

E-VIVA SURVEY TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

**ENHANCING AND VALIDATING SERVICE RELATED COMPETENCES IN
VERSATILE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN WESTERN BALKAN
UNIVERSITIES (E-VIVA)**

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1. Introduction

This Report is produced in the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project ‘Enhancing and Validating service related competences in Versatile learning environments in Western Balkan Universities’ (e-VIVA) is an, led by European University of Tirana, Albania. The consortium has 16 partners from all over geographical Europe and it is envisaged to last for 3 years, with a total budget of 993.581 euro.

E-VIVA project addresses the issue of students’ skills development, facilitation and validation of their skills in informal learning contexts. The project aims at evidencing the most fundamental competences for service economy and will contribute to higher transparency of these, for students, teachers, employers and any other subject interested in it. Informal learning contexts are gaining on importance and the project will identify main issues and contribute to further advancement of new ways of learning.

The specific objectives of the e-VIVA project are:

- Identifying and analysing approaches for skills and evidence validation to foster permeability between higher education and professional practice;
- Developing and refining overarching ICT-based assessment and validation systems;
- Enriching existing validation and certification systems;
- Developing and applying a rich competence development and validation software for service-related skills and competences;
- Applying e-VIVA assessment and evidencing system;
- Establishing a sustainable cooperation between relevant target groups and stakeholders.

The Transnational Report is created based on the desk research and the results of online questionnaires and expert interviews conducted in Western Balkan Countries during 2018-2019.

It is a collection of different teaching and learning approaches (in connection with validation and certification), in regard to development of social, personal and organisational competences. Apart from that, interfaces to certification systems are described and discussed.

In a later stage, the project consortium will use the results of this Report as main source to prepare Policy Recommendations on innovative teaching-learning approaches as well the assessment and documentation of service related skills and competences analysed.

This report provides evidence against the following project deliverables:

Work Package 1 Research and needs analysis (stocktaking)

D 1.1 Research Framework (Desk Research)

D 1.2 Online and offline questionnaires (Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews)

D 1.3 Need Analysis (National Reports)

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2. Findings from the Country Studies

2.1.Kosovo

2.1.1. Summary

e-VIVA national report on Kosovo has been developed through a joint collaboration between two strategic project partners from Kosovo, respectively Universum College and University “Kadri Zeka” Gjilan. Both Universities have established a research strategy that helped partners to collect relevant and representative data covering the service industry in Kosovo. Moreover, the research strategy used for drafting this report, focused on gathering primary information and data from industry representatives, universities, companies as well as students.

This national report gives a brief insight about the service-related competences in Kosovo, the needs of the industry as well as the obstacles and advantages that companies, academia and students face. In recent years, especially after the declaration of independence Kosovo has worked towards building an entrepreneurial community through campaigns, incentives, competitions, and various other facilitations. Along this way great work is being done in order to promote Kosovo to many international investors. All this work has proven to be fruitful due the fact that many international investors have come to the realization that Kosovo’s youth is a great potential. Thus, their investments have shaped Kosovo’s economy from manufacturing and production into a service-based economy. Based on the recent researches, having in mind that not many researches have been conducted on analyzing the needs of the economy, 70% of the GDP of Kosovo is generated from service-based economy, whereas only 30% from the manufacturing economy. Various researches also indicate that service industry representatives/companies are in desperate need of employees and newly graduates to have good command of the following skills and competences.

- ICT Skills
- Design skills such as (graphic, Interior and exterior)
- Accountant
- Computing

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- Communication
- Customer care

In order to see if there are available training programmes, academic curricula and courses offered by various institutions to those needing this skills, the results remain unfavorable. The most frequent training programmes offered by various institutions include the following:

- Management Training
- Marketing and sells/Digital Marketing
- Training in Finances and Accounting
- Programing, software development, design, coding, web development
- Training on soft skills/communication, public speaking and organizational management
- Training on career orientation Resume writing, motivation letter, interview and presentation skills.

Various respondents through mixed methods such as online questionnaires, interviews and a focus group were asked to rank the most important service-related competences depending on the field/ sector of the work. The most popular and the most rated responses are as follows:

- Communication and Negotiation Skills.
- Management Skills,
- Conflict Solving and Resolution,
- Cooperation and teamwork;
- Planning and Management.

When analyzing all this data and received feedback from all the interviewed stakeholders in Kosovo, UC and UKZ have cooperatively used the feedback to draft strategic steps and implementation in the upcoming deliverables of e-VIVA. In general. Service-related

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competences need to be addressed by all higher education institutions in Kosovo. UC and UKZ can serve as a national role models which have taken serious measures in ensuring that students are well prepared to the service industry. UC and UKZ have taken tangible measures in addressing service-related competences when compared to other universities operating nationwide. For instance, both partners have updated (and still keep doing so) their curricula, partners offer tailored courses to student which explicitly tackles service-related competences. Both partners have been attempting to incorporate assessment and validation methods in all the courses, so students and academic staff have a clear picture of what skills and competences has been achieved throughout a particular course.

The findings and the drafted results of this national report indicate that there is an urge to increase the triangular cooperation amongst higher educational institutions, policy making agencies and the industry representatives. Policymakers should be more involved in drafting a national policy paper which enforces both public and private institutions to closely cooperate with industry and monitor the skills and competences needed based on the profile of university and faculties operating within. On the other hand, industry representatives such as companies and corporations must be in touch with HEI's and express their demand. They must constantly provide evaluation and feedback on employed graduates, of the skills that are in line with the service and the skills needed to be improved. Jointly they can finance training and offer additional support to the struggling employees, hereby enhance their service-related competences.

Last but not the least, Universities (especially public ones) should reduce the influence of bureaucracy and political intervention and open up to the industry and adopt constant changes to meet the demand and fast developing economy. Universities should be the first step takers in improving this triangular cooperation in Kosovo. In a joint effort the evolving yet struggling economy can take a turn for a better.

2.1.2. Interpretation

All the research conducted including, the desk research, online survey as well as the focus group interviews provide similar data despite that they were all conducted with multiple respondents representing various stakeholders. This multidisciplinary approach was utilized purposefully in

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order to attain the best and the most representative data and findings about the service-related competences in Kosovo.

Desk research findings highlight that it is very important to develop the communication and study through challenges for students through engaging businesses as supporters of ideas for development within the University. It should be given the certain tasks to students to develop projects as challenges, especially in IT and Computer Engineering. It is also important to build or develop multidisciplinary staff for any field, based on technology and to develop within it other skills, whether economic, legal or otherwise. It must be built an image for students not only to view studies as an obligation but to experience it as a pleasure, to challenge, develop and achieve results not only domestically. It should be kept in mind that mixed programs are very important, all of which may currently need to be based on IT technology, then adapting to other areas, whether marketing, entrepreneurship, management, consulting and more. It is extremely important for students to pursue internships in order to develop their professional and practical capacities. It is also very important for students to incorporate non-formal education, based on international cooperation, in order to develop their ideas within this type of education as well.

Another important characteristic is that the number of students in the study programs is not high. There should be given more time to the students by the professors and in order to increase students' competencies in studies, there should be a smaller number of them.

Nonmatter the financial cost the above-mentioned practices should be adopted by all the HEI's in Kosovo, although there is no feasible evidence that proves the cost increases drastically if the abovementioned steps are implemented by all the universities, they should consider their financial alignment. Service- related economy is extremely important for the country and the economy. This is due to the fact that currently, the 70% of the GDP of Kosovo is generated from service-based economy, whereas only 30% from the manufacturing economy. Although there is a lack of research and publication regarding the business sector and the competencies wanted. However, Universum College in association with Swiss Caritas has conducted a recent skills gap analysis in Kosovo.

According to the sample of research, the highest number of companies represent the trade industry (25%), an industry which has the highest number of registered firms in Kosovo

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according to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2016). The construction (12.5%), production (12.5%), and Tourism and Catering (12.5%) industry have the second highest representation in the sample, which are also the sectors with the highest growth in Kosovo. Other sectors represented in the sample are as follow: Telemarketing 3.1%, Telecommunication 1.5%, Education 4.6% Tourism and Catering 12.5%.

According to the findings The most favored economic activities during these three months were: trade with 723 registered enterprises (27.4%), production with 299 (11.3%), accommodation and food service activities with 277 (10.5%), construction with 260 (9.9%) , agriculture, forestry and fishery with 198 (7.5%), professional, scientific and technical activities with 170 registered enterprises (6.4%) while other activities participate in smaller scale. According to the Kosovo Statistics Agency, during 2018 In the category of 1 to 4 employees there are 2537 enterprises registered in these three months (96.2%), with 5 to 9 employees are 61 (2.3%), 10 to 19 employees 25 (0.9%), 20 to 249 employees with 13 (0.5%), while in the category of 250 or more employees there are no enterprises registered during these three months.

The number of employees in the companies represented in our sample ranges from 2, that characterize a typical small-family-owned enterprise, to over five hundred employees, that speak for large corporates. The average employees for the companies of the sample is 61.

Almost half of the companies (45%) believe that they have current employees that are not able to implement or are not to implement well enough their duties due to lack of relevant skills. 55% of the respondents confirm that they do not have currently employed anyone who lacks the skills to perform well. The table below consist of top skills required from employees that surveyed companies have identified.

SKILLS' SHORTAGES IDENTIFIED BY SURVEYED COMPANIES IN KOSOVO

NUMBER	SKILLS
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2	Interior and Exterior Designer
3	Production line Machinist
4	Food Technologist
5	Accountant

2.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

2.2.1. Summary

While the entrepreneurship concept (including the specific entrepreneurship competencies) is well known and widely discussed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and there is increasing interest to increase participation of entrepreneurship topics into education, there is no widely accepted perception of specific Service-Related Competences.

In general, strategic documents stress the need to secure that education outcomes and acquired competencies meet the needs of a competitive economy, but without specifically referring which exact competencies are actually needed for any targeted area of work.

At the same time if reviewing the jobs advertisements one can say that the major requests for the applicants relate to their formal education and experiences in the area, but a few of the service economy competencies are sometimes added to the requests, underlining the communication and negotiation skills, teamwork, ability to work effectively in multicultural environment, good critical thinking and problem solving, client orientation and similar. These competencies sometimes also perceived as “soft-skills”, seem to be more demanded with the job ads published by international organizations and companies.

Enterprises, companies, private and public employers in BiH active in service-related economy usually underline as their key competencies the following ones: Client orientation as a priority target, adaptability to the changing market requirements, effective and efficient Communication with their customers, Creativity and Problem solving regarding the emerging social needs. If wishing to underline only one, usually that would be the Client orientation.

Analysis of data obtained through 118 questionnaires from Bosnia and Herzegovina provides many important and valuable information. The demographic data shows that age, gender and employment/organization of respondents are well balanced. Of great importance for the development of the eVIVA project is the fact that the respondents were mostly familiar with service-related competencies and consider them as very important. On the other hand, they were

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mostly unaware and unfamiliar with programs that promote their acquisition and validation, which may ultimately increase their chances of finding a job.

University of Sarajevo – Mechanical Engineering Faculty organized six separate interviews with two businesses, higher education institution, chamber of commerce and two groups of students. While conducting interviews interviewer gave a short introduction about eVIVA Erasmus+ project and its focus on enhancing and validating service-related competences in Versatile learning environments in Western Balkan universities. The interviewer explained eVIVA competence concept consisting of knowledge, skills and attitude. All interviewed stakeholders agreed that there is a need for education on Service-Related Competences as well as need to have people in companies with these competences. Although there is large network of institutions that support entrepreneurship, generally speaking there is still lack of awareness of its importance. In addition, although some universities offer courses regarding entrepreneurship there is a space to improve cooperation between major stakeholders which will improve system on service-related competences education as well. This cooperation is of utmost importance for the success.

University SSST organized a focus group interview session on August 28, 2019 with the following participants: 2 participants representing the Business (industry) sector, 2 participants representing HE institutions, and 1 student. In order to set all focus group members on the same ground in terms of the meaning of the concept, the moderator gave the explanation of the term ‘competence’ by e-VIVA: a competence encompasses knowledge, skills and feelings or attitudes. The moderator highlighted that all three dimensions of competences should be considered while answering the questions. Also, some of the social, personal and organizational competences, according to e-VIVA, include communication, teamwork, client orientation, flexibility, problem solving, planning, and entrepreneurship. All focus group members unanimously agreed that demand for education on Service-Related Competences (SRC) as well as demand for people owning those competences is strong.

According to this focus group members, our country does have a lack of entrepreneurs. Possible reasons are people being afraid of failure, insufficient funding and overall culture in BiH, which is not particularly supportive to the entrepreneurs. It is necessary to be very persistent to succeed as an entrepreneur. They agree, we have a lack of entrepreneurs and lack of Service-Related competences along with it.

2.2.2. Interpretation

Desk research: Organizations, either public or private, in production or service sector, achieve and expand their business success by introduction and implementation of a comprehensive and goal-driven business way of thinking through the whole organization and inclusion of all employees. Besides of the organization's mission, vision, values and business and technical culture, it is of crucial importance to provide continuous professional education of its employees in order to retain and increase its competitiveness in dynamic and rapidly changing business environment. When organization itself is not able to provide education for its employees through own resources or capacities, then it is appropriate and meaningful for organization to consider engagement of professional education institutions such as higher education institutions, institutes and third-party organizations specialized in particular professional education.

There is no national strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the use of technology to broaden the definition of learning space. This process understands that e-learning, learning management systems and other platforms can potentially turn any room (e.g. the student's home, the library, the cafeteria) into a learning space. This would reduce the pressure on current classrooms to serve as sole places of learning and allow these spaces to be used across departments and disciplines, and more intensely outside office hours.¹

Besides the fact that there are few universities/faculties that deliver blended learning, this cannot be considered nearly satisfactory. Based on that, coupled with the facts that a huge number of people prefers learning technologies and online learning popularity rises sharply², it can be freely stated that there is a demand on the integration of learning technologies in the HE sector, in BiH particularly.

Contrary to the lack of the integration of learning technologies and blended learning in the HE sector, there are numerous examples of incorporating practice in the studies, in forms of internships, traineeships and volunteering actions. As a university putting a lot of effort to integrate with the industry (especially IT industry) and employing a significant number of

¹ *E-Learning in European Higher Education Institution, EUA Publication, 2014*

² <https://online.westernsydney.edu.au/blog/top-reasons-online-study-gaining-popularity/>

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industry experts, our HE is one of the brightest examples. For example, SSST's CSIS faculty has established good connections with local IT companies through the final year thesis work of its students, and constantly attracts new partners. Considering it more generally, as the overall situation in BiH, there is a demand for practice integration.

According to the European Training Foundation³ Bosnia and Herzegovina is making strong progress in education, including through the VET Strategy (2015-2020) and development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) guided by participation in the European Qualification Framework (EQF) advisory group. In 2015, representatives from entities completed the drafting of a comprehensive skills development policy strategy. Progress is being made in entrepreneurial learning, through the implementation of the Small Business Act. Progress has also been made in non-formal learning: a comprehensive training needs analysis was completed for SMEs in four economic sectors and capacity-building initiatives in business chambers such as the creation of databases showing business service providers that offer non-formal entrepreneurial learning⁴.

A validation is seen as an important opportunity in the new framework and forms part of the action plan, but there is no country-wide system.^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} Neither VET nor higher education yet has agreed criteria for validation of qualifications, which would support quality assurance and levelling of qualifications in the NQF.⁵ The BQF is not yet being used as a reference system or tool by learners, providers and workers.

On the 24th of March 2011 the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Decision on Adoption of the Fundamentals of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and on the 11th of January 2015 it adopted another important document, Decision on Adoption of the Action Plan for Development and Implementation of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-2020. The Action Plan represents a work plan for all main activities in the development and implementation of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina for all involved institutions and individuals, in

³ *The European Training Foundation is a European Union agency that helps transition and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems*

⁴ http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina

⁵ European Training Foundation, Bosnia and Herzegovina - NQF Inventory

(https://connections.etf.europa.eu/wikis/home?lang=en#/wiki/Wf591e43b607e_4ccf_8d94_a3256a255147/page/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20-%20NQF%20Inventory)

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accordance with their responsibilities, in the development and implementation of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The National Qualifications Framework includes all educational qualifications, i.e. all qualifications gained in higher education. The term qualification is the formal term used for the results of the process of evaluation and validation obtained when the competent institutions establish that an individual has achieved learning outcomes in accordance with the applicable standards.

Learning outcomes are defined through descriptors which describe the expected knowledge, skills and competences for each qualification level (incl. any sub-levels), from primary education to doctoral degrees.

This framework was designed to describe various qualifications in Bosnia and Herzegovina, regardless of the method of education in educational institutions, training centers, private life, etc. This means that the Foundations of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina describes learning outcomes achieved through formal and non-formal education and informal learning. The framework helps to connect the results of these different forms of learning through evaluation of learning outcomes. The Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not emphasize competence in service economy.

National frameworks and qualifications are obviously based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credit.

The project **BiH Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (BHQFHE)**⁶, which was based on European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) and European Qualifications for European Qualifications Framework Area (QF-EHEA), established in its report⁷ that a **system for VINFL is not yet fully developed in BiH**, there are “**no procedures for recognition of the system**” and “**no procedures for checking of quality assurance of NF and IF**”⁵⁷. The Law restricts the provision of adult education to the following institutions:

⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework For Higher Education. <http://www.bhqfhe.eu/en/about-project/>

⁷ Bokonjic, D. & Vico, G. 2016. NF and IF learning - Self-certification report Bosnia and Herzegovina. Accessed March 26, 2019. www.bhqfhe.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NF-and-IF-learning.gpt

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elementary and secondary schools; specialized schools, e.g., workers' universities, driver training schools, foreign language schools⁷.

According to the report⁵⁷, “the universities have not developed legal framework or practices for the validation of the NF and IF learning.”

However, there are efforts towards VINFL, including:

Defining NF and IF learning in the law for Adult Education by the majority of **cantonal ministries in Federation BiH**⁷.

In October 2014, the **Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina** “adopted the Strategic Platform for the Development of the Adult Education in the Context of the Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014–2020”⁵⁷.

Online questionnaire: From the analysis of responses given in questionnaire it is obvious that more than 90% of respondents consider that service-oriented competencies are very important and can significantly contribute or support their personal and further professional development and success in labor and business market.

In the opinion of the respondents, best service-oriented competencies in formal education can be acquired in vocational and higher education domain, then in adult and regular education. In non-formal education domain respondents consider that best service-oriented competencies can be acquired in working place and on internship. However, by respondents' opinion, service-oriented competencies can be acquired in both formal and non-formal education domain and in all available programs.

Respondents are familiar with European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ECTS, 55,93% of them, and it can be result of high number of respondents from higher education domain and students, however large percent of those unfamiliar still exist. Respondents are very unfamiliar with European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training ECVET and European Qualification Framework EQF. Only 8,47% and 15,25% are familiar with ECVET and EQF. Consequently, around 80% of respondents have no opinion or consider these systems useless.

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When discussing citing of personal service-oriented competencies, respondents would use CV, EUROPASS and YOUTHPASS. However, even though EUROPASS and Youthpass are indicated by some as important it seems many are not familiar with these two instruments, since the number of those who do not know is relatively high.

Furthermore, more than 90% of respondents consider that validation of service-oriented competencies is of very high or medium importance for their personal, career and future professional development, and that it can increase their chances for job finding. This is a very important statement for the eVIVA project as one of its aims is validation of service-oriented competencies.

63% of students regularly use systems or platforms for digital learning. Very high percentage of respondents occasionally or never use digital systems for learning and content management, e-Portfolio or blog. Exception is Wikipedia, which is used regularly or occasionally. These observations are quite expected as 78% of respondents are not familiar with open learning systems or systems that provide online assessment and validation of service-oriented competencies. Concerning is that only 49,15% of respondents consider such tools useful.

Finally, it can be concluded that stakeholders are aware of importance and benefits of service-oriented competencies. They consider that these competencies can benefit individuals in many ways including personal, career and professional development and can significantly help in job finding. Stakeholders believe that service-oriented competencies can be acquired in formal as well as non-formal education domain, however they are not familiar with programs or courses that promote acquisition of service-oriented competencies and its validation. Very high percentage of respondents are unfamiliar with validation of service-oriented competencies, but they consider validation as an important and necessary step for formal recognition of service-oriented competencies. Furthermore, it can be concluded from respondent's answers that they still favor classical learning system over new digital learning platforms/system. Additional efforts should be made in order to introduce and present benefits of digital learning platforms/systems to the potential users.

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Interview: There were five questions which were answered by the following stakeholders: businesses, academia, chamber of commerce and students.

Regarding the **first question** “General demand for education on service related competences” one way of understanding the concept of the Service Economy and Service Related Competences is that is mainly referring to tourism, banking, healthcare, transport, education, but the real sector, like the metal industry, understands the competencies of the service economy in the context of their supporting activities such as consulting, training, maintaining and implementing complex systems such as robots and automation of production lines. Education on Service-Related Competencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not as in demand as in countries which have a developed infrastructure of the product-service system. This is mainly due to the underdevelopment of the tertiary sector. The focus on customer needs is the starting point of every business and must receive greater attention from not only educational institutions but entrepreneurs as well. There is a lack of entrepreneurs (business owners) in general, but the shortage in the service economy is much greater.

Higher Education institutions emphasizes that a few universities offer education in entrepreneurship as a core study programs. Importance of entrepreneurial education has not yet been recognized among children and their parents and young people. Although education has an important role in building an entrepreneurial culture, there is no pressure on educational institutions at all levels to recognize a need of building entrepreneurship competencies as key competences among their learners. Lack of entrepreneurs due to a weak economy with large public sector is one of the reasons for a lack of entrepreneurs and service-related competences.

Chamber of Commerce concludes that we have to accept that we are still in the transition period from state driven economy to the market driven economy. Many of the market players in this field still expect that they can get education on Service-Related Competences immediately as they need it. Management of the companies have to plan in advance for skillful workforce so strategic development of the companies and human resources are crucial at this moment. There is a demand on Service-Related Competences but for many of companies they are too late for implementation.

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Students think that development of the service economy implies a change in lifestyle and technology change. It is evident that the service economy is growing in our country. In their opinion focus should be on learning organizations that will constantly adapt to new situations if they want to survive and prosper. They think that the importance for education in service economy has been recognized by some higher education institutions but not enough. Also, their opinion is that we are still in transition and that these service-related competences are still underdeveloped, but the good thing is that people have recognized importance of service-related competences, and started developing them, especially young people.

Focus group members also stated that everyone should act in their scope and in their own personal approach when it comes to raising attention to importance of this topic: those who teach should expect and ask students not only to make a product, but also to present it nicely and sell it, same as those who employ should expect and ask employees for SR competences.

As more specific actions, they suggested organization of trainings on SR competences, with topics similar to “Speak to Deliver” – how to speak to a person in order to deliver the speech or speaking to high level management, based on the example of international company whose director is one of the industry representatives. He stated that half of such trainings are usually held internally, while another half are trainers from outside agencies.

Regarding the ways on how the offer for improving Service Related Competences in Higher Education Institutions should be presented and advertised best to attract more students, members mentioned inviting successful individuals to hold talks to students, by primarily passing their message in the form similar to: “Possessing all these competences promises to get you highly on the success and overall quality scale, as well as in society.”

Then, after students understand and get attracted by the idea of acquiring SR competences, the teaching stage can start, including various means of presenting this knowledge to students. Interesting idea of posting SR competences experts’ videos on social media, especially YouTube (through the University channel) might be particularly attractive to students. From the university standpoint, it would be worth considering organizing hands-on type of training, where students will not only listen, but got engaged into discussion. Those might be short, meaningful training sessions, held by an expert exhibiting very good competences.

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Regarding the **second question** “Support” businesses emphasize that the 3rd parties (e.g. chambers of commerce, „real economy“ representatives) can contribute to implement Service Related Competences in the HE if they promote enrolment policy at the HE that is in line with market needs and that businesses must find interest to involve students in practice in more adequate way. Government can stimulate businesses to promote more practical oriented learning and there should be better cooperation between HEI and business sector in a sense that people from businesses should be more involved in educational process like mentoring and delivering lectures. Also, businesses can provide better environment by providing attractive scholarships for students, organizing study trips and by promotion service-related jobs as a good opportunity for young people. Government and administration can provide financial support to projects, development of new services, support to development of new curricula related to service competencies

Higher Education institution thinks that the government and administration, including education policy institutions, can provide better educational approaches related to service related competences formally via education laws and accreditation criteria, and non-formally through promotion of importance of service related competences, while businesses can be integrated in classes as guest lecturers and as a presenter of a real-life study cases in the corresponding fields as well as to offer attractive internship for students.

Chambers of Commerce thinks that it has to work more in the field with direct contact with companies and to improve flow of information regarding the Service-Related Competences. Chamber of Commerce wants to gather information from the companies about their needs and then regarding to the complexity of the education implement it by the Chamber or pass this information to the HEI so that they can plan further steps. So, Chamber should be gathering information and be intermediate between companies and HEI.

Furthermore, focus group members mentioned that possibly the cheapest way for Government would be to hire a consultant from the EU, since there is high possibility they already have some laws or regulations on how to incorporate different educational approaches related to SR competences, and try to adapt and apply it to our country.

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It was noticed that, since Government is very complicated and complex in our country, and we cannot rely on them, it is important to invest in technology infrastructures at universities which then can aid in competence learning, a unified system where the resources are available. This might represent a concrete investment opportunity.

Students point that businesses can contribute to the implementation of competencies related to services by showing the importance of these competences in the real sector and trying to point people to these competencies as well as emphasizing the need for people with these competencies. This can be achieved through various educations. The importance of these competences is emphasized at the faculty and through teaching. People with these competences can explain to others how they have acquired them. This can be explained to people by means of examples and exercises. The 3rd parties could contribute to implement service-related competences in higher education by offering practices to students or inviting them to visit their companies and organizing presentations for them to show them the importance of these competences and how to improve them. Business sectors could contribute to implement service-related competences in higher education by offering practices to students or inviting them to visit their companies and organizing presentations for them to show them the importance of these competences and how to improve them. It would be great to have people from business sector in the classroom to tell stories of some real problems they faced in their professional career, as well as to show some examples of usage of service-related competencies they gained and how they used them in some situations. Their examples would give more motivation to learn and gain those competencies during education.

Regarding the **third question** “Provision of Service-Related Competences Education” businesses emphasize that cooperation between the business sector and HEI must be in both directions with involvement of professors in the business sector and people from businesses in classes. The HEI can provide better educational approaches related to service-related competencies by introducing and developing more study programs and/or courses based on service competences. Also, integration of practical work in curricula by having students to work part time in companies in order to gain experience through real life situations.

HEI thinks that there are good examples of practice integration in study programs, but this approach is not widely adopted in educational community despite evident growing demand for

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practice integration in study programs. Business partners can be engaged in the classes as quest lectures, but potential of these opportunities is rarely used. Practical entrepreneurial experience (learning by doing) is a feature of a state entrepreneurial learning strategy but it is not fully implemented.

Chamber of Commerce thinks that HE-sector can provide better education after they get adequate information from the companies through the Chamber of Commerce. It states that there is lack of entrepreneurship education since we are still in the transition. EntreComp and its 15 competencies is something that Chambers and HEI can work together on it.

Students point that in higher education it is possible to better emphasize competences related to services among students. There is a need for practice in universities and this is a way to highlight the importance of a service economy. It is necessary to provide practice for students so that students can realistically see what the service economy is. There are companies and organizations in the country that support the development of the service economy. These companies educate their employees and support the skills required by the service economy. Development of HE staff is an essential element for higher education institutions with clear policies.

Regarding the **fourth question** “Methodology” businesses think that education on service-related competencies should be provided dually, through learning at universities as well as through having students obtain real life service providing experiences by working in the tertiary sector as part of their grades at the university. It is quite important for students to acquire practical skills, but this can also be achieved through the implementation of learning technologies. The best locations to learn Service-Related Competences are both classroom as well as real business processes and real business projects. The best way is the blend (mix) of different learning modalities. Students should be encouraging to start with their own business. HEI should be providing mentoring by professors and by people from real business sectors.

Higher Education Institution says that majority of universities organize additional training for their employees in the area of teacher competence, teaching, and content creation, e-learning, entrepreneurship and project management, soft skills, etc. But there is no national strategy for the use of technology to broaden the definition of learning space. Learning management system is widely used in many organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In many HE institutions many

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of new learning technology have been integrated on regularly bases. For example, Moodle based platform is used by about 70 institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Chamber of Commerce agreed with the University of Sarajevo about collecting and passing information of companies willing to accept students for practical work so that students can learn something from the real working environment. Establishing research or innovation centers would just improve their skills.

Students think that there are many ways to learn more about the service economy: importance of a service economy can be emphasized at faculties through teaching, while through practice it can showed how the service economy is really important. Support of business sector is of utmost importance in emphasizing the importance of these competencies. In teaching, the service economy can be presented through different types of exercises. Service-related skills should be the skills you gain at university or some training courses and seminars, but you always have to keep developing them because market is changing constantly.

Generally, focus group participants also stated the benefits of adopting **blended learning**. They proposed **approaches/components of blended learning** for Service-Related Competences that would increase the attractiveness of such programs, including:

Nano degrees; trend in education

Cutting the course/lectures length

Online/e-learning courses

Customizing the courses to individual learner. Flexibility and ease of learning - students choosing the pace - when, where and how

Personalized recommendations of learning content to every learner, based on their needs and preferences, and recommending topics students might not have thought of themselves

Interactive “classrooms”, i.e. interactive learning content and devices/tools/apps, e.g., watching online or listening to lecture in a classroom for several minutes, followed by a quiz or discussion on the content (e.g., Kahoot app)

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Use of student feedback/responses received via interactive classroom tools/apps as indicators for lecturers of how well the learning content has been explained/understood while the lecture is occurring

Offering quality educational content

Regarding the **fifth question** “Service-related competences and Validation” businesses think that three the most important aspects from EntreComp list for service economy are: Taking the initiative, Vision and Mobilizing others. Three least important aspects from EntreComp list for service economy are: Ethical & sustainable thinking, Financial & economic literacy, Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk. The only known approaches for competency assessment are grades, diplomas or certificates. The term “competency” applies to knowledge, skills and attitude and the question is, how do we rate and validate competency? This can be done through feedback interviews, questionnaires etc. Students taking courses in providing services should have tests which are specifically designed to assess the level of their knowledge of service providing through questions applying to real life service providing situations. Grading their practical skills and attitude could be accomplished by having the students observed at the companies and then rate/grade them based on both the feedback from the employer’s observation and the professor’s observation comprised into one whole grade.

HEI stressed that in a validation of service-related competences should be followed framework described in the document EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework. This validation including documentation should be also complied with the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. It is very hard to select the most important competences defined in EntreComp list. All competences are very important. Maybe Vision, Self-awareness and Self-efficacy and Taking the initiative could be mentioned.

Chamber of Commerce emphasized that all 15 EntreComp are important, but mentioning Coping with ambiguity, uncertainty & risk; Learning through the experience or Taking the initiative. Least important are Ideas like Creativity; Vision; Spotting opportunities

Students think that most important aspects are self-awareness and self-efficiency, reflection on your needs, taking initiative and working with others. The least important are: Mobilizing resources, Mobilizing others and Learning through experience (you can learn something without

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experience). It is important to validate them and thus to improve one's CV and give upper hand leverage over other candidates when applying for job.

Summary of focus group responses is given in the table below:

<i>Most important</i>	<i>Least important</i>
Ethical and sustainable thinking	Self-awareness and self-efficacy
Working with others	Planning and management
Motivation and perseverance	Valuing ideas
Learning through experience	Spotting opportunities
Vision	Financial and economic literacy
Taking the initiative	
Creativity	
Mobilizing resources	

Note: Aspects in red color are the one that appear on both sides according to our focus group answers.

When commenting on an aspect of *working with others*, focus group participants agreed that **attitude**, as one of the dimensions of the competence, should be taken into account. For example, some people are just not teamwork players. Personality tests could help identify this characteristic. However, this can be changed and improved after some training.

Participants further commented that selecting above aspects was based on personal preferences. It was difficult to select the least because all are important and all are considered as default, according to our participants. They also suggested turning the question around: If you want to be an entrepreneur, which of these things can you outsource? Meaning, if I can give it someone else to do it, it immediately implies that it is least important to me.

2.3.Serbia

2.3.1. Summary

Service-related competencies are recognized as a very important concept by all stakeholders in Serbia: the government, the employers, institutions of higher education, and students and employees. Moreover, service-related competences are recognized in Serbian legislation and in Serbian strategic documents, where they represent one of the key goals for the transformation of education and also one of the key requirements for transformation of the Serbian society and economy. However, there is also a consensus among all stakeholders that the current educational system in Serbia does not allow students to acquire service-related competencies in such a way to make them fully ready for work upon graduation and to make onboarding procedures faster and shorter. The chasm between what is offered (only about 50% of students during their studies access to a course this is relevant for acquisition of service related competencies) and what is needed (more than 80% job advertisements in Serbia require one or more service related competencies) can be acutely felt in the job market, which leads employers to spend considerable time and money on educating new employees in the domain of service related competencies, which, in turn, implies the new employees cannot be productive immediately after starting to work for the employer. In conclusion, having a job market where most employees have relatively developed service-related competences can also help Serbian companies become more competitive in the world market and reduce their HR expenditures.

Having this in mind, all stakeholders in Serbia are working on different approaches to educating students, as well as current employees, i.e. people already present in the job market, in the domain of service-related competencies. From that perspective, it is immensely important that Serbian higher education institutions are entering the new accreditation cycle, during which university curricula and syllabi are required to include substantial student internships, which are recognized by all stakeholders as the best method of acquiring service-related competences. However, despite the legislative push and strategic orientation towards service-related competences becoming an integral part of higher education, there are still several obstacles to be overcome, the biggest of which is a lack of clear definitions and descriptions of service-related competences.

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The second biggest obstacle is a lack of universally applicable framework for valid dating service-related competencies, as well as skills and competencies obtained in nonformal and informal settings. Such a framework would also be useful for validation or other competencies because employers in Serbia are noticing grade inflation, and, as a consequence, lower competence and skill levels of new employees. The Serbian government has implemented several strategic documents and regulations that are aimed at standardizing qualifications obtained in different educational settings, but the regulations are currently not fully implemented.

In sum, it can be expected that in four or five years, most students graduating from Serbian universities will have acquired service-related competences, thanks to the new curricula and syllabi being accredited right now. However, both state funded agencies/institutions and private businesses are working on increasing the level of service related competencies right now (instead of waiting for the effects of reformed curricula and syllabi), either through short courses, tutorials and workshops, or through cooperation with higher education institutions where businesses offer scholarships internships and mentorships to students, mostly those in the domain of IT.

In terms of learning technologies, all stakeholders agreed that Serbian educational institutions have the necessary infrastructure to make the best use of learning technologies as a means of acquiring service-related competencies in a faster way, and preparing students for internships. In that sense, the only learning technology that is not sufficiently used in service probably is the e-portfolio, where the e-VIVA project can provide guidelines on how to properly use e-portfolios in acquisition of service related competencies

To conclude, the e-VIVA project is happening when the Serbian educational system and economy are undergoing a transition in the direction of service orientation, so the results of the project can have a very positive effect and can provide guidance for Serbian decisionmakers and legislators on how to best integrate service-related competences in the educational system.

2.3.2. Interpretation

This chapter represents a joint effort by the Serbian e-VIVA partners, University of Novi Sad (UNS) and University of Niš (UN), to interpret the findings of the desk research, survey and interview contained whose description is contained in the previous chapter. The interpretation provides four main topics: a) the status of and perspectives for Service-Related Competences

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(SRCs) in Serbia from the point of view of the decisionmakers (the government and state institutions) and stakeholders (employers and employees), b) the status of and perspectives for acquiring SRCs at or through educational institutions and the role of e-learning technologies in this acquisition, c) validation of SRCs.

Status of and perspectives for Service-Related Competences (SRCs) in Serbia

Generally speaking, the Serbian service industry is still lagging behind the world standard of constituting roughly 65% of income in the GDP, but the number of employees in the service economy is rising, so the concept of service-related competence is gaining importance both among stakeholders and among decisionmakers. Additionally, more than 80% of job openings require one or more service-oriented skills. Having said this, the rising awareness of the importance of service-related competence is not followed by a clear legislative framework on what exactly service competences are, and how and where these competences should be acquired and validated. Some research studies have been conducted in Serbia which show that more than 50% of students do not take any courses that helped them acquire service oriented skills - although this piece of information may be understood negatively, it also implies that almost 50% of students do have access to courses that are relevant for acquisition of service-related competences. In sum, this data can be interpreted as an indication that the Serbian economy is in the stage of transition from non-service (primarily production) to service economy, where the curricula and syllabi of higher educational institutions, as well as curricula and syllabi of middle schools and vocational schools, are slowly starting to catch up with the requirements of the marketplace. In other words, the Serbian domain of service rated competencies is in its formative stage, which, from the point of view of the scope of this project, means that the project outcomes can have a tangible impact on both the practice of teaching and acquiring service related competencies and, potentially, on the currently-non-existent Serbian legislation that regulates acquisition, recognition and validation of service related competences.

The relevant Serbian ministries as well as official strategies of higher education and economy development have recognized the chasm between the expectations of the job market in terms of service-related competencies, on the one hand, and the capabilities of the current educational system of the Republic of Serbia to provide acquisition of those competencies, on the other hand. That is why the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, the Education Strategy of the

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Republic of Serbia until 2020 and the Economic Reform Program for the 2018-2020 Period, all strongly encourage and urge Serbian educational institutions to develop curricula and syllabi that develop personal business skills and promote acquisition of competences relevant for the service economy, as well as entrepreneurial competences. Furthermore, the aforementioned law and strategies focus on the development of strong links between the industry and employers, on the one hand, and institutions of higher education, on the other, with the aim of enforcing the requirement for curricula to contain obligatory internships, during which students can gain relevant service-related competences. All of this can be taken and understood as a strong indication the relevant decision makers in Serbia have made strategic steps devised to ensure future generations of students would gain service related competence is and other job relevant soft skills.

Another important conclusion that can be drawn from all three analytical instruments used in this work package is that there is a consensus among employers, the government and there could academic community that's service-related competencies and soft skills are extremely valuable in the job market but are not adequately and sufficiently featured in current curricula and syllabi. The Serbian higher education landscape is currently undergoing a change in the form or we knew regulations governing the accreditation procedure or higher education institutions, and it is during this, ongoing, accreditation cycle that new laws guidelines and strategies when then relevant competencies will be integrated into curriculum and syllabi. This means, given that the average length of studies in Serbia is four years, that the results and effects of service related competence is being integrated into the educational process at universities can only become visible and measurable in about five or six years when the first generations of students who will be studying according to new study programs will have graduated and entered the job market. In turn, this means that the e-VIVA project can play an important role in providing guidelines to university lectures who will soon be starting to deliver newly accredited courses on how to properly integrate service related competencies into the teaching process and how to make the best use or internships for the acquisition of such competences.

In sum, it seems that this project is occurring at the pivotal moment for the proper introduction of service related competencies When all relevant parties – ministries, employers, employees and industry associations - Are seeking proper ways to address the lack of sufficiently developed

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service related competencies in the Serbian job market, and are trying to formulate the best methods to ensure that current employees can upskill in this domain, while new employees and the job market with the relevant competence is that shorten the onboarding time.

At the very end of this interpretation of the results of desk research, survey and interview in terms of the status of and perspectives for Service-Related Competences in Serbia, it should once more be emphasized that Perhaps the biggest problem in this regard is the absence of clear classification of service related competencies and the recommendations and best practices for their acquisition, which is a gap that can be filled by the deliverables and outcomes of this project.

Status of and perspectives for acquiring SRCs in Serbia and the role of e-learning in the process

When it comes to the question of how service related competences should be acquired in the Serbian educational domain, it should be first pointed out that the government of Serbia, in particular the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, considers the continuing vocational education and training (cVET) as one of the main goals of the educational transition and one of the key requirements for the successful social and economic progress. In other words, service-related competencies are encoded in strategic documents that are shaping the reform of higher education in Serbia and they should feature more prominently in the future curricular and syllabi. Organized by individual consultants or by for-profit educational institutions and businesses. In some, this can be taken an interpreted as another evidence of the aforementioned conclusion that the Serbian educational domain is undergoing a transition from being purely academic in its orientation, to being partially job-market oriented and relevant for the increasingly important service economy in Serbia.

The strategic orientation to provide education for service industry related competence Is currently spearheaded by two separate groups of actors. The first group of actors are state-funded organizations such as the National Employment Service, the Education Center of the Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Professional Development of Adults, The Institute for Improvement of Education, and the National Agency for Regional Development. The second group actors are various SMEs and large enterprises. The state funded organizations are providing trainings and targeted short courses that are aimed to pre-qualify people who are currently unemployed as well as to provide continuous education for local authorities, schools, small businesses and startup

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companies. On the other hand stakeholders from the business sector call parade with universities where they propose specific topics for the existing courses, provide guest lectures and mentorship for graduate and post graduate students who are willing to write their BA and MA thesis on market relevant topics. In this respect, all relevant actors i.e. stakeholders - employers , students, government institutions and ministries - agree that the best method to help students or unemployed people to gain service related competencies is by means of internships whose duration depends on the type of the service related competence and the professional domain, whereby the durations of internship usually mentioned are between one and three months.

All stakeholders also agree, which is a very important conclusion that can be derived from the research activities conducted in this work package, that educational technologies play a very important role in educational activities aimed at the covering service-related competences. The most common type of the educational technology, the learning management system (LMS), such as Moodle, is identified as the best means of providing learning resources that can help students prepare for internships. The learning management systems also provide a good environment for asynchronous teamwork in various student projects that mimic real life services provided to customers. Of course, Learning management systems should use Open Access learning resources in the forms of YouTube tutorials, free and open source (e-)books and guides, as well as community-based knowledge repositories such as wikies and professional forums. At this point it should be emphasized that the results of all three types of research activities conducted in this work package clearly indicate the level of e-learning infrastructure at Serbian institutions of higher education is sufficient to facilitate efficient use of electronic learning resources for the purpose of acquiring service-related competencies and soft skills. The results of WP1 tasks show that the only type of e-learning technologies it is still not used to its full potential at Serbian educational institutions is the e-portfolio. This finding is extremely valuable from the point of view of this project, as one of the key elements of the e-learning solution used to pilot courses that develop and help students acquire service-related competencies in the project is exactly the e-portfolio. In that sense, the e-VIVA project can be used to provide educational institutions it guidelines how to properly use the e-portfolio for the sake of developing service related competencies, but also for the sake of documenting them and making them visible to the potential employers.

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Having said that, there are still many courses at Serbian universities that do not employ e-learning and digital technologies, so an additional effort will have to be made by the relevant ministries to incentivize university lecturers to start using e-learning technologies and creating online courses at all study programs, and also to use these technologies in ways that go beyond them being merely content delivery systems for students. The need to boost the adoption of e-learning and other learning technologies is visible in the fact did Serbian institutions of higher education do not provide a significant number of study programs that that employ hybrid learning environments and distance education, Which are exactly the kinds of study programs that can be offered to people already active in the job market who want to gain or increase their service related competences.

The pilot courses that boost service-related competences developed in the e-VIVA project can be, therefore, used as examples and case studies on how to properly use learning technologies to facilitate acquisition of service-related competences.

Validation of SRCs in Serbia

While it can be said that the status of service related competences and the ways in which they should be acquired are relatively clearly defend and strategically encoded in relevant Serbian legislation, the same cannot be said for the manners in which service related competencies are to be validated and made recognizable in the job market. Although the government and several ministries of the Serbian government are discussing different ways in which informal and non-formal education can be recognized and validated, the exact mechanisms and the relevant legislation are both unknown and non-existent. The suboptimal situation regarding validation of service-related competences and soft skills is further compounded by the aforementioned lack of clear definitions and lists of service-related competencies, as well as other job-related skills i.e. universally applicable skills not tied to a specific trade or profession. It can be concluded that such a situation creates significant problems in the job market, because employers cannot rely on a standardized validation framework which means the hiring process needs to last longer and so does the onboarding process.

Nonetheless, Serbia has the strategy that covers recognition of education that is informal non-formal in nature and is acquired throughout an individual's career. The only issue with the

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strategy is that it was adopted in 2007, but has not been fully put in practice and transformed into an operational framework that all stakeholders can use in the job market. This strategy is augmented by the regulation on the informal education that was sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, which was enacted in 2015 and which has as its outcome the rule book that defines informal learning programs and the providers of such programs. Partially on the basis of this regulation, in 2018 the Serbian government has also enacted the Law on National Qualification Framework which makes it possible to formally recognize prior knowledge and qualifications that were obtained in formal and nonformal settings. Having said that, despite the existence of strategic and legal frameworks the possibilities of having one's informal non formal qualifications officially recognized are still limited as there is no government body which regulates such qualifications. It should be emphasized that this statement is only partially true, In the sense that there is no general framework for recognition of such competencies. Namely, some professions in Serbia have clearly defined lifelong learning frameworks by means of which professionals are obliged to improve or maintain their competences every year, for example primary and secondary school teachers, as well as medical doctors.

Another problem that can be noticed on the basis of the three research instruments employed in the activities of this work package is that neither employers nor the employees are fully aware of various European standards that can be used to validate and document competencies and skills. In particular, neither employers nor employees are fully aware of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVT) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Most explicitly, more than 80% of Serbian respondents do not know how to use the aforementioned frameworks when hiring or being hired. This opens door for the e-VIVA project to provide guidelines not only on acquisition of service-related competencies but also on the proper way to validate them and document them for the purpose of their use in the job market. Additionally, there is a big potential in creating a synergy between validation of service-related competence is and learning technologies, in such a way that the platforms which are used to acquire service-related competencies can also be used to document them and validate them, for example in the form of officially recognized digital badges. In this context, it is crucial to note that all instruments used

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in this set to activities decisively conclude that in Serbia there is an urgent need for universally applicable system all valid dating and documented competencies acquired in formal, informal and non-formal contexts.

Another important conclusion of the desk research, survey and interview, is that the current status of validation of service-related competences in Serbia is not entirely black and white. Namely, employers are more than willing to take into consideration internationally recognized certificates and digital badges in the domain of IT and language competences: the problem for the employers is the recognition of diplomas and certificates obtained at Serbian non formal educational institutions (such as private schools of business skills, programming and language schools) and at workshops and similar educational events. It can be deduced this situation is a direct consequence of a not fully implemented framework of national qualifications, but it is very likely in this situation made change in the near future as a consequence of the strong strategical push in the direction of recognition of informal and non-formal competences. From this point of view, this project can be useful through the Serbian legislators in the sense that they can use the projects validation framework as a basis for enacting an official method of validating competences acquired outside the formal educational setting.

Although it is not directly related to the scope of the project, it is worth mentioning that employers are getting somewhat skeptical about the officially recognized qualifications in the form of university diplomas because they are starting to notice the effects of grade inflation. In particular, during the interview several interviewees mentioned that the onboarding time for new employees has significantly grown over the last 10 years, to the point that it is now quite common for the new employee to become productive only after a period of 6 or 12 months. This can be taken as a strong indication that the descriptive framework for validating service related competencies from this project may even be useful, in an adapted form, to universities, as they can use it to combat the grade inflation and introduce grades which are based on descriptors of what students can or cannot do.

Finally, it should be stated that the desk research, survey, and the interview have not identified the optimal way in which employers and the government should work together for the purpose of introducing and universally applicable way of validating service-related competencies and soft skills. From this perspective, the e-VIVA project may also be beneficial, because the ways in

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which a student's performance gets graded by the host institution during the student's internship may also be used as a blueprint and starting point for working together for the common goal of having a universally applicable competence framework.

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2.4. Albania

2.4.1. Summary

Nowadays, service toward clients is the most important factor for prolonged success in business. Service economy sector includes a great variety of economic activities, including trade, hospitality, transport, storage, health, communications, financial service, insurance, services for companies and community, social and personal services. While Service-related competences are special traits and they need to enhance to be able to adapt in the service sector; competences related to properly offering services to customers.

In recent years, there has been a notable improvement in Albanian education related curricula development which is based on Competencies but requires further development. There are different university programs that intent to support Service-Related competences on courses like marketing, management, arts (design), telecommunication, tourism, etc.

‘Enhancing and Validating Service-related competences in Versatile learning environments in Western Balkan Universities (VIVA)’ project is an Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education funded initiative, led by European University of Tirana, Albania. The consortium has 16 partners from all over geographical Europe and it is envisaged to last for 3 years, with a total budget of 993.581 euros.

E-VIVA project addresses the issue of students’ skills development, facilitation and validation of their skills in informal learning contexts. The project aims at evidencing the most fundamental competences for service economy and will contribute to higher transparency of these, for students, teachers, employers and any other subject interested in it. Informal learning contexts are gaining on importance and the project will identify main issues and contribute to further advancement of new ways of learning. In the framework of project implementation and preparation phase, three important deliverables were produced by each partner and a final national report per Western Balkan Country was prepared. These National Report for Albania is completed using the data collected from desk research, online questionnaires and interviews /focus groups organized at each participating institution.

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Desk research was performed by each partner institution and a national report was completed. A set of guiding questions led the desk research phase and gathered data were organized and interpreted following this logic. The online questionnaire questions were developed by the research team members and then it was conducted online to gather data concerning to Service-Related Competences in HE institutes and workplace learning contexts in Albania. Online survey was translated in all partner countries official languages and each country collected the data from questionnaires translated in their own language. For Albania, online survey was conducted in the Albanian language. In details, the sections of the questionnaire include the following elements:

1. Introduction and statistical background data
2. Service Economy and Service-Related Competences
3. Acquisition of Service-Related Competences
4. Validation of competences
5. Digital learning

The obtained data from both desk research and online questionnaires revealed that the main problem in Albania remains how to evaluate the competences created, how to design curricula and syllabus based in competencies and how to evaluate and validate them. At the same time, competency-based student evaluation was identified as an important issue for the participating universities, their student and prospective employers.

2.4.2. Interpretation

The concept of service-related competence (SRC) is known and discussed in Albania in term of skills. SRC is perceived in term of skills by businesses, public and private institutions in order to represent the necessary know how, capacity, expertise and attitude to perform in the right way a specific job in every entity of service sector. It's part of vocational school's curricula, new programs of bachelor professional diploma and professional master diploma in public and private Higher Education Institutions. In the public sector this competence is reformed through the Albanian Civil Service Reform in Public Administration. Even though the concept is widely discussed by businesses in function of labor market needs to recruit individuals with the right

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skills and competencies required for a specific job, formally as part of the country strategy the SRC concept was represented in 2010 in order to fit with EU integration and new needs of labor market. Transforming our country's economy from a closed and isolated economy into an open economy, now part of the capitalist world economy, necessarily brought not only the outbreak of new energies of the most active part of our society but - what is even more important - entry into the new world of competition also led to increased claims and the demands of the Albanian individual in the new social order. This new reality of society brought new demands. Knowing and realizing the individual is now transformed into the only path of success and prosperity of the individual into a new society.

Only securing a valid diploma / certificate can lead us to providing a truly workable job for ourselves and society, or at best it may have given us enough preparation - not just professional but also entrepreneurial skills - enough to give space, courage and security of opening an economic activity; a beginning of true life in terms of the market economy, not only financial but also socially. Two basic concepts have been used for the drafting of the national list of professions: types of work, which is defined as a set of functions and tasks that a person performs. A whole set of types of work, which have a high degree of similarity, constitute the profession. Competence is defined as the ability to perform functions and duties of a given type of work.

In the national classification of professions, competence is characterized by two dimensions:

The level of competence, which depends on the complexity and breadth of the functions and duties it covers;

The specialization of competence, determined by the area of knowledge required, the tools and machinery used the materials with which it is being worked, and the types of goods and services being carried out.

There are some key elements in the definition of job descriptions:

Descriptions of occupations are the measure of fulfillment that an individual should achieve within order to be able to perform a certain job;

he description of the professions contains: title and code of the profession, professional competencies and relevant description, knowledge, skills and attitudes needed;

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The description of the profession is the basis for the drafting of the qualification specifications;

The description of the profession is the basis for determining what is expected of an individual in the work process.

Descriptions of professions should be based on:

- Analysis of labor market needs
- Analysis of the profession;
- Functions and duties of a job;
- Concept for Sustainable Development

Vocational education and training help to quickly and safely gain the profession and promotes further advancement in professional careers. In this way the profession it is not seen as defined once and for all, but in continuous evolution, depending of the social division of labor, which in turn varies depending on social developments - economic and technical - technological. Also, he is not seen as being won at one time, through initial vocational education or training, but growing continuously as a result of further learning and experience gained at work.

Higher Education (HE) structures and policies are determined by the Albania Government and Parliamentary Bodies. The Albanian School of Public Administration, ASPA, was established in 2014 as successor of TIPA, the Training Institute of Public Administration, its organization and functioning are defined by the Council of Ministers Decision no. 138, dt.12.03.2014 "On the Organization and Functioning of the Albanian School of Public Administration and Training of Civilian Civilians". Chapter III, Article 1, states that "ASPA will provide in-depth training, continuing training and pre-training for non-civilian candidates.

The main legal framework regulating HE in Albania is Law No. 80/2015, date 22.7.2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania" ((Pustina, Tane, & Dibra, 2017). Lifelong learning and Continuing Professional Development as cross-cutting issues has proved to be a challenge for both legislative and executive bodies in our country. Multiple laws and bylaws introduced by the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES), Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, Ministry of Economic

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Development, Trade, Tourism and Entrepreneurship has aimed at promoting both Lifelong learning and Continuing Professional Development, yet big challenges remain. National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2014-2020 (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2014) is one of the ongoing initiatives of Albania Government funded by the European Union, oriented towards four key strategic priorities: foster decent job opportunities through effective labour market policies, offer quality vocational education and training to youth and adults, promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion and strengthen the governance of the labour market and qualification systems. The overall goal of this initiatives is to promote quality jobs and skills opportunities for all Albanians throughout their lifecycle and as explicitly stated, high quality VET is a core part of the strategic agenda for the sustainable development of our country (Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, 2014).

Continuous reforms in education, training and employment remain key strategic priorities for the Government of Albania, as they underpin the sustainable social and economic development and the country's regional and European integration. In the European context, Vocational Education and Training (VET), Lifelong Learning (LLL) and Employment have also been defined as key priorities of the European Union (EU) policies in the last few years.

Are there any training programmes for Service-Related Competences in general in your country?

It is crucial to ensure that skills taught at school are relevant for the working world. For this reason is important to improve the educational system in response to labour market needs, and to ensure that the students complete their school with skills needed to find work. This requires the collaboration of businesses and higher education institutes.

Both Lifelong learning and Continuing Professional Development are emerging practices in Albania, continuously gaining popularity among HEIs and other interested stakeholders. There are several service-related competences and skills programs offered in Albania. They are mainly training and workshops organized by HEIs, public institutions, training centre or CSOs in the framework of career development projects and initiatives and they are mainly focused in competences such as: computer literacy, communication skills, leadership, project management and risk management.

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Are there any specific programmes and/or modules on the acquisition of Service Related Competences in Higher Education?

In recent years, both HEIs and industry have realized the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration. Many HEIs has established a rich network of stakeholders from business and public sector, and continuously have invested in developing and adapting their teaching curricula with the market needs. UET itself runs a network of partners with more than 500 stakeholders in its network, continuously collaborating in join initiative. In addition, since 2018 UET offers five 2-year professional diplomas in: Applied Informatics, Programming, Accounting, Management, Tourism and Applied Design. Other public and private HEIs too offers study programs and training modules focused on the acquisition of Service Related Competences.

Are there any partnerships with other foreign institutes linked to this topic?

Concerning Service related competences, up to our knowledge e-VIVA is the first initiative. As per VET and CDP in Albania, in the last decade many international organizations and interested stakeholders has undertaken several projects and established programs to promote VET Education and CDP in Albania. The main promoter is EU, through directly supporting Albanian government initiatives as well as VET related institutions.

Are there any attempts to include training of Service Related Competences in HE from third parties?

Interested stakeholders from public and private sector, as well as international organisation promoting the acquits of service related skills and competences closely collaborate with HEIs by providing to them financial support or expertise in offering such training modules. Th list of programs offered is further elaborated in Annex 1.

Are there any collaborations between the business sector and HE in regard to Service Related Competences or related areas?

As already mentioned, there is a close collaboration of HEIs with business sector in Albania, cooperation promoted by both parts. UET has already established a network of partners and

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stakeholders, and it continuously invests in these partnerships and uses the information from the market to update and adopt its study curricula. On the other side, companies are highly interested especially in qualified junior level employees who can best be found from the universities. They have the opportunity to attract qualified young professionals with up-to-date service related skills and competences, and it is less costly for these companies compared to potential trainings they can offer to their existing staff. Another example - FASTIP is an institute which integrates the studies with practice. This institute signs different agreements with business, in which the students have the possibility to see every day how the business is going on. Recently this institute signed an agreement with ASLE that aims the cooperation between the two institutions in improving and enriching the content of study programs, in the context of coordinating the theoretical aspect with the practical aspects of preparation of students in financial markets. There are different agreements in other HE institutions with other businesses, AMF, Banks etc

European University of Tirana deliver blended learning as explained above. Other universities that use LMS for blended learning is EPOKA University, a private university which is using Moodle since several years. The public universities are not using Learning management systems. Five public faculties (Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Social Sciences, and Faculty of Philology) were using an oracle based management system till two years ago. Since then, that system is out of service. In just a few other public universities there are only some private efforts of some teachers to use some online system with their students, but nothing official and institutionally organized. No other university is using an e-learning system for their students.

The number of universities that deliver blended learning in Albania is lower. Only a small number of universities, mainly private use e-learning. Universities in general have increased co-operation with businesses. In this way they offer internships or teaching practice for their students.

There is a high demand to integrate learning technologies in the HE sector.

Service Related Competences in Albania are recognized and validated in terms of Qualification Framework since 04.03.2010 when the parliament adopted the law no.10247 on the Albanian Qualification Framework (AQF) by legally adopting the national country qualification framework with the European Qualifications Framework(EQF). The law is revised and adopted

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on 18.05.2018, Law (23/2018) and a secondary legislation under the revised AQF Law is being prepared. In order to support the implementation of the AQF, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth with the support of International Labour Organization (ILO) have announced in February 2014 the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2014-20.

The aim of NESS 2014-20 is to increase employment thorough the development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) related with labour market needs. In order to achieve the reform of qualifications systems, several actions are taken related with the available tools and approaches. According to the European Training Foundation (ETF) policy stage indicators the country can be classified at the structured stage, the third policy stage referring to the implementation, where the infrastructure to effect change is in place and elements such as the choice of a leading and funding arrangements have been decided on.

The necessity to emphasise the reform of VET is related with the gap between unemployment, labour market requirements and qualification systems. As an EU candidate country, Albania receives financial assistance from IPA (Instrument for pre-accession) in order to implement NESS 2014-20.

The link between NESS and AQF policy can be described in five action lines:

1. Review of existing qualifications and qualification development processes by the National Agency for VET and Qualifications (NAVETQ) under different donor projects as well as qualifications offered by public or private VET providers or universities.
2. Revision of the system for assessment and certification
3. Establishment of sector commities
4. Developing the national Catalogue for Vocational qualifications
5. Revision of curricula based on AQF qualifications and standarts, and referenced to AQF levels
6. Selecting bodies and putting in place procedures for the validation of qualifications, skills assessments, certification and the validation /recognition of prior learning

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No system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning had yet been established. However, several institutions are involved in carrying out studies on VINFL,

Nowadays, service toward clients is the most important factor for prolonged success in business. Thus said, service economy means that a nation is mainly dependent on service rather than production. Service economy sector includes a great variety of economic activities, including trade, hospitality, transport, storage, health, communications, financial service, insurance, services for companies and community, social and personal services. While Service-related competences are special traits and they need to enhance to be able to adapt in the service sector; Competences related to properly offering services to customers. In recent years, there has been a notable improvement in Albanian education related curricula development which is based on Competencies but requires further development. There are different university programs that offer service in related competences on courses like marketing, management, arts (design), telecommunication, etc.

Most of the students are tired from traditional way of studying when it comes to studying and dealing with knowledge's in that particular course, rather than competencies in offering service. There are different companies, especially supported from foreign consultation which offers this kind of education/training. As service economy continues to grow, there is a strong demand on Service-Related competencies both in general and in the University. There should be a campaign to point out the need for these competences.

When dealing with a field that general public is not familiar with, information is a key factor. To be able to attract young Albanians attention with a proper marketing is a necessity. One of the most well-known channels that are attractive nowadays for young generation is social media. A channel where the quality of service sector can be presented and be seen from everyone. With the proper attention we get more available jobs and more public services from the service sector, which also makes an important contribution to the overall GDP in most countries.

The organization of open sessions by inviting people from the marketplace can incentivize students to aim for these competences. At the same time universities should themselves or through other training centers motivate students to take these courses. If service sector is presented with all its values that it has for the economy and the different opportunities that it

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offers it will increase student's interest. Conferences and different trainings can help by giving a better understating about Service-Related Competences.

Entrepreneurial education should take into consideration all the stakeholders that are involved, including customers. A good entrepreneur starts its business by deducing and differentiating costumer's needs that are not being fully or partly fulfilled by the market and focuses its efforts in creating a business compatible with that. There is no lack of entrepreneurs in my country, but there is a lack of service-related competencies in these entrepreneurs and in their entrepreneurship vision and strategy. Training modules and programs focused on service-related competences are very important. There is no good leadership without a good team behind the leader.

The concept of the Service Economy and Service Related Competences in the point of view of private entrepreneurs mainly is related almost to the services like banking services, healthcare services, transport, education, but the real sector understands the competencies of the service economy in the context of their supporting activities such as consulting, training, maintaining and implementing complex systems such as robots and automation of production lines. Financial Consultants find this concept, closely related to consulting services, whether legal or/and financial.

In point of view of High School Principals, Competence is the set of demonstrable characteristics and skills that enable, and improve the efficiency of, the performance of a job.

The concept of the Service Economy and Service Related Competences in the point of view of students, is seen as the greatest discovery of the late 20th century and will mark the entire 21st century developed economy. They have the opinion that the economy of services has a positive impact on increasing the quality of life and the working population provides new employment. In education institutions we care about education in the service economy but not enough, so, it is necessary to show people that this is a very important segment in business, especially among students, through various education and seminars and competitions that will stimulate the needs of the service economy in young people.

A few educational institutions have programs that match their resources, knowledge and competencies but they do not adapt closely to actual market needs. The main reasons are this

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lack is mostly from national strategy, limited budget allocations for education. The focus on customer needs is the starting point of every business and must receive greater attention from not only educational institutions but from entrepreneurs too. Albania has a lack of ‘qualified’ entrepreneurs (business owners) in general, but the shortage in the service economy is much greater. Another reason according to the business sector view is the lack of infrastructure of Albania related to Education and Services Economy. Education on Service Related Competencies in Albania is not as in demand as in countries which have a developed infrastructure of the product-service system.

An education on Service Related Competences in Albania is not yet a frequently used concept. Instead, the concept of entrepreneurship in general is widely discussed but it is not enough introduced in education system in high schools, colleagues and Universities. The Economy in Albania is mainly a service economy, unfortunately, it is not widely recognized in public in order to raise demand and offer in a direction of an education on service-related competences.

A few universities offer education in entrepreneurship as a core study programs. Entrepreneurship education and related competences are even less incorporated as a soft subject in other study programs. Importance of entrepreneurial education has not yet recognized among children and their parents and young people. An entrepreneurial culture as a tool to promote competitiveness and employability is not prevailing. Although education has an important role in building an entrepreneurial culture, there is no pressure on educational institutions at all levels to recognize a need for building entrepreneurship competencies as key competences among their learners. On the other hand, children and young people education see as a way to gain core competencies in the specific field to increase their employability. They are not aware that developing entrepreneurial competencies bring value to them and their future workplace, but also community. Without entrepreneurial competencies they can hardly be enough innovative, adaptive and flexible regarding ever changing labor market.

To increase demand, it is necessary to show people that this is a very important segment in business, especially among students, through various seminars, training courses and competitions that will stimulate the needs of the service economy in young people. The development of the service economy implies a change in lifestyle and technology changes necessary for prosper. It is evident that the service economy is growing in Albania, but it needs to be more effort toward

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this aim. All the interviewers agree, that it seems to be difficult to integrate service related competences in curricula of universities. Depending on how the way how the competences concept is understood, some aspects can be taught and are taught in Albanian Universities.

The best way to learn service-related competences as a personal competence is thorough practical learning and technology implementation. Besides theoretical input most universities provide a lot of opportunities for project work and internships in cooperation with business and enterprises. The students benefit from the practical experiences, for the companies this is an important instrument for recruiting. The student reported that they had a lot of opportunities to work practically and also the connection to enterprises was good, but there was no concrete teaching activity on service related competences, despite one lecture during the whole studies.

The Albanian Government have to spot more opportunities that embedding entrepreneurship education in all levels of educational system will make young people more employable and more ‘intrapreneurial’ in their work within existing organizations, across the social, public and private sectors”. It is an EU experience that an investing in entrepreneurship education is one of the highest return investments and students who receive enterprise educational are three to six times more likely to start a business in the future”. All these EU achievements should be promoted at educational institutions as well as in the Albanian community. All the actors in Albania Economy will be aware and up to date to promote the modern ways to develop and improve Service Related Competences, to update the syllabus on universities according toward service economy and education institutions must offer more training course to improve skills in that point of view.

2.3.2. Support

These 3rd parties can contribute by informing the general public through their communication channels and means, being present in HEIs by showing the need of such competencies in the market. Business sector can be part of educational approaches and together with universities can collaborate for better Services in the future. The business sector firstly should be trained and informed about such competencies. Best service company’s representatives should be invited to open sessions to express their experience. First, they need to train their employees how to treat costumers. There is a big need in the public government institutions to change this worldview.

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Second, they have to promote best service companies in country. Third, they can implement other countries policies on this issue in our universities and schools. Business sector should be an integrated part of the learning process. Practical involvement and discussion can make the course more effective. Students can work part-time in their business and see themselves how it is done.

The 3rd parties (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, real economy” representatives) can contribute to implement Service Related Competences in the HE if they promote enrolment policy at the HE that is in line with market needs according to national strategy. In general, the business sector must find interest in more adequately involving students in practice according to fulfill their duties as well as possible. The business sector can provide better educational approaches related to Service Related Competences education by giving attractive scholarships for students, by organizing study trips, by promotion service related jobs as a good opportunity. Stakeholders of government and administration, in particular education policy institutions, can provide better educational approaches related to Service Related Competences through: providing financial support to projects, development of new services, financial and institutional support to the development of new university study programs related to service competencies etc. The business sector can provide better educational approaches related to service related competences education offering internships for students taking formal and non-formal education regarding this education. People from the business sector can give important contribution through their integration in classes as guest lecturers as a presenter of a real-life study cases in the corresponding fields.

Some measures can also be taken by the government to stimulate the business sector in this direction, offering some tax facilitations in order to fulfill and monitoring this. Will be more collaboration between the business sector and the higher education in order to be more involved in the educational process through mentoring as well as during classes. Providing internships and supporting students’ project groups is one main supporting tool. Interviewed persons do not see any reason how his aspect should be integrated in curricula, since the practical approach is rated as the most important factor to teach this competence. The government and administration including education policy institutions can provide better educational approaches related to service related competences formally via education laws and accreditation criteria, and non-formally through promotion of the importance of service related competences. The promotion

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and support for entrepreneurship ideas are supported by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and Ministry of Finance and Economy which are in charge of SME policy coordination in our country. At whole country there are a number of ministries and agencies are in charge regarding entrepreneurship. All these stakeholders are making good efforts to link education with entrepreneurship in order to fulfill the main goal. Many students during the interview had the idea of impulse lectures on the topic or to invite guest speakers to share their experience with students or to take over a mentorship for a student project group. This is will be a good approach in order to help in this continues process.

2.3.3. Provision of Service-Related Competencies Education

Provision of service-related competences education can be successfully achieved only by including all the relevant stakeholders in the process. Additionally, HEIs can support the process by including courses related to Service Competencies in all the relevant study programs. Additionally, combination of taught-based skills and competences with work environments will help a lot to boost the whole process of competences development. Meetings and visits in different service organizations might be one example. The only place where one can clearly see the benefits and learn better skills is around workspace. Students who are not able to get an internship after they are done with their studies, will have a harder time to adjust to the business environment. If they would be able to interact with their study field jobs, it would create for them a better understating in what they want to focus in the future. First, international business operating in our country can show their experiences. Second, they can organize open sessions where they can show how it works and what are the benefits. Third, improve the school curricula from the elementary school, fourth to accept more internships from students, so they can practice and see real approaches toward services. In general, they will be able to offer real examples from work experiences for students, bring models that they use to train their employees when it comes to service offer. Also, by organizing information sessions, seminars etc. ca help a lot on the competences' development and validation. Being able to exchange students would be a good support too. I would highly appreciate if companies and universities both together could collaborate for better services in the future.

It is true that is a lack regarding entrepreneurial education. One of the participants in the interview sessions pointed out that: “No program which involve practical learning (e.g. internships). I

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would recommend more courses that include not only entrepreneurship education but also courses that have as on focus clients and service-related competences”. Universities should provide more courses that explains how important is to integrate costumers in the product. Examples from companies would be very helpful. Is very important and should be a tradition that in auditors to have lectures from companies in those particular courses. Most of the companies have contacts with their customers. More practical activities are needed. Most universities lack in helping students to use critical thinking, when students lack in entrepreneurial thinking. Universities are focused in more general things than specific things that are required from the market. There is a constant contact from business to costumers but not from higher education and costumers. Additionally, there is a lack of internships offer from most universities. So basically, there is a lack of guidance from higher education institutions for the real business world.

The most interviewed persons who have stronger connections to the academic field (student, financial consultant), pointed out that it is difficult to require more and more practical approaches form the Universities, since the concept of universities is to provide academic education. More cooperation in both directions needed between the business sector and the higher education. Professors need to become more engaged in the business sector through projects, consulting, training, mentoring in practical master or PhD theses. If we want to have better and more practical oriented studies, all three sides (HE, Students and Businesses, even foreign companies) need to find their interest.

The HE sector can provide better educational approaches related to service related competencies by introducing and developing more study programs and/or service competencies based subjects. Practice integration can be accomplished through some kind of a cooperation agreement between the universities and companies based in the tertiary sector, in which students would be able to work part time in the said companies in order to gain experience in providing service through real life situations while also having the opportunity to earn their own money and understand the true meaning of responsibility by being able to support themselves. However in special cases is observed a collaboration between the business sector and HE in regard to entrepreneurship education. This is typical for non-public higher education institutions. Through the internship program, they sent the students in different companies to gain practical skills regarding business,

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management and entrepreneurship. For example, students of Professional Academy of Business, have the opportunity to visit and perform practices and internships in: Antea Cement, Titan Group; Coca Cola; Rinas Customs; Durrësit the Customs; Univers Trade Center; Raiffeisen Bank; First Investment Bank; SII, etc.

ELISAA (E_learning Innovation and Sustainable Albanian Agriculture) is another project between Albanian universities and businesses aimed at increasing the competences of graduates in agriculture. The focus of ELISAA is to build a vocational training courses, for post graduate and staff employees of Albanian companies, concerning no-food uses of biomass. In particular it focuses on bio-fuels generations through an e-learning platform. ELISAA addresses the priority “Agriculture” because it performs the cooperation between universities and agricultural industry, through technological knowledge transfer by a new e-Learning approach. The idea is to help the agriculture sector to explore new business opportunities and prevent its decline trends.

But that is not enough...Since HEI in our country has lack of entrepreneurship education and by that lack of service-related competencies we could ask foreign business to help. Some ideas for foreign business and companies to promote service-related mind in our country would be:

- Transfer (business networks) of knowledge, experience and management “know-how” from large firms to students,
- Creation of links between University and SMEs
- Creation of a favorable business environment for SMEs with regard to access to information and/or ease of bureaucratic obstacles,
- Creation of a favorable business environment for SMEs with regard to management skill education possibilities,
- Creation of a favorable on-the-job learning environment and/or coach-guided training and planning possibilities,
- Enterprise-led training networks.

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2.3.4. Methodology

The best locations to learn Service-Related Competences would be universities and training centers through role-play, on the job lecture-training, projects and team working. Furthermore, internships can be a great source of service-related competences in businesses/institutions. As, individuals learn and progress in different manners, the more variety available enables the highest overall effect on adequately acquiring service-related competences. Thus, the more variety in learning modalities available, the more effective and efficient the process will be. Blending learning modalities would be an efficient way for students to learn and adapt skills on their own in every service sector. Students can learn on their own, leading to cost reduction. Online learning is efficient, however needs proper follow up to be effective. A combination of learning from both companies and universities will not only bridge the gap between the theory and practise but also provide a better understanding of what companies demand.

Using technology in the learning process is vital. It is easier to develop these kinds of competences when using up to date technologies. Thus, computer skills are crucial and necessary. Online studies for the students, including multimedia materials and the use of networks and communications systems would enhance the skills and knowledge of the students. We can apply role-play/scenarios, practice in the business/institution and virtual service environment.

The learning process should be more focused on practical application and less theoretical. However, means of online learning can be especially useful for the theoretical part. Programs can reward and Incentivize students and/or employees with certificates when completion of the program. This certificate and the improved associated computer-based skills can be used to enable access to better jobs. With little instruction, virtual computer programs can be used to improve their skills.

Station Rotation Blended Learning is a good approach and allow students to rotate through stations on a fixed schedule, where at least one of the stations is an online learning station and also Project-Based Blended Learning in which students use both online learning, either in the form of courses or self-directed access, and face-to-face instructions and collaborations when it comes to design, iterate, and publish project-based learning assignments, products, etc. The elements that I consider important for the success of the program are professors that will give

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lectures, the way it will be held, the real time cases and the practical lessons. I would recommend avoiding exams. Instead of exams students can work on real time cases, by applying frameworks and theories. Students who have good ideas and help different business they can be promoted by joining the team.

All interviewers agree that practical experience is the best method to learn and to practice to learn personal competences that can be subsumed under the term “Service-related competences”. Following this argumentation the “learning technology” learning by doing is seen as the most effective way.

The best location to learn Service-Related Competences are both workshops, hands on exercises, project presentation, case studies as well as real business processes and real business projects. The best way is the blend (mix) of different learning modalities. Students should be encouraged to start their own business (through co-working spaces and business incubators) and encouraging them to take part in different business competitions and challenges. The HEI should be providing mentoring by professors and by people from real business sectors, but also co-working spaces and budgets.

Service-related skills should be the skills you gain at university or some training courses and seminars but you always have to keep developing them because the market is changing constantly. According to us, people in Albania needs of different learning methods would give the best outcome when trying to teach and promote the education of service related skills among our youth. We would combine promotional presentations of those skills, educational part in classrooms and practical use of those skills, so students can actually see what they have learned in this process and that their time is not lost in vain.

We can use learning technologies (LMS) in our HE institutions. LMS is a web only-based learning, that allows students accessing materials for registered courses and enables the use of a wide number of facilities to enhance their learning experience. This brings the dynamic environment of an online class. This allows teachers and students to cooperate in a "virtual classroom" in the same way as a standard class. The difference is that this can be done from anywhere in the world and at any time with Internet resources support. Participants take a short quiz at the end of each of the modules and receive a certificate after completing the course.

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2.3.5. Service-related competences and Validation:

Working with others, learning through experiences and using creativity are three key pillars to identify, develop and validate service-related competences. Working with others is very important, because we need to know how people react to different situations, and how to find the best offer for the client. Creativity is the next one. As an employee, to find a way how to solve problems in different situations very fast is important. Financial literacy, vision, coping with the uncertainty. In principle, the employees can use the earned certifications to find a better job, but also to be improved. Most of the interviewed people either had no idea about existing frameworks for the validation of those competences or mentioned The Entrepreneurial Skills Pass.

The three most important aspects from EntreComp list for service economy are:

1. Taking the initiative
2. Collaboration
3. Creativity

These are the three most important aspects in general, it is the starting point for any entrepreneurship initiatives. Every aspect is important, but our student has the least deficiencies in these aspects. The only known approaches for competency assessment are grades, diplomas or certificates. Some ideas to achieve this goal are: mobility projects, internship, practical training in school workshops, practical training in companies, practical work in companies, project work, online courses, etc.

The most common way to assess service related competences (in the service economy), is often based on customers feedback and/or the level of customer satisfaction. The term competency applies to knowledge, skills and attitude. The question is, how do we rate and validate competency? In general, there are different types of indicators used for monitoring and evaluation:

Context: context indicators do not directly concern the policy/program, competences being implemented but they help to explain the bigger picture. They are used to contextualize the performance of a program/policy/competence.

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Inputs: what is invested into the implementation of the program/policy/competence. Inputs can be financial resources or human resources.

Process: the activities put in place.

Outputs: these reflect what the program directly produced, meaning the numbers of participants, products, services delivered, etc.

To conclude: Though official legislation has noticed and also forwarded European validation initiatives as outlined above in Albania, the investigations in the practical fields of HEI and business show that there is not much of a validation and assessment practice – especially when it comes to SRC.

As a consequence one would need a comprehensive methodological approach combining the action of the learner (which shows his/her performance) with appropriate assessments.

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2.5.Montenegro

2.5.1. Summary

The research about the status of service-oriented competences in Montenegro is performed by representatives of the University of Donja Gorica and the University of Montenegro who are engaged on the international Erasmus + project E-Viva. The research was realized in 3 stages, as following:

- Desk research
- Survey
- Interview with stakeholder representatives

This research provided answers to numerous questions regarding the current state of service-oriented competences in Montenegro, needs and opportunities for their development, as well as questions regarding the validation of these competences and the conditions for their development. Desk research was carried out by EVIVA working teams of UDG and UOM. The questionnaire, sent to numerous stakeholders in Montenegro, was completed by 80 respondents. The interview was separately conducted by UDG and UOM working teams. Both teams interviewed 1 entrepreneur, 2 professors, 1 student and 1 representative of Chamber of commerce. The results of the interviews of both working teams are presented individually in item 2.3, while a consolidated interview is given in item 3 of this Report. This comprehensive research has indicated that a lot of attention is paid to developing competencies in service industries in Montenegro. Actually, the basic strategic branches of development of the Montenegrin economy are based on services, especially on tourism, transport and partly in agriculture. Montenegro has recognized its strength in the field of service industries and through the reorganization of the economy. In accordance with that, Montenegro is changed its strategic direction, from production-oriented companies to service-oriented companies. It is important to mention that there is a very high interest in study programs that enable development of service competencies. There is no specialized education program for the development of "service oriented competencies" in the country, but these competencies are developed through specialized fields, for example: tourism, hospitality, economics, law, languages and the like. Also, there is no study

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program or module that only deals with the collection and analysis of data about the achievement service-related competences in higher education institutions.

There is no system for validation of competences that are acquired through training and extracurricular activities, but respondents believe that this kind of system is very useful and it should be established. When we talk about teaching methods, there is mostly applied F2F learning with practical teaching in laboratories. However, in the new Law on Higher Education has the obligation to organize 25% of practical courses in study programs at Universities. In accordance with that UOM and UDG intensively work on strengthening cooperation enterprises and private sectors. Universities in Montenegro do not have accredited programs that include e-learning or distance learning. However, in teaching courses, some forms of e-learning (Moodle) are used as support to the traditional teaching.

In line with the previous, it can be concluded that the goals of the E-Viva project are fully aligned with the needs for development service-related competences in Montenegro.

2.5.2. Interpretation

DESK RESEARCH REPORT

Part 1: Service Related Competences (SRC/SPOC) in practice:

A lot of attention is paid to development of competences in service sector in Montenegro. Basic strategic branches of Montenegrin economy development are based on services, especially on tourism, transport, but also on agriculture and its service processes. Montenegro has recognized its potential in the development of service sector and changes its strategic direction of development and performs restructuring of the economy from production oriented to service oriented enterprises through reorganization of economy. Accordingly, Montenegro is aimed to service sector in recent years, and in that terms, creates prerequisites for intensive acquisition of competences for service activities.

There is some statistics about business sector in Montenegro. A significant number of statistic data related to service sector (but also for other sectors) is recorded by state organ of Montenegro- the Statistical Office.

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Also, the Employment Office of Montenegro conduct regular periodical statistic records on the structure of employment in Montenegro in terms of: demand for employees and available workforce per education structure...

State bodies promoting necessity for collection and validation of competences referring to service and other sectors. All competences, acquired at higher (and lower levels of education) institutions, are collected, analysed and adopted, and thereafter classified in the national qualification framework aligned with the European qualification framework, through the body of the National Qualification Council, as well as sectoral commissions.

In that term, all knowledges, competences and outcomes of studying acquired in educational institutions are strictly defined. All literature related to competences and titles in the field of service and other sectors is considered, potentially corrected and adopted at all sectoral commissions before adoption at the National Qualification Framework.

Needs of business sector in Montenegro contributed to promotion of dual education in high schools especially in service sector such as tourism and hospitality mostly for the fact that Montenegro is famous tourist destination and tourist product is something the state counts on.

Study programs at the level of higher education are implemented in accordance with market requirements, i.e. requests of business sector. Namely, competences acquired during the creation of certain study program, must be proved as capable to be used at market, i.e. to fulfil business sector requirements.

Business sector is also frequently appeared as initiators for development of certain study, i.e. educational program. They define levels of required knowledges, competences and skills, i.e. studying outcomes to be mastered by students or pupil. This is important both for service business sector and other fields.

Fields of service sector considered the most significant in Montenegro from the aspect of employment are:

- Tourism,
- Hotel management,
- Medical services,

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- Economics,
- Social work,
- Law,
- Engineering - maintenance,
- Standardization and qualities.

Enterprises for public and private sector announce their attitudes on necessary competences, from the aspect of market at the following manners:

Through the work of sectoral commissions in which they have their representatives,

Through initiative for development of educational programs within sectoral commissions and the national Qualification Framework,

On the basis of seminars and round tables organized in state bodies for example in: the Chamber of Commerce,

Through cooperation with universities throughout alumni clubs/organizations formed by universities,

Through public discussions organized in the public service, but also in other media.

Applicable knowledge for certain field is crucial for employers, thus, they will more often employ persons with practice in specific field performed during the education period. Likewise, communicativeness is the competence especially significant for service sector and it is mostly required in that field. Commitment to consumer is also feature important for employers. Employers especially appreciate this characteristic of employees and are particularly proud of such employees. Also, employers often change employees because of this feature, looking for people who are communicative and fully committed to business and user.

Part 2: Service Related Competences: Higher Education and CPD Modules (cVET)⁸

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There is no specialized educational program in the state for the development of "service-oriented competencies", but these competencies are developed especially for specialized fields, such as tourism, hotel management, economy, law, language and so on. There is also no study program or module that only deals with the collection and analysis of data on acquiring competencies in service activities in higher education institutions.

In the terms of strengthening service-oriented competencies, there is cooperation with foreign universities in order to disseminate knowledge through the mobility of teachers and students, and especially through the organization of modules where the so- double and / or joint degrees are acquired. The rules for the organization of study programs for dual and / or joint degrees have been defined through the Law on Higher Education. For example, the study program: Politics - international relations, which is being implemented with a related Slovenian faculty, is formed at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Montenegro in that manner.

There are efforts to improve students' competences through the involvement of business entities in the educational process at the level of higher education, that is, study programs. The Law on Higher Education defines the obligation to provide 25% practice at program and / or study program at the level of all study programs in higher education organizations, through cooperation with the so-called basics for organizing practical lectures. Activities and plans for the organization of practical classes and certain companies in which practical training will be conducted, are already implemented and adopted at the UoM in that terms. Also, contracts defining the rights and obligations of all parties in the implementation of practical lecture and strengthening competencies based on cooperation between universities and business entities are signed with a certain number of enterprises.

Part 3: Learning Technologies and blended learning in Higher Education

There is no official statistics available on the use of learning technologies at universities. However, depending on the specific faculty, there is an application of some services on courses. These mostly refer to faculties which are more practice oriented and need laboratory research and precise results which cannot be obtained in any other way. Courses are organized on the use of methodology that goes beyond lecturing. Apart from using software, teaching is being increasingly organized around students' needs and their future development. It means that the

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basic modality of learning is increasing student's capabilities through investing in their knowledge but also their life intensity.

Integration of new courses and programmes increasingly introduces new technologies due to the greater need of the market for their introduction. In contrast to faculties that used technologies before, it is social sciences that now try to develop their programmes to be more practice oriented. However, it is still not possible to obtain any official statistics and there is a need of compiling data in order to understand the scope of innovation in this sense.

There are also no universities or faculties that are specialised in delivering blended learning. However, there are activities which are undertaken during research projects, which aim at detailing a new approach or technology that can be used at universities. Some of these are for exclusive use in the project while others may be for the wider audience, especially teachers and students. Unfortunately, there is no database on these activities and each university and even faculty practice their own activities. The number of projects also varies but those oriented at reforms of curricula are especially relevant as they focus on blended learning.

Students use Microsoft technologies, together with similar online applications which help provide distinctive methods of learning and enable students' visualisation beyond the book only. Data analyses by software like STATA or SPSS are being applied, together with various simulation software's which allow combination of different data analysis and programming. UDG also uses laboratories and specialised units for students (e.g. Laboratory for quality and safety of food, Laboratory for photography, Film studio). Entrepreneurial nest is being developed and will be opened soon, allowing students to work on their ideas. It will encourage start-ups development and university will offer its institutional support for all students involved.

At the moment, there is no specifically defined demand for integration of learning technologies in a sense that it is still a developing concept and the one that is not fully utilised. Potential of integration of the learning technologies is recognised but its application is not easily performed. Higher education in Montenegro is still dominantly identified with classical learning environment and both teachers and students are not using the potential of the new technologies. Even if they are aware of the existence of some of these, they are hesitant to introduce them.

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Integration of business sector depends on the interest of the businesses and their understanding of the need for cooperation. Already mentioned examples are a proof of it, but additionally there are some examples.

There is a high demand of practice integration because educational system in Montenegro has for long been idle and theory oriented and developments on the market and in constant innovations in all of the areas increase a need for practice. Numerous examples already mentioned further prove this fact.

Part 4: Job related Competences, Informal learning and Validation

There is no system of validation on the output side, in the sense that there is no software or database for individuals to have their profiles created or something similar. However, as already mentioned, when each of the new programmes at the university is being recognised and accredited, there is a list of competences that is developed for it. Sectoral committees are in charge of each educational and professional area.

Sectoral committees act as assessment agencies on skills and competences control. Committees also have the authority to stop a certain programme for being recognised or to ask for its further assessment and development. This system allows maximum efficiency and recognition of competences which are found to be essential for specific programmes.

Validation of competences is essential for HE institutions because it enables them to know which exact competences, knowledge and skills they are developing. There is no system of validation of vocational trainings and similar educational options. Employers in private sector especially look for these types of education because they provide additional skills which are often ahead of what HE institutions offer. Some of the vocational training are offered by the Employment Agency of Montenegro, through active labour market policies but statistics is only available on the yearly level, with no specific information about persons who participate. However, participants' participation is recognised officially, although there is no system of validation.

There is no IT-based validation system for individuals in Montenegro, but there is an online system which allows finding each of the competences recognised and how they are labelled (www.cko.edu.me). It is essentially related to the reference system and it allows seeing both levels of competences and intended learning outcomes for each of the qualification that is

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developed. Therefore, if interested in exact competences which are being developed, interested parties can see them and find their relationship with what their interest is.

Major organisations involved in work related to VINFL have already been mentioned but their names will be specified here:

Universities

National Council for Education

National Council for Qualifications

Sectoral Committees

Faculties as members of a university submit applications for development of the new programme and together with the application they submit the list of the competences and qualifications that will be developed. The two councils review and approve the application while the sectoral committee in charge of the specific area approves the competencies and defines a new qualification. It is the official process and these are the institutions involved in development of VINFL.

2.6. North Macedonia

2.6.1. Interpretation

The findings in this report are due to the joint efforts of two higher educational institutions in the Republic of Macedonia and academics/coordinators who are part of eVIVA project: Institute for Sociological Political and Juridical Research – Skopje under University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje” and “Mother Tereza University”, Skopje.

Including all three parts of the research analyses it might be concluded the following key findings:

The Principle of Service Orientation in the Republic of North Macedonia are defined and included in: The Law of Public Sector Employees and The Law on General Administrative Procedure. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia considers education, training, research and innovation as key factors for strengthening the national economy and wellbeing of the citizens. These efforts resulted in Entrepreneurial Learning Strategy; Advisory Group monitoring the implementation of the Innovation Strategy; National Council for Higher Education, Science, Innovation and Technology; Fund for Innovation and Technology Development (FITD), etc.

An analysis of the skill needs on the labour market is conducted once a year by the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia. Ministry of Education and Science, launched “Skill development and innovation support project” (SDISP). In the Republic of North Macedonia, the service sector employs half of the employed population, over 99% of the total number of companies are small and medium-sized enterprises, contributing with more than 76% added value.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia considers education, training, research and innovation as key factors for strengthening the national economy and wellbeing of the citizens. These efforts resulted in numerous steps: Entrepreneurial Learning Strategy; Advisory Group monitoring the implementation of the Innovation Strategy; National Council for Higher

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Education, Science, Innovation and Technology; Fund for Innovation and Technology Development (FITD), competent for promoting and encouraging innovations.

The term “service-related competences” did not appear among the researched companies. All emphasized the value of high-quality service and that the client comes first. The following competences/skills were listed as significant: Client-orientation, Innovation, Expertise and integrity, Market oriented skills, Transparent communication.

The collaboration between the business sector and higher education resulted with the establishment of Technology Parks. Technology Parks are venues designed and organized to support innovations usually functioning within universities, also known as research parks or science parks.

Learning Technologies in the sense of supporting learning at work and the application of blended technologies is not present as a specific strategic direction in education policy in the RNM. However, in the last decade there have been several projects in higher and high school education promoting these technologies. The entire education system, particularly high school and higher education underwent program reforms, now created according to learning outcome-based approach. Still, industry maintains the opinion that graduates are difficult to employ due to the problematic adjustability to the working environment and the slow transfer of knowledge and skills in the real working environment.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, so far no programs from the field of informal learning has been accredited – but there are many non formal programs. *The Adult Education Centre* has been working on creating a Validation Non-formal and Informal Learning system (VINFL) in Macedonia since 2014. However, this has resulted in the preparation of several documents, staff training, and the development of legislation for the validation process. The process follows the phases: identification, documentation, evaluation and certification, with trained assessors involved in the third phase, assessment.

The Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) aims to improve the education and training system by applying an outcome-based approach, to alleviate the access to learning in every context and make the results clear for each citizen, to raise the general level of qualifications of the entire population and strengthen the link between qualifications and employment

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opportunities. With the adoption of the Law on the National Qualifications Framework in 2013, and the appointment of an official representative as a full member of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group, the country obliged to harmonize the MQF with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

From the online questionnaires, the following key findings were attracted:

Almost half of the respondents (47,73%) said that they have medium knowledge about Service Related Competences, 31,82%, have low knowledge, and only 20,45% have high knowledge about the concept. The most of the respondents (84%) are not aware of any learning program/learning activity to promote the acquisition of Service-Related Competences. Regarding the informal learning context, the results indicate that the workplace and the internships/traineeships are considered as more important for acquiring Service-Related Competences, then the mobility and voluntary work. This means that the main stakeholders/key actors in the country (HE representatives, VET representatives, business sector representatives, Government/public administration bodies) should actively promote the Service economy concept, at three levels: first to raise the awareness about the concept in general - through multimedia campaigns/strategies for various target groups; then to raise the knowledge about the concept on a more advanced level; and to develop and implement educational and training programmes for acquiring the Service Related Competences which will result with permanent change of the attitudes/behavior;

The respondents think that “Service Related Competences” are very important for “Further Career development” (68,18%) and with the same percent for “Continuing professional development” (68,18%), than for “Finding a job” (61,36%), “Personal development” (54,55%) and at least they opted for “Success in formal education” (38,64%). This finding indicates that respondents are aware about the positive aspects of the SRC, especially regarding the professional and career development and employment prospects.

According the results, from persons who are “service related” it is expected to have high levels of positive aspects and competences as they are leveled: communication, customer orientation and planning and management. It is interesting finding that flexibility is chosen in a very low percentage (2.27%) and conflict solving and negotiation weren’t selected at all. This is probably

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due to the lack of understanding about the concept in general. The communication and customer orientation competences should be the core of the educational/training programs for Service Related Competences.

According to the collected data from surveyed participants it can be seen that over 38% of did not have any idea about validation of competences and even though 82% considered validation of competences important, 82% did not know about approaches for validating service related competences. This means that in the Republic of North Macedonia there is a lack of knowledge about Validation of competences as well as the approaches.

Regarding the instruments such as ECTS, ECVET and EQF surveyed institutions mostly knew about ECTS with 50% while the less known instrument was EQF. The high percentage of not having clear ideas about ECVET and EQF could be mostly as this to instruments are not practiced considerably in Macedonia. ECTS being most know among surveyed participants was also considered most useful instrument. It is important to mention that if these instruments are useful in professional domain participants of the survey answered with don't know on considerable percentage. The findings indicate that also in this area there is a lack of knowledge about the instruments.

According the data received from questionnaires, in the Republic of North Macedonia the majority of the Institutions are using digital learning but still there is a sufficient number that are not using at all any digital learning tool in their Institutions.

In regard to the web learning tools instruments the study shows that Institutions in the country are familiar with the learning tools instruments and they are using them in their personal and professional life, but they are not active users since in many learning tools they responded that they are using sometimes, as for LMS, CMS and Blogs and maybe mainly this happened in public higher education institutions. The data implies that Institutions mainly uses Wiki web browser as learning tool in their individual and professional life, and this argues correctly the balance of the respondent's responses.

It is evident that Institutions in Republic of North Macedonia are familiar with the open learning system (LMS, e-Portfolio) that connects with validation and the majority of the Institutions are

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using those tools but still a solid number don't know about the web aided learning system. The majority expressed that using such tools is useful.

The study shows that Institutions and individuals are interested to be informed in future about the state of development and be invited on funded conferences, webinars and workshops, but they do not express willingness to take part in a short interview or focus group, and maybe this answer is a result of not understanding enough the concept of Service Related Competences.

According to the data received from the focus groups interviews the following key findings has been noticed:

The respondents were not able to specify clear definition of service related competences. They agree that service related competences are the knowledge that graduated students/pupils should have obtained as a result of the education process, which will help them to accommodate fast to the working organization and to the work/employment, as well as to establish appropriate relationships with the customers. They consider service related competences as competences that a country or an individual requires to perform in order to commit intangible outputs.

It was noticed from the interviews that that there is no direct demand for service related competencies in the public and the private sector as well, but there is a great need. This opinion was supported with several examples of bad services in both sectors, which, according to them, are direct consequence of the absence of service related competencies.

According to the participants, both Governmental and Non-Governmental institutions should be engaged in promoting the impact of these competences, furthermore they should give incentives to increase awareness and especially, to the youth as a long term sustainable development. Noted by academics that there are many tools to be used for promotion, with particular emphasis in the role of social media which can be considered be the main channel for distributing information on the perspectives of Services related competences and other marketing tools such. Influencers could play a very important role to advertise and attract more students.

The participants shared the importance of costumer orientation as a key factor on defining entrepreneurship nowadays because the customer is the foundation of any business' success. They are aware there's clearly a lack of entrepreneurial education in the country and the urgent need for a customer-focused strategy if companies/businesses want to survive in the long term in

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a market of rapid change. Customer orientation is especially important when it comes to education. It can offer significant data to measure the extent to which new curricula and scientific activities in HEI can be further developed to fulfil then market's expectations.

The role of Chambers of Commerce is considered as very important in supporting and implementation of the concept of service related competences in the educational process. It is stressed that the chambers of commerce should establish stronger relationship with educational sector to promote this concept, trough organizing joint conferences and education of their own members. Regarding the introduction of the service oriented competences in the national legislation they brought two opinions. The first opinion was that legal obligations would not help a lot and the second opinion was related to internship and the respondents agree that it should be better regulated in the respective laws.

Noticed by the business sector that they can contribute to training in service related competencies by means of scholarships, accepting pupils/students for practical work/internship, etc.

When it comes to the question how can stakeholders of government and administration, in particular education policy institutions, provide better educational approaches related to Service Related Competences, it was found out by the participants that the most important part is to understand the urge of updating educational curriculums and integrating the same ones with countries that have been successful in transforming their educational system towards today's needs. Furthermore, the representatives from administrations suggests that consultants and specialists of the field should be hired in order to bring new policies that would result on improving current educational approaches.

Focus group participants expressed that an actual lack of entrepreneurship in all programmes at HEI is the mind-set to satisfy customers need and later on to calculate risks and profits. The understanding of the definition, the impact of entrepreneurship in many of the challenges that the country faces such as unemployment, brain drain, social inclusion etc. might be a good start for change. Most of them think that there is a total lack when it comes to the presence of a design thinking approach to integrate the customers in the product and service creation. Business representatives consider that the cooperation with professors is good, but it is difficult to come

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to common solutions when it comes to programs for training or education which they need the most for the real business/work practice.

Respondents agree that to use a blend (mix) of different learning modalities to promote Service Related Competences in Macedonia is a perfect combination. The following modalities has been proposed: case studies, role playing games, simulations, clinical teaching with experts from the business, field work where students will be faced with real tasks and problems, e-learning, etc.

Noted that information technology can and should be used for learning of service oriented competences. There is a need of online courses where basic theoretical concepts should be presented, and then, in combination with practical learning, the same should be exercised and learned how to be used in practice. The business sector and the students were not very familiar with the latest learning technologies but respondents from Academia and administration proposed online conferences, skype meetings, TED talks technologies, Software for Learning Management Services, etc.

When asked about the Service related competences and Validation, the interviewees rated as most significant competences the client orientation, communication and flexibility. And, as least competence they rated the leadership, networking and project management.

Related to the assessment of SRC, the respondents consider these methods to be most important for assessment of service oriented competences: direct testing, testing with simulation and testing in real situation (on desk).

The SRC should be certified because there is some kind of chaotic situation among training providers in the country. There are numerous NGOs, training companies and individuals providing different kinds of training, but, unfortunately, these are of a low quality. In their opinion chambers of commerce should be motivated to make an analysis of training providers, in order for good quality trainings to be recognized and later recommended to their members.

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3. Conclusion

3.1. Service-Related Competences and the Service Economy

The researches of the partners (online questionnaires and interviews) showed in general, that service-related competencies are recognized as an important concept. The respondents were mostly familiar with service-related competencies (SRC) and consider them as very important. On the other hand, they were mostly unaware and unfamiliar with programs that promote their acquisition and validation, which may ultimately increase their chances of finding a job.

Most countries consider themselves as being in a transition period from state driven economy to the market driven economy and consider SRC these service-related competences as underdeveloped.

The focus on customer needs is the starting point of every business and must receive greater attention from not only educational institutions but from entrepreneurs too. Albania has a lack of ‘qualified’ entrepreneurs (business owners) in general, but the shortage in the service economy is much greater.

Montenegro identified a high demand in the service sector such as tourism and hospitality mostly for the fact that Montenegro is famous tourist destination and tourist product is something the state counts on.

In the Republic of North Macedonia the term “service related competences” did not appear among the researched companies. However, all respondents emphasized the value of high-quality service and that the client comes first. The following competences/skills were listed as significant: Client-orientation, Innovation, Expertise and integrity, Market oriented skills, transparent communication.

Partners from Serbia stated 80% of job openings require one or more service-oriented skills while almost 50% of students do have access to courses that are relevant for acquisition of service-related competences. In sum, it seems that this project is occurring at the pivotal moment for the proper introduction of service related competencies. When all relevant parties – ministries, employers, employees and industry associations - are seeking proper ways to address the lack of sufficiently developed service related competencies in the Serbian job market, and are trying to

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formulate the best methods to ensure that current employees can upskill in this domain, while new employees and the job market with the relevant competence is that shorten the onboarding time.

3.2.Acquisition of Service-Related Competences

Despite rather clearly articulated strategies, there are currently no separate study programs or even modules that are specifically designed to help students acquire competencies and soft skills relevant for the service economy. In the republic of North Macedonia most of the respondents (84%) are not aware of any learning program/learning activity to promote the acquisition of Service Related Competences. At the time when this report is being compiled, service-related competencies can only be acquired through trainings and workshops that are organized sporadically and irregularly by university lectures at their home institutions, or through paid courses, trainings and workshops. The partners generally report that the Service Relation is somewhat included in the curriculum, but very often it turned out that there is no conscious consideration of what students acquire in terms of SR-competences.

In most countries there are currently no separate study programs or even modules that are specifically designed to help students acquire competencies and soft skills relevant for the service economy. At the time when this report is being compiled, service-related competencies can only be acquired through trainings and workshops that are organized sporadically and irregularly by university lectures at their home institutions, or through paid courses, trainings and workshops.

3.3.Competences

Albanian partners state that without entrepreneurial competencies students can hardly be enough innovative, adaptive and flexible regarding ever changing labor market. To increase demand, it is necessary to show students that entrepreneurship and Service (client) Orientation is a very important segment in business, especially among students, through various seminars, training courses and competitions that will stimulate the needs of the service economy in young people. All the interviewers agree, that it seems to be difficult to integrate service-related competences in curricula of universities. However, as one interviewee states: “I would recommend more courses that include not only entrepreneurship education but also courses that have as on focus clients and service-related competences”.

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As far as the identification of competences is concerned there is a lack of clear definitions and descriptions of service-related competences. In BiH for example, the only known approaches for competency assessment are grades, diplomas or certificates. Most countries report that neither employers nor the employees are fully aware of various European standards that can be used to validate and document competencies and skills.

They also report that employers are getting somewhat sceptical about the officially recognized qualifications in the form of university diplomas because they are starting to notice the effects of grade inflation. Consequently, e-VIVA is considered to be a project to support universities in such a way, that they can use it to combat the grade inflation and introduce grades which are based on descriptors of what students can or cannot do.

3.4. Blended learning

The partners who answered questions related to that topic report that the best locations to learn Service-Related Competences are both classroom as well as real business processes and real business projects. The best way is the blend (mix) of different learning modalities.

Partner propose it would be worth considering organizing hands-on type of training, where students will not only listen, but got engaged into discussion. Those might be short, meaningful training sessions, held by an expert exhibiting very good competences.

Businesses should be increasingly considered as (practical) learning spaces since they can provide better environment by providing attractive scholarships and traineeships for students.

Albanian partner state that “besides theoretical input most universities provide a lot of opportunities for project work and internships in cooperation with business and enterprises. The students benefit from the practical experiences, for the companies this is an important instrument for recruiting. The student reported that they had a lot of opportunities to work practically and also the connection to enterprises was good, but there was no concrete teaching activity on service-related competences, despite one lecture during the whole studies.

Thus, the more variety in learning modalities available, the more effective and efficient the process will be. Blending learning modalities would be an efficient way for students to learn and adapt skills on their own in every service sector. Students can learn on their own, leading to cost

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reduction. Online learning is efficient, however needs proper follow up to be effective. A combination of learning from both companies and universities will not only bridge the gap between the theory and practice but also provide a better understanding of what companies demand.

This is an important point which will be referred to in the following chapters (“recommendations”) since e-VIVA seeks to innovate the teaching and training by offering “Competence Oriented Learning” as an educational approach to (create and) acquire SRC in an appropriate way.

3.5. Validation

In most Balkan countries the official legislation has noticed and also forwarded European validation initiatives. However, the investigations in the practical fields of HEI and business show that there is not much of a validation and assessment practice – especially when it comes to SRC.

Partners from Montenegro, for instance, state that “There is no system for validation of competences that are acquired through training and extracurricular activities, but respondents believe that this kind of system is very useful and it should be established.”

The respondents from the Republic of Macedonia state that SRC should be certified because there is some kind of chaotic situation among training providers in the country. There are numerous NGOs, training companies and individuals providing different kinds of training, but, unfortunately, these are of a low quality

As consequence one would need a comprehensive methodological approach combining the action of the learner (which shows his/her performance) with appropriate assessments leading to appropriate assessments.

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4. Recommendations

The findings of the country reports show that the Western Balkan countries are rapidly developing into service economies, thus needing Service Related Competences in their workforce.

By now there is a lack of appropriate connections between the HE sector and business as far as the competence development of SRC is concerned. There are no appropriate studying and learning approaches nor is there a reasonable approach to validate these competences.

It has to be stated that also in the European Members states a reasonable approach for Competence Oriented Learning and Validation of these Competences is still missing on a broader scale. Hence the e-VIVA project also contributes to innovation in this sector.

Competence Oriented Learning and Validation is a rather new concept which goes along an innovative idea of teaching and learning (in Higher Education and beyond). In order to implement such an approach the stakeholders should understand the need of a paradigm shift from traditional teaching (which was appropriate for traditional, industry and bureaucratic dominated societies) to competence oriented learning (which is needed in service rendering societies). One of the main differences between to traditional and the innovative approach is the shift to a more learner centered educational approach which is neither common in the EU member states nor in the Western Balkan (candidate) countries.

Hence the recommendations on hand will first outline the modern societal and educational theories and conclusions before developing the practical recommendations for an appropriate training and learning approach.

4.1. Learning 2030 - Didactics and Mathetics

Technology supported learning environments are increasingly proving to be responsive to the individual pro-file and the web history of the user. Users will increasingly learn in an environment of their own, which differs from that of others.

This implies that the contextual component of competence (e.g. environment, preferences and expected quality) becomes more and more important and has to be considered in teaching and learning.

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Society is moving in a direction in which we all operate in a rich and increasingly personalized work-learning environment (triggered for instance by the home-office and other non-traditional working modes). For matters of education and learning this implies that learning increasingly needs to become a mutual process rather than a one, or two-way process.

This requires new and different competences from both learners and trainers (including mentors, coaches and other learning supporters).

4.1.1. Didactics - Competences for Teachers and Trainers

To tackle these new challenges from the instructional point of view we need appropriate and specifically adapted approaches to teaching and learning in order to cope with the new societal (learning) environments.

It will require a paradigm change from a formalized, structured, subject and supply-oriented training and qualification approach to a more informal, demand oriented, needs-driven and individualized learning design.

In a time of nearly unlimited access to information, knowledge, facts (and fakes) the main task of teachers and trainers is not merely the processing of knowledge anymore, but rather the facilitation and (self-)management of competences of their learners.

4.1.2. Mathetics - Competences for Learners

In future, we will not only need competent teachers but also competent learners. Not just smart training and teaching skills will be required but also advanced learning competences.

We view teaching and learning as two sides of the same coin- although this is not a new idea. Already Comenius, who developed the concept of “Didactics” as the “Art of Teaching” also coined the term “Mathetics” as the “Art of Learning” in the middle of the 17th century.

The concept was re-discovered in the nineteen seventies by a few progressive educational scientists; however, it did not play a role in the increasingly formalized educational systems in the following decades up to 2020.

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In the third decade of the Millennium however, our societies are facing fundamental changes which will also affect our professional and educational lives. Mathematics, as a way to facilitate self-learning, may become a key approach to teaching and learning in 2030.

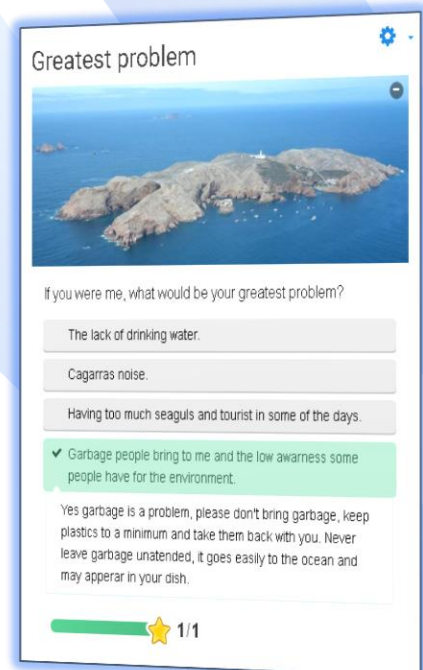
The affective (emotional, attitude and value related) dimension is of the utmost importance for self-learning competences, for instance:

by using attractive, demand driven learning formats that create curiosity and motivation,
which bring into play the rules and norms of central societal values and
which consider the individual learning context and pre-knowledge and existing competence levels.

When it comes to technology aided learning, we are as yet scratching the surface and still admire the shiny but often didactically very poor video based, technology-driven learning assignments. These are too often just comprised of knowledge delivery or behaviouristic drills and as a consequence relate to low competence levels.

In most cases the non-cognitive components of learning are neglected or not considered even though we know about their importance. However, the affective competence dimension is what distinguishes human from computer-based learning.

In 2020 many educationalists are talking about “digital learning”⁹, however, some refer exclusively to digital tools, others to solely video-based learning formats, while some other experts put nearly every didactic model in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) context. Today, many learning technologies (among them also Open Educational Resources (OER) tools like H5P) still offer rather poor didactic options and suffer from the limitations of “programmed learning”, while other “hard coded” learning apps are lacking the options to design multiple learning spaces



⁹ which creates a kind of contradiction in terms since it reduces learning to digital on-off processes and therefore comes as a completely misleading metaphor

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for the planning and delivery of various contents. Nevertheless, there are open source learning management systems ((LMS e.g. moodle) and e-portfolios (mahara) which are in use in many institutions in all educational sectors and which offer a fairly wide range of structuring, designing, delivery and methodological options and tools. However, the created learning environments are often unattractive for the learners – too complicated, too much related to formal “learning”. In many cases these LMS are just used as carriers for learning materials.

Whilst technology has changed rapidly, there remains a distinct lack of adequate didactic blended learning competences which will be necessary to help us explore the full potential of the new learning technologies. In the overall discussion we should not forget the threat that in our ever more technology-dependent societies, the “direct encounters” of social and socialized learning in the real world, may vanish behind a digital learning facade promoting just behavioristic, programmed learning assignments. We run the risk of detaching learning from the lived experience and of becoming isolated behind our screens.

It is important to state that we are not taking an anti-technology stance here: Digital learning offers great opportunities and we have been promoting blended learning since the beginning of the millennium – however we feel strongly that it should always be used to promote human learning and not to determine it.

We believe that it is not only the problem of the technologies but more the problem of the old-fashioned learning and teaching designs which prevent us from achieving a more successful use of attractive blended learning approaches which encourage learners to start and continue learning on higher competence levels.

If our aim is to promote more individualized, user-centred learning we have to change the educational concepts and training, teaching and coaching approaches – at least to some extent. Therefore, we consider a modern adult education system to be so important.

We have to enable and empower our learners to use learning technology in an appropriate and meaningful way, to make them drivers of the development and not just the passengers of externally driven learning programmes.

In the third decade of the Millennium, competitive economies in liberal and sustainable societies need creative, innovative, communicative, collaborative and critical thinking workforce and

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citizens. The old acceptance of ‘Adult Education’ as either a social luxury or as merely ‘re-tooling’ a workforce as a cheaper alternative to automation has to be challenged. If our aspiration is to move to a truly circular economy where our civilization’s resources are preserved, valued and continuously up cycled then we have to apply this doctrine not just to energy, materials and the environment, but to people as well.

Education must respond to these needs and challenges.

It has to become less formal and more flexible, open and participatory. It has to offer a multitude of different entry gates for adult learners with interfaces between the formal and informal sector.

In a more learner-centred perspective, training will be more about support of navigation on the individual leaning pathway and collaboration with others than about pre-determined content and programmed learning.

Hence, we should expect a shift from teaching to learning and from instruction to more self-centred learning.

Mathetics – the art of learning - is going to become a crucial element in this development and it requires a competence-oriented learning and training approach. It is aiming for self-development and empowerment of the learners rather than their formal qualification.

Today we have reached a state of play in which the original differences of theories no longer substantially divide the experts. As in so many societal domains people pick and choose; they select the elements they find useful and compose their own mix of elements from the available theories and concepts. However, the mainstream approach to adult learning and education today includes elements of:

1. Social constructivism, as well as-
2. processes of creating and giving personal meaning, and personal growth, together with-
3. Blended learning in which the virtual environment plays an important role.

These three elements form the background against which we have opted for a competence-oriented approach to learning, educating and validating learning.

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4.2. Competence acquisition

4.2.1. The Concept of Competence

Competences as defined by various European bodies, as well as by educational experts throughout and beyond Europe, consist of three interrelated ingredients:

Knowledge (cognition),

Skills (capabilities and the overt behavioural repertoire) and

Attitudes (emotions and values).

Competences consist of a combination of cognitive, behavioural and affective elements¹⁰ required for effective performance of a real-world task or activity. A competence is defined as the holistic synthesis of these components.

If we see it this way it may be explained as the (inner) potential of a person to tackle a task.

From another (an external) perspective a competence may again be divided in three aspects. A competent person is able to:

demonstrate behaviour

in a specific context and

at an adequate level of quality.

¹⁰ knowledge, attitudes and capabilities (to be exchanged?)

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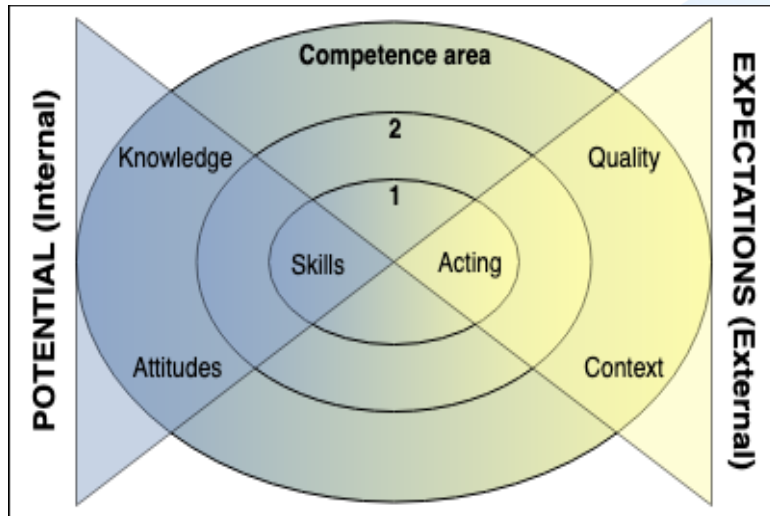


Fig. 1: Bow tie model of competence components

The “bow-tie model” in Figure 1 is a visualization of all competence components and their interdependencies, brought together in one picture.

In the model knowledge (as is quality) is only one component. We know that what is often criticized in formal education, is that feeding knowledge into learners’ heads and then assessing the extent of its retention is simplistically used to measure ‘quality’.

In this more accurate representation, the circle where the two triangles meet can be understood as a kind of “performance lens”. Here, skills and capabilities are acted out and become externally visible with the activities and behaviors (of the learners). At the same time the performance lens also covers the other internal aspects (cognitive and affective) and external aspects (quality and context).

Knowledge and cognition are needed to understand the content matter, theories, principles, functionalities and the own behavior.

The affective dimension is vital since learning is always connected to emotions and values which bring in curiosity, motivation and volition (commitment) to learn and develop more.

Eventually the context also becomes a crucial factor since it determines the environment in which the individual has to perform – and it is certainly a different matter to solve an exercise or to engage in

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role play or to tackle a challenge in real life. At the same time, this critical element of contextualization brings in the quality aspect.

The bow-tie model visualizes that, for a holistic understanding of a competence, the performances should neither be reduced to just the knowledge and quality aspect or only the behavior.

It demonstrates that the shape and the size of the performance lens will indicate the level and quality of a competence. Competence levels are schematically indicated as circles in this model – meaning that an individual is more competent the larger the area covered by the circle is and the more equally all the aspects are covered.

This is how educational scientists may describe what competences are.

To put this in terms perhaps better understood by the layman, this implies that what matters is not only what we know about things, but more importantly it is what we are able to do with this knowledge, and whether we are able to go on developing our abilities.

Should education make learners knowledgeable, or should it make them competent? That is no longer the question.

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4.2.2. Competence Taxonomies

The increasing level of control (management) over a particular competence can also be called a 'competence level'. This implies that a 'competence' is a dynamic concept – competences grow while learning. The question on how to measure and document different competence levels is as old as it is complex. It has probably challenged generations of educationalists on practical, administrative and political levels; in formal education but also in professional development domains, such as in Human Resources.

The problem in measuring competences is not only a certain ambiguity in the term 'competence', caused for instance by different connotations in different languages, but also by different cultural views on competence and learning theory.

Additional complexity comes in as competences are – unlike (school) subjects – always dependent on their contexts. Teamwork competences are (among others) dependent on the team composition and the task; leadership competences are dependent on the group and the environment in which it is practiced and teaching competences relate to the learning environment, the students and their familiarity with the learning schemes – among many other contextual aspects.

In order to operationalize competences, one needs certain reference points against which competences can be described.

Taxonomies are such reference systems.

They are the major instruments to classify, and later to measure and document competence levels.

One of the best-known taxonomies was developed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 as Taxonomy of Learning Objectives. He differentiates 3 main areas:

Taxonomy for the area of cognitive behavior

Taxonomy for the area of affective behavior

Taxonomy for the area of psycho-motor behavior

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Fig. 2: Taxonomy according to Bloom¹¹

Bloom's taxonomy has been constantly further developed by his followers (Anderson/Krathwohl and others) and describes cognitive objectives, psycho-motor objectives and affective objectives along a number of quality levels.

A second, well known taxonomy is for instance the European Qualification Framework and the related Credit Transfer Systems (ECTS and ECVET).

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competence
Level 1	Basic general knowledge	basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
Level 2	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	work or study under supervision with some autonomy
Level 3	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems

¹¹ Heer (2012), Iowa State University, CCBYSA

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Level 4	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
Level 5	Comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change review and develop performance of self and others
Level 6	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study	manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
Level 7	Highly specialized knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
Level 8	Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research

Fig. 3: EQF-Taxonomy

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Both taxonomies not only differ in structure (EQF is clustered in Knowledge, Skills and Autonomy/Responsibility and has 8 levels while Bloom distinguished Cognitive, Psycho-Motor and Affective traits on 4-6 levels).

The main difference between these taxonomies – and this is often forgotten – is their purpose.

While ‘learning’ was in the focus of Bloom’s taxonomy, ‘qualification’ is the main driver for the establishment of the EQF.

What all taxonomies have in common is that they aim to describe competence dimensions (the vertical columns) and competence levels (the horizontal competence qualities) with the help of learning outcome descriptors. These learning outcome descriptors have to be precise and consistent in order to facilitate distinguishing between different competence quality levels.

There are several other competence models and taxonomies which try to explain and describe competences and try to operate them for different purposes.

The REVEAL group has developed its own taxonomy (LEVEL5) based on the post-Bloom taxonomy in a blend with a derivate of the emotional intelligence taxonomy. It consists of Knowledge, Skills (capabilities) and Attitudes (emotions/values) on 5 levels. This taxonomy facilitates assessing, documenting but also planning competence developments in highly context-dependent environments such as learning in mobility or learning on the job or in leisure time activities.

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LEVEL	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS Capabilities	ATTITUDES Emotions/Values
5	Know where else... (Transfer Knowledge, <i>Strategic Knowledge</i>)	Transferring Developing/ Constructing <i>Versatility</i>	Incorporation (Internalising) <i>„Unconscious“ Competence</i>
4	Know when... Practical (Procedural knowledge)	Discovering/ acting independently (disturbed systems)	Commitment <i>Affective self-regulation (Willing)</i>
3	Know how... Theoretical knowledge	Deciding/ selecting (Known systems)	Appreciation Motivation
2	Know why... (Distant understanding)	Applying Imitating (Exercising)	Perspective taking (Curiosity)
1	Know-that... Basic Perception	Perceiving Listening	Self orientation Neutral

Fig. 4: LEVEL5 Taxonomy

As Fig. 4 shows, the LEVEL5 taxonomy comes with general descriptors ('level titles') which are derived partly from Bloom's systems and partly from other taxonomies and concepts, like levels of 'emotional intelligence' and 'affective competence' and affective self-regulation.

The LEVEL5 taxonomy is the basic system for so called 'reference systems' in which the taxonomy is transferred to distinctive competences.

In the reference systems competences are contextualized with the help of specific learning outcome descriptors for each of the cells.

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N	COGNITIVE/KNOWLEDGE		ACTIVITY		AFFECTIVE	
	Level-Title ¹	Individual description/explanatory statement ²	Level-Title ³	Individual description/explanatory statement ²	Level-Title ³	Individual description/explanatory statement ²
5 ⁴	Know where else ⁵ (knowledge for Transfer ⁶)	Knows how to develop high quality flexible, adaptive learning environments and programmes for competence oriented learning which promote COL related to contexts which are not familiar ⁷	Developing ⁸ Constructing ⁹ Transfer ¹⁰	Is able to transfer competence oriented learning systems to other domains ¹¹ "	Incorporation ¹² Internalisation ¹³	Striving to continuously develop the teaching and learning process to facilitate competence oriented learning processes in other domains and contexts ¹⁴
4 ⁴	Know when ⁵ (Implicit understanding ⁶)	Being able to plan and develop COL programmes for contexts (in lessons, projects, extracurricular activities etc.) ⁷	Discovering ⁸ acting independently ⁹	Can develop programmes, modules and that include competence oriented learning activities in the own programme context ¹¹	Commitment ¹² Volition ¹³	Is pro-active to apply competence oriented learning in other fields of the own learning environment ¹⁴
3 ⁴	Know how ⁵	Knows how to plan and develop a competence oriented environment in regard to: ⁷ •Assessing learners' needs and motivations ⁸ •Designing and constructing trainings and programmes ⁹ •Planning and designing the learning process ¹⁰ •Deploying different learning methods, styles and techniques ¹¹ •Creating competence oriented learning offers ¹² •Creating an open learning environment ¹³	Deciding/ selecting ⁸	Can plan the a selection of competence oriented learning units (resources, tasks and assignments based on the COL approach ¹¹ Being able to evaluate the own learning units according to COL quality criteria ¹²	Appreciation ¹² Motivation ¹³	Is motivated to be more involved in the COL approach ¹⁴
2 ⁴	Know why ⁵ (Distant understanding ⁶)	Knows that competence oriented learning brings specific additional requirements to the task of developing effective learning experiences ⁷	Using, ⁸ limiting ⁹	Can choose and deliver learning activities to be included in a competence oriented learning process as provided in the REVEAL exercises ¹¹	Curiosity ¹² Perspective taking ¹³	Is open and interested to learn about new teaching and learning concepts that facilitate learning related to new contexts and competences ¹⁴
1 ⁴	Know-what/know that ⁵	Being aware that competence oriented learning is a way of approaching education affect his future educating/developing tasks ⁷	Perceiving ⁸	Perceives that there are other ways of teaching than subject orientation ¹¹	Self oriented, neutral ¹²	Has no strive and sees no reason to apply new learning and teaching approaches. Is happy with the own way of teaching and training ¹⁴

Fig. 5: LEVEL5 Reference system with general descriptors on teamwork

With the help of the reference systems each competence can be described properly on 5 quality levels along their three basic dimensions: the knowledge, skills (capabilities) and affective (value) competence components.

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4.2.3. Competence Development and Learning Pathways

The development of competences is a very complex matter and is certainly not always a linear process, despite terms like ‘learning trajectory’ which imply the contrary.

Competence development is a process which is highly dependent on the competence itself¹², the potentials (stages) of the learners and, as stated above, also on the external factors such as context and quality expectations.

LEVEL5 was designed to facilitate and arrange learning in a competence-oriented way in all kinds of possible learning settings, be they formal, non-formal or informal (but not ‘unintentional’¹³).

A learning facilitator may design, based on a sound reference system, a learning pathway which crosses certain learning outcomes/objectives and different quality levels.

KNOWLEDGE		SKILLS Capabilities		ATTITUDES Emotions/Values
Knowing where else (strategic transfer)	Knowing how to transfer idea creation skills and concepts into other contexts. Knowing how to help other people act successfully in different entrepreneurial structures in this respect.	Developing, constructing, transferring	Being able to transfer ideation and prototyping strategies into new business contexts. Actively planning and creating new entrepreneurial activities based on ideating and prototyping.	Incorporation Having internalised ideation and prototyping as a fundamental personal entrepreneurship mindset. Being an inspiration for others in their ideation and prototyping activities.
Knowing when (implicit understanding)	Knowing when to apply right instruments from the portfolio of different ideation and prototyping approaches and tools. Knowing when to use certain ideation and prototyping strategies.	Discovering acting independently	Deliberately searching for and selecting appropriate ideation and prototyping techniques and instruments for the own business. Creating and executing an ideation and prototyping strategy for the own context and professional domain.	Self-regulation, Commitment Being determined and pro-active in using and improving ideation and prototyping in the own environment. Finding it important to be creative in this respect.
Knowing how	Knowing different ideation and prototyping approaches, techniques related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotting opportunities Creating ideas Working towards a Vision Valuing ideas Checking for Sustainability. Theoretically knowing how to use along an ideation and prototyping concept.	Deciding, selecting	Occasionally taking part in non structured activities related to the creation of ideas. Choosing singular tools and prototyping tools from a given (known) portfolio	Motivation/ appreciation Valuing ideation and prototyping in general. Being motivated to develop own ideation and prototyping competences and visions.
Knowing why (distant understanding)	Having basic knowledge on creativity and innovation. Knowing that idea creation, a multiperspective view on the ideas and the check of ideas is an essential part of the product/service and business development. Understanding basic aspects of the ideation and prototyping.	Imitating	Occasionally taking part in non structured activities related to the creation of ideas. Carrying out ideating actions when being instructed to.	Perspective taking Being curious and interested in ideating and spotting of opportunities.
Knowing what	Knowing that entrepreneurship is based on innovation and the creation of ideas.	Perceiving	Perceiving and recognising the concept of creating ideas and opportunities without taking further steps.	Self-orientation Perceiving the concept of creating ideas and opportunities without relating it to oneself.

Fig. 6: Schematic learning pathway

¹² language competences for instance usually develop in a series of plateaus rather than in linear or exponential ways while other competences can develop in a more linear fashion)

¹³ Reference to annex „Informal learning“

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Fig. 6 visualizes the learning process as a meandering, but upwardly moving trail. For facilitators of competence-oriented learning the reference system is a central instrument in the learning design process.

4.2.4. The Engine of the Learning Process

There are a number of circular process charts that are used in management and human learning and development. Among others there are, for instance, the Think-Do-Act Circle (Levin) used as a background model for his concept of Action Research; the Deeming Circle in Quality Management (PDCA) and David Kolb's approach to Experiential learning¹⁴.

A circular approach has the big advantage that it always comes back to its beginning and provides as such the opportunity to check if a planned status has been reached. Hence management and learning circles support iterative developments that are of growing importance in our professional lives, for instance in programming and design thinking processes.

From the learning point of view these principles are extremely important since they offer different (interesting and attractive) modes to approach a subject and at the same time offer “reflection points” – quasi “fermatas” in the process which invite to think about what has been achieved and what is still ahead. At the same time, they also support the learning-by-doing principle.



¹⁴ In his models Kolb considers certain learning preferences and learning stages (e.g. doing, reflection, evaluation etc.) and combines them in a cyclic process.

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Fig. 7: The components of competence

Fig. 7 is a model which includes the main drivers for learning and competence development. It further develops the (still rather static) bow-tie model and illustrates the dynamics of competence development as a circular process.

The light blue lower sector represents the knowledge, skills and attitudes that serve as the potential of the learner to use these learning outcomes once they are needed. The upper sector includes the actual behavior in a concrete context at a certain level of quality.

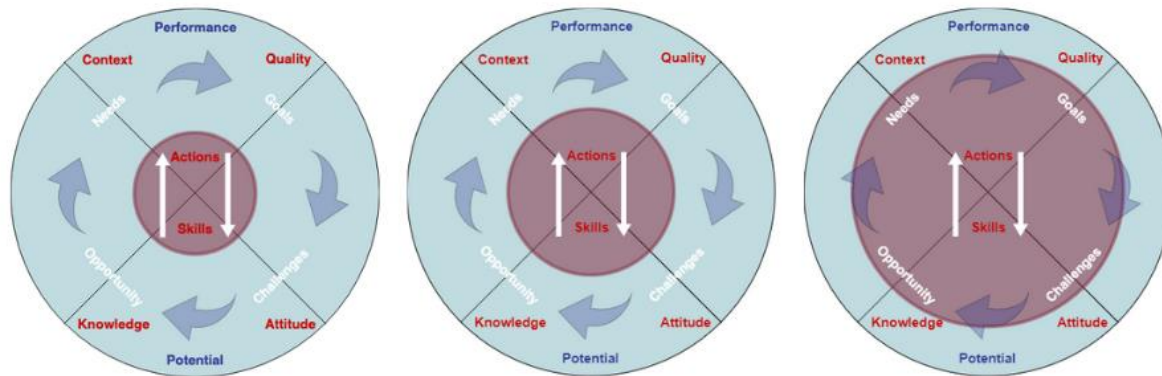


Fig. 8: Development of components of competence

The circle in the middle of the scheme includes the actual behaviour that shows the level of control over a particular competence – the competence level which can grow with every circle around the process, starting for instance with the identified needs, converted by reflection into goals and objectives taking on board challenges and opportunities to come to a higher construction and competence level.

The social constructivist learning process is conceived as a kind of engine in which the actual experience of performing in a context, and finding out to what extent this has an adequate quality/effect, leads to a need to find out more about it, to develop skills and to get motivated to again try to perform but now at a hopefully higher level of quality. Thus, the experiential process and the acquisition process inspire each other and bring the learner in a spiral trajectory to a higher level of performance and to an increased potential to do so.

4.2.5. Competence Oriented Learning and Education

In this section we move from general ideas on what competences are to competence-oriented education. Competence based learning and competence-based education do not consist of traditional teaching situations. They are based on the idea that the learners learn by experience and discovery. This concept has an impact on how learners may be educated. The idea is that learners need to be actively involved in the learning situation. They learn best in meaningful contexts and in co-operation and interaction with others and with their environment. Thus, they enable themselves to acquire knowledge, construe knowledge and check and cross check their newly constructed ideas with those of others. Of course, this in no way denies the importance of teaching; it emphasises the necessity of teaching in a highly responsive and learner-centred way without neglecting the obligation of showing learners new horizons and perspectives and enthusiasm for things they may never yet have heard of.

Key features of Competence Based Education

Competence based learning requires an approach to education that differs from the traditional approaches to teaching. In competence-based education one tends to stress the importance of powerful, or rich learning environments, that enable students/learners to engage in meaningful learning processes. The most distinctive features of this approach may be summarized as follows:

Meaningful contexts

For learning to take place it is recommended to create or to look for meaningful contexts in which students will in a natural way experience the relevance and the meaning of the competences to be acquired.

Multidisciplinary approach

Competences are holistic and consequently the educative approach needs to be integrative and holistic as well.

Constructive learning

The philosophy of competence-based education has its roots in the social constructivism that pervades our views on learning today. Learning is conceived as a process of

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constructing one's own knowledge in interaction with one's environment, rather than as a process of absorbing the knowledge others try to transfer to you. The consequence of this view is that educative processes are better when they are constructive. By focusing on the construction of models, products, guidelines, rules of thumb, reports, or other tangible outputs the learning easily and naturally will turn out to be constructivist. This is the opposite approach from using learning processes that focus on information processing first, after which the actual application of the knowledge will have to wait for another time.

Cooperative, interactive learning (with peers, teachers and heritage providers etc.)

The basic idea behind competence-based education is to help learners to develop and construct their own knowledge and seek ways to make optimal use of other people's competence in their learning itinerary. This is what social constructivism is about.

Co-operation and interaction are both domains of learning as well as vehicles of learning in other domains. If learning is supposed to be self-initiated, self-regulated, and aimed at developing personal competences, the educative approach must allow for diversity in needs and related to that in goals and objectives. This requires an open approach in which education includes dialogues between learners and educators about expectation, needs, goals, choices etc.

Discovery learning

Open learning processes require learning that may be characterized as active discovery as opposed to receptive learning. This does not imply that learning content should not be made available and accessible. It means that the way of acquiring this knowledge or these competences, should not be just a process of providing information, but should always be embedded in a discovery-based approach.

Reflective learning

Competence based learning requires, apart from a focus on the key competences, also an emphasis on the learning processes as such. By reflecting on one's own needs, motivation, approach, progress, results etc. one develops learning competences/strategies that may be

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considered *meta-competences*. The competence meant here is usually referred to as the process of 'learning to learn'.

Personal(ised) learning

In the competence-oriented theories learning is conceived as a process of constructing one's own personal knowledge and competences. Information, knowledge, strategies etc. only become meaningful for a person if they become an integral part of one's own personal body of knowledge and competences. In education this implies that students need to be able to identify with the contexts, the persons, the situations and interests that are included in the learning domains involved.

4.3. Validation

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is one of the major educational initiatives in Europe. It has been developed since 2002 and comes with a number of very powerful instruments like the EQF, ECVET and EUROPASS which have been promoted in the European Educational field. The main purpose is to make skills and competences of the individuals visible, transparent and transferable and with it to contribute to European mobility and cohesion.

The year 2018 marked the official European introduction of validation of informal and non-formal learning in political and administrative structures in all European member states.

Validation of competences is an integral part of the applications for KA1 projects. Hence Adult Education professionals should be competent in validation.

Up to now, however, validation of competences is still unknown territory to the vast majority of (adult) educators in Europe.

Our surveys over the last few years¹⁵ show that a competence validation is not being managed, its' potential usefulness is not even explored and the need for it remains undiscovered by the large majority of educational stakeholders in Europe. The reasons are manifold, and it certainly requires a larger publication than this to explain them.

Validation is often reduced to certification, connected only to the delivery of proofs of attendance or considered as a rather formal exercise to deliver some kind of proof that learners crossed a certain threshold for whatever reason and for whichever purpose. In the utilitarian world of purely work-related learning, the only driver for this is often regulatory compliance by the employer.

It has to be emphasized though, that the validation of competences can be far more than just another (isolated) assessment and certification exercise. It is also a great opportunity to invent new forms of learning and to improve teaching, training and learning design.

It inherits the identification, documentation, assessment and certification and related counselling, training and learning activities.

¹⁵ PROVIDE, IMPACT, REVEAL

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Most educational stakeholders in Europe are still a long way from a feasible and attractive integration of competence validation in their training offers.

However, innovative learning formats (especially also online, blended technology supported) can contribute a lot to holistic learning approaches which also include validation processes, be it identification, assessment and documentation and eventually also certification.

4.3.1. Levels of Formality in Learning

Since the full title of the concept is called “Validation of non-formal and informal learning” it is crucial to understand the concept of formalization in learning and education.

As with many formal structures in society we take our education systems for granted – we consider them as quasi-natural systems. We are simply used to them, and many of us (educationalists) never really question them or reflect about major principles.

Some official documents define ‘informal learning’ as a ‘precursor to learning’ or ‘unintentional’ learning; in other words: learning which cannot be influenced. However, the term ‘informal learning’ was coined in the 1970s in connection with adequate (informal) learning strategies to educate citizens in the former European colonies. In this case it was the opposite of ‘unintended’. In connection with validation the term was hijacked and used for a rather unconscious state of competence acquisition which can be exploited for qualification purposes.

Some other approaches developed concepts of the ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ which at least have a learning aspect in it.

However, at the beginning of the invention of validation of non-formal and informal learning, the ‘learning’ part was not more than a pre-stage that was not considered at all.

As well as this, more than 15 years after the first official concept and 10 years after the specifications of VINFL¹⁶ there is still the danger that either validation is treated as an add-on to adult education or conversely that adult education is not a part of validation (which is far worse). In this case (and from a solely utilitarian point of view) validation would become just a smart tool for qualification, an instrument to speed up certification processes and to produce

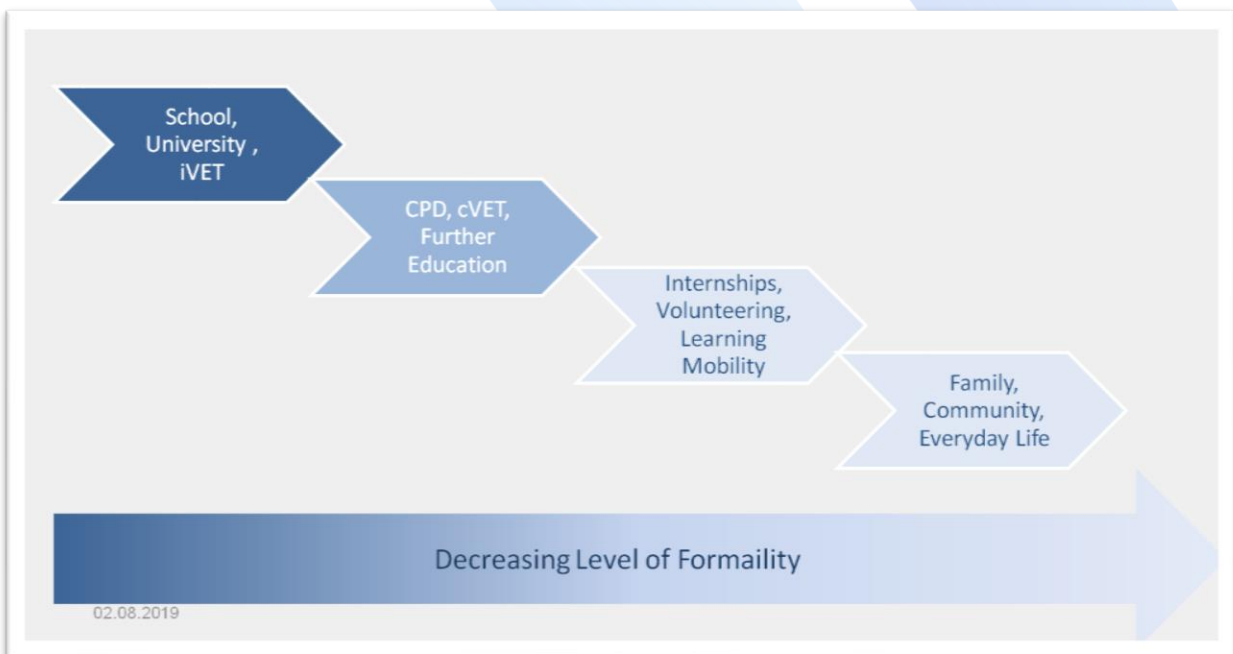
¹⁶ VINFL validation of non-formal and informal learning specs 2009, European Commission

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certified individuals without development of their competences. This is exactly the structural threat of validation for informal and non-formal adult and youth education: the risk is that they might become obsolete since learners (or more likely their employers or the state) only need assessments and certifications and not the learning part – especially where training providers are being ‘paid by results’

With the 2016 guidelines for VINFL it seems that also the CEDEFOP¹⁷ realized this danger and the fears expressed by some of the AE and youth stakeholders¹⁸ and emphasized the necessity for guidance, counselling and accompanied training.

However, what is missing is a holistic approach to integrate Validation in Adult Learning, not only for the sake of the individual learner but also as an improvement of the quality of the learning offer and as a starting point to Competence Oriented Learning. To fully understand all implications of the concept of “Validation of Informal and Non-Formal learning” (and its integration into COL) it is worth taking the time to reflect a bit on the nature of formality and informality in education.



¹⁷ Cedefop (European Center for the Development of Vocational Training) is one of the EU’s decentralised agencies. Founded in 1975 and based in Greece

¹⁸ Who still clashed in the 2013 conference on validation of informal learning

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Fig. 9: Learning offers in relation to the level of formalization

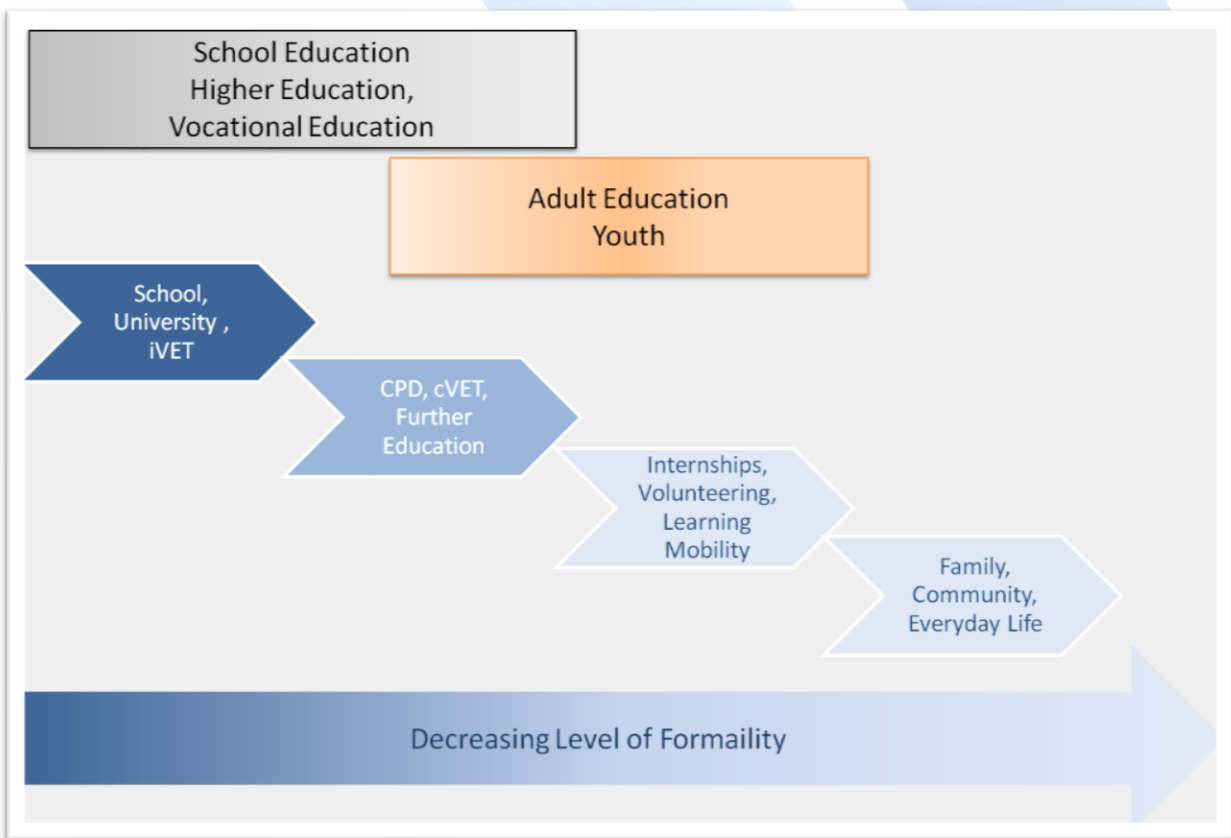
Fig. 9 shows the main educational domains and training/learning offers along a decreasing level of formality.

From the purpose point of view the focus of formal education (in school, university, iVET) is clearly on qualification – as a doorway into the labor market.

The focus of CD is still very much on qualification; however it allows more choices and probably also tackles more generic competences.

In the fourth cluster there is still a more or less conscious personal development component like in internship, learning on mobility, volunteering and other societal engagement – however, the learning is more practical and overlapped by other motives like travelling, discovery, trying out, help and support etc.

The last area is unintentional learning such as that which occurs within the family and communities.



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Fig. 10: Education sectors in relation to the level of formalization

It goes without saying that adult and youth education are operating in less formalized sectors.

This is one of the reasons why adult education and youth education providers should pay more attention to VINFL and integrate it into their learning offers. This goes together with the competences which are acquired in these less formal learning areas. They are less formalized and more contextualized, not so much looking to be certified, not so much anchored to curricula and more are more generic in nature.

This does not mean that they are less important as a quick check through the job adverts will certainly reveal. Enterprises are looking more and more for team workers, networkers, communicators and interculturally skilled labor.

Given the fact that these competences can be validated, this is a great opportunity for adult and youth educators to gain more importance and influence.

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Characteristics of formal, non-formal and informal Learning			
	Formal	Non-formal	informal
Absicht	• Long-term and proof of entitlement-based	• Short-term and specific	• situated learning, specific, activity/experience-based
Timeframe	• Long-term cycles / preparatory / full-time	• Individualized / output-oriented	• individualised
Content	• Standardized, • input-centered • AcademicEntry requirements determine clientele	• Individualized / output-centered • Practical Clientele determines entry requirements	• Individualized, contextualized • Practical knowledge • Individual interests and needs
Delivery	• institution-oriented • Isolated from environment • rigidly structured • teacher-centered, resource-intensive	• environmentally based, community based • flexible, learner-centred and resource-saving	• Community-based, practice/work context, community-based, collegial • Flexible, not price based
Controle	• External / hierarchical	• autonomous / democratic	• self-guided
Curriculum	• top-down • given curriculum	• mixed, top-down or bottom-up • negotiated	• bottom-up, conversation-based, non-curricular, interest and need
Weiß et al. (2005)			

Fig. 11: Characteristics of formal, non-formal and informal learning

Fig. 11 shows indicators for each of the educational areas.

Certain characteristics can be assigned to each of the areas though it has to be emphasized that this table as well as the previous graph visualize a continuum and not discrete categories. Even in school and university there are hopefully also informal (or less formal) traits and activities and there may also be formal aspects in mobility activities (e.g. the mobility supplement to the EUROPASS).

However, what the table from Weiß clearly shows is that informal learning is also intended learning – intended at least from one learning partner – either facilitator and/or learner.

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4.3.2. Validation Stakeholders

“Validation is the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing a wider range of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts...”(Bjoernavold 2004).

In order to fully understand the concept of validation we have to think about the stakeholders and their (potential) motivations in being part of the system.

From the side of the European Commission the idea is clear:

“The purpose of validation is to make visible the entire scope of knowledge and experience held by an individual, irrespective of the context where the learning originally took place. “

” Lifelong learning requires that learning outcomes from different settings and contexts can be linked together. “

“In lifelong and life-wide learning, ‘validation’ is a crucial element to ensure the visibility and to indicate the appropriate value of the learning that took place anywhere and at any time in the life of the individual. “ (Colardyn/Bjornavold 2004)

Given that the CEDEFOP and the authors represent the will of the EU, the main idea is to make competences of individuals more transparent and comparable and to contribute to the European Cohesion and economic growth.

One has to see validation in the larger context of the growing Europe and its educational policy, starting already in the years after the Rome treaty (to support guest laborer’s and their children) through the Maastricht and Lisbon contracts (Lifelong Learning) up to the European Skills Agenda (2018) and its components.

Below the European and national political stakeholders there are four other groups which play decisive roles in validation:

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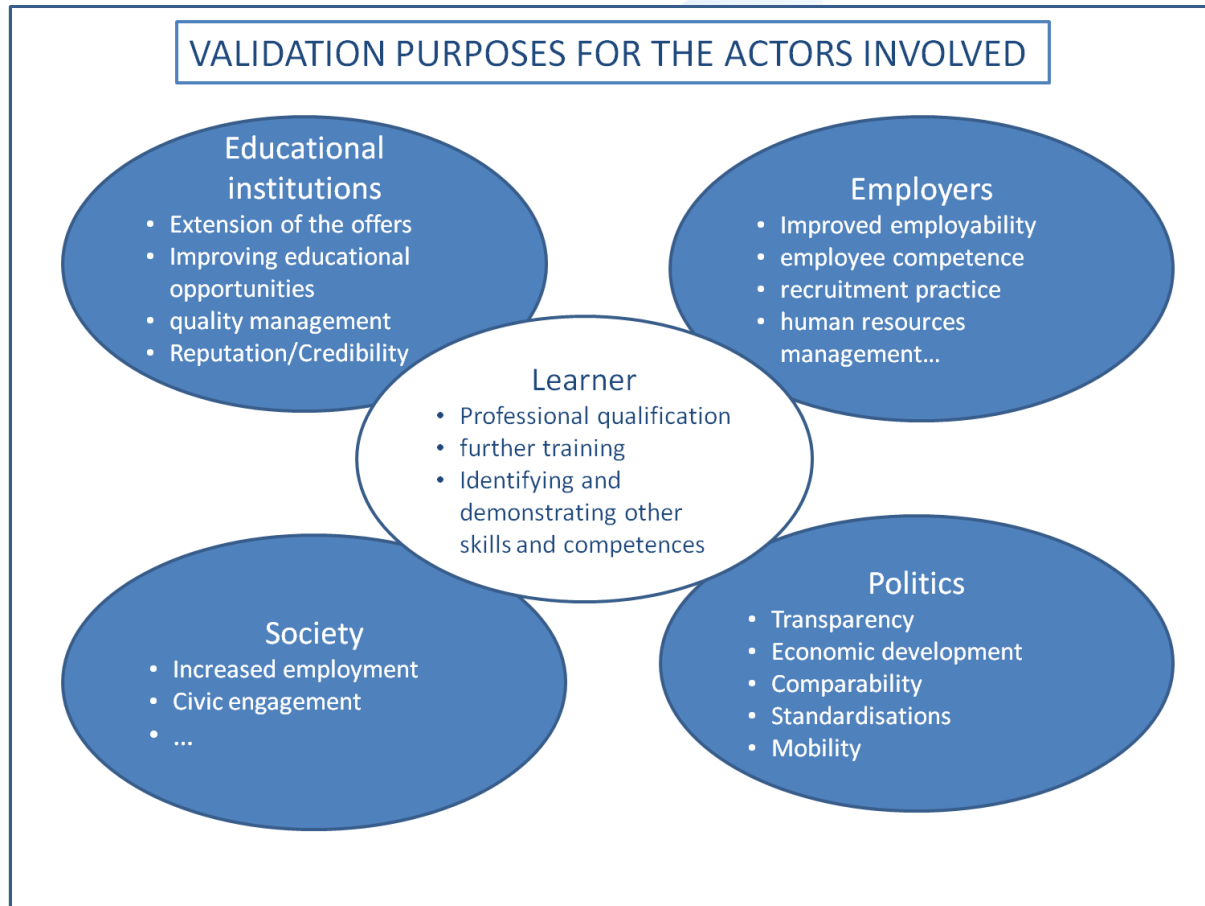


Fig. 12: Stakeholders involved in validation

Following the idea of the inventors of validation the individual learner should be in the centre of the system and improve his/her employability and through the management of the competences.

Employers expect a more competent labor force and better access to and visibility on competent human resources.

Educational institutions expand their offers, improve their quality and credibility.

Eventually the European societies benefit via higher employment greater productivity and higher social engagement.

This is of course still rather visionary and up to now we neither have the administrative nor the educational structures to affect a reasonable introduction. However, the system inherits chances for innovative and creative adult education institutes.

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4.3.3. Validation Purposes

Validation purposes can firstly be clustered along organization levels:

1. EUROPEAN level (European Commission)
 - Transparency of qualifications
 - Mobility
 - Comparability
 - European economic growth and stability
2. INSTITUTIONAL level (enterprises, public institutions, schools)
 - Finding personnel
 - Providing evidences of own capacities
 - Organizational development
3. INDIVIDUAL level
 - Showing potentials and competences
 - Finding jobs
 - Collecting evidences in CV
 - Sharing competences for private projects/purposes

As far as educational stakeholders are concerned the purpose changes with the level of formality. This is especially important for Adult Educators since a sole qualification purpose would not bring any added value in their working area.

Hence, one could differentiate 2 opposite sectors, derived from the levels of formality as outlined in 6.1.

Professional Formal Qualification:

Purpose: ‘profiling’, identifying levels of competences and measuring ‘performances’

Means: -> summative assessments and high level of formality, certification

Personal development:

Purpose: incentive for civic engagement, showing potentials of learners

Means:-> identification, formative assessment and low level of formality

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Between those two poles there are a large number of different scenarios ready and waiting for competence validation:

Continuing professional education and training,

Learning on the job,

Training on social/personal competences like teamwork, communication, customer orientation etc.,

Orientation projects for young (unemployed) adults,

Mobility projects for those Not in Employment Education or Training (NEETs) – what used to be known as the Intermediate Labor Market or ILM - to develop their potentials and to bridge to the working life or formal education again,

Self-learning arrangements, to give evidence to competences acquired in rather informal learning contexts, e.g. in volunteering,

Competence Oriented Learning Arrangements, e.g. Design Thinking workshops for young entrepreneurs - just to name a few.

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4.3.4. Validation procedure

Validation, as a European concept, is based on a 4-step procedure consisting of

identifying,
assessing,
documenting and
recognizing

Knowledge, Skills and Competences¹⁹ acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

According to the CEDEFOP glossary, EU Communication on LLL:

” Validation is the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing a wider range of skills and competences which people develop through their lives and in different contexts... “

The EU-wide agreed process of validation of informal and non-formal learning (EU Directives 2009/2012) consists of the four steps of identification, documentation, assessment, certification of "learning outcomes achieved by a person in a non-formal or informal way".

Learning outcomes play an essential role in the validation concept - they are descriptions of what a learner should know and be able to do (after completing a learning activity).

¹⁹ For educationalists of certain member states the 'competence' component sounds rather odd or tautological (since knowledge and skills are parts of a 'competence'). In this definition 'competent' marks the level of autonomy and responsibility that a person shows in the working process.

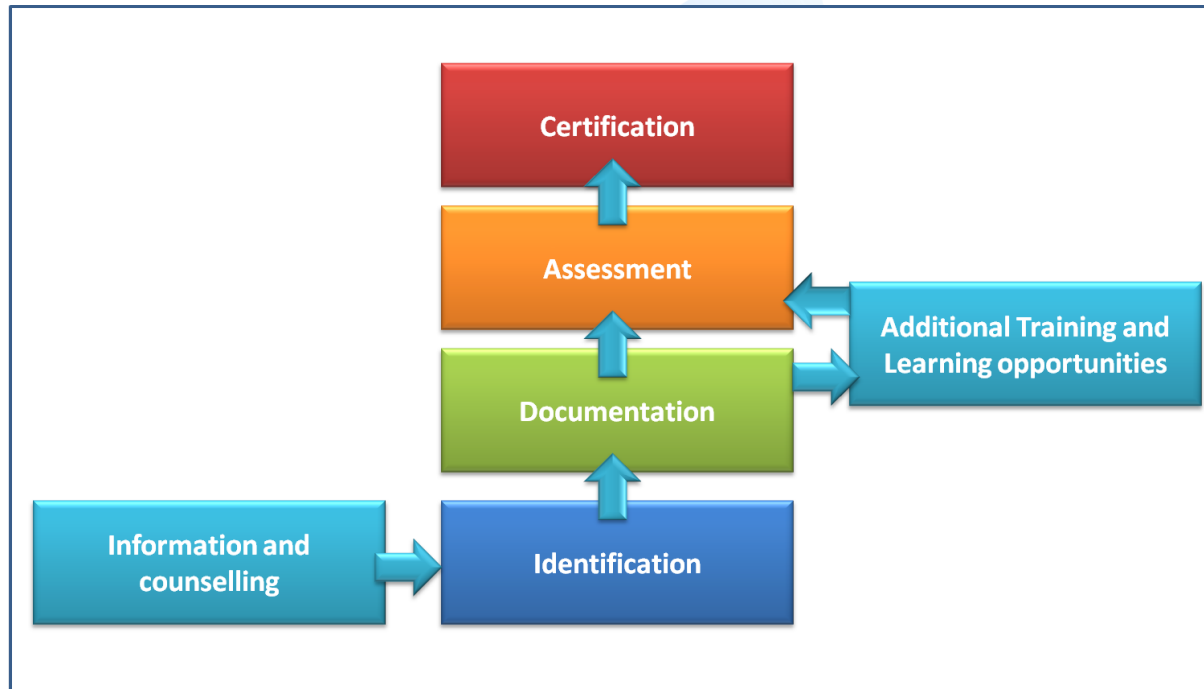


Fig. 13: Validation steps and necessary support measures (information, counselling, training)

‘Identification’ is the collection and identification of existing competences and learning outcomes of the individual.

‘Documentation’ means that the competence proofs and learning outcomes are collected in appropriate tools, for instance in e-portfolios. To identify potentials, strengths and competences, biographical tools such as ProfilPASS play an important role, as the purpose of the collection phase is also to increase the awareness of the results of previous learning experiences.

‘Assessment’ is the third validation step in which the existing evidence of competences and learning outcomes are classified according to specific reference points and / or standards. This step requires high quality measurements for the credibility and transparency of the procedures. According to the 2016 Guidelines, this step will use "similar methods and tools as used in the formal education and training system". However, at a time when social, personal and organisational competences are becoming increasingly important, the question arises as to how these competences are also taken into account in the validation process.

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The fourth element of validation is '**Certification**', which seeks to 'authorize' a person to perform certain activities by awarding a formal qualification (or partial qualification, or 'license').

The multiple meaning of the term '**competence**' becomes clear at this point: In formal, qualification-oriented contexts, being competent may have the main meaning of 'being allowed to'. In a pedagogical context it describes the comprehensive ability of a human being, to apply a mixture of knowledge, skills attitudes/values in a defined context (which may also be professional) in a certain quality.

For qualification purposes, learning outcomes are assigned to defined professional skill levels, for example through the European Credit Point System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). Here, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) serves as a background system and orientation framework for the descriptions and classification of different qualification levels. The EQF is the central European reference system that integrates and links the different national qualifications frameworks and thus serves to make comparisons and transparency of qualifications possible.

A broader understanding of the concept of validation, as increasingly articulated in the CEDEFOP 2016 Guidelines, creates new opportunities for adult learning and its actors. The purpose of validation is to make visible the full range of a person's knowledge and experience, regardless of the context in which the learning originally took place. This vision includes at least in principle essential elements of adult education conception (e.g. a competence orientation), even if the objective of the validation was originally entirely occupation related.

EU Member States should include by 2018 the necessary regulations for the introduction of the four validation steps, which "give individuals the opportunity to use each of these steps, either individually or in combination, according to their needs."

This makes it clear that, in contrast to input-oriented education models, the validation of informal learning focuses on the individual and the validation steps and instruments used should be flexible.

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Secondly, it emphasizes that validation does not necessarily have to include all four steps. Thus, 'validation' is also to be understood as an umbrella term for all recording, documentation, evaluation and certification activities.

4.4. European Tools and Instruments

The EU has developed a number of instruments to facilitate the Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning (VINFL).

The most prominent ones are the EQF (European Qualification Framework) and the credit transfer systems:

ECTS for the Higher Education sector, based on time-related credit points and ECVET is the European Credit Transfer System for VET. In contrast to ECTS the ECVET system is based on learning outcomes, which are descriptions of what a learner knows, is able to perform in which grade of responsibility and autonomy.

As outlined above, the EQF is a central taxonomy to compare 'qualifications' among member states with the help of 8 levels.

The ECVET system is entirely based on the EQF level descriptions that should be transferred into an occupation-specific taxonomy. In reality, the system was implemented without much success. Even in more than 100 funded model projects only a minority kept to the ECVET specification and only about 10% delivered reasonable models for 10 VET and CPD areas²⁰.

EUROPASS has been designed as European wide CV with several interfaces to practical learning and mobility learning documentation.

The instruments serve as assessment and documentation tools.

For identification purposes the German ProfilPASS may be mentioned as well as the YouthPass for youth and volunteering actions.

²⁰ Survey carried out in the framework of the IMPACT project (<https://mahara.vita-eu.org/artefact/artefact.php?artefact=20068&view=3270>)

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4.5. The LEVEL5 validation approach

REVEAL has developed and maintained the LEVEL5 system since there are a number of shortcomings that relate to a solely formal validation approach as it has been brought forward by the Commission and the CEDFEOP in recent decades.

Firstly, LEVEL5 aims to also validate those competences that are not related to qualification or curricula. Nevertheless, they are becoming increasingly important in our professional lives. We cluster them in social, personal or organizational competences, among them teamwork, communication, flexibility, creativity and innovation, conflict management, client orientation, critical thinking and spotting ideas and opportunities, just to name a few.

A second aspect which differentiates the LEVEL5 validation from the above-mentioned systems (EQF, ECVET, ECTS) is its purpose: while the EU systems aim at summative assessment and validation, LEVEL5 can also be used in a formative approach. Formative assessments aim primarily at empowering learners, while summative assessment is a sort of grading process which aims at measuring performances related to knowledge or expected behaviors. We can therefore say that formative assessment is diagnostic in nature while summative assessment is evaluative. For us the diagnostic functionality is very important since the learning process is very much in the focus of our members and not just the assessment and grading of the learners. Nevertheless LEVEL5 can also be used as a summative tool to judge the performances; hence it allows a balanced assessment based on both functions, thus delivering on the one hand necessary information about the next steps of the trainers and learning providers and motivating learners to go on, and at the same time measuring the student's learning regarding to the taxonomy.

Eventually – and this goes along with the second aspect, LEVEL5 does not relate only to one measurement at the end of a learning process but to several points in time which allows a documentation of the progression of a learner. This progression is displayed in the LEVEL5 cube and the LEVEL5 certificates.

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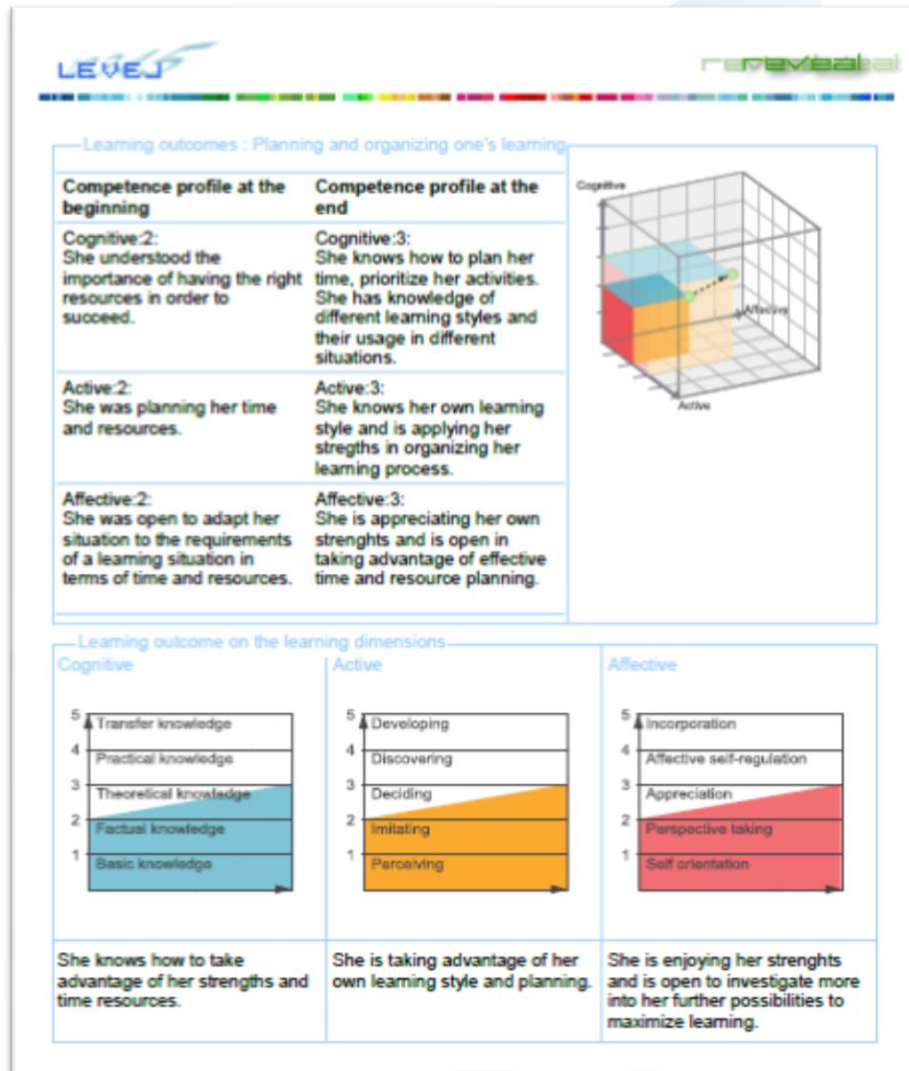


Fig. 14: Excerpt from a LEVEL5 certificate

To conclude: LEVEL5 is not just a validation system but an approach which combines Competence Validation with Competence Acquisition; a holistic training, learning and validation approach which we call “Competence Oriented Learning and Validation”.

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4.6. How to apply Competence Oriented Learning and Validation

As mentioned earlier our approach is based on the definition that a competence is the ability of a person to apply

Knowledge,

Skills and

Attitudes

in a specific context and in a particular quality.

Unlike in this holistic model the third affective dimension is mostly neglected in formal and professional education, particularly in traditional learning settings and in connection with the assessment of ‘learning outcomes’. The attitudes of the learner, if they are reported on at all, are usually relegated to general notes at the end of a tutor’s assessment.

Neurobiological (brain) research in recent years, however, has clearly proven that the affective (emotional and non-cognitive) dimension of learning is of utmost importance for the learning process. Feelings, attitudes and values are crucial for learning, especially for the development of social and personal competences – which play an increasingly important role in our modern societies, be it in professional or civic life.

Communication, teamwork, service-mindedness, intercultural and diversity management, autonomy, flexibility and problem solving belong to these competences, but also the complex ‘key competences’ like entrepreneurship or active citizenship which cannot be efficiently ‘taught’ in school but are mostly acquired in practical and real life learning situations.

For efficient learning in formal or non- formalized learning contexts we need innovative learning approaches that promote tailor-made, needs driven and situational learning for the integrated development and validation of these skills and competences.

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4.6.1. Core Elements of Competence Oriented Learning and Validation

According to our philosophy, all three dimensions have to be considered to design learning and validate competence development along a comprehensive, holistic and effective learning approach.

Therefore, LEVEL5 is based on a three-dimensional model which maps the development of:

Knowledge (-> cognitions)

Skills (-> actions) and

Attitudes (-> emotions and values)

along five quality levels – from beginner to competent expert.

This model forms the basis for the two core LEVEL5 instruments:

The LEVEL5 *cube* visualizes a person's competence development in a specific (preferably practical) learning field which is described in the so called LEVEL5 *reference system*.

The LEVEL5 *reference systems* facilitate the design and planning of informal/non-formal learning and the validation of competences in a specific practical action and learning field.

The LEVEL5 *cube model* reduces significantly the complexity when visualizing and describing learning outcomes and therefore provides an attractive presentation and documentation system for learning.

With LEVEL5, learning and validation of competences is promoted in practical, rather informal learning situations (e.g. learning on the job, in internships, volunteering and in mobility programmes etc.) and in innovative competence fields (e.g. entrepreneurship, active citizenship and other key-competences).

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4.7.Principles of Competence Oriented Learning

Competence oriented learning is based on human centred educational concepts that are backed up by educational research and practice.

We believe that it should contain the following features:

- Active learning,
- Experiential learning,
- Contextualized learning,
- Explorative learning,
- Collaborative learning,
- Constructive learning,
- Personalized learning,
- Reflective learning.

These principles and features should be considered when designing, planning and delivering a learning module or learning pathway.

There are several tools and instruments that support competence-oriented learning. Design Thinking approaches, for instance contain a large number of instruments and tools for different phases of visioning, spotting and creation of ideas, refinement and prototyping.

Open source learning technologies offer multiple learning pathways be it as LMS or e-Portfolios. They are also rich development and collaboration pools.

Especially in mainly informal learning environments (for instance in mobility learning, volunteering etc.) well designed learning apps can be used as (hidden) navigation to lead learners through intended learning steps. Here explorative (e.g. app-guided) learning arrangements can be the methods of choice, especially when working with non-mainstreaming or hard to reach learning groups such as those excluded from conventional schools, Hence there is no lack of state-of-the-art technologies or creative approaches to design and deliver Competence Oriented Learning. What we identified as a shortcoming is a lack of a systemic approach to create a

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holistic, quality driven method of developing competences and the means to assess and document them.

To design and deliver Competence Oriented Learning we have to leave the formal education domains and plan learning in real life scenarios in which we make use of real demands and interests of the learners. This was the original idea of ‘informal learning’: It should relate to challenges in REAL life, should have an immediate effect and use more practical and fewer theoretical learning resources.

We do not want to be misunderstood here: of course, we need knowledge and theory to learn – but we have to construct knowledge rather than just transfer it from teacher to learner. We have to stimulate learners to be more active: show them how to them explore knowledge and research sources and do not just transmit theory at them but let it be constructed by action, reflection, and comparison to real life experience!

4.7.1. Planning and Delivering Competence Oriented Learning

There is a high demand for Professional Development for Educational personnel, be it trainers, teachers, coaches, learning providers or e-Learning designers – but increasingly also professionals without a professional educational background who deliver learning to others.

For both groups, professionals working in formalized education and other competent learning providers working in informal learning we wanted to set up an easy-to-use approach to plan and deliver Competence Oriented Learning and Validation.

Therefore, we developed the LEVEL5 system which builds on a simplified Plan-Do-Check step procedure:

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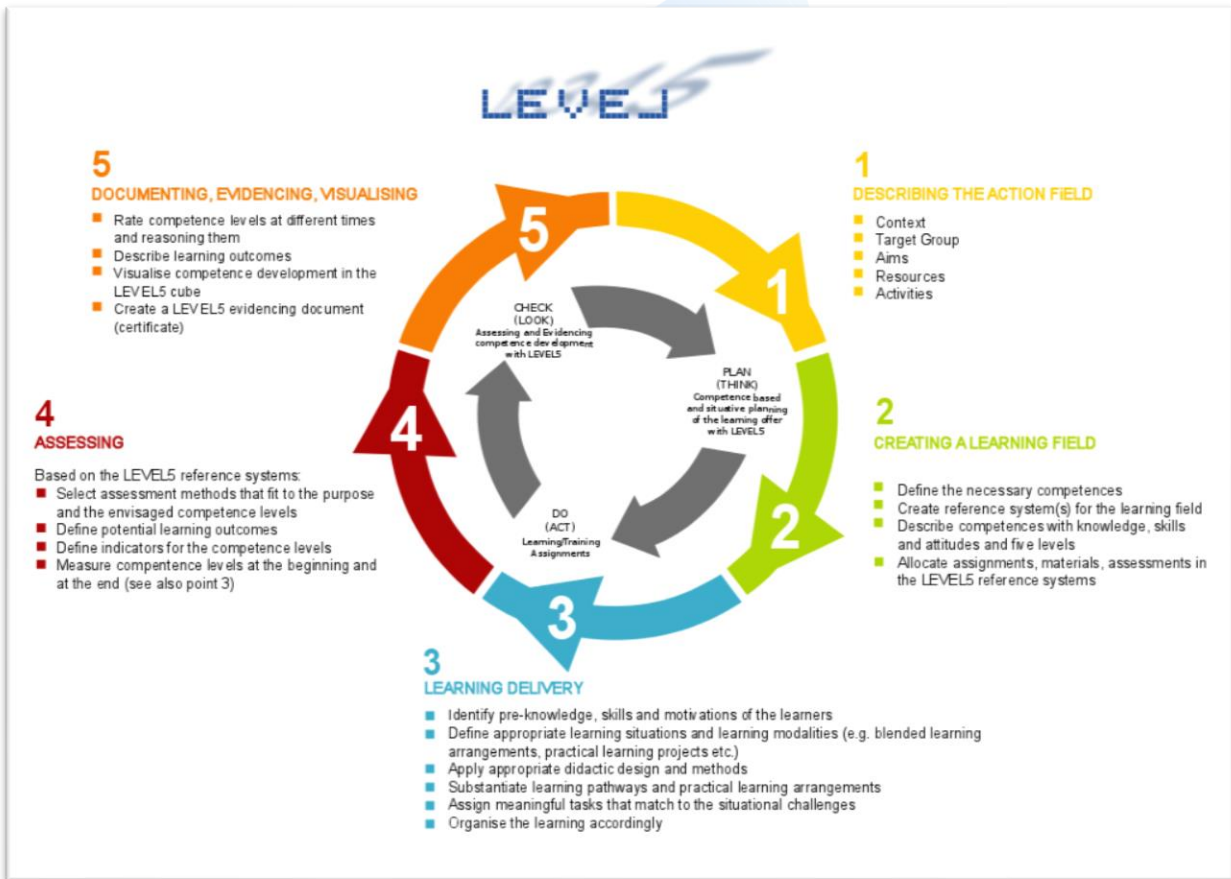


Fig. 15: Procedure to plan and deliver COL&V

Plan:

The starting point of the planning is the so called 'action field' in which the learner is located. It describes context, actions, resources and objectives of his/her activities.

The conversion of this action field into a learning field is facilitated by the LEVEL5 reference systems which derive the competences that are necessary to tackle the actions and solve the tasks in the field.

Do:

The delivery of learning is highly dependent on the context. It can range from a rather informal, self-guided learning (e.g. in learning on the job or in mobility settings) to more formal

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arrangements (e.g. in school projects or more guided continuing professional development (CPD) actions).

LEVEL5 largely supports blended, web-aided learning arrangements. The REVEAL community offers state-of-the-art learning technologies and an open learning space for these purposes.

Check:

The check-element refers to the validation within LEVEL5. Dependent on the identified action and learning field it covers the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of competences. It is largely based on the LEVEL5 reference systems that facilitate individual and contextualized validation. The learning outcomes are documented in LEVEL5 certificates including the dynamic LEVEL5 cube.

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4.7.2. Instruments for Planning and Delivery

Based on the procedure we have developed four main instruments to plan and deliver Competence Oriented Learning and Validation.

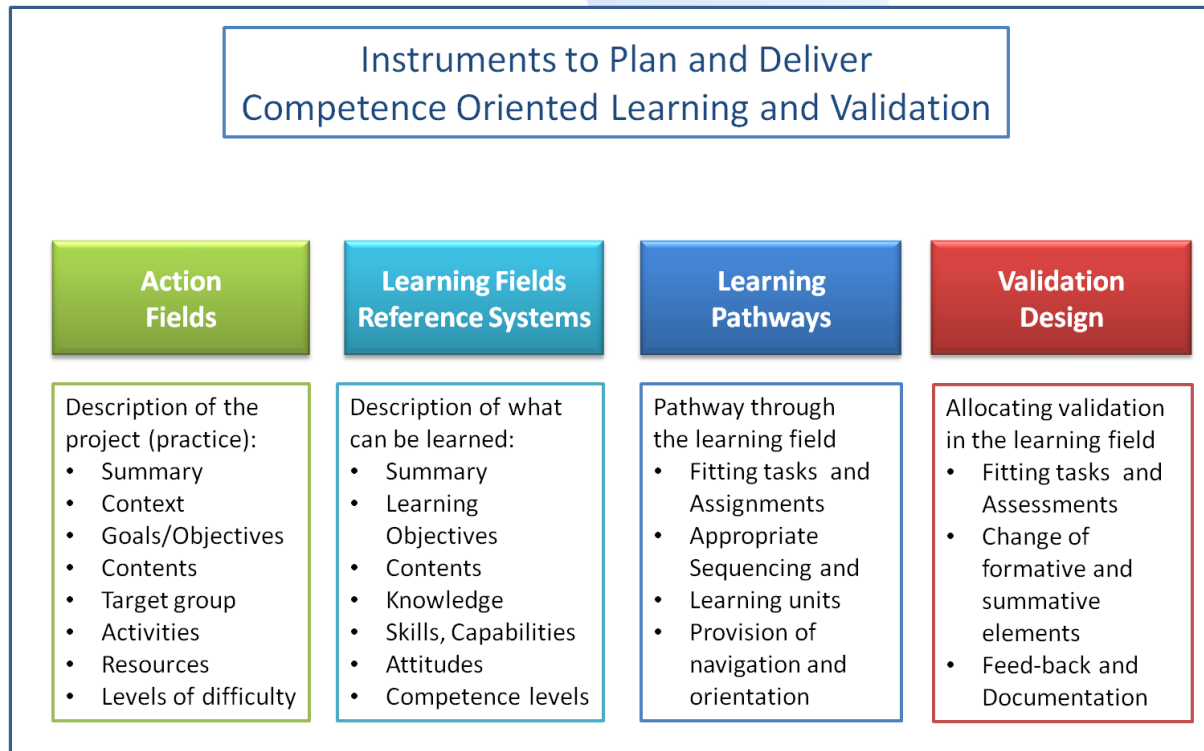


Fig. 16: Tools and Instruments for Planning and Delivering COL&V

The instruments are easy to use tools that facilitate the planning according to a logical step-by-step procedure. The first step (action field) scans the practical field and the challenges therein.

The learning field connects to learning objectives and envisaged competences levels and sets up a contextualized reference system. In the third step a learning pathway is designed, and reasonable tasks and assignments are located on it. In the last step a reasonable assortment of assessments is assigned to it (formative and summative if applicable) as well as meaningful documentation and certification.

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4.7.2.1. Action fields

The first planning step is always related to the practical situation and describes:

What is the acting field and what does the individual has to perform in a specific context
–(what are the tasks, the challenges, the visions, background and the perspectives)?

The action field is thoroughly described in a pre-defined project pattern. This step represents the planning of modern, practical and contextualized learning. It can be applied in a large variety of learning sectors ranging from modern HR-management for highly efficient continuing professional development (CPD at the workplace) to practical learning projects in NGOs or in innovative (primary, secondary or VET) schools, e.g. in climate friendly management, system thinking or other interdisciplinary action fields.

The action field already comes with five different quality levels and describes the challenges and tasks that the individual is confronted with in his/her field of action (which can be professional and/or private).

4.7.2.2. Learning fields

In the next planning step, the action field is turned into a learning field, following the question:

Which competences do we need at which (quality) level in order to tackle the situation successfully?

At this stage the LEVEL5 reference systems establish a framework which maps the necessary (contextualized) competences on three dimensions and quality levels.

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KNOWLEDGE			SKILLS Capabilities		ATTITUDES Emotions/Values	
L	Level Titles	Level description	Level Titles	Level description	Level Titles	Level description
5	Knowing where else (strategic transfer)	Knowing how to enhance team processes in different teams. Knowing how to help other people act successfully in teams and to assign specific responsibilities to people keeping in mind their relevant skills.	Developing, constructing, transferring	Leading a team in a way that members are able to contribute to the best of their abilities, supporting them to do so. Being able to strategically develop a team.	Incorporation	Having internalised the "culture" of constructive team work and to accomplish goals through mutual support. Inspiring others to improve their teamwork skills.
4	Knowing when (implicit understanding)	Having substantial knowledge on how and when to join/form a team. Understanding strength and weaknesses of team members. Knowing the importance of communication and how to coordinate workflows.	Discovering acting independently	Being able to assign and coordinate specific tasks and roles to team members on the basis of their strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring team processes. Trying out new roles for one-self.	Self-regulation, determination	Feeling the importance to refrain from own preferences (e.g. in regard to procedures, own solution strategies, methods etc.) for the sake of the team and the teamwork. Being determined to be a good team worker.
3	Knowing how	Knowing the basic dynamics and demands of teamwork. Knowing how to engage in a coordinated work flow where the skills, qualities and limits of each member are taken into account in order to work efficiently.	Deciding/ selecting	Actively reaching out to join a team or help create a team. Contributing to the team process according to own strengths and needs for reaching the shared goal.	Motivation/ appreciation	Having a positive attitude towards working together in a team and to appreciate team diversity. Finding it important to have a 'team spirit'. Being motivated to develop own competence to successfully work in a team.
2	Knowing why (distant understanding)	Knowing that teamwork is a more effective way to achieve results. Knowing it demands from individuals to coordinate their work considering individual competences and abilities.	Using, imitating	Contributing to team work when being invited or instructed to. Fulfilling assigned tasks in a team by following the example of others.	Perspective taking	Being interested in the potentials of team work and to learn more about it.
1	Knowing what	Knowing that teamwork is collaborating with others to reach a shared goal.	Perceiving	Recognising situations in which teamwork is feasible to reach goals.	Self-orientation	Seeing teamwork as something positive, but without considering developing own team work competence.

Fig. 17: LEVEL5 Reference system (Learning field)

Knowledge, skills and attitudes in the learning field are described in a consistent way on the five quality levels including potential learning outcomes. Appropriate learning activities, materials, resources, and potential validation settings are assigned to and allocated in the reference systems.

4.7.2.3. Learning Pathways - Planning not formal learning

KNOWLEDGE		SKILLS Capabilities		ATTITUDES Emotions/Values	
Knowing where else (strategic transfer)	Knowing how to transfer idea creation skills and concepts into other contexts. Knowing how to help other people act successfully in different entrepreneurial structures in this respect.	Developing, constructing, transferring	Being able to transfer ideation and prototyping strategies into new business contexts. Actively planning and creating new entrepreneurial activities based on ideating and prototyping.	Incorporation	Having internalised ideation and prototyping as a fundamental personal entrepreneurship mindset. Being an inspiration for others in their ideation and prototyping activities.
Knowing when (implicit understanding)	Knowing when to apply right instruments from the portfolio of different ideation and prototyping approaches and tools. Knowing when to use certain ideation and prototyping strategies.	Discovering acting independently	Project presentation, Essays		Being determined and pro-active in using ideation and prototyping in the own environment. Finding it important to be creative in this respect.
Knowing how	Knowing different ideation and prototyping approaches and tools. Valuing ideation and prototyping as a fundamental personal entrepreneurship mindset.	Deciding/ selecting	8. Teamwork Design sessions on..		Valuing ideation and prototyping in general. Being motivated to develop own competence to successfully work in a team.
Knowing why (distant understanding)	Having innovation as a key concept in idea creation, a multiple of the own context and the own context and professional domain.	Using, imitating	6. Case study on		Being curious and interested in the potentials of team work and to learn more about it.
Knowing what	Knowing that entrepreneurship is based on innovation and the creation of ideas.	Perceiving	3. Exercise on		Perceiving the concept of creating ideas and opportunities without relating it to oneself.

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Fig. 18: Learning pathway with envisaged activities in the Learning field

In a nutshell: What do we have to consider while planning and delivering COL?

Assigning the right tasks to the right boxes; Depending on
content levels (level of complexity)
levels of difficulty
levels of knowledge, skills
attitudes
intention of the designer

The action and learning fields help the learning designer to identify different competence levels, to describe learning outcomes related to the levels and the three dimensions (columns) knowledge, skills and attitudes. They are then able to deliver a kind of landscape to develop a consistent and high-quality learning pathway – also in informal learning settings.

Based on these landscapes, designers can also plan entrepreneurial learning or learning trajectories when the learner is not in a classroom (e.g. in internships, volunteering or on mobility) and/or connected with mobile learning apps.

4.7.2.4. Validation Design for informal and non-formal learning

Validation is a complementary process to planning and delivery of competence-oriented learning. As outlined in the competences for AE professionals, validation refers to the identification of already available competences, their documentation, a competent assessment and (if needed) a certification as formal proof of the learning activity.

The identification can be easily integrated into the learning processes, for instance as entry questionnaires or competence spiders based on self-assessments.

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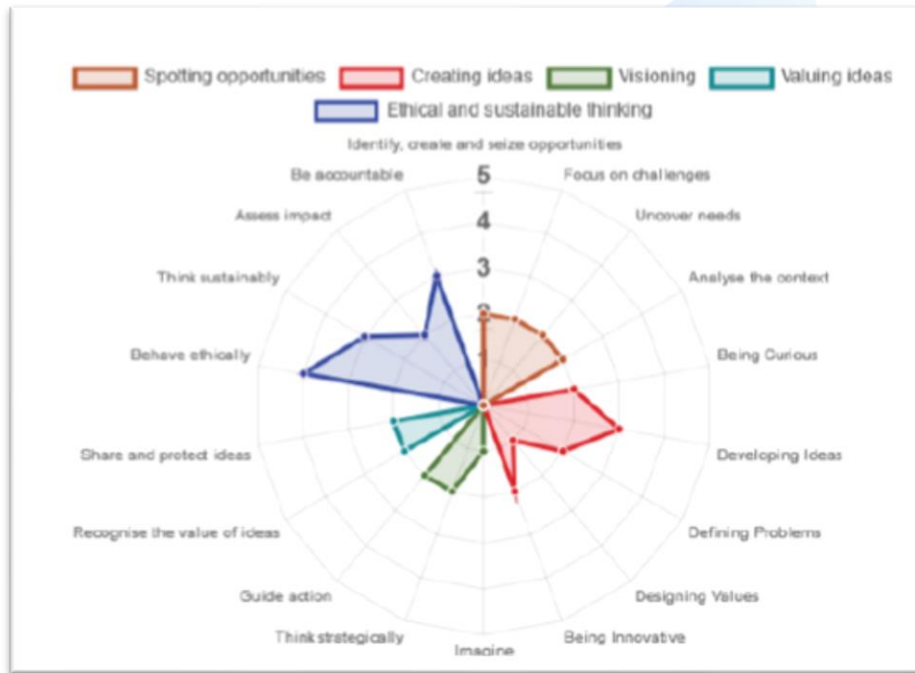


Fig. 19: Competence spider on the Competence to spot ideas and opportunities used in design thinking

Documentation, as outlined above, can be facilitated with e-Portfolios (e.g. mahara as an Open Source tool). Here, the learning proofs or artefacts can easily be collected and connected to the learners' competence profiles.

Assessments have to be competence-oriented as well. This refers to

1. the competence column (knowledge, skills and attitudes): there is no need to identify and measure complex attitudes with simplified tick-box questions.
2. on the other hand, to the competence level (again, the higher the competences level is, the greater the need for a more complex assessment)
3. to the purpose (formative to empower, summative to measure performances)

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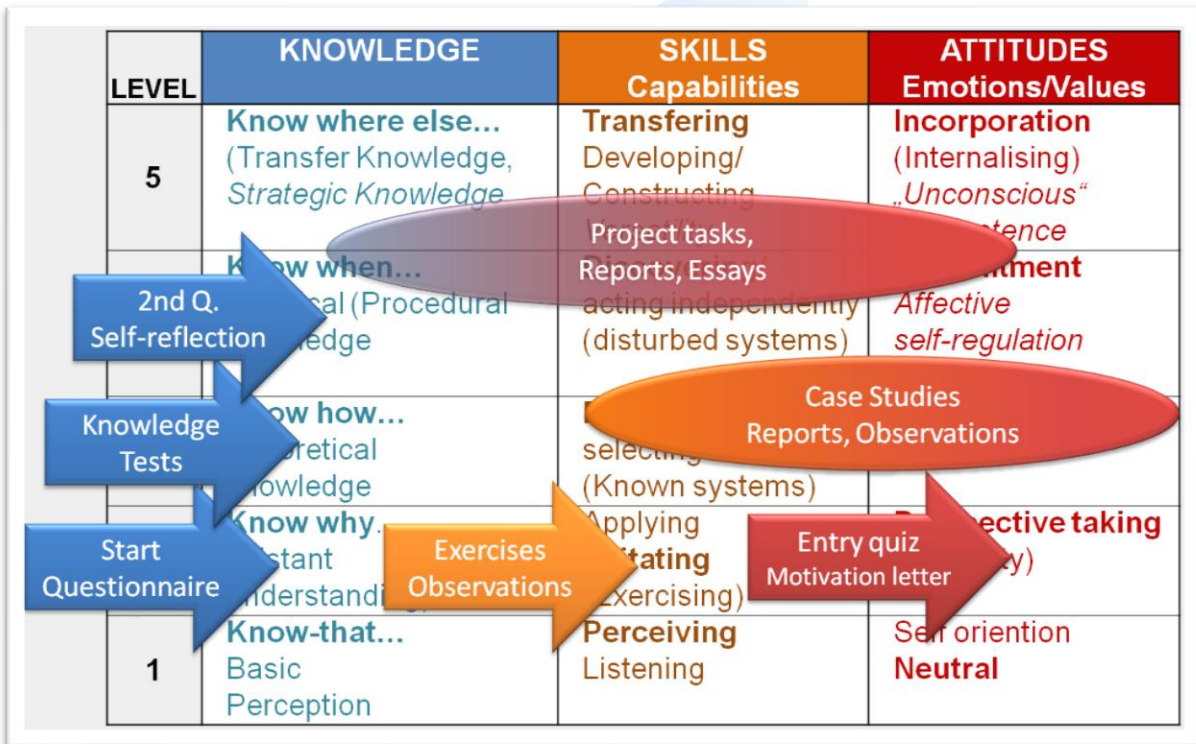


Fig. 20: Schematic ordering of assessments with a reference system for competence-oriented learning

When looking for proofs of learning we should also consider that a smart assignment is often a very powerful assessment tool. Especially in higher competence regions it is not helpful to only go for a knowledge related assessment, since the performance quality can only be observed by looking at all three dimensions.

At least from level 4 the complexity of a challenge is in most cases so high that it needs more than just a simple, descriptive report to understand capabilities, motivation and commitment but also procedural knowledge. We can expect a rather high level of reflection on a problem and self-reflection (metacognition) which will only be revealed either in more complex essays and/or in complex pieces of work.

Given that, it is only logical that the individual (who is in the centre of the validation, remember?) has the opportunity to organise his/her learning proofs accordingly, for instance in a web-based portfolio which also facilitates a 'management' of these proofs of competences.

Eventually the learning outcomes have to be documented and (if useful) certified.

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A standard LEVEL5 certificate is displayed below, in this case related to a design-thinking learning project and the validation of the competences to spot ideas and opportunities²¹ and intercultural teamwork.

As outlined above LEVEL5 is not only designed to proof singular performances but the development of a learner in a practical and complex learning project.

LEVEL5

Learner-Certificate
Master of Innopreneurship at UDE

MI MASTER INNOPRENEURSHIP

Participant: Jana Marschalkowski

Learning project: Master of Innopreneurship at UDE

Project start: 01/05/19

Project end: 01/06/19

Institution: UDE

Location: University of Duisburg-Essen

Learning activities: Design Thinking project on product development based on charcoal feed-stock in Modul 7 of the Master of Innopreneurship at UDE

Evaluated competences: Teamwork

Assessment methods: Self-Assessment and peer-assessment with LEVEL5 reference systems. External assessment and quality check by REVEAL assessor.

Assessment/Evaluators: Dr. Tim Scholze

Learning outcomes: Teamwork

Competence profile at the beginning

Knowledge: 2: I knew that interdisciplinary teams would be more successful because of the amount of explicit and implicit knowledge

Skills: 2: I always like to participate when I feel that my contribution is useful for the team.

Attitudes: 3: At the beginning I was very much looking forward to working in a team because I find new perspectives very enriching.

Competence profile at the end

Knowledge: 4: I've learned that "different Thinker types" enrich a team when you get the best out of everyone and use their strengths and everyone gets involved.

Skills: 3: I have often withdrawn to avoid conflict. But I find this negative.

Attitudes: 4: I have often withdrawn to avoid conflict. But I find that negative.

Competence development on each dimension

Knowledge

5: Know where else (Strategic transfer)

4: Know what (Applied knowledge)

3: Know how (Operational knowledge)

2: Know why (Factual knowledge)

1: Know what (Basic general knowledge)

Skills

5: Developing/constructing/transfering

4: Discovering/adding independently

3: Deciding/switching

2: Using/imitating

1: Processing

Attitudes

5: Incorporation/interrelation/Consensus

4: Motivation/appreciation

3: Perspectives taking/interest

2: Self-orientation

1: Self-orientation

I have learned that the selection of team members should never be random

To take myself back in order to avoid further conflicts, which I feel is a negative development.

I still find teamwork enriching, but in the future I will pay more attention to the composition at the beginning.

Fig. 21: LEVEL5 certificate template

The competence development is displayed in the 3-dimensional LEVEL5 cube and in the 2-dimensional visualization of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The learning outcomes at each stage are described to the left of the cube and below the dimensions. If needed learning outcomes related to the ECVET systems can be easily included, if the learning providers in adequate settings (e.g. in formal VET contexts) wish to do so.

Competence descriptions (learning fields with expected learning outcomes) are annexed to the certificate to describe the context and the learning environment.

²¹ Based on the EntreComp framework