

Draft Berlin Declaration on VPL

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Preamble

Validation of Prior Learning is the process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying the learning outcomes of individuals acquired within and outside formal education and training. It gives visibility and value to all forms of learning and seeks to uncover and unlock latent talent in the workforce and in society. Globalization, digitalization and migration are changing the way we work and learn. Where it is already established, we can see that VPL performs an invaluable bridging function between the individual and society, between learning and working. To empower VPL further, we, the VPL community, set out the following overarching principles for achieving a robust and effective VPL-system:

§1 Organisational arrangements

- 1.1 VPL arrangements need **clear entry points**, which are widely **advocated**.
- 1.2 Relevant stakeholders need to **collaborate** and **cooperate** so that VPL holds **value** in society and has a high level of **recognition**.
- 1.3 There should be clearly **demarcated spheres of responsibility** for all stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and quality assurance of VPL.
- 1.4 VPL arrangements, **regardless of the learning pathway**, should be linked to National Qualification Frameworks.
- 1.5 VPL arrangements need to **broaden access** to education, training and work.
- 1.6 VPL arrangements need to include **guidance** at every stage of the process.
- 1.7 VPL arrangements need to be **accessible regardless of geography**.

§2 Financing

- 2.1 Finances should be in place to cover the **full costs of validation** including personnel, infrastructure, instruments and support mechanisms.
- 2.2 **A sustainable financing formula** needs to be in place, which results in fair distribution of costs between the state, employers, and individuals, all of whom benefit from validation.
- 2.3 VPL should be **accessible to all**, with means-tested support available to ensure that lack of financial resources is not a barrier to participation.
- 2.4 Financial instruments should **incentivise** provision and take-up of VPL.
- 2.5 There should be **transparent and fair pricing** of VPL across sectors.
- 2.6 The **Return on Investment** (ROI) of VPL should be monitored, analysed and advocated at the individual, organisational and societal level.

§ 3 Procedures and instruments

- 3.1 **Quality assurance mechanisms** need to be in place to ensure that assessment tools and instruments are valid, reliable, fair and economic.
- 3.2 **Trusted and known instruments** should enable flexible, **individualised** pathways and accommodate the **diversity** of candidates and learning paths.
- 3.3 There needs to be a link between **formative, summative and reflective** approaches.
- 3.4 Individuals need to have access to **self-led, user-friendly tools**, which allow them to **map** their prior learning.
- 3.5 Validation procedures need to refer to **agreed standards** expressed in terms of learning outcomes
- 3.6 Learning outcomes should indicate the **competence level** and **type of learning**.
- 3.7 Validation pathways need to be **modular, transparent, and comprehensible** at all stages of the process in order to allow for flexible work and education careers.
- 3.8 **Certification** should either grant credits, which allow for exemptions to shorten study time, lead to a full or partial qualification, or open up new routes to education and work.
- 3.9 **Specialist training** and **certification** of **assessors** needed to ensure open-mindedness, competence and a non-discriminatory approach.
- 3.10 VPL should make use of the potential of **digital, multilingual and innovative tools** to deliver the best experience for the learner.
- 3.11 VPL should be accessible without **any pre-requisite level of formal qualification**.

§ 4 Support structures

- 4.1 Information-provision and awareness-raising of the value of people's informal and non-formal learning experiences need to be embedded in learning, career guidance and work.
- 4.2 **Free and accessible guidance** needs to be provided before, during and after all phases of validation.
- 4.3 Guidance structures need to be **accessible locally and online**, to ensure that geography is not a barrier to participation.
- 4.4 There should be one **single entry point** to the validation scheme, which is available both online and offline and coordinates the validation pathway of the learner.
- 4.5 **Specialist training** and **certification** for **VPL practitioners** is needed to ensure respectful, confidential and competent support that empowers the learner to own the VPL process.
- 4.6 In order to have fair and objective processes, in the assessment and certification phase, **assessors must be independent from advisors**.

§ 5 Post-validation pathways

- 5.1 VPL should facilitate an individual's mobility horizontally, vertically and diagonally within and between **sectors** and **countries**.
- 5.2 VPL results should be **transparent and meaningful** to employers and providers of education and training.
- 5.3 Validation certificates need to be the same as formal learning certificates so that they **hold the same value** on the job market and ensure that they form the solid building blocks of a further learning career.
- 5.4 **Further learning options** need to be offered based on the results of the VPL process. They need to be adaptive to the individual's learning preferences.
- 5.5 Alongside the responsibility of the education system and the employers, the individual **learner is also responsible** for the creation of a functional learning and working path.

§6 Legal foundations

- 6.1 The legal foundation of VPL must establish an individual's **right to validation and guidance**. At the same time it should be the individual's choice to exercise this right.
- 6.2 The VPL legal framework must establish a solid **funding** system, effective **instruments and procedures**, a trusted **certification** process and a strong **support** structure for candidates.
- 6.3 The VPL legal framework must also establish **regulating bodies**, which oversee provision, uptake and quality assurance of VPL and coordinate the whole VPL system.
- 6.4 Laws and regulations need to be **reviewed** on a regular basis to allow the **evolution** of the VPL system.
- 6.5 To avoid discrimination, (partial) qualification certificates obtained through VPL need to be **identical** to the corresponding certificates obtained via traditional formal education and training routes.
- 6.6 The **ownership** of the VPL results should lie with the individual learner.
- 6.7 The VPL system must be **embedded** in national policy.