



NEWS LETTER

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PROJECT I CARE Informal Competences Assessment and Recognition for Employment

INDEX NEWSLETTER

1. GOOD PRACTICES IN THE VALIDATION AND CERTIFICATION OF INFORMAL LEARNING: THE NETHERLANDS	2
2. I CARE PARTNERS.....	5
3. NEWS ON I CARE ACTIVITIES.....	6
4. NEWS AND EVENTS.....	8

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1. GOOD PRACTICES IN THE VALIDATION AND CERTIFICATION OF INFORMAL LEARNING: VPL – THE VALIDATION OF COMPETENCES IN THE NETHERLANDS

VPL stands for the Validation of Prior Learning. By prior learning we mean the competences an individual has acquired, so far, in both formal and non-formal learning environments. Validation is the acknowledgement of learning, by way of an employment contract, a diploma or certificate from a school or some other educational institution - or by way of an VPL report, which is also called an experience certificate in the Netherlands.

VPL is the umbrella term for every form of competence assessment that uses some sort of frame of reference selected beforehand. Through the process, the examinee is given credit for the competences he or she possesses. This credit can take many forms, but its worth is beyond question. For instance, it can act as exemptions for classes or certificates for (or at least part of) officially accredited college courses; or it can come in the form of an employment contract or some other job responsibility. VPL is often the starting point of an individual's personal development.

VPL is not meant to demonstrate missing knowledge and abilities. VPL is meant to build on already existing skills. That's why the motto is: "the bottle is half full". VPL makes evident how full the bottle exactly is and how it might be further filled. As such, VPL is not a goal in and of itself. It's both a point of view and an instrument. It contributes to the development of individuals and the reinforcement of the human capital management aspect of organizations and companies. VPL can stimulate and activate the individual to have more initiative in their own development. The responsibility of one's own development lies with the individual itself.

VPL - The basics

Cofora divides the VPL process in five stages. The stages are the basis for every VPL procedure:

preliminary phase: focus on engagement and raising awareness of VPL within the organisation and within the individual.



recognition of personal competences: the participant identifies and lists his or her competences, finds proves and composes this in a portfolio. The portfolio is needed in the assessment in phase 3. The organisation provides the portfolio format and guides the participants.

evaluation of competences or competence assessment. The portfolio's content is evaluated or assessed. The examiners compare a person's competences with the standards chosen for that particular situation. The organisation provides the assessment and the chosen standards.

development: This phase of the VPL-procedure concentrates on developing individuals by turning the assessment advice into a personal development plan (PDP). This plan gives the participant direction, in a concrete manner, for development.

structural implementation of VPL within the organisation. In this phase it is all about making VPL a part of the Human Resource policy within the organisation.

The five phases mentioned above are guidelines for the VPL procedure. Each situation has its own difficulties to obtain and therefore the practical implementations can differ in various settings.

Portfolio

Bring out the best in people! The portfolio is a suitable instrument to help individuals to discover the value of prior learning, or as we call it: 'hidden competences'. It is also an important element of a VPL procedure. It activates people's inner motivation and allows them to use their own strength to reach their goals. These goals can be formal (education) or informal (participation into society). On top of that Cofora shows how any experience in life is also a learning experience, regardless of the circumstances (formal, informal or non-formal). This broad view on learning is efficient, less costly, and effectively realizes lifelong learning. In principle we make no distinction between formal or informal goals for development. But in practice it can be a necessity to combine our additional instruments with the portfolio if you want to reach formal goals.

The portfolio can be used for a lot of different goals and can be adjusted to fit various situations. Cofora has developed portfolios for analphabetic, non-native speakers, immigrant women, jobseekers, but also for managers, fire-fighters, defence personnel and so on. Cofora is known for developing customized methods and instruments. We aim at sustainable and long term development of individuals.

A practical example: VPL in a care institution

Opella is a foundation for housing, care and well-being in a central region of the Netherlands. The foundation is concerned with all people who have disabilities; these are in many cases elderly people. Opella has 1.300 employees and can call upon 800 voluntaries.



The aim of a pilot project VPL procedures: To shorten the 3 years training programme for student nurses to 8 months up until 18 months, with the possibility to get a degree; they even will be better qualified than in the former training, because in the new construction, they get extra subject qualifications from other training programmes (Well being).

The VPL procedure consists of:

- intake and assessment to determine whether the candidate has the capacity to finish the training;
- portfolio;
- portfolio assessment.

The competencies of the candidates are assessed according to the official standards of the Law on Vocational Education and Adult Education (MBO-level 3). In principle, the training is composed in agreement with the approach of competency directed vocational education. Point of departure is not the qualification structure (subject qualifications and goals of an educational programme) but the OVDB (KBB, Centre of expertise of vocational education, training and labour market for care well being and sport) competency profile of the vocation supervised learning route (BBL). Only, the examination or reviewing takes place according to the qualification structure. The teachers are making the translation from the competency profiles and the qualification structure.

The VPL procedures are free for employees who next will follow a training programme of the MBO school (Regional Educational Centre, ROC). The others will receive an invoice of the school for the EVC procedure. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has decreed that the fee for the route should be € 462,- a year. For books etc. another amount of € 200,- up to € 500,- will be necessary, dependent of the length of the programme. A third category of costs for the participant consists of the extra activities to be carried out as far as necessary: a more extensive intake procedure, extra skills training, extra supervision from the school etc. (€ 295,- to at most € 950,-). Generally, the employer will reimburse these costs completely or partly.

The pilot project has been completely financed by Opella in the supposition, that the investments will be paid back by the shortening and the quality of the training programme.

Rigo van Raai
Cofora BV



2. ICARE PARTNERS: IOE AND COFORA BV

IOE, Institute of Education, London (UK)

The University of London is a federal university made up of nineteen self-governing colleges and ten other smaller specialist research institutions. In many ways the colleges are considered universities in their own right: they set their own entrance criteria for their courses and they offer their own services to students. A graduate college of the University of London, the Institute of Education (IOE), was founded in 1902, as a teacher training college in London. The original 58 students of 1902 have grown to some 4,400 today. The Institute of Education is the only college of the University of London dedicated entirely to education and related areas of social science. It is now a world-class research and teaching institution and a leading international centre of education and social research. Through its departments and research centres, the Institute generates and promotes new ideas in policy and professional practice. One of the centres, the Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies (LLAKES) investigates the role of lifelong learning in promoting economic competitiveness and social cohesion. Key areas of research include: (1) the social and cultural foundations of learning, knowledge production, and innovation and (2) the effects of knowledge and skill distribution on income, equality, social cohesion and competitiveness. LLAKES aims to work with policymakers, education and training professionals, employers, and other interested parties to improve the way in which national and international research evidence is shared and used

Cofora BV, Doetinchem (The Netherlands)

Cofora has been established in 1992 as “consultancy van raai” by Rigo van Raai. Core business was upgrading company processes to optimize the use of needed and existing knowledge.

In 1993 the first VPL (EVC) based project started at Utrecht University where staff, educated as researches, had to prove they actually would be able to teach students. This became an EVC procedure. EVC was introduced around 2000. Rigo van Raai worked on this procedure together with Ruud Duvekot.

In 2001 EVC started with the Knowledge centre on VPL, Kenniscentrum EVC led by Ruud Duvekot, where Rigo van Raai designed and carried out a large European project which was the bases for introducing EVC for jobless, refugees etc.

In the years to follow, Cofora designed many procedures, mostly informal, aimed at the personal development of individuals. Among them are huge procedures, like for the Royal Dutch Army, the



Fire Brigades in Zuid-Holland Zuid, but also specialist procedures for immigrants, women returners, etc. Etc. For the minister of Social Affairs en Employment, Cofora designed a procedure combining voluntary work and EVC into a path leading to paid work. Cofora holds a license to carry out CH-Q programs, based on this Swiss quality system.

Cofora however works on the border where knowledge, education and training and working processes meet. Rigo van Raai is often key-note speaker on international conferences regarding Lifelong learning, the revenues for economy or company. Also the impact of EQF and other European developments on actual work and life is a significant part of our work. However, as soon as you really want to invest in Human Capital, you need to consult Cofora.

3. I CARE ACTIVITIES

Digital Portfolios of caregivers in Italy and Romania

The Employment Centres and Agencies in partner territories in Italy and Romania have concluded the development of the digital portfolios of caregivers. In total, up until now, 18 portfolios have been developed, with the inclusion of the information, data and evidences of formal, informal and non formal competences of the caregivers. The digital portfolios will be visible shortly on I CARE website, so keep visiting www.projecticare.eu for updated news.

Desk and field research in partner territories

The desk and field research in partner territories, related to the white jobs and specifically to the caregiver (standards of references) and to the systems and methodologies for the recognition and certification of non formal and informal companies(again, with specific reference to those of the caregivers), is coming to its conclusion. Besides the European Union context, national, regional and provincial procedures and settings in the aforementioned areas have been analyzed in Italy and Romania. The same research has been carried out in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, as countries representing good practices in the field of validation and certification of informal learning. With the aim of further integrating the information thus collected, a series of face to face interviews have been developed in Italy (and will be develop shortly in Romania as well) with the main actors in the 3 Italian partner Provinces: Regions (as responsible, among others, for the definition of the standards of competences) and employers of caregivers (families, cooperatives, residential homes, etc.). A Report will be produced as the outcome of the research. Upload in the near future on I CARE

website, it will contain the 4 national reports (Italy, Romania, United Kingdom and the Netherlands) as well as their comparison and the standards of references of the competences of the caregivers, defined and agreed upon by I CARE partners and members of the project Steering Committee (Regions, etc.)



Second partnership meeting and second National Information Seminar - Bistrita, 27th and 28th of September 2011

On the 27th and 28th of September 2011 respectively, the second partnership meeting and the second National Information Seminar took place in Bistrita (Romania).

In the second partnership meeting the partners discussed the advancement of the project I CARE and planned the actions to develop in the second year of the project.

During the second National Information Seminar, in front of about 35 participants from Regional and Local Employment offices in the County of Bistrita-Nasaud, partners and experts have illustrated: the project I CARE and the digital portfolio methodology, the experiences developed until today by the project in the partner territories in Italy and Romania, as well as the UK and Netherlands good practices and the state of the art in Romania in the field of recognition and certification of non formal and informal competences.





5. NEWS AND EVENTS ON THE RECOGNITION, VALIDATION AND CERTIFICATION OF NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMPETENCES

New version of the CEDEFOP glossary

CEDEFOP published on its website an updated and extended version of the Glossary developed in 2003. The new one takes into account recent EU policy developments, including the creation of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and the development of a European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET).

This glossary is meant to promote communication and understanding between countries. It is intended for all stakeholders in education and VET, researchers; experts; those involved in improving learning curricula; and education and training providers. To download the glossary, please visit www.cedefop.europa.eu.

European ECVET Network

The European ECVET network is a conglomerate of Member States, European social partners and VET providers all working to promote and support ECVET. The European ECVET network has three objectives:

- back the initiatives and actions within the Member States,
- communicate the information and experimentations,
- create a long-term platform for information and shared experiences between Member States.

The network is designed to support all stakeholders in vocational education and training for the design, steering as well as the technical, pedagogical and organisational aspects for implementing ECVET.

To learn more about the Network, please visit www.ecvet-team.eu