



Policy-oriented recommendations *for the integration of the “Intercultool” assessment methodology into VET institutions*

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The Intercultool Project

The “Intercultool”, an online competence assessment tool has been developed in the framework of a Leonardo Da Vinci pilot project funded under the Lifelong Learning program. The project targeted professionals across many sectors including Vocational Education and Training (V.E.T.) organisations, public, business and not for profit, who are managing complicated situations resulting from cultural diversity in their professional life..

The purpose of the project was to develop an assessment tool, based on an original model of intercultural competence. This theoretical model was worked out using input gathered from the target group, consequently directly connected to real life experience of a large number of actors.

The project was composed of a number of work phases. These are:

- Interviews with professionals from 4 sectors and identification of competences needed in situations involving intercultural conflict.
- Elaboration of a framework model of intercultural competence on the basis of the interviews
- Construction of an assessment method, based on the framework model, incorporating experiences of two previous European projects dealing with competence measurement and development.
- Testing and validation of the tool (over 1000 tests). The testing process covered five countries including Sweden, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, UK and Northern Ireland.
- Working out a feedback system in order to help better understand and measure the training needs of the target groups.
- Putting the tool into practice in the partner countries by the participating organisations and various organisations reached by them.
- Promotion of the tool and lobbying for its mainstreaming in the training system of VET teachers.
- Promotion of the tool and lobbying for its use in adult education.
- Development of recommendations across the five partner countries involved in the project concerning further possibilities of the mainstreaming and valorisation of intercultural competence assessment in the domain of VET and in the professional world.

Transferring Innovation

Every Leonardo da Vinci “Transfer of Innovation Project” must contain two elements: that of transfer and of development. In this instance, the project further developed and built upon two key innovations resulted from earlier projects. These are: “*New Key Competencies in business for integrating Life Long Learning within an enlarged Europe*” developed by IFOA in a previous Leonardo da Vinci project (<http://www.ifo.it/manpower-keycom>) and the Digital Empowerment Tool (DET) developed by Integra within the Equal Development Partnership Aros Asyl (<http://www.uparos.se> - the project website and <http://www.aveeurope.eu> which describes the Transnational part of the Equal project).

One of the main objectives of the Intercultool Project is to make sure that the tool is widely known and used, within the partnership and in related institutions in the participating countries.

In fact, the partners of the project have made practical steps aiming at the introduction of the tool in their training practices and in order to ensure its promotion within the VET sector. These efforts are in line with the current EU policies with regards to

- Multicultural society
- Learning society
- Competence based learning and the importance of “soft skills”
- Intercultural competence as key competence
- the importance of VET in the learning society
- Competence assessment and the challenge of validation

These policies are also reflected in the national policies and practices of the participating countries.

Intercultool in line with the actual European policies

Multicultural society

In today’s culturally and ethnically complex work environment, intercultural competences have become a basic key competence, necessary not only to avoid, mediate and solve conflicts but also as a means of self realisation and orientation in the world. Cultural diversity is fed by a number of phenomena, all related to globalisation. Migration is certainly one, but ethnic minorities, cultural exchanges, the presence of an ever more mobile European working force all contribute to making the working environment more diverse. . In these conditions, adaptability, openness and creativity have become vital to all. Although today’s multicultural society is not only a result of migrations, understandably, the integration of migrants and minorities have become one of the biggest social challenges of our times. A number of European policy documents treat this question in details.

The new European Commission document entitled “**CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE - EU 2020” STRATEGY**”, recognises the constraints and new challenges presented by the European demography -including “integration of an increasing immigrant population...” (<http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/eu2020.pdf>).

One of the three key drivers the European Commission has identified is thematic and focuses on the second priority -; “**Empowering people in inclusive societies**”. The document concludes that the acquisition of new skills, fostering creativity and innovation, the development of entrepreneurship and a smooth transition between jobs will be crucial in a world which will offer more jobs in exchange for greater adaptability.”.

The “Intercultool” adopted this vision, taking the challenge” of contributing to the achievement of the the second priority. In fact, it can play different roles. Not only it is capable of mapping on an objective basis the individual’s competences to face and cope with a multicultural society, it can also orient the learner with regards to future training needs, while giving a positive feed back on areas of strengths. As such it is not only an assessment-, but also an empowerment tool.

Learning society

In face of the rapidly changing circumstances there is a greater emphasis on transferability of competences, flexibility and adaptation. Social and geographical mobility is at the same time the precondition and the result of this increased flexibility. There is a growing

recognition within the educational and training circles in Europe that enhancing mobility is a means to make sure that everybody has a chance to self realization. There is also a widely shared conviction that the intensification of mobility will eventually augment the European dimension of our societies.

In this environment it is essential to realize that learning is a basic need for everybody and it does not end with schooling, it lasts during the whole life. Most importantly, learning is not limited to formal knowledge transfer in schools but it is seen as a permanent self development in the formal as well as in the non formal sector. It is foreseen that increasingly, the social position of each individual will be determined by the knowledge that he or she has been able to acquire. The society of the future therefore, must be one which invests in intelligence, based on education and learning, in which individuals can build up their own personal educational profiles; in other words, a learning society.

In this context the European Commission has drawn up a ***White Paper on Education and Training***¹ which is intended to serve as a document for analysis, reflection and debate. The document identifies 3 driving forces of change. These are: the information society, internationalization, and finally, the growing impact of scientific and technological knowledge. The text starts with a visionary statement: „In the future, individuals will be called upon to understand complex situations which will change in unforeseeable ways, but which advances in science should nevertheless make it easier to control. They will also be confronted with an increasing variety of physical objects, social situations and geographical and cultural contexts. In addition, they will have to contend with a mass of fragmentary and incomplete information open to varying interpretations and partial analysis” (idem, p9).

This situation offers a potential for European societies for development. However, it contains a risk of rift between „between those that can interpret; those who can only use; and those who are pushed out of mainstream society and rely upon social support” (idem). Efforts to reduce the gap between these groups therefore must be a priority for the Education system within Europe. In fact, our capacity to positively deal with this challenge may determine the kind of society we will live in tomorrow. Accordingly, the white book underlines: „The future of European culture depends on its capacity to equip young people to question constantly and seek new answers without prejudicing human values. This is the very foundation of citizenship and is essential if European society is to be open, multicultural and democratic (idem, p10).

Competence based learning and the importance of „soft skills”

The Lisbon Strategy, also known as the **Lisbon Agenda** or Lisbon Process, is an action and [development plan](#) for the [European Union](#). When the European Council met in Lisbon, Portugal, in March 2000, EU leaders adopted a ten-year program aimed at revitalizing growth and sustainable development across the EU. They noted the challenges Europe was facing from globalization, an ageing population, and the emergence of a worldwide information society. They resolved that economic and social reforms had to take place in the context of “a positive strategy which combines competitiveness and social cohesion”, and reaffirmed that the European social model, with its developed systems of social protection, must underpin the strategy. The Lisbon Agenda set a new strategic goal for the European Union to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.” The policy paper also offered guidelines to achieve this objective. It underlined that there is a need (i) to attract and retain more people in employment and modernize social protection, (ii) to improve the adaptability of workers and firms and the flexibility of labour markets, and (iii) to increase investment in human capital through education and the development of skills (p14).

As part of this new orientation, growing attention is paid to methods of competence development in national educational strategies. As early as in 1997 the **OECD** started to develop a framework defining the key competences to be developed in the formal as well as in the

¹ European Commission: White Paper on Education and Training, Teaching and Learning. Towards the learning society, 1995.

informal sector of the education. The competences that were recognized as key competences by the OECD and the European Union are not limited to those that enable the individuals to cope better with the technical and scientific challenges of our world. These institutions equally emphasize the importance of the competences that are necessary to live together, to work and realize oneself in an increasingly complex world. These are the so called „soft skills” or “social aptitudes”.

„**Social aptitudes** concern interpersonal skills, i.e. behavior at work and a whole range of skills corresponding to the level of responsibility held, such as the ability to cooperate and work as part of a team, creativeness and the quest for quality. Full mastery of these skills can be acquired only in a working environment and therefore mainly on the job.” (White paper on Education p.14)

Intercultural competence as key competence

Cultural diversity is becoming a general characteristic of most European societies, and the competence to deal with such diversity is becoming a key requisite not merely for citizens belonging to cultural minorities or immigrant communities wishing to integrate, but to all residents. This observation has also been underscored within the **working groups launched by the European Commission on the identification of key competences**. The working groups have identified “intercultural competence” as a core element of social and civic competences². Cultural diversity, interculturality thus interferes in all social spaces, including the workplace. Accordingly, the study on the Definition and selection of key competences realized within the **OECD** has identified “working in heterogeneous groups” as one of three areas of key competences³. But while cultural diversity becomes a general condition, it affects particularly some professions (eg. professionals dealing with integration) and poses different challenges according to special professional situations (eg. being in charge of a mixed working group, facing expatriation, etc.).

There are specific professions which require frequent cross-cultural interactions. In the business sector this will be particularly relevant for companies with a heterogeneous group of employees, where a resourceful management of diversity can lead to better competitiveness, or where preparation for successful expatriation, or international merger can be crucial. Furthermore several professions of the social and public sector already are specialized on the treatment and management of diversity, in offering support in integration to a diverse group of clients (social work, social assistance, etc).

The importance of VET in the learning society

Providing tools for the social integration of people going through social or geographical mobility has to be a priority in Europe’s new learning society. Understandably, this requirement signifies a challenge also to VET institutions. John Preston and Andy Green (2008)⁴ in a recent publication equally underscore the role of vocational education and training in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion. They observe: “As the economic and social consequences of demographic aging are felt, immigration remains a useful, beneficial tool to alleviate negative impacts. However, to maximize this effect, migrants must be integrated into citizenship and working life, and realize their potential to contribute to sustainable development in the EU. This must include intra-EU migrants and their dependents, as well as those originating from third countries. It is here that VET can play a significant role in equipping migrants with knowledge, skills and competences needed to succeed.”

² EC – key competences see: RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)

³ OECD Definition and SElection of key COmpetences: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/61/35070367.pdf>

⁴ Preston John & Green Andy (2008). « The role of vocational education and training in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion ». In *Modernising vocational education and training*. Vol. 1. Luxembourg : Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes (OPOCE), p. 121–193.

These new demands put a lot of pressure on VET teachers who have to demonstrate more professional competences as well as enhanced pedagogical skills⁵. A “greater embedding of learner-centered guidance and counseling in VET programs” is required (Parsons et al. 2009)⁶. In other words, VET teachers today are not expected to simply transfer knowledge and professional skills, but rather to develop the skills and competences of the learners according to an individualized development plans. It is evident that in order to meet this demand the VET teacher himself should develop some important interpersonal competences, he has to learn how to assess learners coming from different cultures and should be more sensitive to individual differences. Briefly, in order to successfully teach a multicultural class and contribute to the personal development of the students, the VET teacher also has to acquire and strengthen intercultural competences. This is not only essential for a better professional integration of the migrants, but has got a broader societal relevance. By improving the intercultural competences not only of the migrants but of the general public, teachers and VET teachers can contribute to a more tolerant and inclusive society, and can fight actively against xenophobia and racism.

No wonder, VET educators and trainers need new tools to assist them in the fulfilment of their new roles. The ambition of Intercultool is to become one of such tools, widely used in teacher’s trainings and in in-service further professional trainings.

Competence assessment and the challenge of validation⁷

If informal learning is more and more recognized as a legitimate form of learning and the emphasis is put increasingly on the outcome of learning processes in terms of competences (understood not as a passive knowledge but “as the ability to meet individual or social demands successfully, or to carry out an activity or task”⁸) it is understandable that there is an extraordinary interest in methods to assess and evaluate competences learned both in formal and informal settings. “Validating non formal and informal learning is increasingly seen as a way of improving lifelong and life wide learning”. (Cedefop 2009 p.7). Recognizing the importance and relevance of learning outside the formal education and training context, the European Union have undertaken a series of measures in order to formalize and standardize the validation procedures.

In 2004, the European Council adopted a set of common principles for identifying and validating non formal and informal learning⁹. In 2006 a cluster was set up on the recognition of learning outcomes in the context of the Education and training 2010 work program.¹⁰ In 2008 the most extensive inventory to date was published offering an overview of practices of validating non-formal and informal learning and attempts to establish common standards.¹¹ According to this document, “identification of non-formal and informal learning is seen as a process which “records and makes visible the individual’s learning outcomes”. This does not result necessarily

⁵ See: Modernising vocational education and training. Fourth report on vocational training research in Europe: background report Volume 2, Cedefop Reference series; 70. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009

⁶ David J. Parsons, Jacqui Hughes, Chris Allinson and Kenneth Walsh (2009) “The training and development of VET teachers and trainers in Europe” In: Cedefop (ed) Modernising Vocational Education and Training, 2009, Brussels

⁷ The above section has been developed on the basis of the following document: CEDEFOP: European guidelines for validating non formal and informal learning, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009

⁸ DeSeCo: Definition and Selection of Competencies: theoretical and conceptual foundations. An overarching frame of reference for an assessment and research program, 2002., p. 19

⁹ Council of the European Union. *Conclusions of the Council and representatives of the governments of Member States meeting within the Council on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*. (EDUC 118 SOC 253, 18 May 2004). Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/validation2004_en.pdf [cited 3.2.2009].

¹⁰ See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/comp_en.html#2 [cited 3.2.2009].

¹¹ Souto Otero, Manuel; Hawley, Jo; Nevala, Anne-Mari (eds). European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning: 2007 update: a final report to DG Education and Culture of the European Commission. Birmingham: Ecotec, 2008. Available from Internet: <http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/publications/inventory/EuropeanInventory.pdf> [cited 3.2.2009].

in a formal certificate or diploma, but it may provide the basis for such formal recognition.” (CEDEFOP 2009 p.15). An important distinction is made between the summative and formative purposes of validation. The main difference is that the first approach sanctions the results of a learning process by a formalized certificate, while the objective of the second one is to orientate the learner towards further learning paths and is recognized as part of the learning process. In 2008 the European Commission launched a Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training¹². Other tools include the European network for improving cooperation in quality assurance procedures in VET (ENQA - VET)¹³

¹² Brussels: European Commission, 2008. (COM(2008) 179 final). Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0179:FIN:EN:PDF> [cited 3.2.2009].

¹³ European network for quality assurance in vocational education and training (http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/projects_networks/quality/).

The situation of VET in the partner countries and opportunities of introducing Intercultool in the training systems

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The situation of VET and lifelong learning in Hungary

The lifelong learning strategy was adopted by the Hungarian government in 2005 (Government Decree 2212/2005. (X. 13.)). It reflects the goals set in the Lisbon strategy. The process, however, had started before, with the Development Plan I (2004-2006). The strategy drawn up in spring 2005 lists five priorities and seven key areas for development. Both the representatives of the above ministries and the experts regard the strategy as a good initial document as it follows EU requirements, and at the same time the strategy successfully represents the positions of the ministries concerned. The same objectives appear again in the New Hungarian Development Plan, namely the priority of increasing employment and reducing inequalities through the reorganisation of the education system.

The Social Renewal Operative Programme mentions lifelong learning too as a specific goal. The programme clearly states the importance of developing key competences and laying the foundations of lifelong learning. To coordinate the tasks arising from the strategy, an inter-ministerial committee was set up in November 2005. Despite the efforts, the figures are not encouraging. The involvement of the adult population in life long learning was 4,2 % in 2005, in the face of a 12,5% average on a European level. Thus, the policy basis and the engagement of several actors exist, however, in practice, effective life long learning still meets a lot of obstacles, some of them affecting also the system of VET.

The basic Legal Act, through which vocational education is governed is the Act LXXVI of 1993. On Vocational training. While the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for school based vocational training, VET today is under the supervision of the State Secretariat supervision also the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. This division of responsibilities would require a good inter-ministerial coordination, which is not always the case. The difficulties are especially evident with respect to the harmonisation of quality measures and of validation. „Perhaps the greatest perceptible backlog can be found in the areas of evidence based policy-making and that of assessment. For precisely this reason, one of the priority programmes of the NDP II is devising a system of assessment and measurement for education” (HIERD 2006, p7) ¹⁴.

In autumn 2005 Hungary organised a broad professional consultation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF). While there is a wide consensus on the necessity of harmonisation of learning requirements, correspondence between the levels established in the European System and the practice in Hungary is not always easy to establish. The biggest difficulty concerns the assessment of „personal and professional competence”. The Ministry of Education drew up a concept for developing the national qualifications framework (NQF). It signifies the basis for the acknowledgment of the results of non-formal and informal education as well. It is an urgent task, as today the knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning is seriously under-evaluated. The reasons of this situation are multiple. First, there is a lack of interest amongst educational institutions to recognise learning activities happening outside their own programs. Second, there is no regulated procedure in force. For similar reasons, the same situation prevails regarding skills and competences acquired through

¹⁴ Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development: Expert material serving as a basis for the national report on life long learning, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture. 2006. The document served as a basis for a national report to be published subsequently: JUDIT LANNERT, GYÖRGY MÁRTONFI, EDIT SINKA AND ÉVA TÓT: EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010 WORK PROGRAMME. NATIONAL REPORT. EXPLORING IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS IN HUNGARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOUR, Budapest, 2009

international mobility. „A significant part of institutions in Hungary regard time spent in other countries by students as a disturbing factor in the education process. ...The handling of foreign studies and credits obtained and the method of displaying credits given to knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal learning arose as problematic during consultations”(HIERD 2006 p.14).

These backlogs reflect the ambiguous perception of informal learning today in Hungary. The terms non-formal and informal learning did not even appear in the New Higher Education Act of 2006. Although, the idea of lifelong learning appears - prescribing for the educational institutions to recognise former work experience („ for the recognition of requirements fulfilled based on work experience the institution must obtain proof of acquired knowledge” (cited by HIERD 2006, p.12), the text never mentions it explicitly.

One domain where knowledge and competence acquired during previous work experience should appear strongly as a basis for further self development is career guidance. But „the currently operating Hungarian career guidance policy and labour counselling system does not live up to the expectations” (HIERD 2006 p.13). Although there is a number of interesting projects and initiatives, harmonization is lacking in this field, too and the labour offices, where the bulk of career guidance is carried out, lack the capacity necessary to an in depth competence assessment.

The policy measures of the recent years (the National Development Plan, the renewed National Qualification Register, the regional integrated training centres and the new Higher Education Act) enhance the realization of the strategy in every field of education and training. However, real expansion of the initiatives promoting lifelong learning is still difficult due to inefficient inter-ministerial communication and by a resource gap. Also, there is an internal contradiction in the policy. While lifelong learning by definition should be student/client-centred, within the National Development Plan I almost only centralized programmes were launched.

One of the highlighted strategic plans developed in the National Development Plan II is the elaboration of a harmonized evaluation and measurement system for the education. An action plan has been developed to support the social integration of the socially disadvantaged through training. Consequently, an important task for the forthcoming period will be the establishment of a system of identification and acknowledgement of non-formal learning.

National standards for Exams and Degree/Diplomas

The procedure and the guiding assessment concept of validating formal learning in vocational education and training provided within the school system are defined by **central regulations**. The qualifications obtainable through this kind of education are all state recognized (included in the National Qualifications Register, OKJ) and thus their professional and examination requirements are developed by the minister of the relevant field.

These requirements specify the form, parts and requirements of the national vocational examination organized at the end of the training programme. The general and procedural regulations of this examination that awards the vocational qualification are defined by the Minister of Education in cooperation with the minister of the relevant field.

Pursuant to Act LXXVI of 1993 on Vocational Education and Training, the vocational examination that may have written, oral and practical parts is taken in front of an Examination Board, an independent professional body. Its members are the president appointed by the minister in charge of the given vocational qualification and the representatives of the institution organizing the examination and of the local relevant chamber of economy. Only people with the relevant vocational qualification prescribed by the law can participate in the work of the examination board whose work is assisted by experts (teachers).

A new element in the validation and recognition of prior formal studies was introduced from school year 2005/2006, aiming primarily to facilitate access to VET for less achieving

students. The 2003 amendment of the Act LXXIX of 1993 on Public Education provides for students who could not finish the 8 grades of primary school by the age of 16: in order to obtain the primary school graduation certificate and the competences needed for entering VET, they can participate in a 1-2 year long full time preparatory training in vocational schools.

Pursuant to the 14/2005 (V.26.) decree of the Ministry of Education, OKJ qualifications at the level 31-34 (ISCED 3C) may be obtained even by those with no formal school certificate but have obtained the necessary competences by participating in a VET preparatory programme. The necessary competence-profiles have been developed in 10 occupational groups within the framework of the Vocational School Development Programme and 1-year long preparatory courses are currently being piloted in 23 schools participating in programme.

In adult training and education, there exist 2 parallel systems of formal learning validation. One is the centrally regulated examination system described above which is effective in case the training aims at providing an OKJ vocational qualification. In adult training, the vocational examination can be organized by public and higher education institutions engaging in adult training (for their participants) and by institutions authorized by the minister of the relevant field.

The other system of validating formal learning in adult training is effective for programmes providing qualifications not listed OKJ. In the case of the so-called trainings regulated by public authorities the content and examination requirements are regulated by the relevant public authority (e.g. Transport Directorate) and the awarded certificates, licenses are state recognized.

In other cases the training provider issues a certificate of completing the training programme based on its own assessment/validation system. These documents are not recognized by the state, but the knowledge and skills acquired through the training programme can make them prestigious on the labour market, especially if they are awarded by accredited training providers and/or in accredited training programmes that would ensure the quality of education.

The modularisation of the OKJ within the framework of Human Resources Development Operational Programme Measure 3.2.1. will provide for the obtainment also of partial vocational qualifications both within and outside the school system. Furthermore, except for higher level vocational qualifications (ISCED 5B) requiring the maturity certificate and vocational qualifications with a higher education degree and qualification (ISCED 5A) as pre-qualification requirement, the new OKJ permits the definition of the access requirements of vocational qualifications at all levels also in terms of competences (although the definition of the relevant competence-profiles at ISCED 4C level is an outstanding task).

The adaptation in Hungary of the Common Quality Assurance Framework (CQAF) devised by the EU "Quality in VET Working Group" started immediately after the system was adopted, and related quality assurance development was carried out in 90 institutions involved in the Vocational School Development Programme and has continued in another 70 schools since 2006 in the second phase of the VSDP. In a few vocational training institutions the previously launched quality assurance activity continued but most recently no resources were available to support these efforts.

Accreditation regulation in adult education was made more precise and tightened further in 2006. Supervision/control likewise became stricter and for operation diverging from legal specifications more serious sanctions (large fine, suspension of operation) were introduced than previously.

Intercultool in line with the National VET Policy

Competence-based education and ICT-based tools are on rise in current Hungarian education scene. However, there are few tools available in Hungarian language. Therefore, the Intercultool could answer an existing demand and could effectively be used in training of teachers studying in colleges. As specialized teacher training for VET does not exist in Hungary, a

part of these teachers will teach in VET education later. Another use of Intercultool could be found in supporting further professional training of teachers. Taking part in training courses is obligatory for teachers each year. There is a catalogue containing the available training courses accredited by the Ministry of Education. Since the further teacher training is de-centralised in Hungary, several institutions (who meet the accreditation criteria) can offer further trainings for teachers. Since the integration of disadvantaged students is quite an acute problem in Hungary, many teachers attend courses about this topic. Because, for historical reasons, social disadvantage in Hungary is often structurally linked with belonging to ethnic minority groups, namely the Roma, learning about the challenges of a multicultural society should be - and in fact often is - part of specific trainings in this domain. However, this is a delicate field, where learning presupposes - besides of accumulation of knowledge - the development of a series of social and civic competences and changing of attitude. Reliable assessment tools for “soft-competences” like this are particularly lacking. This is where Intercultool could fill a gap.

Recommendations on the integration of Intercultool into National VET System

In order to integrate *Intercultool* into the Hungarian national system a few steps can be foreseen:

- Approach the National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education (Nemzeti Szakképzési és Felnőttképzési Intézet) (a back-end institution for the Ministry of Education) and raise their interest (it is possible and it is in progress)
- Raise interest of the National Institute for Public Education in Hungary (Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet) (it is possible, and in progress)
- Raise interest in assessment of “soft competencies” in teachers’ training institutions and within the field of further teachers’ training (it is possible, and it is in progress)
- Raise interest within organizations and structures assuring further training of professionals in different field as part of adult education. (it is possible, and it is in progress)
 - o Make sure these institutions put the Tool in practice, testing it in their model schools (formal engagement has been taken from different institutions)
 - o Lobby for the integration of Intercultool in the series of “Good Practices collection” recommended for teachers
 - o Propose the placement of the Intercultool’s dissemination materials in the collection of the “Multicultural Workshop” (placed in the National Pedagogic Library and Museum)
 - o Approach publishers of VET educational material for publishing purposes.

Data derived from feedback about Intercultool from VET Teachers for Future Improvements to the Tool

- suggestions for further development, mutation of the test making it suitable for primary and secondary school students
- suggestion to broaden the range of the questions in order to make it possible to generate several question forms. In this way, the test could be used both prior to and after the training, to measure effective learning outcomes.

Achievements of advocacy and mainstreaming so far

The test has been promoted to, and tested by the following institutions and organizations (see certifying and recommendation letters attached as an annex to the final report of the project).

- National Institute of Vocational and Adult Education.

The Institute has a National Reference Center. The tool is published on-, and promoted by their homepage. They plan the direct use of the tool in their own trainings, as a pre-training test, as a training material and as an assessment tool after trainings.

– National Institute for Public Education in Hungary.

The test was presented to the Multicultural Workshop of the Institute. There is a commitment on behalf of the Workshop to continue discussions in order to further promote the test within the VET system.

– Teacher training and further training of teachers: Members of the Centre of Intercultural Psychology and Pedagogy of the ELTE University (PPK Interkulturális Pszichológiai és Pedagógiai Központ) participated in the testing phase of the test, so they have a first hand experience. They already use the test in their teacher trainings in the Master training “Multicultural Education”.

– Training organizations active in adult education: The test has been introduced and successfully used linked to ongoing trainings in Mórotz és Társai Oktatási- és Nevelési Módszertani Bt. and in Artemisszió Foundation.

Change Institute UK and North West Regional College NI

National VET Policy UK

No single piece of legislation provides the basis for the legal framework for education and training in the UK. Governance and system development has been regulated in a series of laws, each tackling different aspects of education and training. Due to the devolution of governance in the UK the government and institutional frameworks differ between England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, all of which have extensive autonomy. Overall policy for vocational learning and skills is the responsibility of the Learning or Education Department of each national government along with school education¹⁵.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and their co-ordinating body, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), are responsible for identifying skills needs in different economic sectors and for defining the occupational standards on which occupational qualifications are based. SSCs are independent, employer-led, UK-wide organisations designed to build a skills system that is driven by employer demand. Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) is the sector skills council responsible for the professional development of those working in all sectors of post school education and for workforce development issues, guidance for adults and education/business links.

A large number of awarding bodies offer vocational qualifications and a wide range of vocational qualifications are accredited into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). These are subject to regulation by accreditation bodies, e.g. Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority (QCDA) (England), Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) (Wales), and Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) (Northern Ireland). Vocational Higher Education, whether undertaken in universities, in other institutions of higher education or in further education institutions, is the responsibility of the higher education funding and quality agencies.

Vocational qualifications cover almost every industry sector and every level of the NQF and range from broad-based to specialist qualifications designed for a particular sector. In many cases suites of qualifications are available, offering progression through the levels of the NQF. Vocational qualifications differ from National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in that they are

¹⁵ Overview of the Vocational Education and Training System UK. 2008. eKnowVet – Thematic Overviews

not delivered and assessed at the workplace. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are work-related, competence-based qualifications based on national occupational standards.

These standards are statements of performance that describe what competent people in a particular occupation are expected to be able to do. CILT ((National Centre for Languages) led a UKCES-funded project to develop the **National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Intercultural Working: Standards for working with people from different countries or diverse cultures**. The Standards were approved by UKCES in September 2008 and are available free to download from the [UK Standards website](#)¹⁶.

In the UK and Northern Ireland, VET teachers and trainers face the reality of teaching and training migrants who for the most part have some knowledge of English but are limited in the practical use of it. In the majority of instances, the students must be provided with assistance in order to complete their programme or course.

Other problems relate to comprehension and cultural expectations - such as meeting tight deadlines or attending tutorials. Students from other countries may adhere to these guidelines severely and worry about making those deadlines whilst others have a less faire attitude towards submission of work. It is imperative that clear directions are given and repeated several times to ensure compliance especially if English is not their first language.

Although there are gaps, educators are making an effort through adopting policies which reflect the legislation and also application to all levels to ensure compliance and conformity.

Intercultool in line with the National VET Policy

At the national level there is a clear link between the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Intercultural Working and Intercultool. Intercultool would be valuable for CILT and LLUK to promote as a training tool in programmes designed to deliver the NOS for Intercultural Working.

Integration in the Practice

All Change Institute staff have participated in the testing phase of the tool and will retake the assessment with the final product. It will be used on an ongoing basis in all relevant training offered by CI to client organisations and partners. An example of this is the incorporation of Intercultool as part of a Comenius funded in-service course for teachers under the remit of the KROSSS project (Kick Racism Out of Schools, Sports and Society), which will take place in London in April 2010.

A number of North West Regional College lecturers/trainers/tutors have participated in the testing phase will be invited to retake the assessment with the final product. It will be offered to those tutors interested in Cultural Diversity. Further, all partnerships which are currently working with the North West have been given information on the project and the availability of the finalised tool.

¹⁶ *Standards for working with people from different countries or diverse cultures:*

Unit 1: Skills to work effectively with people from different countries or diverse cultures

Unit 2: Build working relationships with people from different countries or diverse cultures

Unit 3: Appoint people from different countries or diverse cultures

Unit 4: Build a multicultural team

Unit 5: Manage delivery of a service to people from different countries or diverse cultures

Unit 6: Develop new markets with different countries or diverse cultures

Mainstreaming of the Tool and the Development of Intercultural Competence

Interest in using Intercultool has so far been expressed by the following agencies:

The Uniting Britain Trust (UBT): this is a national charitable trust working towards developing good relations between different groups and communities in the UK. Currently it is running a project call Alif/Aleph UK to enhance Jewish/Muslim dialogue and has requested the use of Intercultool as part of its training with young people involved in the project on a national basis.

Network of Black Professionals (NBP): NBP is a national network of ethnic minority staff in further education that provides support and professional development training to help individuals progress into leadership positions in further educational institutions. NBP worked with CILT to produce the National Occupational Standards for Intercultural Working and is interested in testing Intercultool and promoting its use on a national level through CILT.

It is also running a national two year training programme on behalf of the government Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG). The work is funded by the Department under the Tackling Racial Inequalities Fund (TRIF) and a core component of the training NBP is offering is 'intercultural competence'. The organisation has requested the use of Intercultool and CI is currently in discussions with them for licensed use of the product.

City College Leeds: City College is an umbrella body composed of six further education colleges in Leeds. It recently hosted one of Butt's pilot initiatives for UK, Interfaith Week and is interested in incorporating Intercultool in both its teacher training activities and for use with its wider student body. CI is in negotiation with the college and has a meeting with them in January 2010 to progress this.

KPMG: is part of the largest integrated accounting firm in Europe. Its training manager in the UK was keen to test the tool with its UK staff. This will be followed up in the New Year.

ARSENAL FC: As part of 'Arsenal in the Community' work, staff at Arsenal have expressed an interest in using Intercultool with school children and their teachers. CI has undertaken to examine ways of modifying the tool for use with young children.

HML: one of the largest employers in the North West of Northern Ireland is interested in the tool and has indicated that it would like to see it in use. HML has developed its own equality tool which is used company wide.

THE CHARTERED MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE (Northern Ireland) has indicated that such a tool would be useful for companies especially those with incoming groups of migrants.

IFOA, Italy

National VET Policy – Italian Law on VET

The State has exclusive legislative power over a specific series of subjects, including the definition of the general rules on education and of the basic provisions concerning civil and social rights to be guaranteed all over the national territory.

The Regions have exclusive legislative power on all subjects not expressly reserved to the State legislation by the Constitution, like vocational education and training.

As for certain subjects, which are expressly listed, the regions have concurrent legislative power; it means that they have law making power in the respect of general rules, fundamental

principles and essential benefits reserved to the State legislation; education falls within the concurrent legislation; in this respect, the regional legislation should respect school autonomy.

Life Long Learning

Italy signed the Lisbon Convention to stimulate life long learning.

National Standards for Exams and Degree/Diplomas

At the current moment, there is no specific national structure in Italy with the aim to certify knowledge and ability, like the one stated in the European Qualification framework. Regional autonomy influences the certification of professional qualifications; however, a lot of work has been progressing to move this certification into national oversight, with the involvement of all social and professional partners.

Intercultool in line with the National VET Policy

Intercultool can be in synergy with the following Priorities of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy:

- Reinforcing the attractiveness of VET systems and make them respondent to labour market needs; promoting training initiatives for employed workers and improvement in the quality of training offered.
- Improve continuing training for teachers as a tool to increase quality of VET provision; development of skills and competences for teachers/trainers.

Recommendations on the Integration of Intercultool into Regional/National VET System

Considering that there is no specific VET national structure in Italy and that Regions have exclusive legislative power on VET, but should however respect schools autonomy, the following steps appear important for the mainstreaming of the tool:

- Develop *Intercultool* into a format of 'good practice';
- Approach Emilia-Romagna Region introducing the Tool;
- Have *Intercultool* recognized as a 'good practice' by Emilia Romagna Region;
- Rising awareness about the tool in the Region and linking it with specific initiatives.

Data derived from Feedback about Intercultool from VET teachers for future Improvements to the Tool

- let the content relate more closely to the four different sectors of employment, e.g. if one has chosen the 'VET' sector, have the questions and cases relate to VET;
- the tool's rating system should not be dynamic. Now that the rating is dynamic, the rating a respondent receives varies according to the average of the answers prior respondents have given. The rating system should be fixed so a proper '*baseline*' can be created that is the same for all respondents.

ROC Drenthe College, The Netherlands

National VET Policy – Dutch Law on VET

VET education, as all other areas of education in The Netherlands, is governed by the national ministry of Education, seated in The Hague.

The ministry decides on the content of the curriculum taught in schools, i.e. the subjects and the number of hours schools are responsible for on an annual basis. There are a number of general compulsory subjects such as Dutch, English, Math and Citizenship. Other compulsory subjects pertain to the profession/vocation the individual student studies.

Life Long Learning

The Netherlands signed the Lisbon Treaty to stimulate life long learning.

National Standards for Exams and Degrees/Diplomas

The Dutch ministry of Education also stipulates the standards and levels for passing (national and institutional) exams in order to receive diplomas which are equally recognized by employers and other schools alike, as well as enabling students to pursue a higher level of education.

Intercultool in line with the national VET Policy

The subject *Citizenship* is built up of five different standards. A student is obliged to proof personal growth in all five standards. These standards pertain to having the appropriate social and professional skills to function as an employee; being aware of the political system and political parties in order to vote; being able to understand the national and cultural codes of conduct.

Intercultool is a valuable innovative instrument to use for teaching the subject of *Citizenship*. *Citizenship* was not a major part of the national VET curriculum until 2008. This means that VET schools are currently looking for tools.

Recommendations on the Integration of Intercultool into National VET System

In order to integrate *Intercultool* into the Dutch national system one should:

- present the 'good practice' of *Citizenship and Intercultool* to the national Board of VET schools as well as CEDEFOP;
- approach publishers of VET educational material for publishing purposes.

Data derived from feedback about Intercultool from VET Teachers for Future Improvements to the Tool

- let the content relate more closely to the four different sectors of employment, i.e. if one has chosen the 'VET' sector, have the questions and cases relate to VET;
- registration to use the tool should be instantaneous and not subjected to approval by an administrator;

- the tool's rating system should not be dynamic. Now that the rating is dynamic, the rating a respondent receives varies according to the average of the answers prior respondents have given. The rating system should be fixed so a proper '*baseline*' can be created that is the same for all respondents. This is an important feature when one deals with groups of students.

Conclusion

The results of the fact finding survey carried out by the partner organizations show that despite of a common engagement of European countries towards the Lisbon Treaty and the recognition of the need to harmonize institutional frameworks promoting life long learning, there is still much diversity and major national differences in the needs of the public, in policy frames and in practices regarding the promotion of lifelong learning within the VET system. Mainstreaming the Intercultool in these circumstances means necessarily to engage different strategies on the European and on the national level:

1. On the European level there is a need of increasing awareness of the existence of the tool.
All opportunity should be taken to present and publicize the tool and promote it as a good practice in European Instances.
2. On the national level strategies may vary considerably depending on specific situations. However, a common feature of possible mainstreaming strategies is the recognition of the need to effectively introduce the tool in different training settings. This work has already started and must continue.
3. It would be desirable to collect the first experiences from these experimentation in order to propose actions to further development of the tool.

Intercultool has got several potentials for application.

It is first of all a test for competence evaluation in the domain of soft-skills usually difficult to measure. As such, it can have a role in evaluation, validation and certification of competences acquired in the process of lifelong learning, in settings of informal learning. At the same time, it has been developed on the basis of an original model of intercultural competence elaborated by the partnership. This framework model contains important knowledge on the nature of intercultural competence, and hence can become itself material for training towards a specialized professional public.

As all evaluation tool might have a summative and a formative function, it seems that it is necessary to chose between these options and define clearly in which direction the partnership wishes to move with the promotion of the tool. While summative approaches to assessment and validation aim explicitly at the formalization and certification of learning outcomes, formative approaches do not aim formal certification, but provide feedback to the learning process or learning career, indicating strengths and weaknesses and providing a basis for personal or organizational improvement. Formative assessment fulfils a very important role in numerous settings ranging from guidance and counselling to human resource management in enterprises” (Cedefop 2009 p.29).

Accordingly, it seems more advantageous to exploit the formative potentials inherent in the tool and define it clearly as an assessment tool to be used for formative purposes. It follows that foreseeably it can be most successfully used as part of a training or as a means to raise awareness and orientate towards a training. There is also a very interesting additional possibility to explore, i. e. the integration of the tool in a guiding and counseling mechanism as part of an adaptable tool-kit. Put to be in practice in such a way, Intercultool can contribute to the success of Europe-wide on going efforts relating to the validation of informal and non-formal learning and in this way to increase the prestige and acknowledgement of lifelong learning in line of the strategic objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.

A strategic document on Lifelong Learning published by CEDEFOP (2009) resumes the advantages of competence validation in the informal sector in the following way:

- It supports mobility within education/training and in the labour market by improving access and mobility of individuals, both into and within education and employment;
- promotes efficiency within education and training by helping to ensure that individuals are able to access tailored learning opportunities;
- promote equality of opportunity for individuals to achieve recognition for their skills and competences, regardless of where these were acquired, so helping to establish a level playing field in education/training and the labour market;
- support disadvantaged groups such as immigrants and refugees, the unemployed, older workers;
- support lifelong learning by making it more likely that lifelong recognition of learning is possible;
- achieve coherence with other (EU) countries;
- address sectoral needs in relation to skills shortages or to comply with regulations regarding professional qualifications;
- support the response to demographic change;
- combat a qualifications deficit.

Although the document itself concludes that these are wide-ranging expectations, these are precisely the strategical domains where Intercultool can prove to be useful. The partners to the project are engaged and committed to help exploit the potentials of the tool in these directions. This will certainly require a lot of marketing, lobbying and advocacy efforts. But mainstreaming means that the concept and practice of validation in the domain of soft skills becomes an integrated part of qualifications systems “politically, legally, administratively and financially”. (CEDEFOP 2009 p.21). NGOs and training organizations have a big responsibility in this process. However, this responsibility is shared with other actors, namely those in charge of shaping the institutional environment and policy.

Annex

Questions for collecting feed-back on the tool (testing phase)¹⁷

GENERAL

1. Which intercultural problems do VET teachers/trainers come across in their daily work? Please offer examples.
2. Would you support your students' or colleagues' sensitisation for intercultural issues? Please explain.

ALPHA TOOL

3. Does the content of the tool reflect what teachers/ trainers come across in their daily like/work?
 - a. If no, please explain;
 - b. If yes, please explain.
4. Did you find it easy to answer the questions? Was it therefore difficult or easy to answer the questions?
5. Which parts of the tool did you find helpful? Please identify:
6. Has completing this tool raised your intercultural awareness and will this help you in a classroom situation?
 - a. If yes, please explain
 - b. If no, please explain.
7. Do you think that the tool presents a variety of questions which adequately review the nature of "cultural problems and distinctions" as faced by VET teachers/trainers?
8. Do you think that the tool presents a variety of scenarios which present a realistic portrayal of issues and problems which VET teachers/trainers face on a day to day basis?
9. If you are undergoing teacher training/ or have completed teacher Training in the past few years, do you think that the tool could help you with understanding the issues which are prevalent in society today?
10. In what situations would you use this Intercultool tool today? Would you use it to develop the intercultural competence of students? How?
11. Would you recommend/promote this Intercultool tool to other VET teacher/trainers?
12. Are there any other instances or situations that you would consider using this tool?

MODIFICATIONS

13. We would like to improve the tool. What recommendations do you have, if any (e.g. content, validation, curriculum development, further development of the tool, etc)?

¹⁷ Recommendations regarding further modification and development of the tool have been elaborated on the basis of this questionnaire.