

PR3: Enhance training course module

Module 2

<p>Title: Recognition of Skills. Authors: Luis Carro, Marta Águeda. Institution: University of Valladolid.</p>	<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>Unit 1:Competencies - What are they? How are they acquired?</p> <p>Unit 2:Conditions for the elaboration and implementation of the provisions for validation</p> <p>Unit 3:Characteristics of the competition validation process</p> <p>Unit 4:Validation context: the third sector. Good practices</p> <p>Unit 5:Competency validation tools</p> <p>Bibliography</p>
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Unit 1: Competencies - What are they? How are they acquired?

The concept of “competence” has been established in our vocabulary for a few years now, but when it comes to finding a single definition with which all entities and institutions agree, it becomes a complicated task.

Reviewing the large organizations that are pioneers in valuing people's skills, we find the following definitions, which are the most complete and used:

- The OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2016) defines it as “the ability to respond to individual or social demands or to carry out a task or activity.” It also points out that each competence rests on a combination of interrelated practical and cognitive skills, knowledge, motivation, values, attitudes, etc. that can be mobilized together to act effectively.
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2017) refers to competencies as “the complex capabilities that a person develops and that have different degrees of interaction,” manifesting themselves in a wide variety of “situations corresponding to the various areas of human, personal and social life.”
- Set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow a person to act effectively in a given context. (Fernandez, 2022)

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Analyzing the definitions, we point out as a meeting point the interaction of the different skills acquired by a person for the development of an activity in different areas.

The next concept that we need to know is transversality, understood as the knowledge that interacts with each other to develop different tasks that are not those for which they were taught (Carro, 2019).

This transversality of knowledge and skills is one of the lines of work that was marked by the “HORIZON 2020 - The EU Framework Program for Research and Innovation” reflected in its report (through the provision of transversality brought to competence) would consist of giving meaning to disciplinary learning, establishing connections between the instructive and the formative in a way that articulates the knowledge of the different sectors.

Unit 2: Conditions for the elaboration and implementation of the provisions for validation

Validation is the evaluation of a process meeting specified requirements. Validation arrangements are the measures taken to ensure that validation is carried out effectively and efficiently.

These conditions for the development and implementation of validation provisions are the factors that must be taken into account to develop and implement an effective validation process.

In order for this process to meet certain minimums, the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP from now on) began to generate guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in 2012, with the last revision being in 2016. We will refer to these guidelines throughout this chapter. (Council of the EU, 2012).

These factors include:

- Central character of the person.

This process has as a determining factor that it is centered on the person and their life experiences, since it will be through their life history that determines whether or not the person has acquired these competencies. During the different phases they go through in this process, the different vital milestones will be sought that generate the traceability necessary to verify this learning.

For this process to work and be effective, it will be essential that there be active, sincere and dynamic communication on both sides.

- Information, guidance and advice.

Every person who begins this process must be fully informed about how, when, where and who will be the professional who will accompany and advise them throughout the process. Information must be fluid before, during and after completing this procedure.

On the other hand, the professional who accompanies the student must provide guidance and advice, including a whole series of activities, such as tutoring and training in relation to professional career management skills.

- Coordination between the parties.

For this validation and certification process to be valid at all levels, it must have double coordination between different institutions. On the one hand, coordination between the areas of education, training, employment and youth specific to each country, and, on the

other hand, coordination at all levels: local public sector, regional public sector, national public sector and European public sector .

- Current regulatory frameworks.

For the above coordination to be effective, all processes must be based on the same regulations, therefore, the basis will always be the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations together with the national qualifications frameworks of each country that must be perfectly aligned. .

- Process quality.

This point is decisive in this process, since quality and transparency must mark each of the phases of this process. To do this and following the CEDEFOP recommendations, each phase must be evaluated under the criteria of: adequacy to the objective, security, confidentiality, coherence, reliability, reliability, transparency, sustainability and that they are measurable.

Validation is an ongoing process that must be reviewed and updated periodically. Organizations should be prepared to adapt their validation arrangements as requirements, risks or available resources change.

Unit 3: Phases in the competence validation process

The final objective of the validation and accreditation process of transversal competencies is to give value to the experience that people have acquired in different contexts. This process requires high transparency and the following of guidelines that generate quality, validity and contribute to the guarantees of the procedure.

Therefore, CEDEFOP justifies this process as:

“A process by which an authorized body confirms that a person has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant level, adding that it is intended above all to give visibility to the varied and rich learning of people, which often takes place outside of formal education and training being overlooked and ignored.”

In order to accredit a transversal competence, we will follow the guidelines provided by CEDEFOP (2016), which are divided into four phases:

- **Determination:** This first phase is self-knowledge of your abilities and knowledge acquired over time in the formal and non-formal sphere. This self-assessment must be carried out by a person, since ICT may not be able to identify and assess the capabilities acquired by a person. In this phase it is important to be “open to the unexpected” since the knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal spaces are not regulated and, therefore, can be developed from the most unexpected actions. To collect data in this phase, research methods such as observation, interviews or dialogue-based methods will be used.
- **Documentation:** In this phase we must present evidence that demonstrates that we have acquired those skills and knowledge.

The evidence presented must have its own traceability, that is, it must have coordination from the local scale to the European scale that facilitates transparency and compatibility in the different educational sectors. All this evidence will be directed towards the creation of a “skills portfolio” with European validity that can be evaluated by an external professional.

- **Evaluation:** It is the most sensitive part of the process, since, through the standards or reference points that are evaluated, the credibility or viability of the certificate will be provided. This evaluation, and the tools used for it, will be designed based on the person

being evaluated, that is, they will be personalized so that they capture and evaluate learning in the contexts where these actions have been developed. These tests can be written and documented, but those provided by other means must also be taken into account, such as, for example, simulations of practices and meetings for demonstration in case of not having the appropriate certificates.

It is necessary to present the evaluation in the most transparent way possible so that a relationship of trust is generated between the evaluated and the evaluator, taking into account that there are solid quality mechanisms in this process that must be complied with at all times.

- **Certification:** this is the last step so that the entire process is valid and with which a qualification is granted. This process is a summative evaluation of documentation of different typologies that must be closely related to national qualifications systems. Furthermore, it must be carried out by an authority that affirms the credibility of the documentation, who is trained and specialized in the accreditation of this type of competencies. These bodies could develop a legal right to validation that guarantees access to the qualification, taking different forms depending on the national legal and political context.

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In the context in which we find ourselves of formal education and training, CEDEFOP, through its report “European inventory on validation” (2016), recognizes that the formal space is a space where non-formal and informal training is also practiced, and, like formal education, the knowledge and skills acquired can begin to be recognized, validated and certified, opening a door in the medium/long term for the recognition of these competencies.

Unit 4: Validation context: the third sector. Good practices.

According to the Royal Spanish Academy. (2015) we understand the third sector as the "set of privately based institutions, normally of an associative or foundational nature, equidistant from the State and the market, which are responsible for organizing services and benefits predominantly of a social nature."

In this sector, learning is continually produced by the people who carry out these activities, and it occurs entirely in non-formal and informal learning spaces.

We will define non-formal learning as an organized and intentional learning process, which aims to provide specific knowledge, skills and attitudes. It can be provided in a variety of contexts, such as: vocational training courses, arts and crafts workshops, summer camps, volunteer programs, youth clubs and organizations, ... (UNESCO, 2017) Examples include: training courses, workshops, volunteer programs, membership in associations and clubs, ...

On the other hand, informal learning is the learning process that occurs in everyday life, through experience and interaction with others. It can occur anywhere such as home, work, the educational community or the natural environment. (UNESCO, 2017). Examples include: learning to cook from your mother or grandmother, learning a new language by traveling to a foreign country, or learning to solve problems by reading a book or watching a documentary.

The relationship between the third sector and the recognition of skills is close. Third sector entities offer a wide range of learning and personal development opportunities. These opportunities can contribute to the development of competencies that are relevant to employment, education and personal life.

Competency recognition can help people who have acquired skills through non-formal or informal education to obtain official certification of their skills and knowledge. This certification can help them improve their employment, education and personal development opportunities.

Some examples of good practices relating the third sector and the recognition of skills are:

- A third sector entity that offers vocational training courses may also offer a competency

recognition process for people who have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge through work experience or informal learning.

- A third sector entity that works with people with disabilities can offer a competency recognition process to validate the skills and knowledge that these people have acquired through their experience and training.
- A third sector entity that works with young people can offer a competency recognition process to certify the skills and knowledge that these young people have acquired through their participation in educational, training or volunteer activities.

The recognition of competencies can be a valuable tool for third sector entities, as it can help them:

- Improve the quality of the services they offer.
- Promote the employability of the people they support.
- Contribute to the personal and social development of people.
- Be reference spaces for other organizations.

Unit 5: Competency validation tools

In order to correctly carry out a recognition of competencies, it is necessary to use different tools that allow us to obtain, classify, analyze and evaluate the evidence they provide us. A data collection tool is an instrument or method that is used to collect information from a specific sample or population. Data collection tools can be quantitative or qualitative, and can be used in a wide range of contexts, such as research, marketing or management. Babbie, E. (2010).

In addition to correctly choosing the tools to be used, it is important, and must be taken into account, the training and experience that the professionals who use these tools have in the process, which will be decisive since they influence the general quality. –validity and reliability– of the process and its results.

The recommendation made by CEDEFOP is the use of common European tools in terms of transparency and recognition, and on their possible support to the process (EU Council, 2012): «the use of Union transparency instruments, such as the Europass and Youthpass framework in order to facilitate the documentation of learning outcomes. But it also provides guidelines on other types of tools that can be used as long as they follow the following criteria: validity, reliability, equity, cognitive range and suitability to the purpose of evaluation. Following these criteria, distinguish between:

- Tools to obtain evidence
 - Tests and exams have the advantage of familiarity, social recognition, validity and reliability.
 - Interviews can have a higher degree of validity than tests and exams, since they allow dialogue – thus avoiding misunderstandings in the formulation of questions – and, where appropriate, trial and error.
 - Declarative methods are based on the determination and recording of competencies by the person themselves (sometimes according to certain criteria and sometimes not). However, the declaration is usually signed (verified) by a third party.
 - Observation is the obtaining of evidence from candidates during the performance of their daily tasks. This method, which involves the judgment of a neutral evaluator, is relatively more widely used in the private sector, but is also widespread in other areas.
 - Simulation methodologies where people are placed in a situation similar to that

of real life to evaluate their skills.

- The candidate himself collects physical or intellectual evidence of learning outcomes from work situations, volunteer activities or family or other contexts.
- Tools for presenting evidence
 - The CV is probably the most common way of documenting individual knowledge, skills and competencies.
 - Third-party reporting for validation of non-formal and informal learning can take several forms. These may be reference letters (or audio and video statements) from supervisors, employers or colleagues or performance evaluations by the employer.
 - Skills portfolios are a typically process-based method, and it is widely proven that the selection process involved promotes self-assessment and helps focus candidates' attention on quality criteria.

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