

# ICONET

## Transfer Guide



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# Transfer Guide

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 How we learn

Informal learning is something of a conundrum. Fairly obviously, we learn throughout our lives, in all kinds of different setting and contexts. Most of this learning does not come from formal educational programmes. Jay Cross (2006) argues that formal training and workshops only account for 10-20 per cent of what people learn at work, and that 80-90 per cent of our learning takes place outside formal settings. Yet there has been little attention paid to informal learning or to how it takes place. Jay Cross goes on to say: “Most corporations over-invest in formal training while leaving the more natural, simple ways we learn to chance.”

In most European countries there have been some moves to recognise informal learning. However, most effort has been expended on trying to assess and certify informal learning (whether it then remains informal is a moot point, as is whether most people wish their informal learning to be certified).

There is growing interest in informal learning from the corporate world, driven by the desire to capitalise on the intellectual assets of the workforce, to manage organizational knowledge and in recognition that informal learning may prove a cost-effective way of developing competence.

Less attention has been paid to informal learning by young people and in particular to informal learning by young socially disadvantaged young people. Yet informal learning may be of most relevance and importance for this group. Many are early school leavers and have few formal educational achievements. This is obviously a serious barrier to their progression to employment or to further education and training. Furthermore it may effect their self esteem and willingness to undertake more education.

Young people tend to acquire a range and variety of skills and competences through processes of non-formal and informal learning. These skills may be developed when they take on certain responsibilities within their own family, when they meet up with friends, or when they get involved in sport, music-making, through involvement in employment or indeed as a result of voluntary or community work. These skills may be related to being able to work in a team, being able to organise things, being flexible, and being reliable. Young people are often not even aware of this themselves. These competences may be transferable and of considerable relevance to potential employment or for further education and training. The problem is that all too often such competences are invisible both to themselves and to other organisations. Traditional CVs tend to focus on formal educational achievement and without support young people are unable to relate their informal learning to such formalised documentary evidence of competence.

## **1.2 Making competences visible**

Making these competences visible could enable disadvantaged youth to better understand their own competences and to learn how to use them for Vocational education and Training and at the same time provide teachers with a better understanding of pupils' competences acquired outside schools. These competences could give disadvantaged young people better access to training and employment. Their present school achievements all too often indicate what they do not know, rather than their potential for further training or for employment.

Whilst there have been a considerable number of initiatives and projects dealing with informal learning, the main focus of most of this work has been the accreditation of prior or informal learning seeking to develop instruments and strategies to recognise such learning for the purpose of qualification. However, our research suggests that often young people are not able to recognise the relevance of such learning itself, nor to relate informal learning to more formal competences. Furthermore, programmes to accredit informal learning tend to focus on the particular competences required for a qualification and thus may ignore wider learning gained by young people or competences outside the spheres of a particular programme or qualification route.

The ICONET project, building on work undertaken through the earlier ICOVET project, focuses on the broader achievements of the young person themselves and seeks to support young people in exploring their previous informal learning, regardless of subject or context.

## **2. Present policy and practice on the recognition of informal learning**

### **2.1 European Policy**

The European Council has recognised the value of informal non formal learning for young people. These kinds of learning are important, they say, because they:

- are complementary to the formal education and training system;
- have a participative and learner-centred approach;
- are carried out on a voluntary basis and are therefore closely linked to young people's needs, aspirations and interests. By providing an additional source of learning and a possible route into formal education and training, such activities are particularly relevant to young people with fewer opportunities;
- take place in a wide and varied range of settings.

They go on to say that non-formal and informal learning are important elements in the learning process and are effective instruments for making learning attractive, developing lifelong learning and promoting the social integration of young people. They encourage the participation, active citizenship and social inclusion of young people, and

are of practical relevance to the labour market by helping to acquire knowledge, qualifications and other key skills.

The European Council has called on the Member States and the Commission to:

- ensure the comparability and transparency of the skills and competences acquired by young people through non-formal and informal learning, which involves developing a youth-specific element within Europass for identifying and recognising these skills and qualifications in the EU, especially in the labour market. To this end, the voluntary use by young people of Europass and similar national and European instruments should be encouraged;
- encourage public bodies and NGOs to use comparable and transparent instruments for recognising the competences of those active in youth work and youth organisations, in accordance with the European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers currently being developed within the Council of Europe;
- recognise and support the contribution made by youth organisations and other NGOs to non-formal and informal learning;
- promote application of the common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal learning to the specific needs of the youth field;
- encourage research into the socio-economic impact of non-formal and informal learning, including the contribution of youth organisations and other NGOs;
- encourage social partners to acknowledge the quality and diversity of non-formal and informal learning and to recognise its social and economic added value;
- encourage innovative partnerships between formal and non-formal learning providers, in order to develop educational approaches that could be attractive for different groups of learners.

In a similar vein the European Commission has also taken steps to promote the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The validation of non-formal or informal learning is a key element in national lifelong learning strategies developed by countries participating in the EU's 'Education and Training 2010' programme. As they report, countries are at different stages in developing systems to support this validation – some have established systems, while others are only beginning to develop provision in this field.

A number of steps have been taken at European level. An inventory of validation of non-formal and informal learning has been produced on behalf of the Commission and Cedefop, with a detailed survey of developments in European countries. The Cluster on the Recognition of Learning outcomes – the largest of the eight education and training clusters – supports countries in developing national qualifications frameworks and systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The Cluster uses peer-learning activities to exchange good practice and channel collective efforts. A priority is the development of operational guidelines to support

countries in using the 2004 Council Conclusions on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Both actions are closely linked to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

## **2.2 Policy and practice in European countries**

As the European Commission suggests, practice in different countries varies greatly, both at the level of formal systemic measures to recognise non formal and informal learning and in the extent to which various programmes and projects have been launched to develop such recognition. Rather than seek to examine every country in Europe, we will focus here on three or four examples as exemplary of the wide range of initiatives and experiences in European Member States.

In Germany, the term informal learning as a term used in the working and civic context originated from the international discussion, which is gaining importance within German educational research debate in recent years (see Dehnbostel et al. 2003, p. 30 et sqq.; BMBF 2004). Besides formally organized learning in schools and universities, increasing attention is being paid to learning in different contexts. In addition to learning at the workplace, this includes skills and competencies acquired through voluntary work, leisure time activities, and in the home (BMFSFJ 2005).

Various initiatives have developed procedures for young people and adults to make visible capabilities and skills from informal learning contexts. For young people these include:

- the competence certificate culture which is awarded for cultural commitment and
- the YouthPass for international activities and intercultural experiences through the EU programme Youth in Action.

For the vocational orientation phase of school to work transition there are very different recognition forms for young people, based on assessment, diagnosis, self-assessment and external assessment procedures and also integrated portfolio approaches.

A number of procedures have also been established for adults with whom people can explore, assess and document their own capabilities. Tools such as profile pass, advanced training pass, competence balance require a voluntary commitment from learners.

However, despite these initiatives there is no accreditation body or approved procedure for the recognition of informally acquired, job-relevant competencies, despite various efforts at different levels.

In Romania, recognition of informal learning benefits from legislation that allows any citizen to address their requirements for evaluation of competences acquired in informal context. The system of recognition comprises of Local Evaluation Centres for Informal Competences that are entitled to issue appropriate certification based on a specific evaluation procedure. In spite of the legislative regulations and institutional settings, the reality shows that the process is actually difficult and sometimes

exclusivist, in as far as only people that have access to information and generally speaking highly qualified people utilise this national service. The number of disadvantaged people accessing the informal competences recognition services is very low, firstly because of limited information regarding the access to the services and secondly because the low social recognition on the Labour market of those certificates.

In most countries the recognition of non formal learning and informal learning for young people is largely dependent on projects and innovative programmes.

In Austria, Chance B consists of a consortium of 5 different companies providing services for disabled and old people. The services and tools applied within Chance B provide common strategies for disabled young people and young people with learning disabilities. All projects are targeting the integration of the participants in the first labour market.

“Clearing” provides young people with face-to-face guidance including parents, teachers and other relevant people from the young person’s social environment. The objective of this service is to find potential employment opportunities. Informal competences are identified through interviews and questionnaires.

In other schemes such as the Arbeitsassistentz für Jugendliche designed to help young people find a job and integrate them in the first labour market, informally acquired competences are listed while developing a CV and in Basisqualifikation Bauernhof (Basic qualification-farming Project) providing 2 year training programmes in basic skills for the labour market, participants are trained in soft skills concerning their work attitude and communication as well as basic competences like writing, reading and basic mathematics. The ICONET project has developed processes for the recognition of informal competences in this project.

### **2.3 Opportunities and issues on developing projects to recognise informal learning**

Despite the wide interest in the recognition of non formal and informal learning for young people and some progress in promoting such measures at a policy level, the picture is very uneven in different European countries. Forms of recognition of informally acquired competencies also vary.

They may include ‘formal recognition’ at the level of regulatory policies including certification for progression in the educational and employment system.

It can also include “de facto” recognition on the labour market, especially in systems with less regulated systems. However, even then recognition may not extend to the education systems, although opportunities may exist to convert or ‘upgrade’ informally acquired competences to qualifications through various recognition procedures.

To some extent informal competences appear to be recognised in all countries as part of processes for employment guidance, particularly for socially disadvantaged young people wishing to enter the labour market, or within special training programmes. However, there is considerable variation in the weight or value afforded to such

competences, and to the degree in which processes are in place to assist young people in recognising such competences.

For those wishing to establish projects and initiatives in this field, it is important to research existing policy and possibly more important, to establish what programmes may already be established to support and encourage innovatory projects. Such programmes and projects may involve a wide range of different governmental and non-governmental offices and agencies, including education and training bodies, labour office organisations, social agencies and youth organisations, sometimes at federal or state level, at other times at regional or local level.

They may also involve state organised educational institutions and a wide range of NGOs, enterprises or private sector organisations. These organisations may operate at a sector level or may also be established to support particular socially disadvantaged groups. Given the wide range of different agencies and organisations with an interest in this field, networks may be particularly important.

With such uneven actions in implementing new policies to recognise non formal and informal learning, international contacts and projects may be of considerable value, in allowing mutual learning between initiatives in different countries in Europe and further away.

### **3. The ICOVET and ICONET projects – developing methods and tools for recognising informal learning**

#### **3.1 The ICONET validation tool**

The ICONET project builds on and transfers the results and outcomes of the earlier ICOVET project.

The ICOVET project examined strategies to make informally or non-formally gained competences visible in order to enable disadvantaged young people to better understand their own competences and to learn how to use them in engaging with the formal world of vocational education and training, give teachers in schools of general education a better understanding of pupils' competences acquired outside schools and enable teachers to systematically use these competences in preparing for VET. It further aimed to give disadvantaged young people better access to training and employment in companies and likewise enable companies or training institutions to systematically use these competences in VET.

The project developed a validation tool, primarily comprised of an interview template and guide to help teachers, trainers and youth workers work together with young people to explore how their activities and experiences relate to competencies or abilities.

The guideline for interviews related to seven areas of potential informal learning:

- leisure time

- family
- school/training
- voluntary involvement
- jobs
- health
- special life situations

The assumption was that young people acquire abilities in at least one of these areas and that they will want to talk about it, if provided sufficient support.

Activities and competencies were recorded in a document owned by the young person.

The project also examined how these competencies could be translated into the terminology of the EuroPASS. EuroPASS is a common European CV, approved by the European Parliament, documenting competences gained through both formal and informal learning.

### **3.2 New settings and new target groups**

The ICONET project aimed to transfer the ICOVET procedure to new fields of application, settings, and target groups. This involved the further development of the ICOVET tools and their adaptation for use with new groups and in new contexts.

The project also aimed to embed the key results and experiences from the ICOVET project in each of the partner countries' system of career support programmes for disadvantaged people. The so doing, the aim was to open up new avenues for institutions and organizations working in the field of vocational support for disadvantaged target groups.

The project brought together partners from Germany, the UK, Austria, France, Portugal and Romania.

In Germany the aim was to develop the ICONET process as a tool for use in the stages of preparation and review of work placements for young people whose school completion is at risk. The aim was to stimulate a reflection process by young people concerning their experiences of work placements in order to find out what they have learnt during that time. The second aim was to research the effects on young people who engage in a setting of inter generationally learning.

In Austria, France, Portugal and Romania, the ICONET process and tool was transferred to sectors which have yet to develop specific methods for the validation and documentation of informal competence.

In Austria, the process and tools were developed to assist the vocational development of people with disabilities.

In Romania, the project worked together the Ministry of Justice and the State Law Enforcement Agency to further develop the ICONET procedure for use with juvenile prisoners.

The French project also focused on how the ICONET process could be used working with professionals responsible for young offenders.

The UK team, comprising of two partners, looked at the use of the ICONET process in two different contexts. The first was that of a summer school for disadvantaged young people, seeking to encourage them to progress to university. The second was within the context of a higher education entrepreneurial skills module.

Finally, in Greece, the ICONET process was tested as a tool to support competence development in small and medium-sized enterprises and the industrial sector.

Besides the adaptation, testing and reporting on the use of the ICONET process and tools the project has produced examples of effective and exemplary practice and this transfer guide, designed for others to build on the work the project has undertaken.

#### **4. The ICONET Transfer Guide**

This publication is entitled a 'transfer guide'. This raises the issue of just what we mean by transfer. The ICOVET methodology and tools were originally designed to support disadvantaged young people at transition stage between school education and vocational training. The methodology is based on a structured interview on a basis of a set of guidelines that aims to identify key competences acquired through family and leisure time, formal training, work experience, voluntary activities and other life situations. With the ICONET project, we sought to take the tools and processes for recognising informal learning and adapt them for use with different groups of learners.

This transfer guide is designed to further that process by providing information on our experiences in order to allow others to use the ICOVET tools and processes in their teaching and learning. To help in that we will tell you what worked, what didn't, what were the problems and what the results were?

We believe that the ICOVET process and tools have great potential in helping learners reflect on their informal learning and experience. But of course, all tools require some adaptation for particular learners and for particular learning and teaching contexts. We hope this guide may convince you of the value of the process, and if you wish to try it out for yourself, provide you with the information necessary to make the process a success.

The guide is designed for all those working with learners, in formal and informal settings. This could include teachers and trainers, youth and social workers, careers guidance workers and those working with socially disadvantaged groups.

It may also be of interest to researchers working in this field and to curriculum developers, policy makers, planners and managers interested in the recognition of informal learning.

## **5. Transferring ICONET in practice**

The ICONET partner organisations took the original ICOVET tools and adapted them for trialling with a range of different target groups. The aim was to test the applicability of such tools for use with a wide range of socially disadvantaged people and to determine what changes would need to be made, alongside examining processes for adaptation change and transfer. In this section of the guide, we will look at the different target groups and examine how the ICONET tools were adapted. We will go on to look at the different trials of the instruments and what was learnt.

The final section will summarise the recommendations arising from the work for others wishing to adapt and build on the ICONET experience in their own countries and context.

### **5.1 Austria**

#### *5.1.1 Background*

It is important to consider the meaning of lifelong learning in contexts that don't just relate to formal education. Particularly disadvantaged youth could take advantage from different forms of recognition of their informally acquired competences. In the long term, it is important to find different ways of exploring and considering informal acquired competences and at the same time to integrate these objectives within different communities of practice.

#### *5.1.2 Participants*

In Austria this means reaching all organizations that provide vocational training courses or preparation for vocational training for people with disabilities. The target group in Austria was young people with learning disabilities, participating in a vocational preparation course lasting up to three years. The aim is that participants are able to enter the labour market after this period of training.

This course is based on the idea of learning by doing. Activities are designed for participants to become familiar with real working situations, mainly in agricultural production and trade.

#### *5.1.3 Activities*

Therefore the ICONET tool needed to be integrated in daily work, since the timetable did not allow for extra time to be allocated. Furthermore reflection on informal competences requires a period of time, especially for people with learning disabilities. A single interview focusing on the competences would not be enough to enable reflection

and exploration of ones competences. Rather it needed to be adapted as a process which could be integrated within the overall course. This was done through the weekly meetings of participants based on peer interviews following a clear interview guide and a procedure for recording their competences. Participants were provided with prior training in how to conduct interviews and to talk about their competences.

Introducing the tool meant changing the procedures of the organisation and required agreement from both staff and management for such changes. Furthermore, exploring the competences gained within the course required the aims of the project to be completely clear.

Preparation for the programme included providing training, information about learning processes and the recognition of competences, conducting interviews, reflection on competences gained in and outside the course, supporting communication between the participants, and developing a module within the course.

#### *5.1.4 Results*

In practice, the participants were active and inspired throughout the training and were highly motivated by the process of recognising their competences gained through informal learning.

However there were obstacles. To integrate the tool as a permanent module in the course requires agreement by all staff members. In addition, the way of exploring the gained competences required clarity and transparency of the pedagogic aims. This turned out to be necessary before starting the ICONET training.

Some obstacles were overcome through meetings with staff, others proved more obstinate due mainly to organisational structures.

#### *5.1.5 Reflections*

In conclusion the lessons learnt from the experience in Austria was the need to inform and involve the entire staff and try to get commitment over the whole process; to determine the competences that should be gained within the course, how staff could be sure when a participant had gained a certain competence, to ensure staff members have a common form for providing feedback and a commitment to the pedagogic aims of the project.

## **5.2 Greece**

### *5.2.1 Background*

The Greek project partner, OBES, set out to transfer the ICOVET methodology to long term unemployed people in the region of Nea Ionia.

Nea Ionia was established in 1923 and was first inhabited by refugees from Minor Asia. With rapid development of the clothing and carpet sector, the city attracted people from the Greek provinces and Nea Ionia became an important industrial and commercial

centre. The population now is estimated at 100.000 people including a large number of immigrants mainly from Albania and Pakistan.

Long term unemployment is a major issue in Greece. Deindustrialization, the reallocation of large industries outside Greece, and the decline of traditional industries has mainly affected mainly low qualified workers over 45. There is a high level of long term unemployment particularly for young people and people over 45.

### *5.2.2 Participants*

The Association of Unemployed People of Nea Ionia was established in 2003 and includes mainly unemployed people over 45 years old. The piloting of the ICOVET methodology and tools has been undertaken by the Association which is a member of OBES.

The pilot was with a group of 12 long term unemployed people and OBES appointed a trainer/consultant, trained in the ICOVET methodology. The application of ICOVET will be as follows:

### *5.2.3 Activities*

The process involved the presentation of the ICOVET methodology to the group followed by individual face to face interviews with the trainer, using the ICOVET tool, In the final stage the trainer and the unemployed person discussed how the skills and competencies acquired through informal learning can be useful in applying for a job.

### *5.2.4 Results*

Participants started out with no confidence in their chances of finding employment, particularly older men, however after the session they were able to identify a rich set of skills and competences. They had not previously considered that informal learning activities could be thought of as a source of skills and competences and found that the ICONET tools could be very useful for helping them to find a job.

### *5.2.5 Reflections*

Close collaboration between the unemployed people themselves and the Greek partners (OBES and IDEC) played a critical role in ensuring the tool was well adapted to the needs of the target group. It also involved reviewing the methodology for example how to make the interviewee comfortable and willing to share his or her experiences.

The use of the EUROPASS certificate was also an important incentive for attracting participants, as most do not have formal qualifications and, furthermore, after being unemployed for a long time they felt demoralised. In these circumstances having a certificate that “recognises their value” contributed positively to their feeling of self worth.

## 5.3 United Kingdom

### 5.3.1 Background

The UK pilot of the ICONET tools involved the development of Cartoon Planet focusing on the use of social computing to motivate young people to reflect on their own skills through informal learning scenarios.

Cartoon Planet, is a set of mini activities developed at the University of Salford designed to value and encourage young people's active reflection on their informally acquired competencies through the use of web technologies.

### 5.3.2 Participants

Cartoon Planet was trialed in partnership with Salford's Young People's University, a summer school for socially disadvantaged young people who do not traditionally access higher education. One of the key aims of the project was to make school attractive to such pupils, through a strong emphasis on an active pedagogy, rooted in informal learning situations.

### 5.3.3 Activities

The sessions started with a brief introduction about the aims of the session and were followed by an "Introduce Yourself" activity. Students were asked to share aspects of their experience they were proud of and that they would like to share with their peers. This proved relevant and provided a base for the other activities. Above all, it gave pupils the confidence to communicate with one another and the tutor in an open and friendly environment.

Afterwards, the facilitator of the session introduced them to the idea that people have skills and competences which might not be solely related with their formal school learning activity but which are all the same relevant to include in their CV as part of their skills and competences. This was explained in a very simple language and pupils were prompted to reflect on "things" they were good at and proud of (this pilot only focused on one of the items of the ICOVET tool - Interests, hobbies, sports, socializing). The facilitator explained this would help them later translate the knowledge of their skills into a more academic language, which they could use in their CV.

Students were asked to work in pairs and do a role play – playing both the interviewer and interviewee, where they had a chance to ask and answer questions that would lead them to reflect on the topic they were exploring.

This activity was followed by a group activity. The entire class was asked to form a round table. The facilitator introduced students to the formal skills concept, explaining what the skills that are mentioned in the EUROPASS CV meant. Afterwards, the interviewers were asked to present the finding of their interviews. At this stage all students were prompt to help their colleague verbalize which skills he/she held concerning the topic explored. The entire class participated in this joint reflection.

In the second part of the workshop students were given a card where they were asked to write down a sentence which would summarize their skills concerning [Interests, hobbies, sports, socializing](#). This was their “passport” to the next phase of the workshop. Pupils were then taken to the Computer Lab and asked to create an Avatar (an interactive, digital cartoon) where they could apply what they had learned about themselves. Access to the internet was made secure by limiting students' access on the Internet to the website they were supposed to use. To enable this a special software called NETSUPPORT was used.

#### *5.3.4 Results*

The creation of the speaking cartoons aimed at introducing a fun element to the session. It also aimed at analyzing how these tools can motivate learning and learners engagement.

Pupils were very pleased with the fact they could re-create themselves online. They were focused and engaged and didn't attempt to browse other sites [this had been one of the main concerns of the SYPU tutors, moderators and coordinator, when considering the Internet as a learning tool]. This suggests that this kind of approach can actually keep pupils' attention and motivate them to be focused.

#### *5.3.5 Reflections*

The session also showed the teenagers' high level understanding of the use of online learning tools. They are not only very keen on it but are also proficient in working with computers and even the ones who were not, were fast at mastering it.

Another issue that triggered our curiosity is that although pupils were quite fast at reflecting on their strengths, they visibly needed help when trying to convert it to an academic/CV language. They also needed support and clear guidance to focus on the tasks, and when first considering their own skills – an exercise they didn't seem to be used to.

We think the creation of speaking cartoons/ avatars explaining what is meant by each skill featured in the ICONET tool might help learners understand the concepts better. It will add a more updated and fun look to the ICOVET tool. Since we conducted the session face to face we didn't feel the need to create avatars explaining the skill concepts, but such idea might be useful when trying to engage learners online.

### **5.4 Romania**

#### *5.4.1 Background*

The Romanian transfer of the ICOVET methodology and tools aimed at developing a model for organizing learning events for staff working with young people in prisons in the counselling, therapeutic and educational programs. The model was based on a reflective approach to the existing practices in working with young people in prisons and ways to empower the staff by using different kind of tools for a better valorisation of

the informal skills and competences of disadvantaged young persons in the penitentiary system.

Despite the use of a number of intervention tools for the social and educational rehabilitation of young people in prisons, and official support for the recognition of informal learning at national level, there have been few prior approaches to overlap these by recognising skills and competences from informal learning for this group. Sharing experiences and reflecting upon the approaches and practices between different categories of staff were seen as possibly developing more understanding and effectiveness in the valorisation of what young people in prisons can do, rather than what they can not do, as is the more common approach.

#### *5.4.2 Participants*

The audience for the learning event were staff working in prisons or educational centers for young delinquents. The group comprised of 11 people working as: social assistant, psychologist, sociologist or educator. All of them graduated from higher education institutions in the field of social assistance, educational sciences, psychology or sociology. They all have direct contact with the young people on a regular basis, providing services such as counselling, education, and psychological therapy.

#### *5.4.3 Activities*

A small research team from the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) organized a one day learning event. The main aims of the learning event were:

- using the experiences of the target group in the learning examples and tasks;
- each of the participants experimenting with the ICONET tool in small groups;
- keeping a positive approach with the target groups they are working with;

The general objective of the learning event was to develop the skills of the participants and use the different tools for the validation of informal skills in their specific context. The specific objectives of the learning event were:

- sharing participants experiences by working directly with the target group in daily activities;
- common understanding of informal and non-formal learning approaches;
- experiencing (getting to know) different kind of tools;
- to design the methodology for implementation of the ICONET tool or other related instruments in their specific contexts.

The face-to-face training event was followed by online communication between participants. A virtual community of practice was created, hosting all the feedback, further discussion and reflections between staff involved in the process. Also, the community offered a set of relevant resources accessible by all interested public.

#### *5.4.4 Results*

The learning event itself, together with the exchanges of practices online afterwards helped to create an atmosphere of trust in the learning environment between all the staff involved and inspired a high level of participation. The staff involved in the events declared they developed relevant professional competences by acquiring new knowledge and developing some specific skills with respect to the use of new work instruments. In addition they recognized the benefits of the learning experience for a more personalized recuperative intervention program and of social reintegration programs, in general. Some of the staff reviewed the personalized psychosocial intervention plan and filling out the personal development file;

Some of the participants declared they acquired a better understanding of the young men's skills, experiences, abilities and adaptive resources. Others recognize that the participation to the virtual community helped them to acknowledge the advantages of using narrative methods.

After the learning event the staff also found becoming familiar with a tool that succeeds in creating an adequate framework for the development of relationships with the young men they work with (therapeutic relationship, mentorship, etc.) was also one of the benefits. Moreover, some of the staff involved recognized that during the virtual communication they developed themselves relevant personal skills reinforcing competency enhancement, and communication and negotiation skills for difficult learning situations.

#### *5.4.5 Reflections*

Most specialists from the penitentiaries and re-education centres which participated in the learning events find using different tools for identifying and validating the informal skills of young people in their institution works well, particularly in the impact it has on the young people themselves. From this point of view, all staff involved appreciated the remarkable benefits of the tools for self-confidence, self-knowledge and social enhancement.

According to the specialists who participated in the events, tools such as ICONET could be added to the current set of psychological tools used in the activities which aim at knowing the prisoners better in the current professional counselling and orientation programs. More specifically, the ICONET tool could be useful in the last part of prison stay, when prisoners are getting ready for social and professional reintegration

For optimum use of the ICONET tool in penitentiaries and re-education centres, the tool should be adapted and improved, so that it can become even more relevant to the profile of young prisoners.

Some of the specialists who applied the interview have some reservations about the appropriateness of using this tool as part of current penitentiary activities. These reservations are mostly related to the amount of time needed in order to apply the ICONET tool, which is quite significant when considering the volume of work of a

psychologist or social worker within an institution. Acknowledging the specialists who use this tool and including them in a rewards system could solve this issue.

In order to disseminate the experiences had when piloting the ICONET tool, as well as in order to improve and adapt the tools to the specific characteristics necessary for young prisoners and young people in re-education centres, it is necessary for the specialists who conducted the interviews (but also for those who are interested in using this tool in the future) to get involved in a series of dissemination, research and innovation activities (seminars, conferences, experience exchanges in Romania and abroad).

## **5.5 France**

### *5.5.1 Background*

The French project was based at the “Centre des Apprentissages de Phalempin”. The training centre is an agency which receives around 60 young people a year, placed in care through the legal system. An analysis of the subsequent life and career pathways of the young people after leaving the centre reveals many have problems and suggests failures by the training system to develop competences for young people.

Interviews and discussions with social workers revealed the problems this group of young people face and the competences needed by social workers to work with this group. The major aim of the project was to build on the ICONET process to develop a guide on how to help young people at risk, and exploring the competences welfare workers need to develop the competences of the teenagers.

### *5.5.2 Participants*

Participants in the project included social workers, magistrates, staff working in special residential agencies for minors and young adults, the teachers working in these agencies, psychologists and other professionals working with young offenders. The objective was to develop these professionals’ competences and allow them to develop the competences of “living together” with the young people.

### *5.5.3 Activities*

The project further developed the ICONET process and methodology to develop a training programme, interview guide and chart and accompaniment guide.

The guide provides key guidance for the professionals including the reasons why young people act against the law, the difficult times they experience within the family circle and the difficulties social workers experience when dealing with this particular group.

The objectives are

- To understand violent behaviour and the violent living out of fantasies
- To improve the explanation of young people’s violent behaviour
- To identify different kinds of violence

- To encourage people in their jobs to question themselves about violence and aggressiveness
- To examine intervention strategies and elaborate action plans to provide answers to the violence of young people
- To adopt an observation and detachment policy about violence
- To question oneself about one's good practice
- To better manage the notion of "help"

The overall aim was to develop a methodology of intervention when dealing with these young people in order to better support them. Such a methodology included providing clear answers on how to act in difficult circumstance, learning how to analyze life trajectories, developing common life rules with the participation of the young people and developing a contract between individuals which aims at building up relations between individuals in order to achieve common goals.

The interview guide and chart focused on the following issues:

- Profile of young people accommodated in establishment (agency)
- To see how professionals build a project for a young who arrives
- Young people and the prison (explanations of the reasons which led them to jail)
- Relationship between the family and the prison
- Measures taken by educators
- When did the delinquency start?
- Do the educators visit the family?
- What is the content of the discussions with the parents of young offenders?
- Social accompaniment (how to help the parents, how to help the young?)
- What are the strategies of social workers to develop competences?

In particular the project focused on professional practice in relation to the young person's experiences within the agency, the recognition and development of their competences and planning for their future after they leave the establishment.

The training was undertaken with professionals from the training centre in Phalempin. Two teams of 13 people were trained following the interviews carried out with the professionals. This training focused on how support for the young offenders could be improved. The training programme was based on concrete cases from the participants' in professional experience.

#### *5.5.4 Results*

Participants were asked what they have learnt through the training programme. Responses included:

- To listen to others and listen to myself
- One needs a dialogue with all partners to develop competences of the young people
- To teach young people through role-play to put themselves in the position of others.
- To train young people to be mediator of other young people.
- We developed a language and common tools to develop the non violence pedagogy and to help the young people to develop competences of living together in society.
- Better communication between us
- It gave me competences, more safety to face difficult situations and not to answer violence with violence with young people
- I feel more reliable in a case of a conflict in the establishment

### *5.5.5 Reflections*

The project provided a methodology for working with young people to understand their life and examine the consequences of their actions and decisions. It provided processes for helping these young people to gain their own personal and temporal autonomy and to find answers to their questions within themselves. Working on life history allows the subject to gain a better understanding of his life and allows him to take his future into his own hands. This is important for young people in prison “in allowing the subject to pick up and rearrange the different pieces of their lives that were strewn over the years, the story of their lives makes them build a personal time which gives them a specific temporal knowledge, a personal story” (Pineau 1998).

Through the methodology of intervention, professionals are able to give answers to difficult situations experienced in interventions practices by setting aims, helping young people to decode often opaque social codes, acting as a medium between them and the bureaucratic institutional environment and helping them to stand up for their rights by using both the environment and their personal resources.

## **5.6 Germany**

### *5.6.1 Background*

How to provide adequate preparation for an internship, particularly when using work experience or internships for further learning can be difficult for teachers and social workers working with our target group of potential school dropouts. These young people often find it difficult to describe what they have experienced in an internship and to recognise and describe competences that they have acquired as a result. The ICONET approach was to create a situation where the young people describe their experiences and reflect on what they learned.

### 5.6.2 Participants

In Germany, the ICONET approach was used to develop activities to improve vocational orientation and vocational preparation courses in two different contexts.

The first was in general education through internships for pupils in an enterprise or social organisation. For pupils in the lower secondary schools, an internship / work experience in an enterprise is mandatory. Generally, these internships take place for a period of two weeks in 8th or 9th grade. The idea is that experiencing real work situations in an enterprise will increase a young person's ability to choose an area of vocational education and training that suits her/his abilities and aspirations.

The second context also focused on vocational preparation courses (Berufsvorbereitungsjahr/ Berufsgrundbildungsjahr) in vocational schools. In most German Länder, for young people who do not find an apprenticeship training position, participation in a vocational preparation course in a vocational school is mandatory. In order to make the courses more realistic, internships in enterprises and social organisations are used in some, but not all, schools or courses.

### 5.6.3 Activities

The original ICOVET interview guide was comprised a total of seven activity areas. For the PHOTO STORY instrument used in ICONET, the area of jobs and working experiences was further developed and deepened.

Based on the needs of 14 to 18 year old youngsters as well as on the conditions of everyday life at school the aim was to develop ICONET to be:

- applicable to groups – group focused – and fun and creativity
- more social, i.e. promotes the exchange among one another: “the young persons tell each other what they have experienced“, presentations in front of the class
- more active, more than an interview, and instead contains activities and special tasks
- less formal, the written form is replaced by photos, new media and technology is used

With the concept PHOTO STORY we want to ensure that

- the phases of practice are prepared and reviewed in a way that the participants profit from them in the best possible way
- young people are able to recognize their own capacity building
- young people are aware of their capabilities
- and are comfortable explaining them to someone else

These requirements were embedded into a programme designed in a way so it could be understood quickly whilst remaining enjoyable to the user. The PHOTO STORY is first of all based on the use of digital cameras and computers which youngsters use everyday.

Secondly, photography offers creative space to share one's own observations with others.

#### *5.6.4 Results*

With PHOTO STORY young people show their individual point of view on what they perceive to be important. With this method we provide youngsters with a tool to document their learning and visualize it for themselves and others. They are able to perceive and at best to guide their own ways of learning in the future – whether on purpose or casually.

In a trial group PHOTO STORY was linked with exercises on training in social and communicative capabilities. In the course playful exercises were performed to try and motivate the young people, and after each pupil prepared a presentation which subsequently had to be shown in front of the class.

In our opinion it is the choice of appropriate photos that is the core of the method. The actual process of reflection is in reasons behind the decisions made which are most important. For this, the young people create categories and decide which pictures are most suitable. In the best case external persons are able to recognize the categories underlying the pictures.

#### *5.6.5 Reflections*

A method for identifying skills and competences from informal learning is easily transferable to other situations if it fits into everyday life, for example everyday school life in Germany involves teaching pupils in classes. To introduce a method into a particular setting would mean additional organisational expenses. We tried to win competency agencies as partners in practice but this was not successful because the students were advised in one-on-one interviews making the formation of an open group difficult.

The method to be transferred should provide room for change, be time-variable, build on current situations and should incur little extra costs. The unchangeable key elements must be clear as well as the variable elements.

It has to be considered if link-up opportunities, connections to other procedures etc. can be used. The PHOTO STORY can easily be integrated in the obligatory industrial placement which most pupils in school complete. The concept is transferable to all situations in which young people work in practical situations. These practical situations provide a multitude of informal, unplanned learning opportunities. We recommend the use of these methods in vocational preparation, institutionally owned factories and in industrial placements.

General educative schools can use the PHOTO STORY interdisciplinary. For example, it can be used in the subject German (What belongs to a narrative? How is a narrative structured?), or when using informatics or media (How do I prepare a presentation, how

do I edit and integrate photos, films and audio files? How do I sort photos in a database?).

The idea of a learning diary in the form of an e-portfolio in the Internet seems interesting. On a learning platform (social network software) the individuals can create their own website including a blog, gallery, comments function etc.

For the cooperation with schools it is generally important to plan for the longer term and to start with the new school year in autumn, with contact taking place in spring. Cooperation for a longer period of time should be assured and it is important to involve the school management in the planning. The approval of the principal was absolutely necessary for full cooperation.

## **6. Transferring innovation: reflection, ideas and Recommendations**

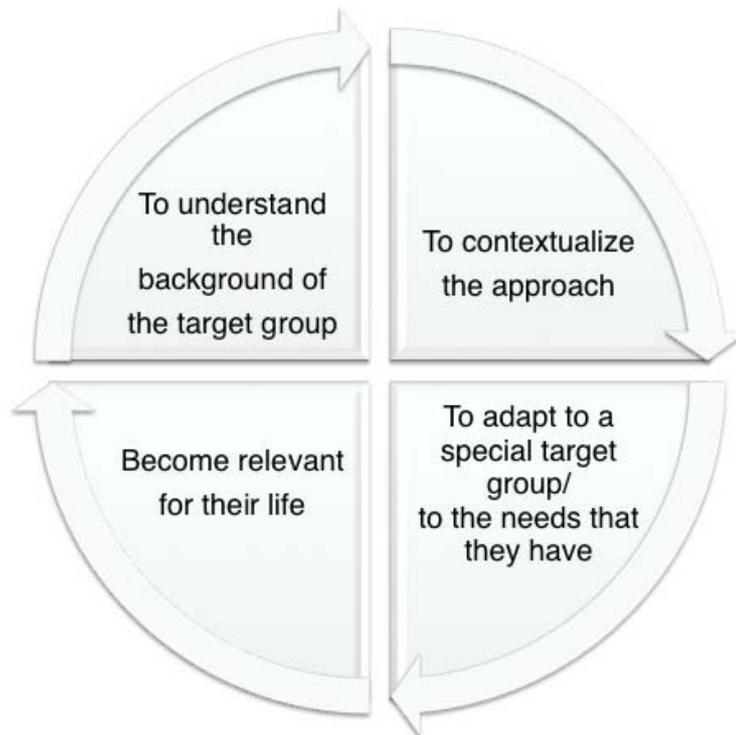
### **6.1 Models of transfer**

Despite the official European and national government support for the recognition of informal learning, there still is little integration of such processes within formal education systems. In particular there often lacks organisations and methodologies for the “formal” recognition of informally acquired capabilities. In this situation the approach of the ICONET project has been to consider the points of contact for the transfer of methods for the validation to be at the level of practice (“de facto” recognition) and in cooperation with different initiatives (“social appreciation”). In other words ICONET has designed the transfer as a bottom-up process.

The transfer of innovative methods can be described at different levels:

1. Practice
2. Educational institutions and administration
3. Educational policy

## Transfer at the level of Practice



The diagramme above illustrates the process of transfer at the level of practice. This means adapting and testing existing methods for new target groups. The target groups in our test field include learning-constricted youngsters, young prisoners, people with disabilities, unemployed young people und youngsters with social constrictions. Also on the level of practice we reach specialists in social work, youth social work, in juvenile imprisonment, teachers and trainers in vocational preparation courses. To adapt the instruments to the requirements of the practice

- needs analyses were prepared
- information was disseminated to potential partners in practice
- project plans were presented
- the instruments were tested in practice

## Transfer at the level of educational institutions and policy

Transfer at the level of the educational institutions and administration aims at introducing tested methods to a broader audience. The collected experiences are discussed with specialists. Continuing education and staff development events should enable specialists to become familiar the instrument and motivate them for their own implementation. For the transfer on this level,

- Good Practice examples were described that support the exchange of experiences

- material for the implementation was prepared
- continuing education and staff development programmes were developed
- information about the instruments was disseminated through a newsletter
- presentations were held on conferences
- articles, videos and audio interviews and information were published in journals and on the internet

### **Transfer at the level of educational policy**

Transfer at the level of educational policy aims to achieve the ongoing implementation and embedding of new and innovative tools, methods and approaches in the different national educational and social systems. Two approaches are possible: top-down through centrally organised administrations or bottom-up through decentralised or federal, regional or local structures.

For example, to implement methods of vocational orientation in general education schools in Germany, requires agreement with the ministries of cultural affairs of the different Länder (federal states). An alternative approach would be to link to existing model programmes organised in cooperation with schools. A third approach is to contact the schools directly.

Top down transfer can be protracted and require extensive negotiation. Given that the ICONET project was only funded for a two-year period so that in our project with a bottom-up transfer model was preferred. But to guarantee long-term sustainability of new innovations, both routes should probably be pursued.

### **6.2 Needs and requirements, context and adaptation**

The main conclusion from our work is that transferring any methodology, tool or process from one situation to another requires some process of adaptation.

Different target groups will have different needs. Equally the context in which process is to be carried out will also determine to some extent how the methods and tools are designed, as will the different institutional and curriculum requirements.

In both Germany and the UK, the project partners wished to use Tackle in group situations, both too were concerned to develop more user involvement in the process. In Austria, the process was adapted to form part of an on-going course, rather than the previous shorter interview procedure.

Another concern arising from the transfer process was to utilise the different opportunities for informal learning arising from the context in which the ICONET tools were used. In Germany this meant looking at internship and practical work in enterprises and school owned workshops as an opportunity for informal learning, in Austria the project developed peer group learning based on interaction between students in their course. Similarly the context in which the tool was being used, for instance institutional restrictions in the case of Romania, could limit or to an extent

determine what methodologies were used. And of course, the availability of resources, in particular the presence or otherwise of trained counsellors or teachers, and the amount of time available for one to one or group support, will affect the design of the process.

In three of the partner countries, Romania, the UK and Germany, the integration of Information and Communication technologies was seen as allowing more extended communication and more vivid and absorbing learning situations.

In assessing requirements or needs, the direct involvement of participants or end users themselves in the design and development of the projects was a key to the approach of most of the ICONET transfer projects. The end users were often better able to articulate their hopes and fears than were teachers and trainers, at one step removed from the direct experience of the learners.

### **6.3 Collaboration and Networks**

All of the transfer projects were undertaken in collaboration with other organisations and often through networks. The organisations varied greatly including voluntary associations, social work agencies, prison authorities, schools and organisations of the unemployed. The collaboration with such organisations was particularly important in allowing the project partners to reach those socially disadvantaged people who could gain from the project. Often the project partners were able to link up to existing cooperation structures and networks. For example, in Germany, access to a school was organised through a German Red Cross (DRK) project which places adults as volunteers in schools in the area of vocational orientation. The volunteers support the pupils in the search for an apprenticeship, in develop apprenticeship applications and in problem solving. In this way we could tie in with the existing cooperation.

To a considerable extent, the long term take up and sustainability of innovative methods and tools like those developed through ICONET depends on the ability to link with networks and structure with the ability to embed such processes within curricular and pedagogic approaches to teaching and learning.

One of the main lessons learnt in implementing the ICONET tools was the need to gain the understanding of other partnership organisations. This was more time consuming than had been expected. It was particularly important that they not only understood and supported the ideas and approaches were proposing, but that they also had a clear understanding of what was expected of them and of the resources necessary to implement the project. It was also important to allay particular fears that they might have, especially when dealing with socially vulnerable groups.

### **6.4 Training teachers and trainers**

As might be expected, the training of teachers and trainers, or other staff involved in supporting end users, was critical to the development and implementation of the ICONET projects. There were different approaches to this, including workshops, one to one training sessions, meetings and the development of training the trainer materials. In

addition to understanding the ICONET processes and tools themselves, it was important that teachers and trainers considered the pedagogic implications of this approach, alongside how it could link to their existing curriculum and pedagogy.

Many of the teachers and trainers we worked with already had heavy workloads and responsibilities; furthermore, they were often involved in other projects and initiatives. To gain their commitment and support, they needed to understand the reasoning and ideas behind our project and to internalise for themselves the ICONET approach.

## **6.5 Information and Communication Technologies**

The earlier ICOVET project, on which ICONET was based, had developed a series of paper based questionnaires and guides, albeit available for download from the internet.

Three of the ICONET transfer projects, in the UK, Germany and Romania, used Information and Communication Technologies to support the recognition of informal learning.

In the UK and Germany, this was largely motivated by the desire to make the course attractive and relevant for young people and also to use technologies which would allow participants to use visual media in identifying their informal learning and as a tool for self reflection. In Romania, ICT was used to support the ongoing development of a community of practice, in all cases, the evaluation of the use of such technologies was overwhelmingly positive.

It is interesting to note that the technology did not appear to be a barrier for participants, with participants generally easily learning the new skills required to use computer and internet based programmes and tools. This also provided a spin off in new competences being developed through participation in the ICONET project.

It was also interesting to look at the different technologies used in the projects. Rather than utilise expensive and technically demanding purpose developed educational software, the projects used lightweight applications and freely available open source and social software.

This is not to say there were not issues that required attention. These included access to cameras and equipment in the case of the German project and concerns over Internet safety in the UK. However, given advanced planning and anticipation of such issues, these problems can easily be overcome.

## **6.6 Evaluation**

Evaluation was important for the ICONET project. Evaluation was seen as contributing to our understanding of both the process of transfer and to the utility and value of the different tools and methodologies developed. In particular evaluation was viewed as a developmental process – a ‘torch’ that helps illuminate problems and recognize good practice as a diagnostic contribution to collective learning.

Thus the evaluation was designed as an ongoing or accompanying process – not just an assessment of outcomes at the end of the project

The evaluation was undertaken by each of the project partners involved in developing the ICONET transfer projects. One important step was identifying the different participants that should be included in the evaluation process. In every case this involved the participants or end users of the ICONET projects and tools and also the intermediaries - teachers, trainers, social workers and counsellors. In some cases it also included managers and other representatives of institutions and of network organisation involved in the pilot.

Whilst we developed common aims and approaches of the evaluation, the individual tools and instruments for gathering and analysing data were customised to the needs of the particular ICONET transfer pilot and to the needs of the different participants. Thus tools and instruments included both written and oral questionnaires, structured and semi structured interviews, meetings and focus groups. In some cases it also involved an examination of the products and results produced by the participants. How successful did they feel the process to be but also to what extent were they able to recognise skills and abilities gained from informal learning and could they record those skills? Did they feel the identification of skills helpful for their future careers or for gaining a job?

Whilst each partner developed their own instruments and tools we agreed on a general model for our approach based on the work of Hamlin.

Thus we are concerned to identify:

- Reactions – immediate responses, feelings and emotional reaction to the activities. What did they like? What did they not like? How did they feel about it?
- Learning – What knowledge and skills have been learnt – has the project resulted in the identification of new skills and knowledge based on informal learning?
- Behaviour change - What might you do differently? How could the project approach be improved in the future? How could the approach to informal learning be used within mainstream curriculum and pedagogy?
- Group change - What collective learning has taken place? At the level of the course or at institutional level?
- Ideological change - Change in values and attitudes of community. What does this approach mean for the way we develop our educational and training systems?

In the ideal world we would follow up the evaluation with longer term enquiries into their subsequent career or learning biography; sadly in the course of such a short project this was not possible – and in some cases not allowed by the organisations supporting the ICONET project.

## **7. Issues in developing a local transfer project**

This section is intended to provide a short guide or checklist for those interested in developing the ideas in this transfer guide forward and possibly implementing their own project or initiative for the recognition of informal learning.

As you will appreciate, we anticipate that the approaches, methods and tools outlined in this guide will need to be adapted for implementation with any particular target group.

### **Different transfer options**

There are different options in how to transfer the ICONET project results. These could include implementing the ideas and methods outlined in this guide in a programme or initiative for different groups of learners. At another level it might mean looking at how such ideas could be mainstreamed through an institutional or regional approach or within the curriculum. Or it could mean organising a dissemination or staff development event on the recognition of informal learning.

### **Systems and structures**

Any innovative approach to teaching and learning has to consider existing structures for education and training. What are existing policies at national, regional or local levels? Are there existing programmes or projects to which you can connect? In which structures can instruments and methods for the recognition of informal learning be embedded?

### **Networks**

Are there existing networks which are interested in the recognition of informal learning? These might be at institutional or subject area or focusing on education and training for particular socially disadvantaged groups. How can contacts be developed with such networks?

### **Partnerships**

You may be in a position where you can implement projects or initiatives for the recognition of informal learning yourself. But often you will need to develop partnerships with schools, associations or other organisations in order to do this. Who are the partners who can best help in this? What is their interest in the recognition of informal learning and how might it help in their work? What is the best way to approach these organisations?

### **Accreditation and recognition**

How can informal competencies be recognized or accredited? How can these competencies be located in the European or the respective National Qualifications Frameworks? Is there any connection to the work of accreditation institutions?

## **Requirements and needs analysis**

The ICONET project suggests that requirements or needs analysis is critical to any successful transfer of approaches to the recognition of informal learning. Who are the people with which the methods and tools are to be used? What is their background and previous experiences? Will they feel comfortable with such an approach? What have they got to gain from exploring their previous learning and how can they effectively use the outcome of the process?

The experience of the ICONET project suggests that directly involving the end users in the design of the project can help in ensuring it matches their needs.

## **Support from managers and staff**

Another finding from the ICONET project was that the support of managers and staff in organisations and institutions responsible for education, training and support for socially disadvantaged people is critical to the introduction of new tools and methods. Not only do they need to know about such initiatives but the need to understand why they are being asked to undertake this work. This is particularly important as such initiatives will often have implications in terms of resources. How can this be achieved?

## **Training of trainers**

The training of trainers – or teachers, social workers, youth workers etc. is another crucial factor in successfully implementing projects for the recognition of informal learning. There are different ways in which this can be done – through workshops, seminars, meetings, one to one sessions or through the use of Information and Communication technologies.

Teachers and trainers need not only to understand the tools and methods, but the pedagogic approaches to recognising informal learning and how such recognition will play a role in the future learning or career progression of learners.

## **Curriculum**

Most of the ICONET projects have involved integrating the recognition of informal learning into existing courses or curriculum. This involves a two fold approach to adaptation – what needs to be changed in the ICONET tools and methods to integrate within the existing curriculum and how does the existing curriculum need to be changed to accommodate such tools and processes? Who is responsible for curriculum development and who has authority to agree such changes? How much time will the ICONET approach take and how is it to be timetabled?

## **Pedagogy and Support for learners**

Most, if not all, learners will need support in recognising skills and competences gained from informal learning. How is this support to be organised? What teaching and learning methods are best suited to the needs of the learners? How can we make learning attractive and motivate participants? Who will support the learners and what form will

the support take. This could include group and peer group learning or one-to-one sessions with teachers or counsellors? At what point does support stop? How can we ensure that learners are able to use the results of taking part in the process?

### Using technology

The ICONET project found the use of Information and Communication Technologies can be an effective tool to support the identification of skills and competences gained from informal learning, to motivate participants and to make learning attractive. The project also found that there is a wide range of free open source and social software that can be used effectively for this purpose and in the process of use develops new skills and competences.

Of course the use of technologies provides issues. What programmes should you use? Do the teachers and trainers have sufficient competence to use such technologies? Do you have access to computers and internet connectivity? Are there issues regarding internet safety?

### Continuing support

If you are interested in further developing and transferring the ICONET methods and tools for the recognition of skills and abilities gained from informal learning, there are a number of possible ways in which the project partners can support you.

The first port of call is the project's main web site at [www.iconet-eu.net](http://www.iconet-eu.net). This site contains case studies and reports from each of the pilot implementations together with examples of good practice. As well as accessing reports and documents, the site contains multi media including photos, audio and video.

The site is multi lingual including material in English, German, Romanian, French and Portuguese.

Some of the project partners also have their own webs sites about the project. These include:

- German Youth Institute [www.dji.de/iconet](http://www.dji.de/iconet)
- Schulen ans Netz e.V. [www.qualiboxx.de/ww3ee/fotostory.php](http://www.qualiboxx.de/ww3ee/fotostory.php)
- Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung Good Practice Center [www.good-practice.de/gp/suche.php?action=view&id=692](http://www.good-practice.de/gp/suche.php?action=view&id=692)
- Pontydysgu – [www.pontydysgu.org/projects/iconet/](http://www.pontydysgu.org/projects/iconet/)

If you would like further assistance we suggest you contact the project partner in your country. If your county is not included in the project, then please contact the project coordinators: Ulrike Richter, Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI) and Randolph Preisinger-Kleine (p&w).

It may be possible for us to send a speaker to your organisation, to organise a workshop or just to arrange a meeting at which we can explain the project ideas and activities.

## 8. Appendix

### 8.1 Checklist for trial in schools in Germany

- Always plan cooperation with schools in the long run. At the beginning of a new school year the teachers are very interested in introducing new procedures. Arrangements for this should begin in May.
- Plan at least two conversations with the responsible teachers for a detailed agreement.
- Agree on the provision of materials, equipment, rooms and on the responsibility for that.
- Maybe the presentation of the photos can take place outside the school which would emphasize the informal learning.
- Point out the possibility of borrowing the cameras of the media stations
- List the costs: cameras, technology, photo development, material, copy costs.
- Plan in detail which person will be responsible for which task at which time.
- Exchange contact data (e-mail, mobile phone number) to be quickly available
- Support the schools in the application for subsidies. Which possibilities of financing do you see?
- Write protocols on the agreements and make them promptly available.
- Prepare a letter for the school management with information on the project and ask for approval.
- Prepare a letter to the parents of the involved pupils.
- Meet all appointments and prove yourself to be a reliable partner.

## 8.2 German Qualifications Framework

With the effort to develop a German Qualifications Framework by 2010, there has been a growing debate on the recognition of informal learning.

In October 2006, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) agreed to work together on the development of a German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (known by its German abbreviation of DQR). They have established a joint “Federal Government/Federal States Coordination Group” for the German Qualifications Framework” (known by its German abbreviation of B-L-KG DQR), which has been commissioned with the task of managing the process of drawing up a DQR. This process involves a large number of stakeholders from general education, higher education and vocational education and training, the social partners and other experts from research and practice.

All formal qualifications within the German educational system, including general and higher education and vocational education and training, are included in the alignment of qualifications to the DQR. A further objective is to accord due consideration to the results of informal learning.

The inclusion of informal learning processes and results in the DQR is still methodically, legally and institutionally problematic in terms of identification, recognition and accreditation. According to a survey of labour union members (Neß 2009: Empirische Erhebung zu den Erwartungen an den Europäischen und Deutschen Qualifikationsrahmen) nearly 90 per cent of the interviewees consider the state to be responsible for the validation of informal learning.

A draft German Qualifications Framework (DQR), published in February 2009, is currently undergoing a one-year trial. The DQR is the German implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQR) passed by the European Parliament in April 2008. The introduction of the DQR has received little discussion and is not accompanied by systemic reforms. Until now there has been little publicity from educational policy makers and discussions unfortunately remain confined to circles of experts.

Critics of the Framework point out that the discussion draft of the DQR only refers to the qualifications acquired in formal educational settings in general, higher and vocational education and de facto partially discounts individually acquired capabilities and attitudes. The informal and non-formal acquisition of skills is not considered in the draft which bears the risk of transforming the Qualifications Framework into an instrument of exclusion which further consolidates the selection mechanisms of the educational system instead of overcoming them.