

Leonardo da Vinci

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“Transferring methods for validation of informal learning to VET institutions in the field of sustainable agriculture”

General Strategy for Transfer Implementation

(draft Proposal)

- Guidelines for validating non-formal learning into formal learning within agriculture sector
- Guidelines for validating experience (expertise)

11/2014

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Introduction

Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) within the AGROSKILL project and their function in the context of LLL

The European Commission defines Lifelong Learning as ‘all learning activities throughout life, with the aims of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment related perspectives’. Lifelong Learning is about providing a second chance to update basic skills and offering learning opportunities at more advanced levels. All this means that formal systems of provision need to be more open and flexible, so that such opportunities can be truly tailored to the needs of potential learners (ESAE, 2007).

Lifelong learning		
All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competencies and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.		
Subdivision of LLL into its three principal settings (pathways), its dimension called usually life-wide learning		
Formal learning	Non-formal learning	Informal learning
<p>Learning that occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school /training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view.</p> <p>It typically leads to certification.</p>	<p>Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view.</p> <p>It typically does not lead to certification.</p>	<p>Learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner’s perspective.</p> <p>It typically does not lead to certification.</p>
<p>The recognition of unrecognised formal education can also be seen as one of the areas of accreditation process.</p>	<p>As non-formal learning/education and informal learning in both its forms typically do not lead to certification, both these pathways of LLL are the main application areas of identification/validation/accreditation process.</p>	

Definition of APL

APL is Accreditation of Prior Learning. Prior learning means knowledge, skills or attitudes previously acquired and includes prior experience. It relates to the learning of individuals and can be defined as learning from the past that is subsequently recognised and accredited. APL is the generic term used for the award of credit on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past. This learning may have come about as the result of a course, or self-directed study, or as the result of experience either at work or in leisure pursuits. The latter is usually referred to as Prior Experiential Learning.

Definition of APEL

APEL is Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (e.g.: gained through experience, usually in the workplace. It is defined as a systematic process involving the identification, documentation and evaluation of learning based on previous experience).

The APEL process generally involves the assessment of experience-based learning that can be obtained through various methods including formal schooling, life and work experience, training, independent study, voluntary work, hobbies etc. APEL encourages an individual to continuously upgrade their knowledge that can lead also to formal education. This in turn can provide opportunities for career development.

Links / context with AGROSKILL project

Agroskill project focuses in the agriculture field, and the project objectives are to transfer innovative trainings methods, to exchange results and to agree best available methodologies in the field of non-formal and informal training, namely outside the field of school and university curricula (like vocational training). Therefore, the aim is to achieve common frameworks for recognition at the European level.

Getting accreditation through the EU is important for people who have been informally trained. Such a training/learning takes place very often within agriculture sector. There is a continuous transfer of information and knowledge between the different generations of farmers, becoming, in the majority of cases, the parents as their children's teachers. Something similar occurs in certain circles of the farmers, such as cooperatives, associations, etc. where the exchange of knowledge acquired through the trial and error makes some farmers to take the role of teachers and other the role of students. These roles, many times, are exchanged. Learning doing by experience, and any learning that is done through daily life can lead to job opportunities if someone seeks subsequent accreditation. Without system of recognition, validation and accreditation, these informally taught farmers would be forced to go through a time consuming and expensive education process that would force them to re-do much of the work they did during their informal training.

Therefore, one of the key elements required is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through the APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) or APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning). Provision of APL / APEL would provide farmers and/or learners within the agriculture sector to progress in the context of lifelong learning. APEL serves as an alternative route and would allow farmers and/or learners to have their formal, non-formal and informal learning to be assessed against learning outcomes. APEL seeks to remove the need for duplication of learning, encourages learners and farmers to continue upgrading their knowledge, skills and qualifications through education and training leading towards formal competences and better employment prospects.

Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning into formal learning within agriculture sector

Current document is a proposal for transfer implementation strategy and it will be a guide for approaching the transfer process. It contains general idea, principles and structure for the accreditation of skills and professional qualifications, and proposals concerning the subject and range of actions within the accreditation process, which could be applied in the project partner's countries.

The term “**prior learning**”, which means the knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired through previously unrecognised training or experience, is used in this Guideline encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The purpose of the Guideline is to:

- support the practices of APL / APEL as a part of lifelong learning in partners countries,
- provide a set of core principles to ensure consistency in approaches to accrediting prior learning / prior experiential learning in EU countries,
- promoting public awareness and understanding of APL / APEL.

The Guideline intends to provide a guide and source of information for:

- VET teachers, educators, advisers, counsellors, assessors and examiners of APL / APEL process,
- professional bodies,
- for learners / farmers as a aid to seek information about APEL policies and practice.

A general idea and the formal basis for carrying out the non-formal and informal learning accreditation

The formal basis for carrying out the validation of non-formal and informal learning in lifelong learning in the partners countries should be governed by an agreed document compiled as a result of united effort, e.g. in a form of uniform standards of conduct (procedure).

The main idea of this document, and the resulting acceptance and application of the procedure, would be to work out a uniform and clear methodology of action determining the assurance of the accreditation process of skills and professional qualifications in individual countries. Furthermore, the document might then be taken into account and applied by the authors of legal acts concerning the introduction of the accreditation in the UE countries, and the formal recognition of documents for the accreditation of skills and professional qualifications for those who make use of such possibility to get their professional suitability confirmed.

Having such a clear outline of goals the procedure should explicitly standardize:

- the rules of conduct for the candidates interested in applying for the accreditation of their skills and (or) professional qualifications,
- rules governing the organization and execution of accreditation by accrediting institutions,
- types and forms of the accreditation documents (e.g. forms and official forms necessary in the accreditation process, and the certificates),
- guidelines for uniform formulation of verbal descriptions as a confirmation of the accredited skills and professional qualifications in the accreditation documents,
- conditions and rules for issuing the accreditation documents (e.g. certificates),
- cases of invalidation of the accreditation documents (certificates),
- the rules for documentation,
- the rules for making appeals by the accreditation participants,
- the rules of service quality assurance at the institutions (or centers) for accreditation,
- the rules outlining the supervision of the accreditation of skills and professional qualifications.

The document (procedure) should also settle down any matters of technical or methodological nature pertaining to the different ways of carrying out the certification.

If we assume that any individual, regardless the way they acquired their professional qualifications or skills, can be subject to the non-formal and informal learning accreditation, then within the course of the accreditation procedure we should take into account **at least three possible scenarios** concerning the situation that the participant may be in.

The participant can:

- have a set of documents (certificates) confirming the types and certified levels of prior education,
- not have any documents (certificates) confirming the type and effects of prior education,
- have certificates (documents) giving a description of the type and effects of prior education but have also undergone further training improving their skills or professional qualifications (e.g. gained as experience at a workplace) and would like to get a certificate as their formal confirmation.

The above mentioned scenarios generate three methods of accreditation, each based on:

- taking of evidence (its integral part would form analyzing the documentation supplied by a candidate),
- practical exam adjusted to the type and range of the skills and/or professional qualifications subject to accreditation,
- verification process (combining the elements of taking of evidence and practical exam).

Each of the methods mentioned above should be carried out in such a way that it enables the skills and/or professional qualifications that the candidate claims to hold to be identified by number and type, and then allowed for their descriptive confirmation in a form of proper accreditation document (certificate).

A brief description of transferred methodology

The transferred method (procedure) provides interdisciplinary and inter-professional perspective on the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning in lifelong learning. Detailed description of “Methodology for the process of identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning” is at the document R16 named “Summary Report about transferred methods for validation of training”.

The transfer methodology presents the theoretical framework and educational model for the APL / APEL process, and focuses on practice and experience gained during the implementation of “European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning” (abbreviated as EPANIL) pilot project which was run on the basis of Leonardo da Vinci program.

The transferred Procedure consists of nine chapters:

The first four of them – “The aim of the procedure”; “The object of the procedure”; “The scope of the procedure’s application”; “Terminology and acronyms” – are concerned with the background situation and cover the origins and justification of purposefulness of implementing of skills and professional qualifications recognizing and accreditation in individual UE countries, as well as the anticipated benefits coming from the introduction of this process.

The fifth chapter, “Range and type of responsibility”, concerns people performing particular process tasks within the scope of the accreditation procedure.

The sixth chapter of the transferred procedure is “Process description”. It consists of nine subdivisions and describes in details the following issues:

1. Principles and rules for applying for the accreditation of skills and professional qualifications
2. Organizing the process of accreditation of skills and professional qualifications
3. Carrying out the accreditation skills and professional qualifications
4. Preparation and issuing of the accreditation certificates (documents confirming the accreditation)
5. Invalidation of the accreditation certificates (documents)
6. Appellate proceedings
7. The opinion and satisfaction survey among the participants of the process of accreditation of skills and professional qualifications
8. Documenting the process of accreditation
9. Supervising the accreditation of skills and professional qualifications.

The seventh chapter, “Related documents”, concerns documents related both: procedure itself and specific Polish regulations and legal educational acts. It is recommended that every partner adjust this chapter according to the national law of participating country. This should be done with regard to the specific conditions of a particular country.

The final chapters of the transferred procedure concern “Administering changes” and “Attachments to the procedure” (see Appendix 2 – as separate attachment).

Structured in the above mentioned way, the uniform APL procedure would put the whole process into right order. At the same time, it would allow to meet the

requirements set forward by the international quality assurance standards for the process documentation.

Methodological recommendations for transfer process

Transfer should be done considering the use and/or the modification of the transfer material (methodology / procedure) elaborated within EPANIL Leonardo da Vinci project. The aim of transfer is to take advantage of the transfer material in order to enhance the efficient use of it in a different context.

Options for transferring of the methodology material could be:

- reordering of transferred material (procedure) when the order in transfer material is not suitable for the particular target group,
- omitting of parts when they seems inappropriate, irrelevant, etc. for the particular target group,
- addition of the content when there seems to be inadequate coverage of key issues,
- reduction of the content when it seems too long for the particular target group,
- extension of material when it seems needed to explain in more detailed way,
- modification of material when it seems less accessible to the particular target group,
- replacement of material when it is considered as inadequate, for whatever reason,
- branching of the material when it is decide to add options to the existing material or to suggest alternative pathways.

Guidelines for validating experience (expertise)

A variety of different approaches to accreditation of **Prior Experiential Learning** (APEL) can be developed and used by agriculture institutions to meet the needs and goals of farmers / learners across the agriculture sector.

The core principles of APEL

The aim of the core principles of APEL is to ensure effective and quality assured practice that will enable all users of the Guideline to have confidence in the outcome of APEL. By identifying the core principles as the parameters within which all APEL provisions should operate, consistency will be more feasibly achieved.

APEL provisions should be underpinned by the following core principles:

- Prior experiential learning should be recognised regardless of how and where it was acquired, provided that the learning is relevant to the outcomes
- Information and support services should be actively promoted, easy to understand and recognise the diversity of learners/farmers
- Assessment should be evidence based, equitable, unbiased, fair, valid, flexible and reliable
- Assessment methods should accommodate the literacy levels and experiences of learners (farmers) and should provide the ways for clients to demonstrate the required outcomes/skills/qualifications
- Assessment should be undertaken by experts examiners / practitioners in the subject matter or skills area, policies and procedures
- Decision should be accountable, transparent and subject to appeal and review
- Quality assurance rules should be clear and transparent to ensure confidence in the decisions.

Benefits of APEL

APEL has many benefits to various stakeholders, for instance: to learners, training institutions and the society.

Benefits for learners

APEL can help learners to:

- get access and recognition to higher competences,
- document knowledge, skills, professional qualifications and experience through the preparation of portfolio of evidence or through the practical exam,
- plan for further training and personal career development,
- increase employability and mobility,
- reduce time and costs.

Benefits for training institutions

APEL can help training institutions to:

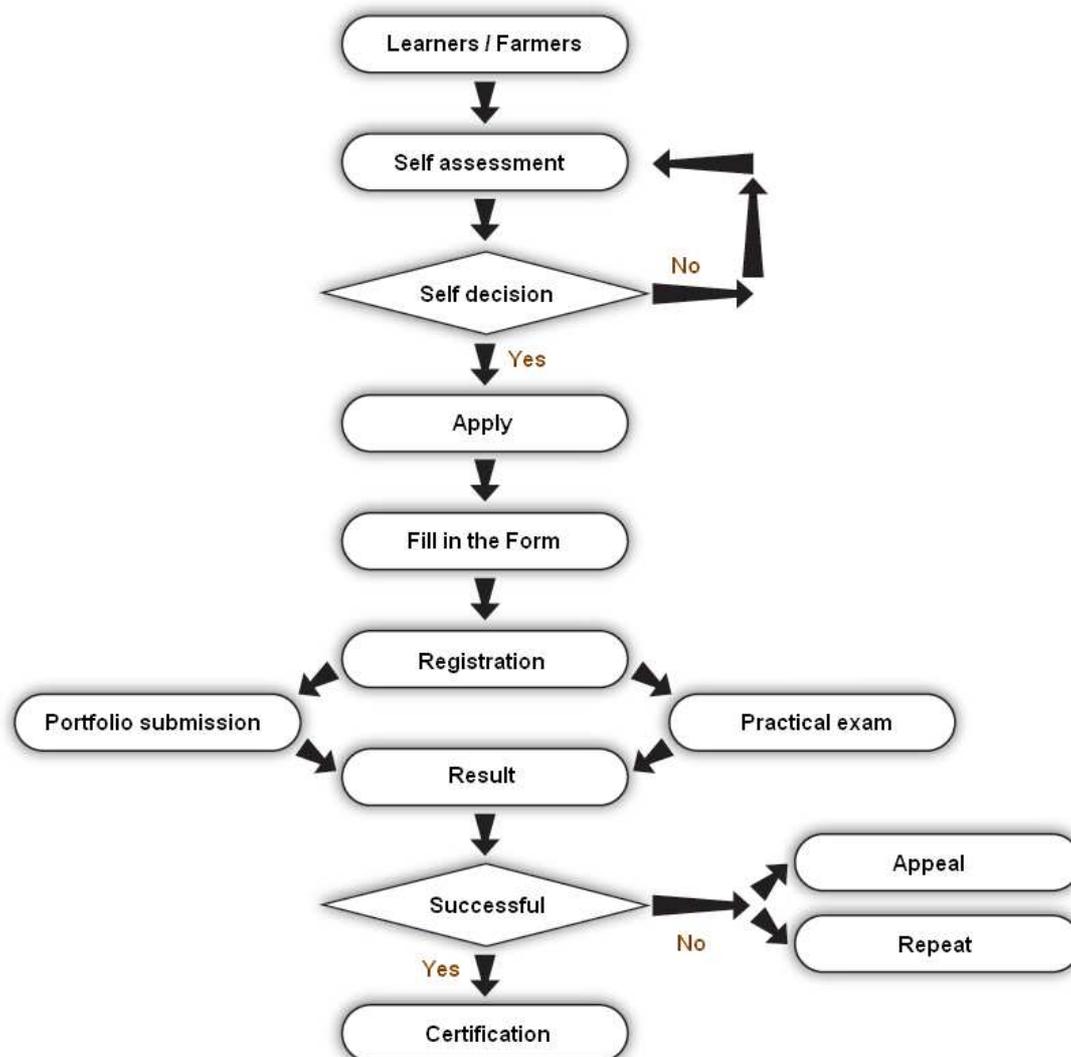
- increase access and widen participation for non-conventional learners,
- support the development of curriculum,
- enrich the teaching and learning experience.

Benefits for society

APEL may bring various benefits to the society by:

- promoting lifelong learning as a means of upgrading people in response to global economy,
- enhancing productivity through the acquisition of skills and professional qualifications among workforce,
- boosting the nation's competitiveness at the local, regional and global levels.

Flow chart for a generic APEL assessment process within agriculture sector



Pic.: The graph structure for the APEL process

Conclusion and recommendation

During the implementation of the Leonardo da Vinci “European Common Principles for the Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in Lifelong Learning” (abbreviated as EPANIL) pilot project, the consortium found out on the basis of information from project partners and experiences from pilot verification, that for quality assurance of the process of identification and recognition of prior learning outcomes and complying with framework of Common European Principles it is necessary:

- not to simplify the process of recognition only to examination performance, however take into account that this is a long-term process (e.g. in some countries the recognition of prior learning outcomes may take even half a year), which involves also another possibilities described in this document,
- to establish the role of adviser considered as a very important person for a successful verification process,
- to train advisers and assessors, so that these would be able to perform their roles in the process of recognition on a qualified level,
- to assure accessibility of the recognition system for everyone,
- to create common assessment standards containing only necessary competencies required by the labor market, which will be verifiable through performance of working activity,
- to involve social partners and/or employers into the entire process of recognition, including development of assessment standards,
- to assure that authorized person dispose of adequate workplace equipment for recognition,
- Clients entering the process of recognition should be at least 18 years old.

Appendix 1 - Glossary

Term/ Acronym/ Abbreviation	Description
Lifelong learning	All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competencies and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.
Formal learning	Learning that occurs in an organised and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s point of view. It typically leads to certification.

Non-formal learning	Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically does not lead to certification.
Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.
Learning outcome(s)	the set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process.
Competence	ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in a habitual and/or changing work situation.
Prior learning	the knowledge, know-how and/ or competences acquired through previously unrecognised training or experience
Assessment	the sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how and/or competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification.
Certification	the process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies.
Validation (of informal /non-formal learning)	the process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences which people develop throughout their lives in different contexts, for example through education, work and leisure activities.
Validation of learning outcomes:	Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification. Source: Cedefop, 2008c.
Accreditation of prior learning (APL)	See validation of informal / non-formal learning
Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)	Accreditation of prior experiential learning (e.g.: gained through experience usually in the workplace)

Source: CEDEFOP Validation Inventory

Appendix 2 – Attachments to the procedure

A separate file which contains template documents (application forms and other accreditation documents), as follows:

- Application form for accreditation of professional skills and qualifications
- The fixed accreditation date and number of applicants submitted for the accreditation of professional skills and qualifications
- Schedule for the accreditation of professional skills and qualifications.

APPENDIX 2 – ATTACHMENTS TO THE PROCEDURE

Place, date

.....
(candidate's full name)

.....
(place of residence)

.....
(accommodation address)

.....
(telephone no.)

**Accreditation Commission (Board,
Council)***

.....
(name of the accrediting institution)

.....
(institution's address)

**Application for accreditation of N-FL/IL IN LLL professional skills and
qualifications**

I hereby would like to apply for accreditation of my professional skills and qualifications in accordance with regard to the following criteria:

- line of professional activity (in technology, services or other):
-
- field or branch of professional activity:
-
- type of professional qualifications applied for:
-
- scope of professional skills submitted for accreditation:
-
-
-
-

.....
(applicant's signature)

Attachments:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

.....
* - strike out whichever does not apply
F 01 – PA

