score between 4,0-4,5: moderate quality improvement: suspension of grant/renewal accreditation for 3 years as long as it is not complied with the requirement to report acquisition improvement. During suspension no APL procedures may be performed.
- Score between 3,5-4,0: insufficient quality essential improvement: suspension of grant/renewal accreditation until it is satisfied the requirement to report improvement after taking a renewed audit should take place before granting the accreditation or to extend. During suspension no APL procedures may be performed.
- Score below 3,5: insufficient quality without improvement: no granting and withdrawal of the accreditation.



## The audit-report

The audit-report on which the quality-assurance of the PL2S-centre depends is divided into five sections. Each section represents a specific feature of the PL2S-centre that needs to be trusted by adult learners, university-staff and society. Together these sections provide a PL2S-centre with the necessary quality-mark for operating as an independent, trustworthy, accessible and reliable centre for linking adult learner's learning need (input) with the acquiring of new learning outcomes at the attached university (throughput, therewith assisting in generating new social and/or career opportunities for the adult learners (output).

The structure of the audit-report follows these five sections. The outcome of the audit of a PL2S-centre is only positive if all indicators are scored with an average of 5. Within a section a score of 3 or 4 needs to be compensated in order to arrive at the average score.

Quality requirement 1: mission	Rating
1. The PL2S-centre focuses its services and procedures on the assessment/guidance of adult learners on the basis of the qualifications and other accredited learning programs of the university to which the centre is attached and aims at successful linkage of the assessment/guidance results to these qualifications and programs by means of transferable PL2S-reports.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
2. The PL2S-centre is responsible for the quality of every procedure and the issuing of any personalised report.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
Quality requirement 2: rights	Rating
3. Information on assessment and guidance procedures is established, open to all and includes at least a description of the procedure, method, an indication of the time and resources required, the maximum cycle time, conditions for participation and the rights of the applicant.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
4. The PL2S-centre shall include in its agreements with adult learners all information on the necessary investment in time and resources, the maximum duration of the procedure(s), the applicable standard(s) and objective (s) of the candidate.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
5. Agreements between the candidate and the PL2S-centre are recorded and signed by both parties before the start of any procedure.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
6. The PL2S-centre shall ensure that each candidate is	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

entitled to a closing session of the assessment/guidance services rendered. The PL2S-centre offers for this purpose also a 2 <sup>nd</sup> opinion facility and an independent complaint-procedure for adult learners who are not satisfied.	1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
7.The PL2S-centre reports findings from any procedure only to the candidate. It also safeguards that findings or reporting to third parties only take place with the written consent of the candidate.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
<b>Quality requirement 3: procedures &amp; instruments</b>	<b>Rating</b>
8. Responsibilities and powers of officials are clear within the PL2S-centre, known to all concerned and functional in practice.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
9. The assessment/guidance of prior learning outcomes in the procedure is based on the recognized diplomas and/or qualifications of the attached university.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
10. The procedure processes all evidence that a candidate provides.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
11. The evidence used in the procedure meets established criteria for variety, relevance, timeliness, authenticity and quantity.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
12. Instruments and evaluation in a procedure are aligned with the applicable diplomas and/or qualifications.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
13. The assessment/guidance includes ensuring the utmost transparency, reliability and independence.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
14. The substantive considerations that are part of a review (such as the assessment of evidence and the choice of assessment tools) are defined clearly in the procedure and then continue to be available within the organization of the PL2S-centre for at least 3 years.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
15. The PL2S-centre shall keep a copy of the relevant evidence of the candidate for three years on the basis of which was issued a final report.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong

<p>16. A procedure results in a report which includes at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The objective of the candidate.</li> <li>- The prior learning outcomes relevant to the learning objective,</li> <li>- The steps of the procedure and instruments used therein.</li> <li>- Recognized competence.</li> <li>- Clear substantiation of these recognitions.</li> <li>- A conclusion that fits in with the objective of the candidate.</li> </ul>	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
<b>Quality requirement 4: assessors and supervisors</b>	<b>Rating</b>
17. In the procedure the roles of guides and assessors are strictly separated, both on paper and in practice.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
18. Candidates are accompanied by a guide at providing insight into their competencies and working on documentation of their learning experiences.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
19. The guides and assessors are certified and have sufficient professional experience in and understanding of the diploma/qualification requirements of the university and/or the procedure of the PL2S-centre.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
20. The guides and the assessors have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the criteria for delivering convincing documentation of someone's learning experiences.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
21. The assessors are proficient in the use of the applied evaluation methods and associated tools.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
22. The assessors deliver their findings effectively both orally and in writing.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
23. Between assessor and candidate is no relationship other than that inevitably and for the work of assessors is necessary.	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>
<b>Quality requirement 5: quality assurance</b>	<b>Rating</b>
24. The PL2S-centre evaluates in a sound manner the quality of their own procedures systematically among all concerned. Standard components of the evaluations, the quality of information, agreements, used assessment tools, the level of competence of guides and assessors, the reporting templates, the	<p>□ □ □ □ □ □ 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong</p>

evolution of the procedures, the resolution of any complaints or concerns, management and administration.	
25. The PL2S-centre works only with certified and yearly reviewed assessors and guides.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
26. The PL2S-centre uses the results of the evaluations for improvements and ensuring its effectiveness. Evidence of this managerial task is provided and justified on a structured basis in the year report on the PL2S-centre's activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong
27. The PL2S-centre archives in the context of quality assurance and for the three-year audit both the outcome of the procedures in writing (reports) and image (the video recording of the assessments).	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 2 3 4 5 6 weak ..... strong

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Learning is more than ever important and valuable; people are encouraged to invest in their potential throughout their lives, taking into account their prior learning. According to policy papers all across the globe, this should concern all citizens, including the underrepresented groups and non-traditional learners with regard to higher education because everywhere ‘the learning society’ needs more higher-educated participation from all. In this respect, it is vital to dynamise ‘the learning ground’ by transmitting both learning responsibilities as well as learning opportunities to all people, regardless of their background. In doing this, not only the learning by the people themselves is dynamised but also the functionality of higher education institutes, like universities, needs to be widened to be able to respond to the learning needs of all adult learners. These learning needs not only focus on qualifications and certification but also on valuing learning in itself as a motor for personal development and empowerment. This brings about a need for personalising learning since all learning in the context of the present ‘learning society’ always starts with the learner.

‘Affording the Desire to Learn’ aims at filling in the need to articulate and ground the features of personalised learning in higher education. Special attention is given to strengthening the dialogue between the adult learner and her/his learning history with the teacher or trainer in higher education on the design, implementation and validation of the learning that is needed to reach out to the individual learning objectives.

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THE SERIES VPL BIENNALE PROMOTE INITIATIVES IN THE LEARNING ARENA ENABLING PEOPLE TO BE(COME) EMPOWERED AND PARTICIPATE IN SHAPING AN OPEN AND DYNAMIC LEARNING SOCIETY.

