



CEDEFOP

European Guidelines for validation of non-formal and informal learning

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The European Guidelines on validation: Background

European principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning adopted by the European Council in 2004. Focus on:

- Individual entitlements
- Obligations of stakeholders
- Confidence and trust
- Credibility and legitimacy

While applied in a number of countries, these principles are too general and abstract to directly support national developments



The European Guidelines on validation: Background

The Cluster on recognition of learning outcomes - 27 countries have participated. Focus on:

- National Qualifications Frameworks (Peer learning activities in Budapest, Krakow, London and Berlin).
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning (Peer learning activities in Lisbon, Brussels, Paris and Reykjavik).

Both strands of work are directly related to **the shift to learning outcomes** in policies and practises

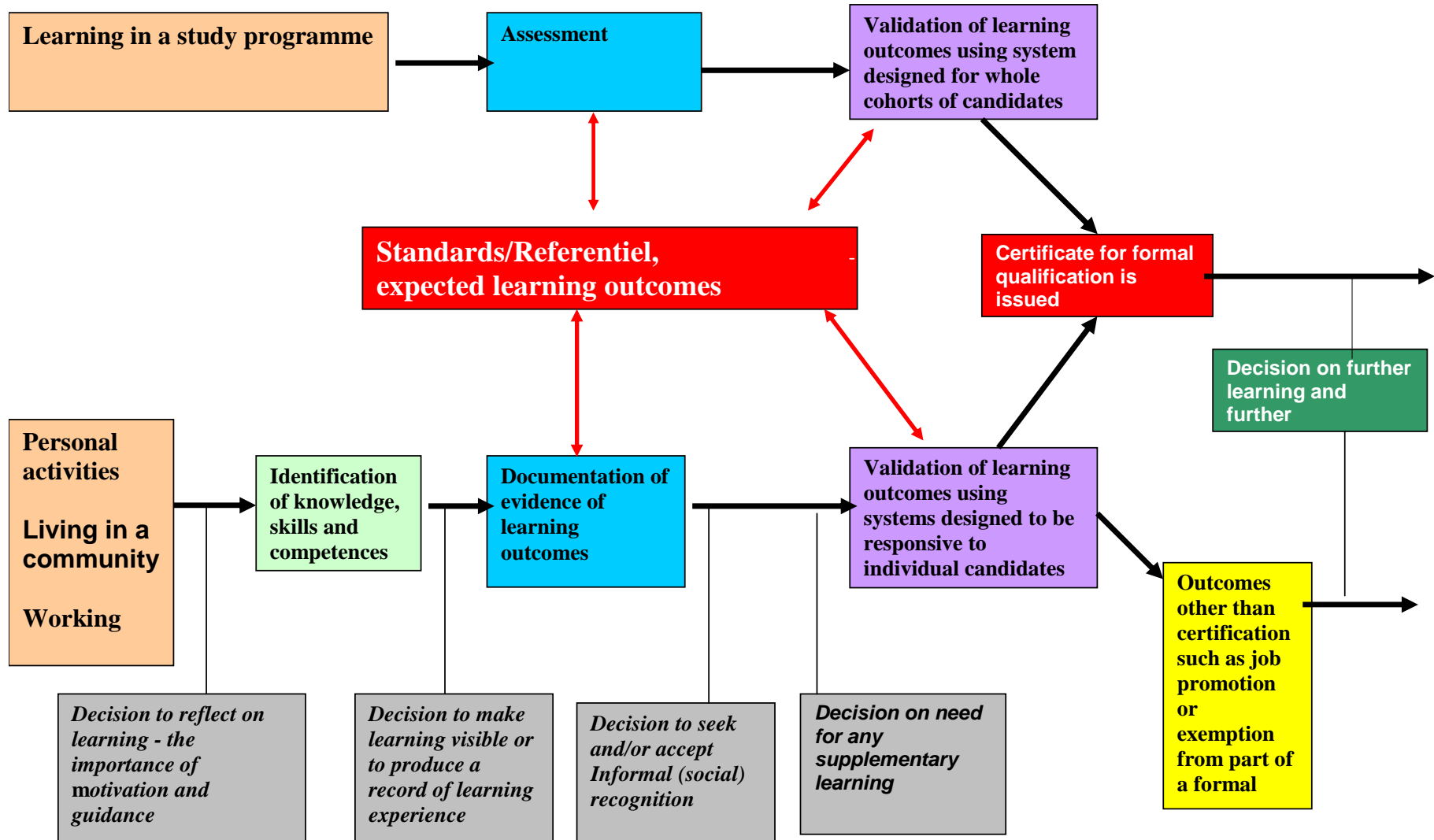


The role of validation in national qualifications systems and frameworks?

Which are the differences and similarities between validation of non-formal and informal learning compared to certification of learning in formal settings? In terms of

- **purposes (formative or summative...)**
- **standards**
- **assessment methods**
- **stakeholders**
- **requirements to quality assurance.**

These questions are addressed by the Guidelines





The European Guidelines/The European perspective:

- ***Compatibility with the the main elements in the 2004 European principles and the European principles for quality assurance of education and training;***
- ***European cooperation in the field of validation should be further developed by regularly updating and improving these guidelines and the European Inventory;***
- ***The European level tools and frameworks (e.g. EQF, Europass, European credit systems) could be used to promote validation and to enhance comparability and transparency of the outcomes of validation processes***



The European Guidelines on validation/The national perspective:

- **Validation should be seen as an integral part of the national qualifications system;**
- **The formative aspect of validation is important;**
- **Summative validation needs a clear and unambiguous link to standards used in the qualifications system;**
- **There should be an entitlement to validation where non-formal learning is seen as a normal route to a qualification;**
- **The development of National Qualifications Frameworks should be seen as an opportunity to promote validation and as a way to improve access, transfer and progress in Lifelong learning;**
- **National validation systems should be supported by cost benefit analysis.**

The European Guidelines on validation/The Organisational perspective (1):

- **Formal education, enterprises, adult education providers and volunteering organisations are key stakeholders in validation;**
- **Validation challenges formal education by broadening the scope of learning to be assessed and recognised;**
- **There are major advantages for enterprises in documenting knowledge, skills and competences of employees;**
- **There is a need to balance the interest of employers with the interests of the employees;**

The European Guidelines on validation/ The Organisational perspective (2):

- **The adult education sector is a major contributor to non-formal and informal learning and its further development can be supported by systematic use of validation – formative and summative;**
- **The voluntary (third) sector offers a wide range of personalised learning opportunities, validation can be used to make visible and value these;**
- **There is a need to coordinate the functions of the different sectors in the field of validation;**
- **Certificates should reflect the learning outcomes acquired, not the learning route leading to these.**



The European Guidelines on validation/ The individual user:

- **The individual is always at the centre of the validation process;**
- **Everybody should have access to validation;**
- **The multi-stage character of validation makes it possible for individuals to tailor validation to their own purposes; identification, documentation or certification....**

The European Guidelines on validation/The structure of the process:

The three processes of

- *orientation,*
- *assessment and*
- *external audit*

can be used to evaluate existing validation procedures and support the development of new validation procedures.

The European Guidelines on validation/ Methods of assessment

- *The methods used for validation of non-formal and informal learning are essentially the same tools that are used in the assessment of formal learning*
- *When used for validation, tools have to be combined and applied in a way which reflects the individual specificity and non-standardised character of non-formal and informal learning,*
- *Tools for assessment of learning need to be fit-for-purpose*



The European Guidelines on validation/ The validation practitioners:

- **The professional activity of counsellors, assessors and validation process administrators is crucial, the preparation and ongoing training of these is critically important.**
- **Networking that enable the sharing experiences and the full functioning of a community of practice should be a part of a development programme for practitioners.**



The European Guidelines on validation/ Example of checklists (1)

		Components	Explanatory notes
General conditions essential for validation of non-formal and informal learning	Orientation phase	Formative process	The primary purpose of orientation is to shape the subsequent assessment stage so that the outcome is optimal for the individual.
		Encouraging psychology	Personal motivation will need to be sustained with encouragement of all participants and the general approach which is taken
		Impartiality	The interests of the individual are not compromised by the interests of those managing validation and other stakeholders (no conflict of interest).

The European Guidelines on validation;

Example of checklists (2)

Assessment phase	Standards/referential	Assessment instruments require clear criteria so that users can make judgements about the validity and the sufficiency of learning. Assessment criteria are often based on more generic standards such as occupational standards. The validation process itself is sometimes governed by criteria for their operation. These are often based in educational standards.
	Qualified assessor	A qualified assessor has knowledge and experience of standards, assessment criteria and assessment instruments as well as some knowledge of the validation process
	Assessment methods	A range of methods (with their associated standards) should be available to tailor to the particular circumstances of a validation. These methods should result in valid and reliable outcomes

The European Guidelines on validation;

Example of checklists (3)

Knowledge requirement for professionals	Orientation phase	Education system	Validation process will draw on the previous formal education and training of the individual and the outcomes may directly link to the system therefore knowledge of the system is essential
		Validation system	From motivation of individuals to seek validation through to post assessment possibilities – the rules and procedures of the whole process needs to be clear. Knowledge of links to other validation systems is also important.
		Labour markets	Progression in the labour market is a common desirable outcome from the validation process. Knowledge of local and national conditions is important



The European Guidelines on validation/ Conclusions

- Should be used on a voluntary basis at national level but provides a common focus for cooperation in the field of validation
- Should be linked to and interact with the European Inventory on validation
- Should be updated on a regular basis
- Need to be further developed for particular target groups, the adult learning sector one of these.....

Formal learning – tip of the iceberg of learning



**The importance of making the full range
of learning outcomes visible!!!**

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/5059.aspx>