

LEONARDO DA VINCI ist das Aktionsprogramm der Europäischen Union für die berufliche Bildung. Der Europäische Rat hat die zweite Phase des Programms am 26. April 1999 verabschiedet. LEONARDO II hat eine Laufzeit von sieben Jahren (2000 – 2006) und ist mit einem Gesamtbudget von 1,15 Mrd. € ausgestattet.

LEONARDO DA VINCI unterstützt und ergänzt die Berufsbildungspolitik der Mitgliedstaaten. Durch transnationale Zusammenarbeit sollen die Qualität erhöht sowie Innovationen und die europäische Dimension in den Berufsbildungssystemen und -praktiken gefördert und damit ein Beitrag zur Leistungsfähigkeit in den Mitgliedstaaten erbracht werden.

Das Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF) als politisch verantwortliches Ressort hat die Nationale Agentur Bildung für Europa beim Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (NA beim BIBB) mit der Durchführung des Programms LEONARDO DA VINCI in Deutschland beauftragt.

Die von der Nationalen Agentur beim BIBB herausgegebene Editionsreihe „impuls“ dient dazu, Ergebnisse von LEONARDO-DA-VINCI-Projekten zu präsentieren, Innovationen und Entwicklungen in der Berufsbildung aufzuzeigen und zu verbreiten sowie einen umfassenden Meinungs- und Erfahrungsaustausch zu initiieren.



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Promoting Visibility of Competences – The EXEMPLO Toolkit for SMEs

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Education and Culture

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Pilot projects



Promoting visibility of competences – the exemplo toolkit for SMEs

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Preface

The development of procedures for the recording and recognition of competences acquired in non-formal or informal settings to promote lifelong learning has been defined at the European level as one of the key factors to achieve the Lisbon strategy targets. Accordingly, measures fostering the recognition and transparency of competences are among the paramount objectives laid down in the joint work programme on vocational education and training policies of the European Union in November 2002 in Copenhagen. Since then, vocational training systems of a number of European countries have witnessed the introduction of procedures for the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning. However, in most cases the significance of these procedures would not reach beyond the borders of the respective country in which they have been implemented.

Large-scale enterprises operating in an international environment would readily adapt to this situation: They have their own methods for competence assessment to facilitate both internal mobility processes and the employment of new staff members – unlike small and medium-sized enterprises which account for some 99 % of businesses in the European Union. On the one hand, informal learning-on-the-job is of outstanding importance in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises: As a rule, their employees' competences are constituted by special skills and knowledge they have acquired during their work activities in SMEs, many of which are serving niche markets. On the other hand, in most of European SMEs no systematic collection of informally acquired competences has been started so far.

SMEs – predominantly, though not exclusively in southern and accession countries – are, in the first place, poorly informed about the benefits of, and the need for assessment of competences acquired by employees in a non-formal or informal

way. Secondly, lack of temporal, human and financial resources often proves to be a major obstacle in adopting the – possibly both costly and lengthy – procedures for competence assessment as practised by large enterprises.

Against this background the Leonardo-da-Vinci-promoted European exemplo project made an attempt to bring together “the best from different worlds” in terms of establishing procedures for the assessment of non-formally and informally acquired competences developed in various European countries. Thus, within the framework of the transnational partnership a set of tools has been provided to be used by SMEs in different European countries. Making use of the tools developed under the exemplo project on a wide scale will help SMEs throughout Europe to come closer to the goal of strengthening the competitiveness of European SMEs.

Eckart Severing

Part I

Findings of the exempro project

- **Recording, development and assessment of vocational competences – A European challenge**
- **Promoting visibility of competences – The exempro toolkit for SMEs**
- **Current state of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe – using the variety of European experience**

Recording, development and assessment of informally acquired vocational competences: A European challenge

Gabriele Fietz, Annette Junge, Thomas Reglin

Changes that result from globalization and accelerated technological progress affect individual jobs as well as company process chains. The ability of employees to manage changing requirements flexibly and competently has become a decisive factor for competitiveness, especially at companies in the *knowledge based economies* of Europe. Employee knowledge is increasingly a raw material on which companies depend.

Consequently, *how this knowledge originates is also changing*. Learning and work are converging. “Stock learning” in the first phase of life is becoming less important than “lifelong learning”. Training and further training are becoming less differentiated. “Further training”, for its part, is increasingly obtained simply by performing practical work under the pressure for innovation that comes from new customer requirements and changed market conditions.

The support that is needed for such learning processes is found less in traditional courses, specialist presentations and the systematic study of specialized literature than in speaking with superiors and co-workers, in consulting manuals and in using the Internet for information and communication. These processes require an individual to reflect on how to meet the requirements of day-to-day work. Here, the old saying holds true: *The proof of the pudding is in the eating* – the success of learning is demonstrated by solving problems and making a sustainable contribution to the success of an organization in a complex environment.

Ultimately, the question of the *transparency of learning results* arises in a new way as well. Traditional forms of documentation that originate from academic learning processes are no longer effective when the learning situation is not separate from the application situation. However, a “balance sheet” of competences that have been developed during work is equally essential for individuals and organizations. Employees need this for their individual career planning and to visualise their employability; companies need it as a tool for planning, controlling and human resources procurement. This is what is meant by the statement – in the language of vocational training research – that *the validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences is becoming more important*.

There is also a second reason why international labour and capital markets require practical methods for visualizing “learning en passant”: since labour is demanded across borders, documentation methods that are closely linked to national (vocational) training systems and their rules are no longer adequate. Practical competences need to be described in a way that is separate from national educational systems and explains practically relevant *learning outcomes* beyond formal certificates. It is therefore no accident that important progress in the description of informally acquired competences has been achieved in European vocational training research and especially in the cross-national exchange of companies and institutions in the LEONARDO programme.

Competence recording and competence development: increasingly important to companies and employees in European countries

According to various studies,¹ between 70% and 90% of a person's vocational knowledge and skills are acquired informally, i.e. outside of formal learning arrangements. This happens while performing vocational tasks and solving problems, without an explicit intention to learn.²

Informal forms of learning such as "learning from others" and "learning on the job" play an outstanding role particularly in

small and medium-sized enterprises.³ SMEs therefore especially depend on the informally acquired competences of their employees. These competences frequently comprise special knowledge that is acquired while working for highly specialised enterprises that are active in niche markets. This knowledge is difficult to replace and forms a large part of the company's capital.

Table 2.1: Main competencies required by European enterprises in the future

- Learning to learn
- Information processing and management
- Deduction and analytical skills
- Decision making skills
- Communication skills, language skills
- Teamwork, team based learning and teaching
- Creative thinking and problem solving skills
- Management and leadership, strategic thinking
- Self-management and self-development
- Flexibility

Source: Hätönen, H, Osaava henkilöstö - Nyt ja tulevaisuudessa (Skilful staff - now and in the future), Metalliteollisuuden keskusliitto, julkaisu 4/98, MET, Helsinki, 1998.

Fig. 1: Employee competences that are increasingly important to European companies
(Source: SME observatory 2003, p 11)

Numerous studies and company surveys in different European countries confirm that European companies place more and more value on employee competences that generally cannot or cannot sufficiently be taken (i.e. in the form of subjective personnel assessments) from conventional diplomas and leaving certificates – such as learning ability, communication ability, flexibility and strategic thinking – to name only a few examples.

To be able to record and utilize the entire spectrum of employee competences, companies need meaningful information on what job applicants and employees can actually do. Diplomas and certificates that

certify a vocational or course degree have increasingly lost meaning due to the quickly changing requirements of modern work processes. New types of methods are required to record competences such as those mentioned above.

The lack of transparency for competences acquired at work (or in other circumstances such as family and leisure) is also a problem for *employees*. While qualifications documented in conventional leaving certificates are becoming outdated faster and faster, the new knowledge and competences that people acquire informally during the work process are not documented anywhere. The results of informal

learning processes are still not systematically recorded, let alone certified, in the majority of countries and companies in Europe. This is a considerable obstacle to the employability and thus the mobility of employees: Employees have to be able to demonstrate the entire spectrum of their vocational skills to take complete advantage of opportunities for employment and advancement.

The countries of the *European Union* have recognized that it is necessary to increase the transparency and *visibility* of informally acquired competences of employees as well – “to make visible the entire scope of knowledge and experience held by an individual, irrespective of the context where the learning originally took place.” (Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2004, p.69)

After it was decided in the Lisbon Agenda of 2000 to make the borders of the labour markets more open, the work force more mobile and Europe as a whole more com-

petitive, more attention has been given to the *validation of non-formal and informal learning* of workers as an important part of this.⁴ The human resources development of companies, the *empowerment* and *employability* of employees and the optimised utilization and development of European knowledge societies equally depend on better recording of informally acquired competences:

“For an employer it is a question of human resource management, for individuals a question of having the full range of skills and competences valued and for society a question of making full use of existing knowledge and experience, thus avoiding waste and duplication.” (Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2004, p.69)

Before the subject of determining and recording competences is discussed in more detail in the following, informal learning will be briefly defined in the context of European discourse.

Key word: informal learning

Informal learning comprises all forms of more or less conscious self-learning outside of the formal training system, in direct relation to life and experience – from unconscious, tacit learning⁵ on the one hand to consciously self-organized learning on the other hand.

After some confusion and misunderstanding, especially concerning the use of the terms “*nonformal*” and “*informal*” learning, in 2001 the European Commission set the definition of informal learning that is used in the training discussion of the EU:

“(a) formal learning is typically provided by education or training institutions, structured (in terms of learning objectives,

learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective;

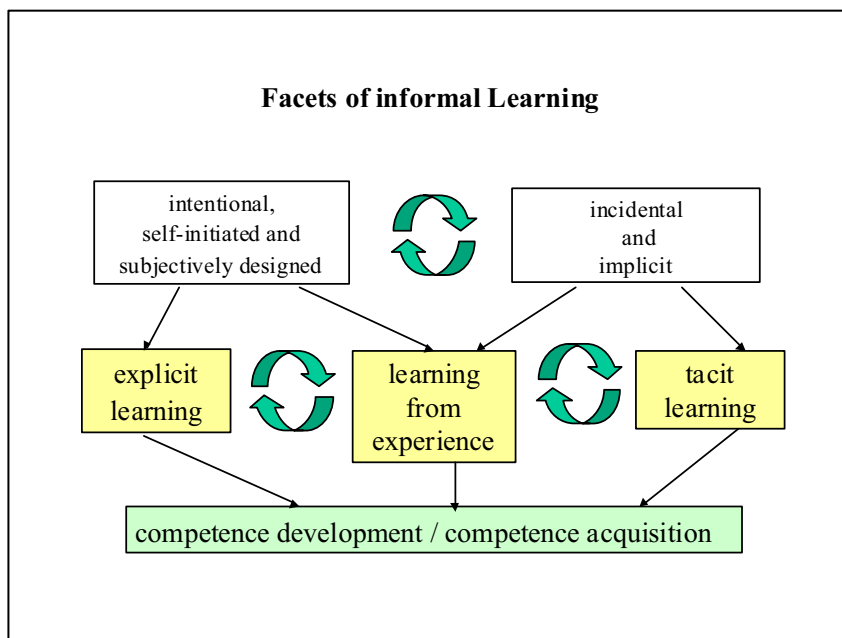


Fig. 2: Facets of informal learning (Frank in: Wittwer 2003, p. 177)

(b) non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically it does not lead to certification. However, it is structured, in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view;

(c) informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support). Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or incidental / random)⁶ (Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 21).

Although there is still some difference in emphasis in how the term is used and understood in different European countries (l.c.), the following can be noted:

Informal learning in a work context primarily takes place in dealing with the work situation itself and the requirements that arise in and during the work process.⁷

Informal learning results in competences: *"The dimension of 'competence' (...) is simultaneously the place where formally and informally acquired knowledge, abilities and skills are integrated."* (Wittwer 2003, p. 33)

The greater emphasis on *competence* as a collection of formally as well as informally acquired abilities and skills, in contrast to the currently dominant point of view of qualification as the proof of vocational capability, marks a significant change in perspective.

Competence – What are we talking about?

According to Erpenbeck/Sauer, the change in perspective from a concept of qualification to one of competence "is an inevitable reaction to the increasing dynamism, complexity and unpredictability of today's economic and political processes" (Erpenbeck/Sauer 2000, 303).

Qualifications describe the results of formal learning processes or the examination and certification of learning results according to preset standards. Diplomas and (vocational) leaving certificates confirm the achievement of a given level in relation to these standards.

"A qualification is achieved when a responsible authority decides that a person's learning meets specified requirements relating to knowledge, skills and competences. The fact that the desired results have been attained is confirmed by an evaluation process or a successfully completed course of study. Knowledge can be learned and assessed for a qualification in a course of study and/or in the framework of vocational experience. A qualification contains an official recognition that is valid in the labour market and furthermore enables a person to continue his or her training or educational career. A qualification

*can legally authorize a person to pursue a particular vocation ."*⁸

In this respect, qualifications are static: They certify that a predefined learning goal has been attained.

Competences, in comparison, *also* comprise vocational knowledge that has been acquired in formal training courses and certified by a qualification. However, they focus on the aspect of the *application* of formally as well as informally acquired knowledge and abilities in the performance of actions. According to Erpenbeck/Rosenstiel, "competence" is understood to be the abilities that enable a person to attain a goal in given situations in a self-organized way, on the basis of experience, knowledge and skills (Erpenbeck/Rosenstiel 2003).

In academic discussion – as well as in business practice – there is a large range of definitions and terms concerning what is defined as "competence" in different contexts; even experts have a hard time knowing all the concepts: *"When this phenomenon is studied in detail, a jungle of definitions, concepts, tools and practical projects is revealed; the state of research*

in this area is very unclear because there are a multitude of approaches from different disciplines with different motives, interests and target groups. The concept of 'competence' is correspondingly protean and at times contradictory" (Kleinert 2005). Lang-von Wins quotes Weinert⁹ in this context, who concludes that "a negative relation (exists) between the popularity of a concept of competence and its precision but there is a wide consensus on what is still lacking in competences." (Lang-von Wins, T. 2003, p. 585)

competences are formulated each time to meet current (and changing) situational requirements for "competent action". "Competence" therefore resembles an equation with two dynamically changing variables: different and continually changing requirements that have to be met by correspondingly adapted action or modified strategies. According to Erpenbeck/Heyse, "the" ultimate definition of "competence" will therefore never exist (Erpenbeck/Heyse 1999, p. 50).

For the time being at least, there is no comprehensive definition of "competence" in sight that is capable of consensus in every respect and that goes much beyond the "minimum definition" in the terminology glossary developed by CEDEFOP¹¹ for vocational training in Europe:

"competence – Ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in an habitual or changing situation."

(Cedefop Glossary, Tissot 2004)

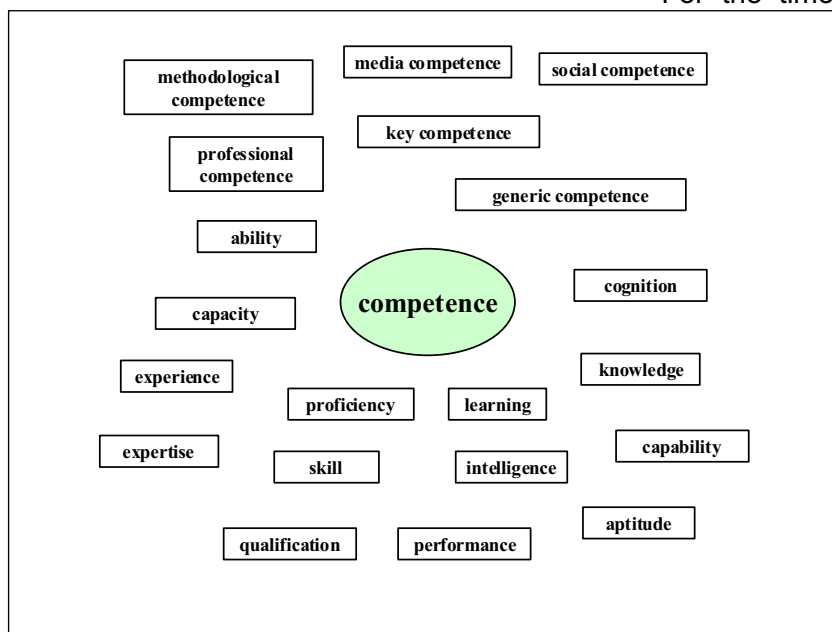


Fig. 3: The manifold conceptual relationships of the competence concept (HAW Hamburg, p 24)

The variety of definitions and specifications¹⁰, which range from the common division into personal, methodological, social and professional competences to very sophisticated specifications for precise requirements at specific workplaces, can be primarily attributed to different practical requirements. The wide spectrum of competence definitions does not reflect academic shortcomings so much as the fact that

The following, however, can be observed: competences can only be explained through how they are expressed in action. Or, more precisely: competences are theoretical constructs that can only be understood using indicators.

Competences can therefore only be measured by drawing conclusions from the (assumed, previously defined) expressions of different competences concerning the underlying dispositions or abilities of an individual. Very different types of evidence therefore play a decisive role in different methods for recording competence.

Measuring competences – What is to be measured?

Methods and procedures for recording the vocationally relevant competences of employees¹² focus on the task of recording *proof* of existing competences and their development. Certificates and proof of existing vocational qualifications can certainly be used as evidence, such as in the framework of portfolios¹³ that combine the different documents and expressions of vocational competences in a single set of documentation. In addition to conventional certificates and school-leaving documents from formal training courses, however, methods for assessing *informally* acquired competences focus on other *proof* or *evidence* in order to visualize competences acquired outside of formal learning arrangements as well: “to capture the added value provided by learning taking place outside formal systems” (Colardyn, Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 108).

For this reason, different types of attempts are made to record expressions of voca-

tional competences that have been variously acquired. The *output*, the visible and (in whatever way) measurable and recordable *result* of learning processes – the *learning outcome*¹⁴ – is the starting point for conclusions about the respectively expressed competences.

Each time before competences are recorded, it is therefore necessary to define what result or what action is to be understood and recorded as an expression of what competence:

- *What* competence(s) is/are to be recorded?
- *Wherein* – in what actions – is the competence, for example planning competence, *expressed*, or more precisely: What is to be considered an expression of this competence (e.g. at a respective workplace)?
- *How* are the competence(s) to be recorded?

How can competences be measured?

In different companies, industries, regions and individual countries of Europe, a variety of procedures and methods have been developed to record, document and assess different competences. Naturally, these methods differ considerably. The specifications for the competences to be recorded differ greatly depending on the national vocational training system, the job description and workplace requirements as well as the respective goal of a competence survey. Despite the wide difference in *content*, however, there are certain similarities in the *methods* that have been developed in individual countries.

Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold propose five categories for classifying the different methods that they have identified in a total of 14 European countries and which they have analyzed in the “*European inventory on validating non-formal and informal learning*”, which now exists in a second edition:

Conventional testing methods and examinations,

- Declarative methods in which employees are actively involved in recording their competences through forms of self-assessment,
- Observation methods in which conclusions are drawn about existing competences (and their form) by third parties, based on observed vocational actions (assessment by others),
- Simulations in which vocationally relevant decision-making and work situations are “reconstructed” outside of the workplace and conclusions are made about existing competences and their development from observed behaviour, and
- *Evidence* in the narrower sense of the word: work pieces or other “physical or intellectual samples” that are consider-

ed proof of existing competences or a competence level (Colardyn/Bjørnåvold 2005, 121 f.).

It can be generally noted that methods that place great value on an *assessment by others* require a higher degree of objectivity than methods that allow a great deal of subjective self-assessment by the employ-

ees themselves. On the other hand, self-assessments have a higher degree of authenticity and can furthermore count on a great acceptance by the people whose competences are recorded. The method – or combination of different methods – that is preferable in each case also significantly depends on the goal of the competence recording.

What is the goal of the competence recording?

Different methods – and different forms and combinations of methods – also differ, among other things, according to the goal of competence recording:

- Should all competences that an individual has acquired in formal and informal ways throughout his or her life be visualized and documented, for example to increase a person's employability with a meaningful competence profile?
- Should the current state of competences – such as that of company employees – be recorded to create a basis for optimizing human resources development, for example in the form of selective further training measures?
- Should informally acquired vocational competences or the attainment of particular competence levels be certified, for example according to the standards of formal training certificates?

These goals (and further ones that can be added here) are not contradictory. How-

ever, different priorities will be set depending on the goal and orientation of competence recording; for example, depending on whether a method is more oriented towards *taking stock of or further developing* competences - or has a combination of these summative and formative functions.

For the different goals related to recording competences – from identification to assessment to the certification of informal competences – and in light of the still considerable variety of terminology (and the vagueness of terminology as well) in the discussion of the *validation, accreditation, certification, recognition* and the *assessment* of competences, Colardyn /Bjørnåvold propose the word “validation” as a *common term*:

“This general term covers a range of activities, spanning identification via assessment to recognition of learning outcomes.” (Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 7)

Measuring competences – by what?

No method of competence recording, even if it only “modestly” aims at a quasi value-free visualization of existing competences, can escape determining required levels.

Simply expressed: measurement is not possible without *standards*; without defining what an expression of existing competence is (and what manifests its absence), competence recordings are a contradiction in themselves.

In the **identification** of vocational competences to increase transparency, the focus is not on the formal recognition of competences; these are “only” to be visualized and documented. Nevertheless, even when a method is not intended to provide an assessment, let alone a certification, the question of *criteria* still arises implicitly or explicitly: something (an action) has to be measured to prove that a competence exists. For the **assessment** of compe-

tences, certain points of reference naturally have to be used. In addition, general points of reference have to be specified at the latest when the mutual **recognition** of different forms of documenting existing competences is to be supported.

Various methods that have been developed in European countries are oriented to standards defined by formal vocational training courses or certificates: they determine whether a person being assessed has the knowledge, abilities and skills that are defined as criteria for the attainment of particular certificates. Such methods, however, risk omitting important competences:

“When non-formally acquired competences are supposed to be similar to those developed in formal education and training, there is a certain risk that important competences are defined as irrelevant.” (Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2004, p. 74)

An example may illustrate this danger: When fundamentally changed technology and correspondingly modified workplace requirements have long since revolutionized the job requirements of a vehicle mechanic *in practice* towards those of a mechatronics specialist, who requires a knowledge of electronics in addition to a knowledge of mechanics, it is pointless to record competences based on the outdated requirements profile of a vehicle mechanic. An orientation to the standards of formal vocational degrees therefore always risks missing the current developments and needs of companies and thus the requirements of the labour market:

“Focus on formal education may hinder taking into account the needs of enterprises (competences and human resources development) and the labour market” (Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2005, p 95)

Other methods are oriented to the standards of individual industries, the specific requirements of individual companies or

even, at individual companies, to the requirements of particular workplaces. On the one hand, this variety of different reference points and levels is necessary for competence recording to be adapted to the different requirements and conditions in individual countries and to the different requirements and prerequisites at companies.

On the other hand, the large spectrum of different reference points and standards is a considerable obstacle to recognising proof of even informally acquired vocational competences in different European countries – and thus hinders the mobility of employees and companies as well:

“However, the development of a high number of sectoral and enterprise-based methodologies tailored to specific and limited needs may contradict the general objective of increased transparency and transferability.” (ECOTEC 2005, p 3)

The European Commission is currently devoting increased effort to developing new methods that allow greater transparency among vocational degrees and other certifications of vocational competence across Europe on the one hand and that do not excessively limit the required variety and range of methods on the other hand.

“The question of reference points (‘standards’) is a major issue for assessment of formal as well as non-formal learning. While norm-referencing (using the performance of a group/population) has not been seriously discussed in the context of assessing non-formal learning (due to the diversity of competences involved), the issue of criterion- or domain-referencing lies at the heart of the matter. The definition of boundaries of competence-domains (their size and content) and the ways in which competences can be expressed within this domain is of critical importance.” (Bjørnåvold 2001, p 30)

The development in the European Union: Step by step towards a common framework for validating informal learning

Common European principles

An important milestone on this path is marked by the *Common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning*¹⁵, which were proposed by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission in 2004. The common principles do not specify “any particular methodological or institutional solutions, since the form of such solutions would have to take into account the local, regional, sectoral or national characteristics” (European Commission 2004, p 4).

Instead, they formulate a few basic requirements for methods of recording informally acquired competences. These

requirements must be met for the methods and their results to be accepted as impartial, trustworthy and credible – an essential prerequisite for transnational transparency and recognition.

The goal of these validation methods is to visualize the entire spectrum of an individual’s qualifications and competences, regardless of where and how they were acquired.

The focus can be on a formative (*supporting an ongoing learning process*) or even a summative goal (*aiming at certification*). In any case, the following principles should be observed:

The Common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning

- **Individual entitlements:**

The validation of non-formal and informal learning processes should always take place on a voluntary basis. Everyone should have the right to the same access and equal and fair treatment; privacy and the rights of the individual must be ensured.

- **Responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders:**

All people involved have certain responsibilities when implementing measures for validating competences, for example installing suitable systems for the quality assurance of methods. Individuals should receive a suitable orientation, advice and information on the respective method.

- **Confidence and trust:**

Assuring confidentiality is a central, basic prerequisite for successfully developing and implementing the methods. The reliability and transparency of the entire method, the process and the criteria used must be ensured. A continuous quality assurance is necessary.

- **Credibility and legitimacy:**

In order to assure the credibility and legitimacy of the method, all relevant stakeholders must be involved. The procedure and methodological principles for the recording and assessment must be presented in a clear, transparent and understandable manner, and they must be coordinated. It must be ensured that the methods are developed and used impartially and applied in a professional manner.

These common principles create an important basis for the common development and mutual recognition of different meth-

ods and procedures for recording competences.

EQF and ECVET: Building bridges between different vocational training systems – for employees and companies

Two projects are underway to make competences and qualifications more transparent and thereby increase the mobility of European workers and companies: a European qualification framework is being developed to record and classify qualifications and competences, and a system of *credit points* is being developed to promote the mutual recognition of competences acquired in other countries of the EU.

- The **EQF** – the European Qualification Framework – is designed as a multinational and multi-industry “translation tool” for acquired competences and qualifications and is strictly oriented to *learning outcomes* that are defined in so-called descriptors. The descriptors *knowledge, skills and competences* are described in a matrix in the present proposal according to eight (8) hierarchical reference levels, whereby the descriptor *personal and professional competence* is further divided into the four sub-descriptors *autonomy and responsibility, learning competence, communication and social competence* as well as *professional and vocational competence*¹⁶.
- The **ECVET** (European Credit Transfer for Vocational Education and Training) aims to develop a system to assess

and recognise learning achievements/learning outcomes of an individual engaged in a learning pathway leading to a qualification, a vocational diploma or certificate. It enables the documentation, validation and recognition of achieved learning outcomes acquired abroad, in both formal VET or in non-formal contexts. This should increase the transparency and connections among European vocational training systems. The ECVET is intended as a tool that can visualize competences regardless of how and how long they were acquired and that can describe and compare even smaller-sized training units.¹⁷

The establishment of standards – for determining reference levels in the case of the EQF and for defining achievement (points) in the case of the ECVET – plays an important role in both methods. It is not possible to set these standards from the top down; it has to be done from the bottom up for the standards to be accepted by the participants in all countries involved. It must be part of a pan-European consultation process that takes into account the different experiences, prerequisites and requirements of the various European countries.

The development in the countries of Europe: Different paths, one goal

More and more importance is being placed on the identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning in European countries and enterprises; however, the actual status and acceptance of corresponding systems and methods are quite varied throughout Europe.

“The take-up and acceptance of methods to validate non-formal and informal learning varies greatly across European coun-

tries and methodologies.” (Ecotec 2005, p. 21)

Against the backdrop of their different vocational training systems, European countries and regions place a varying amount of importance on recording informally acquired competences. Germany, for example, has a dual system of vocational training that integrates practical elements in initial vocational training. Because of this,

Germans did not feel the need for more extensive competence recording for a long time. However, other countries such as the United Kingdom, France or Finland already possess documentation or recognition methods and are experienced in applying them.¹⁸ Colardyn/Bjørnåvold distinguish three stages of development:

- Countries in the stage of *experimentation and uncertainties*; Germany and Austria are mentioned as examples here
- Countries in which national systems are currently being developed, such as e.g. France, Norway, Spain
- Countries in which systems for recording informally acquired competences are already established, such as

Intensifying an exchange of experiences

Promising approaches that appear suitable for SMEs or at least capable of being correspondingly adapted have already been developed in different European countries and companies. However, these approaches generally exist apart from each other; all too often, the wheel is reinvented simultaneously at different European locations.

Against this backdrop, it is especially important to exchange experience across countries and jointly develop tools that can be used at companies in different European nations or at least easily adapted to different needs and requirements.

“Mutual learning should be sought and supported between projects, institutions and countries. A substantial amount of learning is already taking place at various levels. As concluded in other parts of this report, and especially in relation to activity at European level, the potential for mutual learning is much greater than the actual and factual achievements thus far. Establishing such learning mechanisms must reflect the various purposes and functions to be fulfilled. Finally, it is very necessary to increase coordination and to support activities (at European and national level) in order to capitalise on the experiences gained through numerous existing pro-

e.g. the United Kingdom (Colardyn/Bjørnåvold 2005).

The fact that in Germany, for example, there are “*currently only isolated efforts at companies to centrally and explicitly record, document and recognize competences that are informally acquired in the process of work*” (Berufsbildungsbericht 2005, p. 261) is not only due to insufficient attention to new forms of competence acquisition and recording. In many European countries, small and medium-sized enterprises in particular have hardly any suitable tools for this at their disposal. In view of the limited time, financial and personnel resources of SMEs, it is all the more urgent for them to have easily manageable, uncomplicated methods that are easy to integrate in work processes.

jects, programmes and institutional reforms.” (Bjørnåvold 2001, p. 30)

As explained above, it is not possible to find “the tool” for recording “the competence”. However, through transnational communication and cooperation, it is possible to develop a set of tools that is suitable for different goals associated with recording the informally acquired competences of employees.

“No single method of assessment provides a complete overview of skills and competences held by an individual. It does not make sense to say that one assessment approach is ‘better’ than another. The question is rather when to refer to the one and when to refer to another? Each approach has its own objectives and strengths and is, therefore, suited for certain (limited) purposes. Different approaches will coexist and should be combined.”

(Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 108)

Such a set of tools for recording informally acquired competences has been developed in the exemplo project. The exemplo toolkit and the suitability criteria for methods to be used in different European countries are presented in the following contribution.

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¹ The European survey on continuing vocational training CVTS, the survey on continuing vocational training of the Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft (Institute of the German Economy - IW) (Weiß 2001), the IAB-Betriebspanel (IAB company panel) as well as the Berichtssystem Weiterbildung VIII (Continuing Education Reporting System VIII).

² The percentages vary due to different operationalisations/definitions of what is understood as “informal learning”. For an overview, cf. e.g. Dohmen, G., 2001; Frank, I. in: Wittwer 2003, p. 176; Wittwer 2003, p. 15

³ Forms of *learning by doing* are accordingly considered an important characteristic of small enterprises. (ENSR Enterprise Survey 2002, p. 21 f.), quoted according to SME Observatory 2003, p. 13.

⁴ The scope and progress of this process is especially seen in the publications of Jens Bjørnåvold and Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold.

⁵ The phenomenon of “tacit knowledge” has been dealt with by Polanyi (1966) in particular.

⁶ Quoted according to Colardyn/ Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 21

⁷ For a detailed discussion of informal learning, cf. Dohmen, G. (2001), Das informelle Lernen.

⁸ Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 8 July 2006 SEC (2005) 957 – Commission staff working paper: Towards a European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning

⁹ In the framework of the OECD project “Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations (DeSeCo)”, Franz E. Weinert has developed a comparative overview of different versions of the competence concept. Weinert does not give a specific definition of the concept of competence himself.

¹⁰ In the German-language literature on vocational training alone, Weinert has found approx. 650 different proposals for defining key competences (p. 52) – this also illustrates the vagueness of the concept.

¹¹ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training www.cedefop.eu.int

¹² Some methods such as the French *bilan de competence* do not focus on recording the competences of the employees of particular companies but on taking stock of competences independently of an individual's employment status and of individual companies. Such methods are also considerably oriented to improving the employability of job-seekers by documenting their informally acquired competences.

¹³ The *Europass* is an example of such a portfolio.

¹⁴ “Learning outcome” is used in the sense of “learning result” as well as in the sense of “learning goal”. The latter denotes “a written statement of what the successful student/learner is expected to be able to do after the end of the module/course unit, or qualification”. (Adam 2004, p. 5)

¹⁵ European Commission. Common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Brussels: European Commission, 2004.

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/education/policies/2010/vocational_en.html

¹⁶ It is remarkable in this connection that despite all the positive assessment of the present draft from various sides at the result conference on the EQF consultation method at the end of February 2006 in Budapest, a need for revision was seen especially concerning a clear definition of “qualification” and “competence” - further evidence of the above-indicated complexity of the task of defining theoretical constructs such as that of competence beyond content specifications.

¹⁷ cf. http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/ecvt2005_en.pdf and Le Mouillour (2005)

¹⁸ For the different situations in the countries of Europe, refer to the article by Gabriele Fietz in this edition of *impuls*.

Promoting visibility of competences – The exempro toolkit for SMEs

Gabriele Fietz, Annette Junge

The Leonardo project exempro was an attempt to bring together “the best from different worlds” in terms of establishing procedures for the assessment of informally acquired competences developed in various European countries. Partners from seven European countries were entrusted with the identification and further development of instruments some of which had been tested in the course of the project work by small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in the countries involved. Thus, within the framework of the transnational partnership a set of methods was developed to be used by SMEs in different European countries which may be adapted to different prerequisites and requirements.

Section 1 sets forth the objectives, key factors and approaches forming the basis of the European exempro project partnership.

Section 2 contains a description of seven instruments for the assessment and development of competences – the “exempro toolkit” – analysing the strengths and shortcomings of the various procedures.

Section 3 summarises the experience gained during the practical testing of various instruments in a number of European countries making evident the requirements with respect to the conception and implementation of methods for competence assessment. The potential areas of conflict implicitly defined by these requirements will be identified in a conspectus of the project outcomes included in *Section 4*.

1 The exempro project: objectives and approaches

Whether with respect to the recruitment of human resources or in the course of in-house staff development programs – the extent to which business enterprises in European countries depend on the assessment and documentation of competences acquired by their employees in a non-formal and informal way keeps growing.

Informal learning-on-the-job is of paramount importance in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises which account for some 99 % of businesses in the European Union: As a rule, their employees’ competences are constituted by special skills and knowledge they have acquired while working in SMEs many of

which are operating on niche markets. Hence, forms of informal learning may be found especially in SMEs as in such an environment acquisition of competences is, to a high degree, the result of *learning by doing* and that makes SMEs heavily dependant on the competences their employees have acquired in an informal way. However, so far in most of European SMEs no systematic collection of informally acquired competences has been started.¹

While large-scale transnational business enterprises have been availing themselves of a vast number of approaches and instruments in order to evaluate their employees’ or job-applicants’ professional

competences, small and medium-sized enterprises in many European countries in this respect are facing a new, largely unfamiliar challenge. SMEs – predominantly, though not exclusively in southern and accession countries – are, in the first place, poorly informed about the benefits of, and the need for assessment of competences acquired by employees in an informal way. Secondly, lack of temporal, human and financial resources often proves to be a major obstacle in adopting the – possibly both costly and lengthy – procedures for competence assessment as practised by large enterprises.

Against the background of highly heterogeneous VET-systems, learning cultures with regard to both in-company and individual learning as well as differing needs of enterprises during the past years many European countries have witnessed the development and piloting of a wide range of procedures and instruments for the as-

essment, documentation and facilitation of informal professional learning processes.

Linking up the approaches developed within companies, by educational institutions and – last but not least – the state as well as using the experience in developing tools suitable for competence assessment for SMEs gained in various European countries lay at the centre of the *exemplo* project that was sponsored by the EU under the Leonardo-da-Vinci project.

Within the framework of Trans-European cooperation, partners from seven countries – Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom – were put in charge with the development of instruments and procedures enabling SMEs of various European countries to assess and promote informally acquired competences of employees or job candidates in a relatively simple way.

The exemplo project	Data and information
Project name	exemplo
Project duration	October 01, 2003 – July 01, 2006
Sponsor	European Commission, Programme Leonardo da Vinci
Contractor	National Agency BILDUNG FÜR EUROPA at the German Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB, Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training) http://www.na-bibb.de
Project executor	Berufliche Fortbildungszentren der Bayerischen Wirtschaft (bfz) gemeinnützige GmbH http://bildungsforschung.bfz.de
exemplo on the Internet	www.exemplo.de

Fig. 1: The exemplo project – facts and figures

1.1 Key factors of the trans-European partnership

1.1.1 Inclusion of various European countries and different approaches

There are still considerable differences among European countries as regards the importance attached to informally acquired competences, and the same holds true for the range of procedures conceived for the assessment, documentation and development of competences. Hence, the ex-emplo project involved partners from countries showing starkly different traditions in the assessment and evaluation of non-formally and informally acquired competences in order to make available an as wide as possible range of experiences.

Among the countries involved in the work were Norway and Finland – two countries representing the “Nordic approach”², Spain and Germany – the former standing for the “Mediterranean approach”, the latter for the “Dual system approach” – as well as Poland as a representative of an accession country. In the partner countries United Kingdom – a representative of the

“NVQ-approach” – and France – which, according to Bjørnåvold (2000), is characterised by “opening up diplomas and certificates” – there are already full-fledged, albeit differing from each other traditions of competence assessment that might be drawn upon when carrying out the project work.

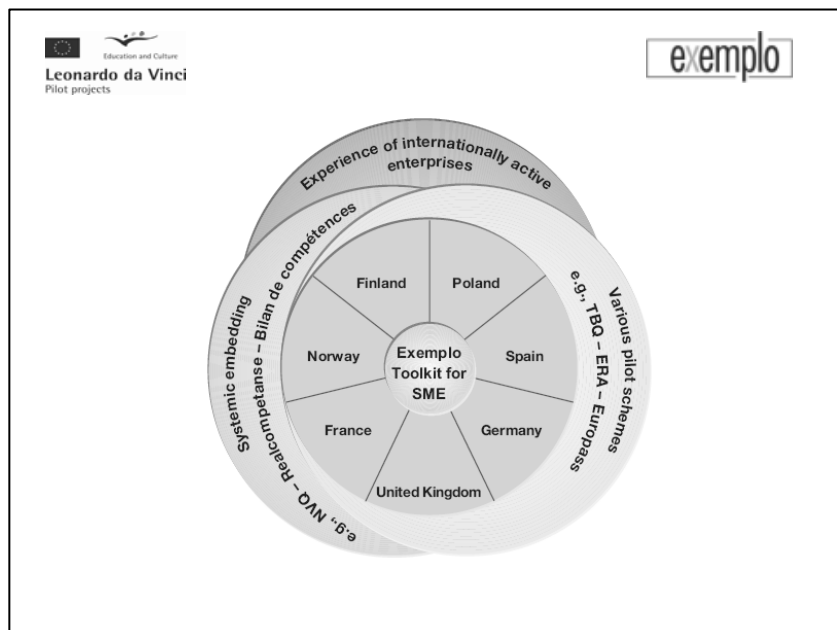


Fig. 2: Inclusion of European expertise into the ex-emplo partnership

1.1.2 Inclusion of various stakeholders

As a multi-actor partnership, the ex-emplo project included

- representatives of employers associations
- trade unions,
- small and medium-sized enterprises,
- state organisations, and
- research institutions from the seven countries involved.

Apart from the participation of VET-experts from various countries of particular importance is the involvement of representatives of the social partners and companies.

The following table presents the ex-emplo partners and shortly describes the wide range of experience and activities of the partners involved in the ex-emplo partnership.

The exemplo Partnership		
Finland	<p>- AKOL <i>AKOL – Aikuiskouluttajien liitto ry</i> – means Trade Union of Adult Educators in Finland. AKOL represents trainers, teachers and lecturers who are working in vocational adult education centres all over Finland. AKOL has 2000 members. AKOL comprises a network of 42 vocational adult education centres covering the whole country. The government of Finland has authorised those institutes to function as Vocational Adult Education Centres. Accordingly, members of AKOL represent all kinds of fields in adult education and have a varied practical experience in organising non-formal training processes. http://www.oaj.fi/Resource.phx/akol/ajankohtaista.htx?menu=ajank</p>	Trade union/ training or- ganisation
France	<p>- afpa <i>afpa – association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes</i> – is one of the biggest educational institutions of France. <i>afpa</i> works by order of the French government and in close collaboration with ANPE (labour administration). Core activity is to offer courses for unemployed persons; more and more often <i>afpa</i> provides training for enterprises, especially for SMEs. www.afpa.fr</p>	Training and research
	<p>- CFE-CGC <i>CFE-CGC – Union Régionale Franche Comté</i> – is an important regional labour union for managers with technical professions in France. Promotion of the interests of employees, in favour of the employment and the development of firms is one of the numerous activities of CFE-CGC Franche-Comté. www.cfecgc.fr</p>	Trade Union
	<p>- MEDEF Franche-Comté MEDEF Franche-Comté is a regional entity of the French federation of employers « Mouvement des Entreprises de France ». Core activity is the development of concepts of vocational training for employees in companies as well as the integration of young persons in apprenticeship and working life. MEDEF Franche-Comté is particularly active in the field of competence management in regional companies. www.medef.fr</p>	Employers’ organisation
	<p>- CFDT CFDT Franche Comté is a regional entity of the federaton of the French trade union “Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT)”. www.cfdt.fr</p>	Trade union
	<p>- Zurflüh-Feller Zurflüh-Feller S.A. is a medium sized company in the technical sector (closing mechanisms and rolling shutters). www.zurfluh-feller.fr</p>	SME
Germany	<p>- bfz <i>bfz – Training and development Centres of the Bavarian Industry</i> is one of the most active providers of vocational training in Germany. The bfz’s Vocational training Research Department <i>bfz Bildungsforschung</i> develops new methods for vocational training and further training. It contributes actively to issues of competence development and transparency of competences on national and European level. http://bildungsforschung.bfz.de</p>	Training and research

<p>Norway</p>	<p>• VOX Research and development on various issues of adult training is the main activity of <i>VOX – National institute for adult education</i>. <i>VOX</i> is active in national and international networks and has a leading role in the competence reform in Norway, directed to school and to work based vocational education and training activities. Innovation in documentation and assessment of non-formal and informal learning is one of the core activities of the <i>Realkompetanse</i> project that is carried out by <i>VOX</i> on behalf of the national ministry of education. www.vox.no.training</p>	<p>Training and research, state sector</p>
<p>Poland</p>	<p>• TNOIK <i>TNOIK – Towarzystwo Naukowe Organizacji i Kierownictwa / Society for scientific organisation and management</i> – is a research and in-company training establishment working closely with the Federation of Employers in Gdansk and Polish Chamber of Maritime Commerce. <i>TNOIK</i> has worked on projects on social dialogue on European level. http://www.tnoik.org</p>	<p>Training and research</p>
	<p>• Solidarnosc As one of the most powerful trade unions in Poland <i>Solidarnosc</i> comprises at present state 1,3 million members. www.solidarnosc.gda.pl</p>	<p>Trade union</p>
	<p>• Przedsiębiorstwo CEMET Ltd. Sp. Z o. o. <i>Przedsiębiorstwo CEMET</i> is a medium sized enterprise of the metal sector with approximately 100 employees. http://www.cemet.com.pl/</p>	<p>SME</p>
<p>Spain</p>	<p>• Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo <i>Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo</i> is one of the biggest educational institutions of Spain and works closely with the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and the labour administration <i>INEM</i>. <i>Fundación Tripartita</i> is actively involved in the reform of VET system in Spain and in design and implementation of the ERA programme. http://www.fundaciontripartita.org/</p>	<p>Training and research, state sector</p>
<p>United Kingdom</p>	<p>• EEF West Midlands Technology Centre <i>EEF West Midlands – Engineering Employers’ Federation/Technical Centre</i> – is the biggest organisation of employers in the engineering sector on regional level in the UK and supports over 5400 companies in 13 regional associations. <i>EEF</i> is actively involved in the process of modernisation of the NVQ-system in England and has profound experience and expertise in matters of assessment of non formally and informally acquired competences. http://www.eef.org.uk/westmid/</p>	<p>Employers organisation</p>
	<p>• T&G – Transport and General Workers’ Union With its more than 900 000 members the <i>T&G – Transport and General Workers Union</i> – is one of the most relevant labour unions of the UK. Accredited courses with Colleges and Universities as well as joint training and development work with 400 companies per year rank among the core activities. http://www.tgwu.org.uk/homepage.asp?NodeID=88397</p>	<p>Trade union</p>
	<p>• Widney UK Ltd <i>Widney UK</i> is a SME with 80 employees that has been associated with two major industry markets for more than 40 years. The two diverse market services are electronics and their allied industries: off-highway, commercial and passenger transport vehicle sectors. http://www.widney.co.uk/</p>	<p>SME</p>

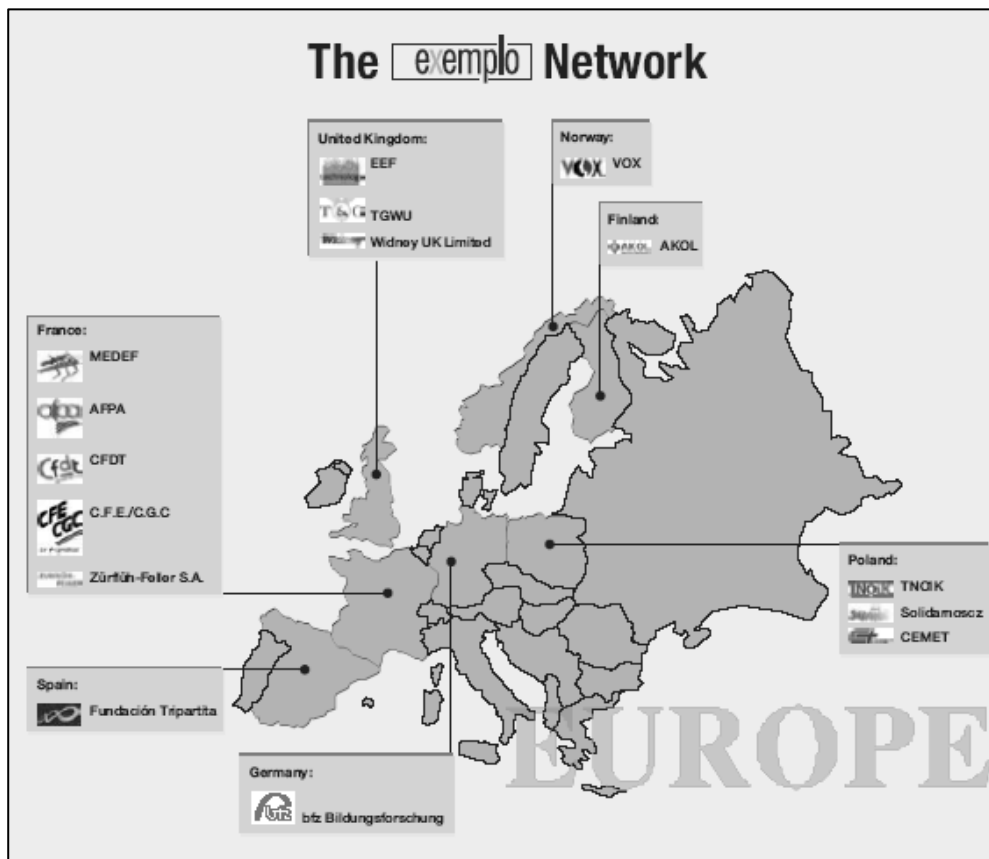


Fig. 3: The exemplo network

1.1.2.1 Inclusion of social partners

While from the employers' standpoint the assessment of competences is primarily a means of optimising the use –and possible further development – of human resources with a view to achieving business goals, employees and their representatives are rather concerned with the improvement of the individual's opportunities for employment and professional advancement.

Quite obviously, these two horizons of concern may become manifest as conflicting situations leading to serious frictions when, for example, employees are apprehending disadvantages from being assessed, or if employers are showing reluctance fearing that competence documentation, while benefiting employees by promoting their mobility, might for the very same reason have a negative effect on their business³. Hence, in order to ensure

that the instruments and procedures developed for competence appraisal find wide acceptance by both sides it is essential to involve representatives from both employers associations and trade unions from the partner countries.

1.1.2.2 Inclusion of SMEs from different European countries – piloting of procedures in business practice

Instruments for competence assessment developed in a given partner country were tested and rated by employees and superiors of SMEs in another European country⁴. Such practical testing contributed much to the exact formulation of the catalogue of requirements for transnational usability of the instruments and also the development of the exemplo toolkit.

1.2 The procedure

1.2.1 European demands on the instruments – elaboration of criteria for the selection of suitable procedures

The development process sets out with the compilation of a catalogue of common criteria an instrument for the assessment, documentation and development of informally acquired competences must meet in order to be applicable throughout Europe.

A first stocktaking of the current state of the assessment of informally acquired competences in the European partner countries – Which requirements are regarded as important in the various countries? Which are the demands of business enterprises? What kinds of procedures have already been developed in the various countries, which are the experiences? – forms the basis for the development of a grid enabling the categorisation and appraisal of instruments and procedures for competence assessment to be used in various countries.

Such a grid provides a clear-cut illustration of the areas of and requirements for use of the respective instrument

- Is the instrument independent of the VET-system of the country in which it was developed?
- Is the instrument suitable for being used by SMEs?
- Which kind of competences can be identified with the help of the instrument – professional competences or personal and social competences?
- What is the aim of the procedure, and which method is being used?

Other criteria are the requirements in terms of human resources, premises, technical equipment and time, and – last but not least – the expenses incurred by the implementation of an instrument within the company. Moreover, adherence to the *Common European Principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning*⁵ is a basic requirement an instrument has to meet to be regarded suitable.

The Exemplo - Toolkit:
Criteria for the selection of Tools - Step 1

Exemplo-tools have to meet at least 3 criteria:

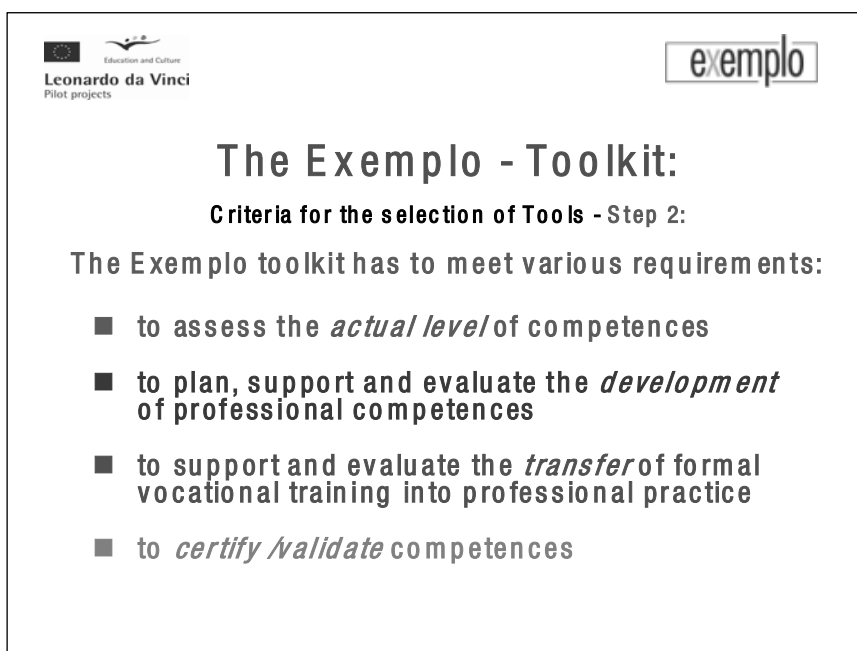
- Independence from specific national VET-systems
- Usability in different European countries
- Adaptability to varying prerequisites and demands of companies and employees

Fig. 4: Criteria for the selection of suitable competence assessment procedures – Step 1

1.2.2 The collection and selection of instruments

As a further step, with the participation of the exempo partners in the various countries a number of procedures and instruments for the assessment of informally acquired competences were selected on the basis of the criteria grid devised for this purpose. Apart from meeting the mentioned basic requirements a decisive role

for being selected is the range of instruments: In addition to instruments for the assessment and documentation of informally acquired competences, the European exempo toolkit should also provide for methods for a systematic *development* of these competences.



Hence, the exempo toolkit includes a variety of instruments catering for a variety of requirements and focuses:

- the assessment of the actual level of employees' competences
- support of the development of employees' competences
- evaluation / certification of competences.

Fig. 5: Criteria for the selection of suitable methods for competence assessment – Step 2

1.2.3 Practical testing and evaluation

Some of the selected methods were tested in companies in a number of European countries to obtain data on the transferability and adaptability of the instruments to the prerequisites and requirements of companies in other European countries. All instruments were evaluated in both a theoretical and a practical respect by exempo experts who, by specifying the requirements concerning the design of the

instruments were thus able to work out criteria for further development and the selection of particularly well-suited methods. Moreover, they could identify those project steps that proved to be success factors in implementing and carrying out the procedures for the assessment and evaluation of employees' competences in SMEs in all the countries involved.

1.2.4 Adaptation of instruments and selection of the most suitable methods

After completion of the testing and evaluation selected instruments were subjected a revision in accordance with the insight gained on that basis. At the end of the process three instruments from the exemplo toolkit were

singled out as the ones most suitable for implementation in a transnational context. A detailed description of these instruments can be found in Part III to this volume.

1.3 The project's website: www.exemplo.de

The central communication and information-tool of the exemplo partnership is the internet platform <http://www.exemplo.de>. The results of the project work or announcements of workshops and conferences can be found there. Links to institutions of the partner countries, such as the VOX barometer from Norway or the competence club of the MEDEF Franche Comté offer a wide spectrum of information on the status of the promotion, documentation and recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences in Europe.

Besides that companies, training providers, trainers and individuals could down-



Fig. 6: The exemplo Website

load the instruments of the Exemplo toolkit in various languages along with practical information and guidelines for practical use.

2 The exemplo toolkit

The following section provides an overview of the “exemplo toolkit” – competence assessment instruments proposed by the partners from seven European countries which have been piloted and evaluated under the partnership programme.

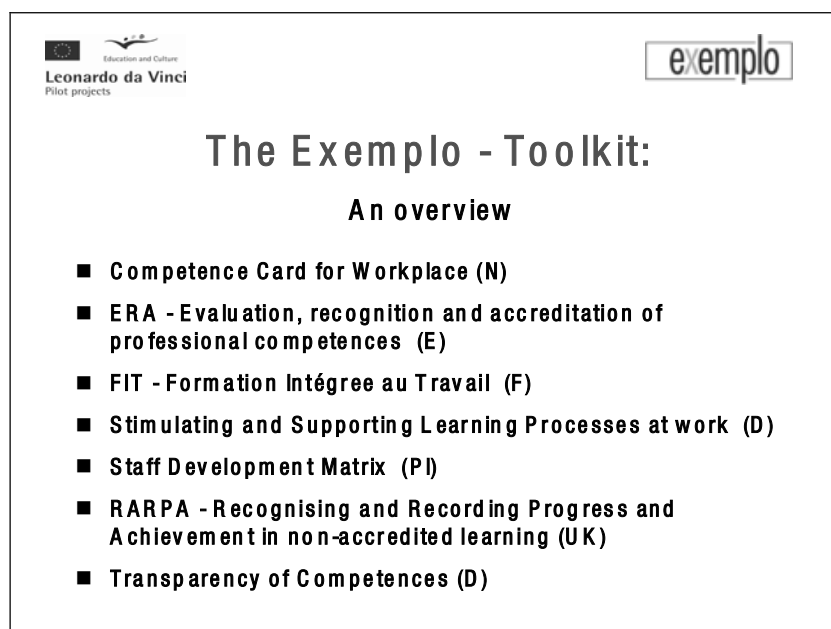


Fig. 7: The exemplo toolkit

The methods and instruments developed against the background of continued heterogeneity of both VET-systems and in-house learning cultures in the partner countries, accordingly, differ from each other with regard to their respective emphases: While all methods aim to assess informally acquired competences of employees they differ widely as concerns the end of competence assessment procedures, the method(s) used and – last but not least – the kind of competences which are to be assessed. Hence, the instruments were classified in accordance with the different focuses by means of a grid as reflected by the following description of the tools.

What does the method primarily focus on?

With respect to their primary objective on the one hand, the methods may be classified as either aiming rather at the assess

ment or the development of competences:

- Some instruments focus on the assessment and documentation of the actual level of competences, i.e. they place to the foreground the summative aspect.
- Opposed to this, other methods put the emphasis on further development of employees' competences, i.e. the formative aspect prevails.

On the other hand, the methods differ with respect to the importance they attach to both validation and certification of informally acquired competences:

- Some methods are designed for the assessment and description of existing competences.
- Other methods are centred on the measurement and evaluation of competences and competences levels.

Who is the subject of the assessment of competences?

Another aspect is the **subject** of competence assessment and evaluation:

- Some instruments focus on *self-assessment*: Using more or less structured questionnaires and other assessment methods employees will reveal and evaluate their competences in self-assessment.
- Other instruments stress competence assessment and evaluation *by others*, i.e. by seniors and / or external expert opinion.

The majority of methods prefer a combination of self-evaluation and evaluation by others with the respective weights varying considerably.

Who is in the centre of the process?

The various methods are distinct from one another also with respect to their orientation in terms of rather serving company interests or adopting the individual’s perspective, promoting his / her professional development.

- Some methods would take the company standpoint aiming to satisfy their specific needs for competence (development).
- Other instruments place the emphasis on the assessment of the individuals’ competences documenting them independent of the specific company context.

What kinds of competences are to be validated?

Another distinctive feature for a characterisation and classification of various methods is the *kind of competences* which can or are to be assessed by applying them.

- Many methods clearly focus on the assessment of *professional competences* in a narrow sense.
- Other instruments aim to cover *personal and social competences*, as well.

The Exemplo - Toolkit:
Criteria for the classification of the Exemplo-Tools:

. Who is the subject of the assessment of competences?	Self-assessment	Assessment by others
. What does the method primarily focus on?	Assessment of competences	Development of competences
. Who is in the centre of the process?	description	Validation, certification
. What kind of competences are to be measured/validated?	Employer-oriented	Employee-oriented
	Professional competences	Personal and social competences

Fig. 8: Classification grid for various instruments and methods for competence assessment

In the following tables, the instruments and methods for competence assessment, development and evaluation proposed by the exemplo partners are classified according to the above mentioned criteria and distinctive features on the basis of the grid which breaks down the instruments by their respective (main) objectives, focal points of competence assessment, the process participants, as well as the assessment method. At the right top of the table, the instrument’s respective focuses with reference to the grid are represented in graphical form.

2.1 Competence Card for Workplace (Norway)

This instrument which is essentially conceived as a self-assessment tool focuses on the assessment of the employee's actual level of competence. The Competence Card has been qualified by the exempro project as being suitable for transnational implementation. For a documentation of this instrument refer to the Appendix to this volume.

Instrument / Method	Competence Card for Workplace		
Developed by	VOX – LÆRNING FOR ARBEIDSLIVET. VOX is an institution of the Ministry of Education and Research of Norway www.vox.no		
Developed in	Norway		
(Main) objective(s)	Placing the emphasis on the summative function, the instruments aims to assess the employee's actual level of competence.		
Method	Self-assessment as the basis for competence assessment jointly by the employee and his / her senior. Upon completion, a certificate will be signed by both an employer's representative and the employee.		
Features	<p>The <i>Competence Card for Workplace</i> consists of two elements:</p> <p>A. The Curriculum Vitae (CV) which, among other things, indicates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal data • Former work experience: kind of work place(s), responsibilities, terms? • Education and training pathway • Acknowledged education and training with specification of their contents • Participation in programs of continuing education and training • Other competences, e.g. honorary work etc. • Additional information <p>B. The Competence Card itself describes and specifies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the individual's main areas of competence / responsibility at the workplace ▪ professional skills necessary to meet the workplace requirements (e.g. business administration skills, work organisation, development, quality control, computer skills, finance, command of foreign languages ...) ▪ professional capability (e.g. commercial, technical skills and knowledge etc.) ▪ social and personal skills (e.g. willingness to cooperate and communicate, commitment to work and the quality of results, customer 		

	<p>care, pro-activity, flexibility, creativity, acquirement and implementation of new skills and knowledge...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ management skills required for the job <p>The employee will assess his /her competence level with respect to each criterion by means of a 4-stage scale ranging from Level 1 to Level 4:</p> <p>Level 1 = Follow instructions for simple tasks Level 2 = Work independently within specified area Level 3 = Professional responsibility: advise/instruct others Level 4 = Good professional/ trade insight: develop work progress independently</p> <p>Following an interlocution between the employee, co-workers and seniors the <i>Competence Card</i> will be signed by both a company representative and the employee provided they share the same opinion as regards the employee's competences.</p>
Participants:	Employees and seniors of the company
Expenditure of time	2 – 3 hours for carrying out the assessment procedure 1 – 2 hours for evaluation by employees and seniors
Experiences / Testing	<p>Testing of the <i>Competence Card</i> in enterprises has evoked most positive responses in particular with reference to its simplicity, the clarity of both language and the procedure, as well as the high degree of flexibility, notably as concerns adaptability to various prerequisites and competences requirements on part of the enterprise.</p> <p>As the main factors accounting for successful application the following elements were singled out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provision of detailed information about the benefits the individual may derive from the procedure prior to starting – the instructions for carrying out the procedure⁶ – the interlocution taking place between the employee and his /her co-workers and senior – the voluntary character of participation.
Notes, rating:	<p>Altogether, the instrument may easily be customised to meet most different prerequisites and requirements.</p> <p>However, simplicity and effortlessness, as well as the instrument's general character are not without cost in terms of preciseness of the achieved results what makes it sometimes difficult for the individual to recognise therein his/her own work practice.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the fact that the <i>Competence Card</i> primarily aims to give an account of existing competences it may as well be used to meet the requirements of competence <i>development</i>. This would, however, necessitate re-assessment of competences at regular terms.</p>

2.2 ERA (Spain)

ERA is an experimental project promoted by the Spanish Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Regional Governments. The objective of the project is to test a methodology for the assessment, recognition and accreditation of vocational skills and qualifications acquired through non-formal learning and work experience.⁷

Instrument / Method	ERA – Evaluación, Reconocimiento y Acreditación de las Competencias Profesionales (assessment, recognition and accreditation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal training, or work experience)		
Developed by	The experimental project was executed on initiative of the <i>Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia – Subdirección General de Formación Profesional</i> in cooperation with the Regional Governments of the Spanish provinces with the exemplo partner <i>Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo</i> being closely involved in its development. http://www.fundaciontripartita.org/		
Developed in	Spain		
(Main) objective(s)	Assessment and <i>individual accreditation of competences</i> . The method stresses on the identification of the <i>actual</i> level of employees' competences.		
Method:	Competence appraisal based on <i>assessment by others</i> ; the <i>candidate</i> will, on a voluntary basis, participate in a consulting process directed at the assessment and appraisal of his / her competences by a <i>counsellor</i> and one or several <i>evaluators</i> . The framework of reference is constituted by the (partial) requirements and certificates of formal VET settings – the so-called <i>Unidades de Competencia</i> . There are various methods – “ <i>different kinds of proofs to measure the evidence of competence</i> ” – being applied: Apart from <i>direct observation at the workplace</i> (used to a lesser degree) and <i>simulation proofs</i> , first and foremost the method of conducting a <i>professional interview</i> is being used.		
Features	The procedure is carried out in three steps: 1. Analysis of the starting position. At a joint meeting of the <i>candidates</i> and a <i>counsellor</i> information will be provided on the objectives of the procedures, papers required and information materials will be handed out and explained. In one-on-one interviews with each <i>candidate</i> the <i>counsellor</i> will collect data and information on the <i>candidate's professional and educational background</i> . On this basis, the <i>candidate</i> and the <i>counsellor</i> will jointly compile a <i>competences dossier</i> containing a detailed description of the <i>candidate's</i> educational and professional pathway. 2. Conception of the assessment: Taking into account the <i>candidate's</i> individual capabilities the <i>evaluator</i> , the <i>counsellor</i> and the <i>candidate</i> will jointly conceive the <i>assessment</i> with both the <i>guide of evidences</i>		

	<p>and the <i>candidate's competences dossier</i> serving as a basis for the compilation of an <i>assessment plan</i> for informally acquired competences.</p> <p>3. The next step is the <i>assessment of competence evidences</i> which, apart from the <i>evaluator</i>, also involves the <i>candidate</i> and the <i>counsellor</i>.</p> <p>Finally, the <i>evaluator</i> will analyse the results and draw up an <i>assessment report</i> to validate or not the candidate's competence using the <i>competence's guide of evidences</i> as a basis. ...</p> <p>Accreditation: Issue and registration of the accreditation.</p>
Participants	Employees taking part in the process on a voluntary basis, as well as a <i>counsellor and one or two evaluators</i>
Expenditure of time	About 10 hours per candidate will be necessary to complete the process.
Experiences / Testing	<p>Experiences drawn from testing in various regions of Spain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prior to starting the assessment process, the <i>candidates</i> must be given sufficient time for preparation and rendered detailed consultation so as to enable them to get an overview of their professional career and competences: "...most of the participants think that they didn't have enough time to put into practice the procedure as carefully and deeply as it would be required. They especially underline that more time should be devoted to the counselling phase, in order to allow the candidate to have more time to draw up his dossier of competences." ▪ Counselling in all phases of the process is important, especially when the evaluation is negative and the candidates are advised to undertake a complementary training in order to complete their competences. ▪ Since the <i>counsellors'</i> and <i>evaluators'</i> competence is of crucial importance it has been recommended "to increase the level of qualifications for guides and evaluators"⁸
Notes, rating:	<p>The procedure is particularly suitable to be applied in countries where informally acquired competences – which may actually be equated with officially accredited competences – constitute a major economic factor, even if they have remained largely "invisible" as yet.⁹</p> <p>Potential shortcomings of the procedure are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focusing on evaluation by external evaluators – who would assess competences on the basis of a general competence list largely informed by formally accredited certificates – the method might fail to pay due attention to company-specific concerns and requirements. ▪ With (for the time being) the framework of reference being constituted by formally accredited certificates and diplomas, there is the risk that some aspects of competences might not be accounted for at all. ▪ The instrument does not <i>per se</i> include the aspect of competence development in the sense of lifelong learning so both the employee and the employer will additionally have to be motivated to continuously develop and document informally acquired competences.

2.3 Formation intégrée au Travail (FIT) / Training Integrated into in-company work situations (TIWS) (France)

The original version of the *FIT* procedure was conceived as early as at the beginning of the 90ies against the background of a long French tradition of also accounting competences acquired through informal learning. Having been tested by enterprises in a number of sectors and formalised thereafter today FIT is being applied by companies of various sectors and scales not only in France, but in other European countries, too.

Instrument / Method	Formation intégrée au Travail (FIT)		
Developed by	AFPA – Association Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes – www.afpa.fr		
Developed in	France		
(Main) objective(s)	<p>Assisting business enterprises with the implementation of staff development programs in the course of strategic reorganisation. Interlinking company and human resources development.</p> <p>Accompanied by external expertise the FIT process places the emphasis on the formative, rather than the summative aspect</p>		
Method	<p>Self-evaluation by employees as the basis for the conception of accorded competence development strategies</p> <p>Process coaching and evaluation by external educational consultants</p>		
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Analysing the company's current situation</i> by means of a <i>questionnaire</i> designed to identify the demands of human resources and competence development. On that basis, working out of a concept for the implementation of the procedure in the enterprise. Selection of appropriate indicators and competence assessment tools in accordance with the management and representatives of the employees concerned. ▪ Job assignments and activities within the company, as well as the skills, knowledge and competences necessary to perform them are identified and analysed by means of a <i>referential activities benchmark</i>. Tasks and competences are rated according to their significance in order to single out "key competences". ▪ Then the employees will carry out a <i>self-assessment</i> using a <i>self positioning grid</i> in which they are supposed to rate their own competences on the basis of a three-stage scale – insufficient, medium or good, with regard to the job assignments identified beforehand. ▪ Taking the total of the self-assessments as a basis, the <i>consultant</i> – usually a member of the external organisation carrying out the FIT – will draw up a "collective map" revealing the kind and location of competence gaps within the group of employees. In accordance with the results, he will put forward proposals on the implementation of adapted close-to-the workplace continuing education projects. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The results of the assessment will be the point of departure for consultations on the proposals on training measures to be held by the “<i>piloting committee</i>” (including the <i>consultant</i>, as well as company representatives, seniors and representatives of the [group of] employees concerned) which will jointly define both the goals of further procedures and <i>measuring indicators</i>. The <i>piloting committee</i> will at regular terms and throughout the FIT process evaluate the actual state of the procedure so as to ensure prompt corrective interference if need be. ▪ In accordance with the – in-house – <i>trainer</i> the <i>consultant</i> will devise a strategy for the implementation of the training objectives. They will define and agree upon the most suitable training methods, job tasks promoting competence development, the scope of assistance required, as well as an appropriate time frame. ▪ Close-to-the-workplace training concepts in the form of <i>micro-projects</i> permitting employees developing their competences step-by-step with a view to achieving the identified learning aims will be put forward and recorded by the <i>consultant</i> by means of a detailed individual <i>training scheme</i> to be implemented by the employees. This forms the basis for the employees to carry out the conceived <i>micro-projects</i>. ▪ Upon completion of the training phase, “<i>the consultant will draw up a final assessment document containing the average for all groups for all criteria, the first and final self-positioning documents, the synthesis of the questionnaires and a synthesis coming from the managing sphere</i>”.
Participants:	<p>Apart from the company management and the employees involved, the main actors in the FIT procedure are the external <i>consultant</i> and the <i>trainer</i>. As a rule, the <i>trainers</i> are in-house instructors who are entrusted with the conception and implementation of the necessary assessment and training programmes in accordance with the <i>consultant</i>.</p>
Expenditure of time	<p>As the timeframe required for carrying out the procedure AFPA states (at least) 12 days within a period of 8 – 10 months.</p>
Experiences / Testing	<p>Among the major factors accounting for the successful implementation of the FIT process in companies the following have been mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ active participation of the company management ▪ detailed information and involvement of all the participants ▪ accordance of objectives and procedures with the workflow and the enterprise’s needs ▪ selection of job tasks appropriate to promote competence development ▪ creating an atmosphere of openness and social dialogue within the enterprise ▪ good cooperation and mutual understanding between the external <i>consultant</i> and the internal <i>trainer</i>.
Notes, rating:	<p>According to AFPA, the procedure is “<i>rather reserved to specific firms which have to implement strategic changes in their organisation.</i>”</p> <p>Moreover, AFPA holds that the prerequisites for implementation of the FIT process in terms of expenditure of both time and financial resources are considerable –</p> <p>“<i>The methodology is rather heavy to implement, as well as complex and complete for the firm...(it) is really long and important financially.</i>” –</p>

	and this is why the exempo partners are rather sceptical as regards implementation of the procedure in SMEs on a large scale. Notwithstanding such reservation it has to be noted that the concept of a training process that would link elements of employee self-evaluation to the achievement of the enterprise's strategic goals by systematic assessment and development of competences seems most promising making FIT a pioneer work. In fact, essential elements of this instrument are contained in other approaches proposed and/or tested in the course of carrying out the ex-emplo project.
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2.4 Stimulating and Supporting Training Processes at Work (Germany)

As a “navigation system for employees learning on their own”, the guideline for – internal as well as external – educational consultants aims to increasingly facilitate independent competence acquirement at the workplace. One of the central elements of this procedure is the **instruction for self-reflection and self-evaluation**.

Instrument / Method	Stimulating and Supporting Training Processes at Work		
Developed by	Berufliche Fortbildungszentren der Bayerischen Wirtschaft gGmbH, bfz Bildungsforschung		
Developed in	Germany		
(Main) objective(s)	Guideline for – internal and external – educational consultants supporting processes of independent learning at the enterprise Instructions for self-reflection and self-evaluation as part of – largely independent – competence acquirement processes at the workplace Rather <i>formative</i> , than summative approach		
Method	Written guideline containing check-lists to be used by both educational consultants and employees (about 40 pages) Self-assessment by employees as the basis for a systematic development of professional competences		
Features	Consisting of six modules the instrument aims to encourage employees to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – independently investigate their workplaces and workflows, – assess their own competences and learning requirements, – identify in-house learning opportunities, – open up relevant sources of information and knowledge, – evaluate learning offers, as well as – continuously review their learning processes. 		

	<p>Each of the six modules contains a checklist that – by asking detailed questions – will support the process of self-evaluation and further development of employees' competences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which are my assignments? Which competences do I need? ▪ Self-assessment and assessment by others: How do I give feedback? How do I react to feedback? ▪ Learning opportunities – how do I identify them, where do I start? ▪ How can I use sources of knowledge within the company? ▪ How can I get the best out of measures for continuing education? ▪ How can I evaluate learning success? <p>The educational consultants will impart methodical knowledge, support processes of self-reflection and coach learning processes taking part within the collective as moderators.</p>
Participants	Educational consultants, employees
Expenditure of time	The six modules will be worked through by the employees in the course of workshops of about two-hours each (total time 12 hours, not including the time for preparation required by the consultant).
Experiences / Testing	At the beginning of the project work, the instrument was subjected to exemplary evaluation by experts from six countries belonging to the exempo partnership, as well as to testing in companies with the aim to establish common criteria that would allow formulating requirements as regards the content, methodology and design of appropriate instruments.
Notes, rating:	<p>Rather “text-biased”, the guideline requires a lot of preparatory work in order to be implemented in a foreign-language environment. In some countries, both the style and the language of the tool were conceived as “academic” and it has been advised to simplify the design of textual instruments, shifting the emphasis to optical elements.</p> <p>Usability of the instrument by SMEs might be limited by the fact that implementation involves the assistance by external consultants. However, replacing external assistance – e.g. by experienced co-workers to act as trainers, or by the employee himself – has not been regarded an appropriate measure.</p> <p>So, it is the comprehensive and elaborate conception that has been considered as the major obstacle to implementing the instrument in other countries. As it were, the less detailed and specific their design, the simpler the handling and adaptability of competence assessment instruments will be.¹⁰</p>

2.5 Staff Development Matrix (Poland)

This instrument supports small and medium sized companies in investigating knowledge, skills and competences of their staff and to create a staff development matrix based on these results. Moreover it is targeted on identifying experienced employees as *experts* in certain spheres of enterprise activities who might act as *multipliers of knowledge*.

Instrument / Method	Staff Development Matrix		
Developed by	Towarzystwo Naukowe Organizacji i Kierownictwa - TNOiK - Oddział Gdańsk, Poland		
Developed in	Poland		
(Main) objective(s):	<p>Assessment of the employees' actual level of skills, knowledge and competences</p> <p>Identification of employees' training needs</p> <p>Identification of particularly knowledgeable and experienced employees as <i>experts</i> in certain spheres of enterprise activities who might act as <i>internal trainers</i></p>		
Method	<p>Employee self-evaluation on the basis of a structured questionnaire adapted to the enterprise's / workgroup's specific needs</p> <p>Drawing-up of workplace and job descriptions by both the employees and his / her senior (<i>working place card</i>) to serve as the basis for further steps</p> <p>Evaluation of the self-assessment / evaluation as indicated in the questionnaire by direct seniors (evaluation by others)</p>		
Features	<p>Altogether, the questionnaire covers 17 thematic sets broken down into most detailed sub-groups. The majority of the questions address the employee's (specific) professional knowledge and skills, e.g. in the fields of IKT, ISO 9000, and also his command of foreign languages. The respondents are requested to classify their respective levels (of skills and knowledge) on the basis of a five-stage scale.</p> <p>Evaluation of the questionnaire will be carried out by seniors:</p> <p>Comparison / decision-making by senior supervisors: Where is there which kind of demand for development? Who might / should, as an <i>internal trainer</i>, impart which kind of knowledge / skills to others?</p> <p>Conception of training schemes</p>		
Participants:	Employees, supervisors, HR managers		
Expenditure of time	<p>As a timeframe, TNOiK states at least 10 days to complete the entire process:</p> <p>Drawing up the "matrix" in accordance with the workplaces and job tasks of the employee group subject to examination: 2 days</p> <p>Introduction into the questionnaire: about 2 – 2,5 hrs</p>		

	<p>Completing the questionnaire: 3/4 – 1 hour</p> <p>Evaluation/assessment of the results by direct supervisors: 2 days</p> <p>Verification of correspondence/deviation of the employee's self-assessment and assessment by senior supervisors / conception of training schemes: 2 days</p> <p>Conception of training schemes, identification of potential internal trainers: 4 days</p>
<p>Experiences / Testing</p>	<p>The Polish expert group is showing doubt: "<i>The instrument is rather complex</i>" „<i>There were some opinions that the instrument is too complicated for SMEs.</i>" Thus, it has been recommended to customise the instrument to each single case and the enterprise's respective prerequisites and requirements: For example, (sets of) questions that obviously are of no concern for a given group of employees ought not to be included at all so as to simplify handling of the questionnaire.</p> <p>There have been reports from a Polish enterprise where the instrument was tested in practice that some employees were showing great reluctance to take part in the survey: "<i>There exists general negative attitude to assessment processes and documents like questionnaires among employees.</i>" Accordingly, it has been stressed that detailed information of employees about the aims and procedures of the assessment, as well as further use of the results are of utmost importance.</p>
<p>Notes, rating:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The expenditure of time as indicated is close to the limit of what SMEs are ready to invest. ▪ The period of a maximum of one hour to be devoted for the completion of the questionnaire has been considered as definitely insufficient. ▪ The emphasis is placed on (specific) <i>skills and knowledge</i> of employees, rather than on social and other <i>competences</i>. ▪ Among the sets of questions only two are directly addressing personal and social competences – "<i>Do I possess personal skills important in my area?</i>" "<i>Do I have interpersonal skills?</i>" Anyway, it is doubtful whether such complex constructs could be identified on the basis of direct questioning by way of self-estimation. ▪ Except for the drawing up of the job description and the completion of the questionnaires the employees, rather than being actively involved, are <i>passively</i> confronted with the assessment and training schemes established on the basis of the evaluation by seniors. This might have a negative influence on the instrument's acceptance and thus to the quality and significance of the replies.

2.6 RARPA (UK)

The RARPA method was developed in the United Kingdom on initiative of the state organisation *Learning and Skills Council*¹¹, refined by a number of educational providers and adapted to meet a wide range of prerequisites and requirements¹². Devised by EEF West Midlands Technology Centre the RARPA method was presented within the framework of the exempro partnership and subjected joint further development. Also within the exempro project this instrument was singled out as being suitable for transnational implementation. A documentation of this instrument is included in Part III of this volume.

Instrument / Method	RARPA – Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non accredited learning		
Developed by	EEF West Midlands Technology Centre		
Developed in	UK (England and Wales)		
(Main) objective(s)	Combining the learning-centred RARPA Portfolio Method with the orientation of learning processes towards strategic goals of SMEs: in-house development of professional competences in SMEs.		
Method	Combination of self-evaluation and evaluation by others. Formative focus: Support in developing skills and competences at work with the development of professional competences laying at the centre.		
Features	<p>The procedure is carried out in the enterprise as a “Staged Process” comprising five stages:</p> <p>Stage 1: Setting aims appropriate to individual learners or groups of learners. Consideration of company aims and individual aims.</p> <p>SWOT-analysis of the enterprise as the basis for the definition of future competence demands and definition of appropriate training objective and contents.</p> <p>Stage 2: Initial assessment to establish the learner’s starting point.</p> <p>Analysis of the demand for continuing education by means of a <i>Training Needs Analysis Grid</i> which will be supplemented in the subsequent process stages. On the basis of a <i>Task Analysis</i> combining self-evaluation and evaluation by others, e.g. by group leaders, it will be established which employee is able to master which (partial) task, and to which degree (at levels of 1–4, e.g.).</p> <p>Stage 3: Identification of appropriately challenging learning objectives</p> <p>In a <i>Training Scheme</i> it will be determined what the individual employee is supposed to know upon completion of the training and also who (e.g. more experienced employees) will carry out which training measures, and at which time.</p> <p>A <i>Standard Operation Sheet</i> displays the activities to be performed with respect to each (partial) task defining the respective quality criteria in the form of <i>Behavioural Objectives</i> the achievement of which may be monitored and measured.</p> <p>Stage 4: Recognition and recording of progress and achievement during programme (formative assessment): tutor feedback to learners, learner reflection, progress reviews</p>		

	<p>During the training period, learning achievements will be continually reviewed with the employees recording their progress on a so-called <i>Progress Recording Sheet</i> that will be ticked off by both the trainee and the trainer.</p> <p>Stage 5: End of programme learner self-assessment; tutor summative assessment; review of all progress and achievement.</p> <p>A final account of the training success will be given by both the trainer and the employees. Competence development will be documented by a portfolio containing all records of the training procedure – written material, but also artefacts etc.¹³ The procedure does not necessarily envisage final examining(s). However, recognition of acquired competence, e.g. by the issue of in-house certificates is regarded as an essential factor of the employees' motivation.</p>
Participants	Employees, managers, team leaders from the enterprise
Expenditure of time	6 days distributed over a period of half a year
Experiences / Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those employees who are supposed to impart their own competences to others ought to be prepared for this assignment in advance.¹⁴ ▪ One of the major difficulties arises from the coordination between trainer and trainee of time schedules. It would therefore be necessary to agree upon fixed time contingents to be integrated into the work process. ▪ Essential elements of sustainable competence development are the provision of opportunities for practical application of learning contents at the workplace, as well as ▪ exchange of feedback on a regular basis with both the trainer and within the workgroup. ▪ When it comes to accounting learning processes the emphasis, rather than on gaps and deficits, should be placed on the documentation of progress and pointing out of opportunities for further development.
Notes, rating:	<p>The procedure is designed as a complex process containing both summative and formative elements. RARPA addresses many of the problems pertinent to the assessment and evaluation of informally acquired competences – from the assessment of the actual level of competences, the definition of specific points of references and development objectives up to continuing development.</p> <p>Since the procedure as presented here aims primarily to meet the competence requirements of individual enterprises both the significance and the comparability of the documents drawn up are limited.</p>

2.7 Transparency of Competences (Germany)

Provision of assistance in, and documentation of the transfer of training contents conveyed at traditional seminars to the work practice lay at the centre of this instrument. The practical implementation of learning contents in the workplace – i.e. the employees' actual *competence* – is evaluated and certified following a procedure which combines self-evaluation and evaluation by others.¹⁵

Instrument / Method	Transparency of Competences (TC)		
Developed by	Forschungsinstitut für Betriebliche Bildung (f-bb) gGmbH and Büro für Qualifikationsforschung (BFQ)		
Developed in	Germany		
(Main) objective(s)	<p>Supporting the transfer of vocational skills acquired in formal trainings to the work practice</p> <p>Issue of significant certificates documenting the implementation of learning results achieved during continuing learning seminars in the work practice</p>		
Method	<p>Supplementing the offers provided by educational institutions with the aim to enhance the degree of implementation of continuing learning results by providing instructions, coaching and certification of the transfer.</p> <p>Combination of self-evaluation and evaluation by others</p>		
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer lists drawn up by an educational institution serve to summarise seminar contents by describing practical activities that reflect the implementation of learning results at the workplace. Upon completion of a seminar of continuing education the participants will decide which of the activities they are going to implement at the workplace; individual addition of further activities is also possible. The individual transfer list will serve as a referential framework in the course of implementation of the goals in the work practice. ▪ Agreements with the educational institution on the objectives defined on this basis will determine, on voluntary terms, which job-related activities the seminar participants want to implement in their own work practice during the subsequent transfer phase. ▪ During the implementation phase at the workplace, the transfer list will assist in the transfer of the learning results to the work practice. The process will be coached by in-house consultants (seniors, experienced colleagues). ▪ Self-evaluation at the workplace: Transfer minutes will document the extent to which an aim has been achieved or the level of implementation reached by the seminar participant. This process of self-reflection will be supported by questions concerning the actual extent of transfer. ▪ The transfer phase will be completed by an <i>assessment by others</i> – as a rule by seniors or experienced colleagues – with the transfer list and 		

	<p>the transfer minutes serving as the basis. Whether and to which extent the goals defined in the <i>Agreement upon objectives</i> have been achieved will be defined jointly with the employee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A leaving certificate issued on the basis of transfer evaluation will provide a detailed description of the activities acquired and managed in practice; however, no mention is made of any deficits which may have been discovered. Aims that were neither pursued nor accomplished will not be indicated in the certificate. The certificate is being issued by the educational institution and signed by both the employer and the educational institution.
Participants	Training providers, employees (seminar participants), seniors from the enterprise
Expenditure of time	<p>A considerable share of the work and time load arising from compilation of transfer lists, the evaluation of transfer minutes etc. which is necessary for the implementation of the instrument has to be borne by the educational provider or the trainer/lecturer.</p> <p>The procedure, including the presentation of the instruments at the seminar, the drawing-up of individual transfer lists by the seminar participants and the agreement on the final goal is estimated to last about 60 minutes. During the transfer phase of about 3 months, seniors from the enterprise will, at intervals of 1 – 2 weeks, review the transfer minutes drawn up by the employees and invite them to discuss them on a monthly basis, and upon completion of the transfer period.</p>
Experiences / Testing	<p>Practical implementation of the procedure at the German Seminar for Tourism (DSFT)¹⁶ in Berlin – under the name <i>TransferPlus</i> – has received most positive feedback by participants, continuing education experts and providers of vocational continuing education alike.</p> <p>Close cooperation and coordination between all parties involved is indeed a prerequisite for frictionless realisation and the issue of significant certificates.</p>
Notes, rating	<p>The procedure facilitates the implementation of professional skills and knowledge acquired in traditional settings of continuing education in the work practice, as well as documentation of the results of informal learning processes at the workplace.</p> <p>The instrument is easy to handle requiring relatively little time for implementation.</p> <p>Involvement of employers and employees, as well as educational institutions to combine self-evaluation and evaluation by others considerably enhances the significance of the instrument. On the other hand, the significance of certificates is somewhat restricted by the fact that it focuses on the respective educational provider's seminar, on the one hand and on implementation in a given company, on the other.</p>

2.9 Different focuses, objectives and methods

“Do we talk of a formative role where the instruments and tools are used to guide the learning processes of individuals and enterprises or do we talk of a more limited summative role where non-formal learning is tested for possible inclusion into the setting of formal education and training? Or do we talk of a summative role where accountability is at stake, focusing on the utilisation of competence resources at various levels? The purpose of the assessments ... is decisive for the methodological choices to be made and for the ultimate success of the exercise. ... functions are not always clearly separated. In many cases we see a wish to combine the formative and summative roles, ... A successful development of methodologies and systems in this area implies that these functions are clearly understood and combined /separated in a constructive and realistic way.” (Bjørnåvold 2003)

The instruments described pursue different aims and approaches as concerns the assessment of informally acquired professional competences. While almost all of the instruments include both formative and summative elements they differ considerably from each other as concerns the weighting of these constituents. Moreover, differences may be noted in the methods used and in the self-assessment to assessment by others ratio.

- While the majority of instruments feature methods enabling **self-assessment** the *assessment by others*, however, is being attached paramount importance with regard to ensuring the objectivity of results. Hence, there is a prevalence of various forms of combining self-evaluation and evaluation by others.

- **Assessment** of existing competences including, but not restricted to, those acquired in informal settings lay at the centre of primarily summative methods aiming to identify and document the whole spectrum of employees’ professional skills. Assessment documents,

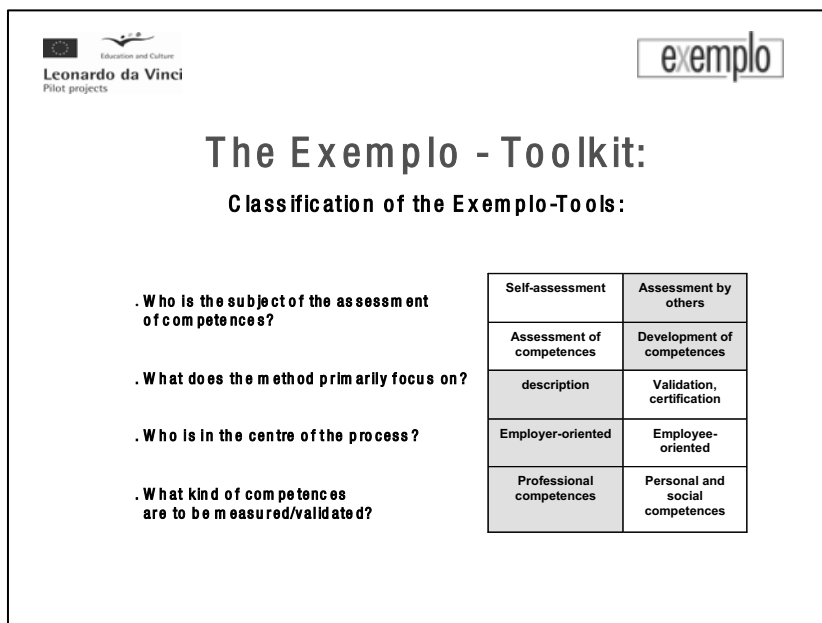


Fig. 9: Focal points of the exemplo instruments for competence assessment

such as the *Competence Card for Workplace* in Norway, or the Spanish ERA projects are suitable to support companies in the recruitment of qualified staff to be employed at certain workplaces and to perform certain tasks. Employees are given the opportunity to document the actual state of their professional knowledge and skills, thus improving their own employability. However, as regards applicability in SMEs in a transnational context, easiness of handling and adaptability, as well as the relatively high share of self-evaluation seems to make the method developed in Norway more suitable than the rather laborious ERA process.

- **Competence development** with a view to future development of business requirements as well as optimisation of in-company learning processes lays at

the centre of instruments which are rather formative-oriented and which account for the focal elements of the *exemplo* toolkit. Here, identification of opportunities and plans for further development of the individual, on the one hand and matching them with the companies' requirements, on the other is paid much attention to. The documents made up primarily serve to facilitate in-house learning processes which imply continuing updating so as to enable the review and documentation of learning progress.

The RARPA procedure devised by the British partner and developed further within the framework of the *exemplo* partnership is the most comprehensive procedure in terms of integrating competence assessment and development in a process including both self-assessment and assessment by others.

- **Certification** of competences – guided, e.g. by a national reference framework or by sector or company standards – plays a minor role in most of the procedures, an exemption being the summative instruments proposed by the Norwegian and Spanish partners which envisage the issue of certificates documenting and evaluating the competen-

ces identified. Certification of the extent to which an individual is able to implement skills and knowledge acquired in the course of formal continuing professional education lay at the centre of the *Transparency of Competences* featuring a balance of formative and summative elements.

- The majority of instruments put the emphasis on **enterprises' requirements**, rather than on the individual's perspective. Although not identical, both perspectives may be separated from each other only artificially: By formulating their requirements enterprises, at the same time, define the competences they would expect from their employees. After all, it is this kind of competences which are at the core also of competence assessment procedures that focus rather on the individual's perspective and his/her employability.
- Most of the procedures foreground the assessment of *professional competences* in the narrow sense, while personal and social competences of employees are taken into account indirectly, notably on the basis of a general assessment of professional competences.

2.10 Procedures particularly suitable for being used in an transnational context

There is not, and will not be "the one" instrument that would meet such a variety of requirements to methods for informally acquired competences assessment – as has also been confirmed by the work carried out within the *exemplo* framework: Too wide are the differences between objectives, too wide the gaps between prerequisites and requirements defined by businesses – not only with respect to the international context.

Essentially, the assessment of informally acquired competences implies three assignments – the account, development and the certification of competences. As it were, with reference to these assignments each of the instruments contained in the

toolkit may be regarded as being particularly meaningful to be implemented in a given European country:

- If it comes to **accounting** existing competences, the *Competence Card for workplace* will do well in performing this task in a simple way as application is neither complex, nor time-consuming. Adaptation to different prerequisites and requirements in various European countries has been tested successfully within the *exemplo* project.¹⁷
- As concerns the **development** of employees' competences, the most comprehensive instrument is the *RARPA* procedure: Both the assessment and

development of competences are conceived as an ongoing process designed for the continuing development of employees' competences. In the course of carrying out the exemplo project, the RARPA procedure was subjected to tests by partners from other European countries and developed further with a view to simplify its handling.¹⁸

- The “*Transparency of Competences*” is a means to certify active implementation of professional skills and knowledge in the work practice enhancing the significance of certificates by taking into account informal learning processes.

These three instruments are documented in part III of this volume.

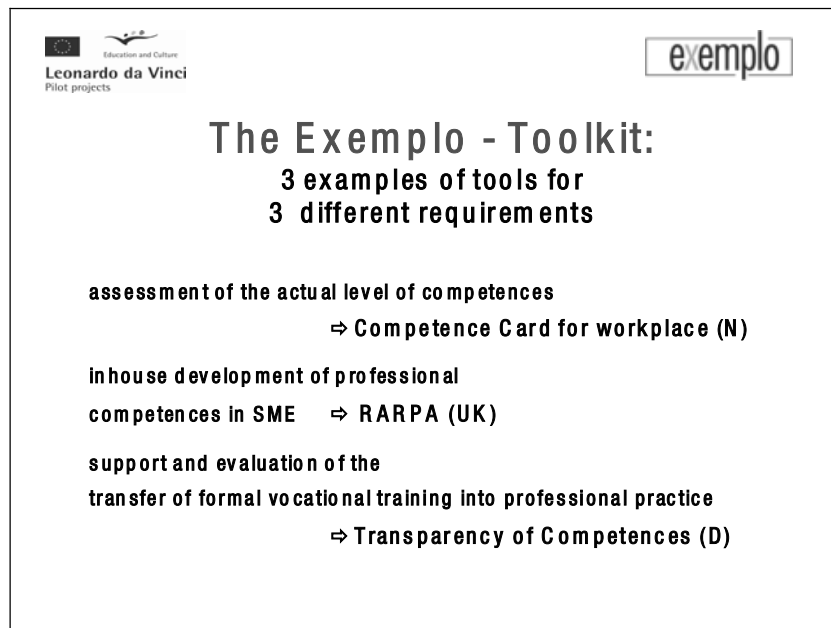


Fig. 10: exemplo instruments meeting various requirements of competence assessment

3 The Implementation of instruments for documentation and assessment of competences of employees in SMEs – experiences and recommendations

The practical testing and evaluation of various methods and tools for competence assessment in small and medium-sized enterprises in a number of European countries have pointed out certain requirements that ought to be considered when it comes to implementation and car-

rying out of SMEs employees' competences assessment. The process steps described in the following have been regarded as success factors by both employees and employers, as well as by experts from all countries participating in the exempro project.¹⁹

3.1 Preliminaries: to provide information, ensure acceptance, build trust

Experience has shown, notably in a number of Polish enterprises, that apprehensions that deficits revealed in the course of competence assessment procedures might imply professional disadvantages may excite considerable reluctance to participate on the employees' part what would diminish both the reliability and significance of results.

„Employees ... generally don't like to be evaluated. ... Many workers were not enthusiastic to participate in the survey, especially older ones. There is neither understanding of such tools, nor good practice (in Poland/the authors). Workers don't want to take part in such surveys if they are asked to undersign answers. They are afraid to show their skills or weaknesses.”
“... more information for employees concerning objectives, procedures and results of the survey is strongly recommended.”
(Field report submitted by exempro partners from Poland after testing competence assessment instruments in Polish enterprises)

Moreover, insufficient information may reduce the significance of results, e.g. because employees might fail to recall all the data and information necessary to compile documents and records that would be both significant and complete.

“It is rather difficult to mention dates (employment, training, ...) without being previously informed of this request.”
(An employee of a French exempro partner company)

Hence, any competence assessment procedure ought to set out with comprehensive information of all participants – the employees concerned, those in charge of in-house continuing education, as well as seniors. Trust in and acceptance of the procedure to be carried out can be ensured only on the basis of detailed information on the aims, the process steps and the purpose of the assessment – only if the evaluation procedures are comprehensible and transparent and if there is a clear understanding of how the results will be used.

„There can be in firms a certain resistance against changes not only from the managing sphere, from the Social Partners but also from the employees themselves. In order to fight against this point, information should be spread among all employees and representatives from the beginning of the methodology and even in the identification of the strategy while elaborating the diagnostic”
(Empirical report on the practice of the FIT procedure submitted by the French partner)

“Before starting to use the tool it is of great importance that everybody involved has got good information about “why” and “how”, and that there is an agreement about what should be the outcome of the process.” (Field report submitted by the Norwegian partners)

What is important is that the various standpoints brought forward by the participants be addressed openly and integrated

into the discussion – e.g. in the framework of a kick-off meeting: For, while the management will primarily be interested in optimum utilisation and development of their employees' competences and pro-active human resources development strategies the employees' concern will lie in the development of their own competences and their professional advancement. Hence, creation of a stable basis for, and wide acceptance of the procedure will be considerably facilitated by involving representatives of all parties concerned with the conception, implementation and evaluation

of competence assessment procedures – e.g. as was done by the “*piloting committee*” in the framework of the FIT procedure carried out in France.

Outlining the company's current state, as well as future tasks and challenges will ensure that employees' competence requirements resulting from that situation are understood. Against that background, assessment of existing competences may be interpreted as laying the basis for systematic further development that would benefit both employees and the enterprise.

- ⇒ The establishment and maintenance of a sustainable basis of trust between employees, seniors, the management and – as the case may be – external counsellors/evaluators is a prerequisite for gaining significant results from measures aimed at competence assessment and evaluation. Only when there are trustworthy agreements on the use of the results employees will be willing to actively participate in the competence assessment procedure.

3.2 Creating appropriate settings

3.2.1 Agreements on the duration, timing, participants, place and use of the results

Prior to starting the competence assessment procedure, a number of questions should be answered:

- Which (kinds of) competences are to be assessed?
- Which method(s) should be used?
- Who should participate – seniors, employees, work group members etc.?
- Within which time frame should the assessment be conducted?
- When should the procedures be carried out: if within the working hours – when? Off the job?
- Where should talks etc. relevant to conducting the assessment take place?

Within the framework of the French FIT procedure – to give an example – such questions are clarified in advance by the *piloting committee*.

Last but not least, legal aspects should also be settled prior to starting the procedure – in particular as regards property rights to the assessment results and the person to decide on their further use.

Clear-cut agreements between the management and employees on which purposes the results may / should serve and which they must not, will essentially contribute to building trust ensuring an unbiased approach towards and willingness to participate in the assessment.

The results of surveys carried out among employees within the framework of the *exemplo* project underline the significance of these factors: 87,5 % of French employees, and 66,6 % of employees surveyed in a British enterprise²⁰ agreed to the following statement:

„I think that it is decisive that participation in the skills survey be voluntary and the results not be used without my permission.”

In this context, enterprise representatives underline the significance of confidentiality of results:

“The confidentiality of results is important for employees to reveal their skills.”

(Survey among enterprise representatives in France)²¹

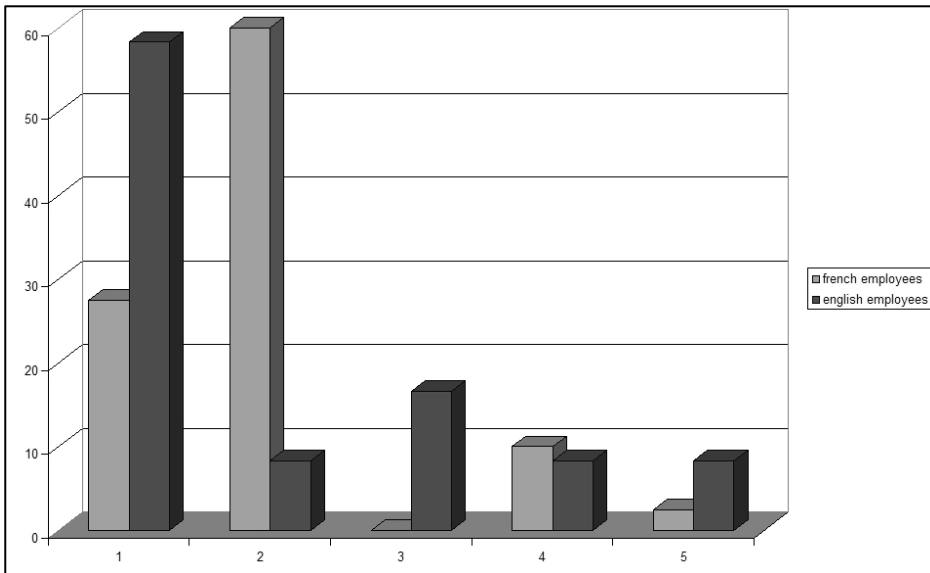


Fig. 11: Significance attached to voluntary participation and the self-determined use of results: Outcomes of employee surveys in France and England (1= very decisive to 5 = not decisive at all; percentage)

Competence assessment should always be carried out on a voluntary basis. In particular with respect to procedures of self-evaluation, voluntary participation is an essential condition for the achievement of significant and “objective” results. In turn, a major requirement for voluntary participation is the conclusion of clear-cut agreements on the use of competence assessment results.

3.2.2 Delineation of responsibilities and powers

It is essential that fields of responsibilities of the management, employees representatives, in-house continuing education officers, foremen and group leaders, as well – as the case may be – external process

coaches be unequivocally defined and that there is agreement about who is in charge of which process steps. In this respect too, it is worthwhile to consider the French *piloting committee* as an example.

3.2.3 Coordination within the working environment

Measures for competence assessment must be organised in accordance with work processes and workflows. This may create the need to reconcile different, partially opposing aspects:

- Maximum embedding of the measures in workflows and linking them up with the individual workplace will ensure optimum significance and authenticity of results.

- On the other hand, interference in work processes and workflows should be kept at a minimum level.

Finally, neither employees nor seniors ought to be overloaded with yet more assignments. Here, a balance has to be found in accordance with all parties concerned.

3.3 Process coaching and support in conducting the procedure

3.3.1 Employer Support

Experience gained in all countries participating in the exemplo project has shown that in particular SMEs are often overburdened with

the multitude of tasks competence assessment and development procedures entail.

- ✓ Identification of future competence requirements resulting from strategic enterprise goals
- ✓ Strength-weakness-analysis with a view to pro-active human-resource development strategies
- ✓ Analysis of job-tasks and of competences required on part of the employees
- ✓ Identification of the actual level of employees' competences with a view to (future) competence requirements
- ✓ Identification of competence development requirement at the respective workplace / workgroup / division / company
- ✓ Conception of individual competence development schemes
- ✓ Provision of competence development opportunities during the work process
- ✓ Identification of learning opportunities during the work process / at the workplace
- ✓ Organisation of workplace-related continuing education opportunities
- ✓ Rendering guidance and support to employees

Fig. 12: Tasks to be fulfilled in the course of competence development processes in SMEs

Assisting and coaching employees during competence assessment procedures often proves to be (too great) a challenge for staff managers and seniors of small-sized enterprises when – e.g., due to scarce capacities – they are not capable of rendering the required support (to the necessary extent).

Hence, many enterprises depend on external support in order to cope with such problems with the degrees differing – in some countries, such as Poland, the demand is higher, than in countries that have witnessed some tradition of implementing competence assessment procedures.

Cooperation with external experts – such as educational consultants / providers of continuing education, or (semi-)governmental institutions, as has been the case during the conduct of the French FIT and the Spanish ERA project – will considerably improve the quality of both the procedure and the results by supporting and relieving seniors and staff-officers. Moreover, inclusion of a “neutral” body may contribute to the acceptance of competence assessment on the employees' part.

3.3.2 Employee support

Among European countries there are varying degrees of experience employees have with competence assessment procedures: As has been mentioned before²², while employees in the United Kingdom or France, for instance, have been familiar

with various forms of competence assessment for years, e.g. Polish employees in that respect might face a new, unwanted situation. Accordingly, there are varied demands for employee support and guidance.

In addition, the demand for support also varies within the countries dependent on the instrument employed, the kind of enterprise and the employees' level of experience:

- In case of a single survey of the actual competence level – e.g. in order to issue a *Competence Card for Workplace* – the scope of the support required will be considerably lower than for implementation of a competence development process, such as *RARPA*.
- Among employees or within work groups there may be individuals who are already familiar with comparable instruments or competence assessment procedures – e.g. from prior professional experience gained in another company –, whereas for others this is a completely new situation calling for a higher degree of support.

Ideally, identification of the respective needs for support is an integral part of competence assessment and development procedures. However, in any case it must be ensured that in each phase of the procedure the employee can rely on support – by seniors or fellows at and in relation to the workplace –, or by educational experts acting as *counsellors / consultants* – as has been the case with the Spanish-

ERA project and the French FIT procedure.

“People able to guide us through the questionnaire”²³ is held to be an essential prerequisite in France and in England, too, employee surveys stress the significance of sufficient support underlining that “an assessment of skills and vocational skills that people have should be explained fully.”

Another factor of support is to give employees enough time to prepare for the assessment procedure.

“...most of the participants think that they didn't have enough time to put into practice the procedure as carefully and deeply as it would be required. They especially underline that more time should be devoted to the counselling phase, in order to allow the candidate to have more time to draw up his dossier of competences.” (Report submitted by the Spanish expert group on their experience while piloting the ERA procedure)

In particular in respect of the assessment of competences acquired in informal settings employees will have to become clear – and be supported to find out – beforehand where their competences lie and how they are manifested.



Reliable support, information and feedback, as well as motivation are decisive success factors in particular in case of application of tools for self-evaluation.

Employees should be informed about the purpose of competence assessment procedures and the use of results. Both evaluation criteria and evaluation procedure should be made transparent.

An examination atmosphere and stress should be avoided: Rather than to reveal gaps, weaknesses and deficits, the point is to recognise and promote strengths and to close gaps.

4 Requirements of competence assessment tools: Potential areas of conflict as regards design

To be suitable for implementation in various European countries competence assessment procedures must be independent of national educational systems, certificates and standards or at least be designed such that they can easily be adapted to different prerequisites and standards.

Moreover, to qualify for implementation in various business enterprises the instruments must be independent of specific requirements and prerequisites of individual enterprises and industrial segments.

The instruments must be simple to handle and be adaptable to various conditions.

- Such are the requirements to be met for transnational implementation. These requirements are listed in the criteria catalogue forming the basis of the ex-emplo toolkit.

This criteria catalogue was supplemented by a number of other aspects added during the evaluation and piloting phases. The requirements (but also shortcomings) of proposed instruments put forward by experts from various countries, however, reveal the bulk of potential conflict areas

that have to be taken into account when designing the assessment tools:

- The instruments must allow independent use by the employee
- Guiding and coaching by educational consultants will improve the quality of results
- Some experts suggest examination of individual work practices and a concrete design with regard to particular sectors, particular SME categories, as well as the particular conditions in the various countries'. ...

It becomes clear, though, that devising of competence assessment tools for SMEs is taking place on the ground of a number of areas of conflict that obviously cannot be exited in the one or the other direction. Quite the contrary, as has also been shown in the course of the ex-emplo project, both theory and practice must refer to these areas of conflict striving to reconcile objectives and requirements that partially contradict each other, and decide from case to case which aspect has to be attached more importance.

4.1 Universal applicability vs. orientation towards identification of specific competences and competence requirements

One area of conflict is that of universality and abstractness of instruments enabling implementation in various enterprises and different national environments on the one hand, and the desire for maximum concreteness and (enterprise) specific design of instruments, on the other.

Competence assessment instruments must provide for implementation in a variety of businesses, sectors and also in different countries and, at the same time, ensure usability in a concrete and workplace-related manner so as to yield specific results that may be used in the respective enterprise also for staff and competence development measures.

- **The more specific** and concrete the competences subject to assessment are defined – in regard of particular enterprises, sectors, target groups, national environments and standards, specific requirements and prerequisites

... the more significant the achieved results will be with a view to systematic competence development;

... the more limited will be, on the other hand, their supra-sectoral and transnational applicability and neither (competence) criteria, nor the criteria of such assessment instruments would allow comparison of results. In this context, Bjørnåvold warns against entering a

“never ending spiral of specifications” (Bjørnåvold 2001, p. 76) when increasingly detailed and specific competence descriptions are issued in order to meet the requirements of practice.

And vice versa:

- **The more general** competence definition and instruments

... the more universal their usability in a transnational context and the better comparable the results of such procedures (seem to be)

... the less, however, will be their relevance to the actual fields of activities and competences of employees²⁴, the re-

quirements of enterprises and, accordingly, the significance of results.

The “difficulties balancing between too general and too specific descriptions and definitions of competences” (Bjørnåvold 2001, p. 27) are most aptly characterised by the Spanish exemplo partners who point out

“how difficult it is to design a common and general tool, since the more specific a tool is, the greater its effectiveness. And specificity gives rise to all sorts of difficulties when applying tools to environments different from those for which it was designed.”

4.2 Adherence to binding general standards vs. a (company-)specific design of competence assessment procedures

A related **area of conflict**: On the one hand, one of the prerequisites for the meaningful *measurement* and *comparability* of competences and competence levels are binding *standards* – be that, at the national level, by basing the assessment and evaluation of informally acquired competences upon the requirements for formal certification, or by basing them upon criteria catalogues developed at the sectoral or occupational level. Unless there are not any standards neither the comparison of results, nor their transfer and mutual recognition (at both enterprises and transnational level) would be feasible. On the other hand, a high degree of standardisation would restrict the possibility to adapt the instrument to specific requirements, e.g. of enterprises in different countries.

- **The higher the degree of standardisation** of reference levels and instruments

... the better comparable and transferable will be the results and documentation of

competence assessment procedures, e.g. in the form of certificates attesting the achievement of certain competence levels;

... the more difficult it will be to customise a given competence assessment procedure to individual and/or enterprise needs.

And in the other direction:

- **The more specific and concrete** the definition of competences and competence levels

... the poorer the significance of results beyond certain boundaries (of the enterprise, the sector, the country);

... the greater the benefit to staff development measures adopted by a particular company.

The antagonism “*individualisation vs. standardisation*” (Hofer 2004, p. 149) would become manifest also by the fact that binding standards are in conflict with the aim to achieve a maximum degree of self-control of learning processes and to assess them in self-evaluation.

4.3 Self-evaluation vs. evaluation by others?

Procedures of self-evaluation would increase authenticity of results, sensitise employees to the necessity of competence development and also promote the acceptance of procedures for the assessment of informally acquired competences. However, both the objectivity and significance of such procedures are limited what decreases acceptance on the employers' part.

- **The higher the share of self-evaluation**

... the greater will be both the authenticity of results and the trust employees have in the procedure

... the less, on the other hand, will be the objectivity and significance of results: As a rule, self-assessments imply the risk of being too subjective what calls in question the validity of results.

And vice versa:

- **The higher the share of competence assessment by others**

... the more objective and comparable the outcomes will be;

... the greater, on the other hand, will be the distance between the specific (company) environment, the (company-)specific competences of employees and external bodies of competence assessment²⁵;

... the greater will be, in case of an *internal* evaluation by others, such as seniors or fellow-workers, the risk of giving rise to distrust and low acceptance on the employees' part what may result in poor significance of competence assessment.

Here, a balance has to be found in accordance with the emphasis and the objective of the assessment procedure.

4.4 Counselling and support vs. independent use by employees

With respect to instruments mainly designed for self-evaluation by employees, too, guiding and coaching of employees by (external) counsellors, as has been explained in Section 3.1, will significantly improve the quality of results. In addition, enterprises, too, will profit from external support of competence assessment and evaluation procedures.

On the other hand, external support is met with reluctance in particular on part of small-sized enterprises which would consider them as too laborious. As a result, the acceptance and applicability of competence assessment instruments designed to be implemented with external support may be restricted.

- **The more** comprehensive and competent the **support** provided to enterprises and employees in competence assessment and evaluation

... the more objective and reliable the results will be,

... the more complex, laborious and cost-intensive the procedures will be. Integra-

tion into the workflow and the employees' activities poses a major obstacle to the acceptance of counselling-intensive instruments, in particular in European SMEs.

And vice versa:

- **The less the demand for support** in terms of internal or external coaching and counselling

... the less laborious the handling of the instrument and the higher its acceptance, in particular on the part of SMEs, will be;

... the poorer, however, will be the significance of results.

There is no general answer to the question which extent of coaching and support instruments for competence assessment in SMEs (may) need so as to not preventing their implementation and applicability in particular as regards small-sized enterprises. Rather, this question has to be decided from case to case and in a pragmatic manner.

4.4 Simplicity of use vs. validity of results

Last but not least it is the fairly long list of rather *technical* areas of conflicts and aspects that has to be taken into account when it comes to the conception and implementation of procedures for the assessment of informally acquired competences:

- **The more time** employees have for conducting the assessment – e.g. to prepare for the procedure – the greater will be the significance of the results;

.... the less the willingness of both employers and employees to apply the procedure: Procedures, in particular those designed for SMEs, must not exceed a certain time-span if they are to be compatible with the specifics of the work-flow.

- Competence assessment procedures **integrated into work processes** will guarantee a maximum of practice-relatedness and authenticity;

... they may, however, be hard to be smoothly integrated into the workflow
...

etc. –

the list might be continued:

“There will always be gaps when the intention is to develop a general tool which is easy in use...” (VOX/Lunner-Evaluation)

4.5 Conclusions

Dependent on the specific requirements and prerequisites of a given enterprise, it will have to be decided in each case what the primary objective of the competence assessment procedure is and which procedure is the most suitable. As a motto, and also in order to encourage a pragmatic approach not shunning experimentation in the ever more important field of informally acquired competence assessment let us quote the conclusion of the Norwegian exemplo partner:

“All models are wrong, but some are constructive.” (VOX)

In this sense, under the exemplo partnership solutions have been worked out and new approaches have been pointed out to optimise both identification and application of professional competences acquired by SMEs employees in informal settings. Work is in progress – experiences gained during the application of the exemplo tools in practice are welcome under

<http://www.exemplo.de/exemplo/contact.html>

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¹ SME Observatory 2003 – Observatory network of European SMEs 2003/1: Competence and qualifications development in SMEs (publication of the Enterprise Directorate-General of the European Commission)

www.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/doc/smes_observatory_2003_report1_de.pdf

² This classification of the partner countries is based upon Bjørnåvold (Bjørnåvold 2000). For a more detailed explanation of the various approaches adopted in European countries cf. Article 3 of this volume.

³ Many SMEs hesitate to invest in competence development activities, fearing poaching of qualified staff by competitors. Cf.

www.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/doc/smes_observatory_2003_report1_de.pdf, p. 8

⁴ The practical testing was evaluated on the basis of two questionnaires worked out in the framework of the project.

⁵ See article 1 of this volume.

⁶ VOX has issued a manual in five languages on this issue which may be downloaded under <http://www.exemplo.de/exemplo/products.html>.

⁷ For further information on this instrument refer to: ECOTEC 2005, pp. 262.

⁸ ECOTEC 2005, p. 263

⁹ With a view to the Mediterranean countries in particular, Bjørnåvold (Bjørnåvold, 2000) stated as a main feature the high importance informal learning processes have for the national economy stressing

the need of bringing to the fore the results of such forms of learning: “*The huge reservoir of non-formal learning which creates the basis for important parts of the economies in these countries needs to be made visible.*”

¹⁰ This set of problems will be dealt with in greater detail in the section “Area of conflicts”.

¹¹ The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is the body responsible for funding delivery of all post 16 education and training in the UK.

¹² www.lsc.gov.uk/rarpa. The method aims to enhance the quality of available training schemes by applying a *Staged Process* which also lays at the basis of the tool presented here.

¹³ Among the various forms of evidence, the Learning and Skills Council lists “learners’ files, journals, diaries, portfolios, artwork; videos, audiotapes, performances, exhibitions and displays; artefacts, photographs and other forms of evidence” as examples.

¹⁴ Training of team leaders entrusted with training assignments and employees was conducted twice at the exemplo partner enterprise Widney UK Ltd with each unit lasting half a day.

¹⁵ A detailed description of this instrument may be found in Part III of this volume. A description of exemplo partners’ experiences with this instrument is given in Part II.

¹⁶ The DSFT Berlin is a central institution of continuing education of the German tourism business. More detailed information on *TransferPlus* is available under: http://www.dsft-berlin.de/index.php?bereich=4&content_id=7

¹⁷ The *Competence Card for Workplace* is documented in Part III of this volume. Further information on, and a description of the instrument in five languages may be downloaded under www.exemplo.de/exemplo/products.html.

¹⁸ A version of the RARPA procedure as it has been worked out under the exemplo partnership is documented in Part III of this volume and may be downloaded in German and English under www.exemplo.de/exemplo/products.html.

¹⁹ This report is based upon surveys carried out among employees and enterprise representatives in a number of partner countries, as well as the empirical evidence submitted by the national expert groups involved in the exemplo project.

²⁰ Since in the survey carried out in France the category “*do not know, undecided*” was not included the values cannot be compared directly. However, they can give an idea of the great significance voluntary participation and consent as regards the use of assessment results in various countries is being attached to.

²¹ This category received the highest level of agreement in the survey carried out in France.

²² On this, confer the article by Fietz, G., Junge, A. and Nicholls, B. in this volume.

²³ I.e. with reference to the *Competence Card for Workplace*.

²⁴ “Too abstract” and “not adapted to the job we occupy” – such, e.g., was the judgement expressed by employees of a French company who struggled to establish a link between the *Competence Card for Workplace* and their own work practice.

²⁵ The problems posed by external evaluation of competences come to the fore, e.g., in the *bilan de compétences* in France: Käßplinger (Käßplinger 2002, p.14) points out the difficulties in the communication between the accounting centre and the individual subject to accounting that would start as early as with the very assessment of competences – when staff members of those centres have little knowledge on the specific character of an occupational field failing to assess competences in the respective context.

Current state of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe

Making use of the variety of European experience

Gabriele Fietz, Annette Junge, Bill Nicholls

In exemplo, the expertise that exists in the seven countries involved is used to offer support to enterprises, especially SMEs and their employees, in promoting, determining and assessing competences. The seven countries show a broad variety in terms of geographical location and typology of vocational training systems. As a starting point, partners surveyed the current state of competence-oriented learning and the anchoring of methods for documenting and validating non-formally and informally acquired competences in the VET systems of the countries involved. The survey revealed a wide spectrum of practices: While some countries already have extensive experience in promoting, documenting and assessing non-formally and informally acquired competences, this development is still in its infancy elsewhere.

Using the distinguishing characteristics of Jens Bjørnåvold as a basis, the seven countries involved in exemplo (Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Norway, Spain, and United Kingdom) could be classified according to different approaches for recognising and promoting informal learning.

Bjørnåvold (Bjørnåvold 2000) distinguishes the *dual system approach*, the *NVQ approach*, the *Nordic approach* as well as the *Mediterranean approach* and specifies the “*opening of diplomas and certificates*” as a fifth approach, as it can be found in France, for example. Since none of these categories seemed to fit the special development in the new acceding country of Poland, a further category was added: a “*transition country’s approach*”.

	Dual system approach	NVQ approach	Nordic approach	Mediterranean approach	“Opening” of diplomas and certificates	A transition country’s approach
Finland						
France						
Germany						
Norway						
Poland						
Spain						
UK (England and Wales)						

Fig 1: Attempt of classification of seven European countries

In all countries, there is a growing understanding of the increasing importance of lifelong learning and attention to new methods for the identification and support, documentation and evaluation of competences. EU policies are certainly an important factor in promoting this. Although a certain convergence can definitely be

found, the considerable differences among the individual European countries should still be emphasized.

If the seven countries are regarded according to the degree of anchoring validation of non-formal and informal learning in their national systems, they might be classified as follows:¹

	Experimentation and uncertainty	National systems emerge	Permanent systems already exist
Finland			
France			
Germany			
Norway			
Poland			
Spain			
UK (England and Wales)			

Fig 2: Degree of anchoring of validation of non-formal and informal learning in VET systems

France: Centralised formal system and opening of diplomas

France represents the “*opening of diplomas and certificates*” (Bjørnåvold 2005). Against the backdrop of an educational system that is very highly centralised and oriented to the acquisition of formal certificates. “*According to French national tradition, formal education and training are very much valued in the country, perhaps over-valued to the detriment of other ways of training. This is partly the result of the existence of a long lasting steady and homogeneous national VET system...*” (Report of the French exemplo partners see: www.exemplo.de). Various approaches to recording vocational competences acquired outside of formal contexts have been created since 1985. Although on the one hand, France is considered “*one of the European countries with the longest traditions in identifying, assessing and recognising non-formal learning*” (Bjørnåvold, 2000), on the other hand, the French demonstrate an increasing but still rather reluctant use of tools for taking stock of informally acquired competences: “*Despite a long tradition of legislation on*

validating non-formal and informal learning, actual practice is limited.” (Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 39)

Nowadays, it is possible to find several different forms of recognition for competences acquired outside of formal courses of study, which thank their existence to various aims:

The *bilan de compétences* (skills record) was developed in the mid 1980’s and introduced by the Ministry of Labour in 1989 to make it possible to determine the vocationally and privately acquired competences of employees and thereby give individuals an idea of the status of their vocational competences and skills as well as to help companies plan their human resources development. For this purpose, 110 state assessment centres were set up in all of France, and there are private facilities as well. Under certain conditions (five years of work experience, one year of employment with current employer), the *bilan de compétences* is supported by a 24-hour release from work. However, this tool has

meanwhile primarily proved useful to workers for finding out where they stand. (Frank 2003) Although the *bilan de compétences* creates the legal and organisational prerequisites for taking stock of competences on a broad scale, the acceptance by companies can be categorized as rather low.

Two other methods explicitly aim for transparency in competences acquired outside of formal courses of study but, in contrast to the *bilan de compétences*, permit access to formal courses of study and the acquisition of diplomas: In 1985, the *Validation des Acquis Professionnels* (VAP) legally regulated the recognition of vocationally acquired competences for certain courses of study in the formal educational system. In 1992, the “Modernisation sociale” law regulated the recognition of knowledge from experience more flexibly and on a wide scale.

The *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience* (VAE, recognition of knowledge from expe-

rience) provides access to formal courses of study, including university programmes, based on vocational knowledge from experience as well as competences that have been informally acquired outside of work (Bjørnåvold /Colardyn 2005, 37 ff.). “*Signals are positive even if from ‘slogan to practice, the way is long’.*” (Colardyn, 2003, according to Bjørnåvold, Colardyn 2005, p. 40).

Since 1999, there has been an initiative of the French employers’ association MEDEF (Mouvement des Entreprises de France) under the title of “Objective Compétence” that aims to anchor the competence aspect more strongly especially in small and medium-sized enterprises. Numerous initiatives have been started particularly on the regional level, which involve labour unions and companies.

One of these initiatives is the “Franche Comté Competence Club”, whose activities are described in part II of this volume.

United Kingdom: The output-oriented vocational education system

The NVQ (national vocational qualification) approach can be seen as strongly output-oriented. It is also deeply anchored in the United Kingdom (England and Wales). “*The general acceptance of learning outside formal education and training institutions as a valid and important pathway to competences is a basic feature in these countries*” (Bjørnåvold 2001, p. 27), so that companies, social partners and training institutions have many years of extensive experience in assessing informally acquired competences.

With the NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) system, the United Kingdom has a method that provides evidence of competences acquired in the process of work, regardless of where and how they were acquired. The NVQ system is based on a standardised national framework for qualifications: from simple routine activity [level 1] up to higher management skills [level 5]. Each NVQ is categorised at one of these levels. At the moment there are hundreds of qualifications covering every occupational area. Each qualification is broken

down into Units of Competence [UofC] which can if required be separately assessed and certified. The NVQ system is a work based system and the majority of qualifications are delivered on-the-job not in a classroom. Whether and to what extent an employee has the required competences is determined by assessments made in the workplace, and occasionally by simulated work situations – but this is rare.

The quality control system is rigorous. All formal assessments counting towards a qualification have to be made by a qualified assessor who themselves has achieved the relevant NVQ in training and assessment. This means that assessors can be managers, supervisors or even co-workers. The assessments are in turn internally verified by qualified staff and external assessors who work only for the awarding body of the qualification maintain the ultimate NVQ standards.

The acquired UofC are collected in portfolios and gradually lead to the acquisition of

a full NVQ. NVQs confirm that employees meet national standards recognised by business, which is considered an important competitive advantage: *“In an age of intense global competition, it is essential to assure customers that high standards are maintained not only in terms of the quality of materials and processes but more importantly that all employees are competent.”* (see <http://www.eef.org.uk/westmid>)

Overseen by a national body [the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)] NVQ's are reviewed at least every three years so that relevance of the NVQ is assured. Employers are centrally involved in determining the content areas of an NVQ as well as in defining standards and qualification requirements. From a business perspective, the strength of the NVQ system is that it determines the competences important to the work activity, whereas process and duration of competence acquisition are of secondary importance.

However, the strict orientation to output might also perhaps be a weakness of the NVQ system: NVQs provide very good

information about whether and to what extent someone is competent, and they help to identify where gaps exist in a company's competence profile - however, the question of how to close these gaps and design corresponding learning processes threatens to be pushed into the background due to the fixation on learning results.

On-the-job training, traditionally popular in the United Kingdom, also requires control as well as deliberate guidance and support if individual competences are to be developed to meet the requirements of companies. Learning cannot be left entirely up to individual employees, and the development of vocational competences cannot be left up to chance through “learning by sitting next to Nellie”, as they say in the UK.

Against this backdrop, the social partners and government in England are currently making great efforts to orient vocational education more closely to the competences required by business.

Finland and Norway: Improving the relationship between formal, non-formal and informal learning

In the Nordic countries, ways to improve the relationship among formal, non-formal and informal ways of competence acquisition have been increasingly sought for some time now: *“all four countries² have taken practical steps through legislation and institutional initiatives towards strengthening the link between formal education and training and learning taking place outside schools.”* The Norwegian concept of *Realkompetanse*, which refers to *“all formal, non-formal and informal competences held by an individual”* (Nordic Council 2001) – is at the centre of various government initiatives in the Nordic countries. *“Finland and Norway are clearly opening up for the institutional integration of non-formal learning as part of a general lifelong learning strategy.”* (Bjørnåvold 2001, p. 27).

The Finnish example shows how a reform process that increasingly considers the documentation of non-formally and infor-

mally acquired competences has taken place in the past few years against the backdrop of a national educational system that has traditionally been highly centralised and oriented to the acquisition of formal certificates. The vocational qualification system is widely appreciated and the tendency is that all kind of skills and competences should have formally validated credits. The tradition of recognizing competence-based vocational qualifications (*näytötutkinto*) goes back to the law on vocational qualifications that went into effect in 1994. These provisions have been continued in the Adult Vocational Training Act of 1998: this provides for competence tests in which adult learners can demonstrate their vocational skills regardless of where and how they have acquired those skills. The three levels of competence-based skills are all at the upper secondary level and comprise initial, further and specialist levels. The popularity of competen

Year	No. of vocational qualifications acquired through competence based examinations
1995	547
1996	2,645
1997	5,152
1998	8,159
1999	12,815
2000	16,903
2001	20,180
2002	23,383
Total	89,784

Fig 3: Competence-based vocational qualifications in Finland (ECOTEC 2005, p. 93)

ce-based examinations for attaining vocational qualifications has increased rapidly since their introduction.

The situation is different for attaining access to formal education based on the results of prior learning (non-formal, informal); this is possible according to Finnish law, but the number of people who succeed is insignificant. *“Although necessary provisions and appropriate legislative frameworks are in place, the number of students whose informal or non-formal learning is recognised as a part of an application for upper secondary schools and universities can be regarded rather low.”* (ECOTEC 2005, p. 94) A particular hurdle arises for access to college studies: Knowledge gained from work experience, for example, is very seldom recognized by universities, with a few exceptions such as teacher training programs.

In Norway due to the competence reform (1997-1999) more emphasis has been placed on the right of the individual to document non-formal learning that has been developed over time in the work context. The status of the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired compe-

tences must also be considered from two perspectives here: the acquisition of the right to enter training programs of the formal educational system and the improvement of employment possibilities in the national labour market.

While the recognition of prior learning in the area of education has been successfully implemented in national legislation, the development of the labour-market-related aspect is proceeding rather slowly: Since 1999, a number of tools that deal with the validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences have been developed to improve access to the employment system as part of various model projects. One example, the *Competence Card for Workplace*, can be found in part II of this volume.

Also, more work is needed in the civil sector and with regard to the labour market before generally agreed competence passports can be introduced. VOX, the Norwegian Institute for Adult Education, is using this experience to introduce a uniform *Competence Passport* that is suitable for different sectors and target groups.

Spain: Legislative initiatives and experimental projects

In the countries with the *“Mediterranean approach”*³ competences are acquired to a large extent in non-formal and informal

ways. Consequently, there is a great need to increase the importance and better utilise competences that are acquired in this

way: *“the Mediterranean countries have a huge reservoir of non-formal learning that needs to be made visible. It is not only a question of making it easier to utilise existing competences, but also a question of how to improve the quality.”* (Bjørnåvold 2005, 57)

In **Spain** legislative initiatives and experimental projects have already been put into effect. On institutional level work is progressing towards the creation of a system that makes it possible to assess, recognise and accredit vocational skills acquired through non-formal and informal channels. A reorientation of basic political conditions towards considering non-formally and informally acquired competences can currently be seen in the creation of a “National Catalogue for Vocational Qualifications”.

“The Law on Qualifications and Vocational training of June 2002” has, as main objective, to create a National System for Qualifications and Vocational training that will give unity, coherence and effectiveness to the planning, systematisation and administration of the qualifications and vocational training. This way, the different forms of accreditation and certification of competencies and professional qualifications, obtained through formal, non-formal or informal ways, will be integrated. This law, therefore, opens the way to set a system that will lead to the official recognition of non formal and informal learning.” (ECOTEC 2005, p. 259 f.).

Against this backdrop, an important further step could be marked – to be classified in the experimental stage: The ERA programme – “Evaluación, Reconocimiento y Acreditación de las competencias profesionales” that has been developed in the course of the current national reorganisation in Spain. ERA is an experimental pro-

ject promoted by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the regional Governments. It represents an initial step that has made available relevant data to justify empirically the development of a procedure to recognise and evaluate non-formal and informal learning, including work experience.

Procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning have been developed and tested on the regional level based on the experience gained with the ERA project. Currently, six regions (Basque country, Catalonia, Madrid, Navarre, Castile, la Mancha and Valencia) have already set up such mechanisms.

In addition, there are a number of private initiatives on the company level, which are difficult to identify, however. Many projects deal with the subject of validating non-formally and informally acquired competences as part of European educational programmes; the social partners are often involved in these activities:

Take for instance the report “La gestión por competencias en España” (Skill-based model of Management in Spain), drawn up by the Spanish confederation of employer organisations CEOE – Confederación Española de organizaciones Empresariales – in January 2002. This report was drawn up in the framework of the “European Skills Management Observatory”.

Also highlighted as examples of good practices were CAJA MADRID in the area of assessment and NH HOTELES in identification of training needs, both included in the follow-up reports of the European Social dialogue Agreement on Training for the years 2002 and 2003.

These projects accompany the process of developing a national system for qualifications and vocational training.

Germany: Dual system and assessment of competences in CVET

The *dual system approach* is represented by **Germany**. Looking at the German VET system a clear distinguishing between the system of initial vocational training (IVET) and the system of continuous vocational

education and training (CVET) has to be stated.

The German system of initial vocational training *“is based on a combination of school and work-based learning, meaning*

experimental learning is included in the formal system" (Bjørnåvold 2005). The training component that takes place at a company is not organised according to didactic aspects; thus informal learning processes take place continually (Straka 2005). In fact, the acquisition of practical competences is characteristic of vocational training in the German dual system. This orientation is also reflected in how the training and final examinations are organised. *"Training guidelines and syllabi do not merely describe the subjects but are concerned above all with the knowledge, abilities and skills to be acquired. These are increasingly determined in project-oriented final examinations that deal with practical situations."* (Weiss 2005, 4).

The reorganisation of many training professions has reinforced this tendency: Since 1998, around 180 training occupations have been reorganised and new occupations have been created, such as those in the IT sector. The examination structure of the new IT occupations includes company project work and comprehensive tasks. Informally acquired competences are tested in a project carried out at the workplace as well as in a subsequent final examination and officially recognised in a certificate. At the same time, the further training project includes regular discussions in which learners can review their learning process and are supported by a learning process supervisor (Gillen, 2003, p. 17 f.).

In the field of CVET, the attention paid to validating informal learning still appears to be rather low, despite all the progress attained in the past years. In Germany *"limited attention [is] given to validation of learning acquired outside the formal system"*. *"Validation of non-formal learning has so far not attracted the same attention as it has in many other European countries"* (Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 40). This development is certainly related to the narrow orientation to the *system of recognised professions* that is especially found in Germany. There, initial vocational training is leading to one of the around 360 professions. Nevertheless, even workers with recognized vocational degrees have to learn throughout their lives and maintain their employability. Businesses also in-

creasingly express a need for more flexibility." (Severing 2005, p. 7).

In the last few years, though, a number of reform approaches and model projects have appeared in Germany that deal with the promotion and evaluation of lifelong learning outside of the formal vocational training system. Very few of them are the result of legislation. Minor efforts could be found, for example, in the reformed Vocational Training Act (BBiG) of April 2005. Here are two examples:

The *"Qualifikationsbausteine"* (qualification modules) are a recently developed instrument that makes it possible to credit partial qualifications acquired during vocational preparation - thus outside of regular initial training - to a training programme. § 51 BBiG stipulates that providers of vocational preparation have to issue written certification of acquired vocational skills. These qualification modules are not that prevalent, however.

The external examination *Externenprüfung*, that has been part of the vocational training system since 1969, has become somewhat more important since entry requirements were simplified in the reformed Vocational Training Act of April 2005. The *Externenprüfung* enables workers to verify vocational experience or knowledge from non-formal further training courses and to acquire a recognized vocational degree without going through a formal training programme. Participants in the *Externenprüfung* are subject to the same test conditions as regular apprentices. Access to the *Externenprüfung* requires several years of work at a specialist level (*"Fachkräftebene"*); according to the Vocational Training Act of 2005, the required length of employment is only one and a half times the training period of the respective occupation. In exceptional cases, this employment period can be further shortened by demonstrating the knowledge and skills acquired in vocational further training courses. But in total, the *Externenprüfung* is of minor importance in the German system: less than 5 % of the examinations leading to one of the recognised professions are achieved in this external examination (Bjørnåvold 2005, p 147).

Whereas these two methods are already implemented by law in the German VET system, more and more research projects and pilot schemes have been taking place on an "experimental" level in Germany in the past few years (Bjørnåvold 2005, p 41):

A widely based study was initiated on the state level by the federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the decentralised ministries of education of the Länder with the "Weiterbildungspass" (continuing education pass).

Continuing education passes record individual activities of lifelong learning in formal, non-formal and informal training contexts (Barth, Neß, 2005). As part of this research project, an inventory was made of the continuing education passes that exist in Germany. A number of these passes, which generally have a vocational orientation, have been created since the mid 1990's. The 48 passes that were introduced in Germany by the year 2003 are mainly process-related; in addition to documentation, reflection, stocktaking and planning also play an important role.

Based on the results of the Weiterbildungspass-study, the ProfilPASS was developed as a training passport for wide application and is currently in the trial phase. *"The ProfilPASS records abilities that have been acquired informally, i.e. through 'learning by doing', leisure activities, family, employment and volunteer work. The goal is to recognize and identify one's own strengths and unite them in a personal competence profile. This helps to prepare job applications and interviews, to define where one stands professionally and to plan one's future learning. After the regional tests, the ProfilPASS will be introduced and established throughout Germany starting in Spring/Summer 2006."* (www.bildungspass.de).

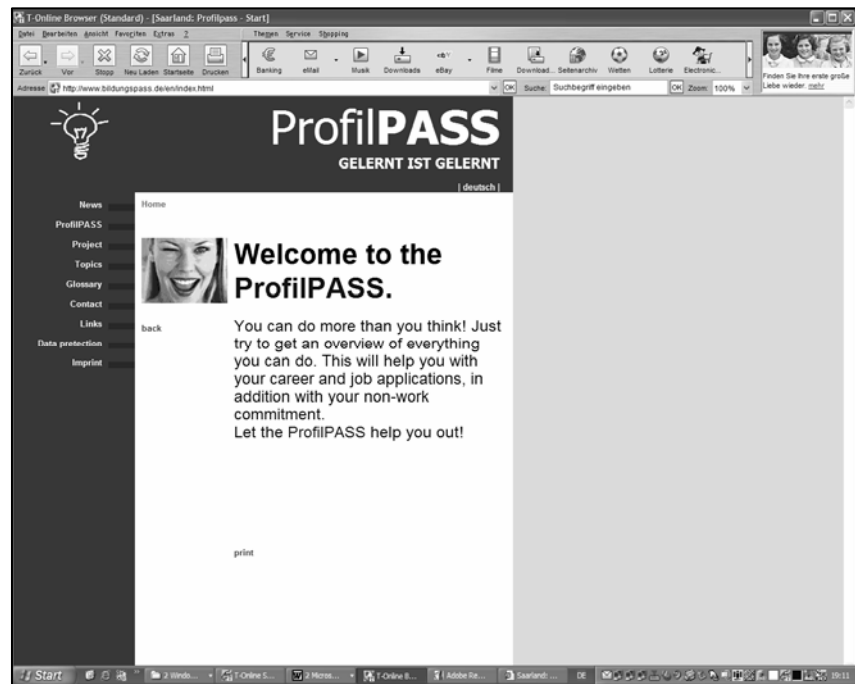


Fig 4: Profilpass

A further research project that has also been initiated by the BMBF and state ministries of the Länder as well as implemented with the support of the ESF is the "Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung" (Competence Development for a Learning Culture) initiative, which also emphasises the company aspect: *"The study focuses on developing and testing efficient continuing learning structures in companies and strengthening individual professional competences. In regard to the validation of informal learning, the initiative attempts to find means to implement informal learning in a more effective way in continuing education"* (Seyfried 2005).

In addition, there are initiatives from various other players, two examples:

The IG Metall (metalworkers' union) has developed a comprehensive *job navigator* to help workers independently plan their career. The job navigator consists of several modules, one of which is the *Kompetenzhandbuch* (competence manual) that helps to develop a profile analysis of competences. It lists competences for the following three areas: professional, methodological and social competence. Each competence area comprises between nine and 16 individual skills.

In Germany, there are also methods for supporting and assessing competences that have been developed to meet the needs of large enterprises. Global players do not rely on government measures. An example of this is a pilot scheme carried out at Daimler Chrysler in Gaggenau for learning in the process of change, which includes validation methods for non-formal and informal learning (Seyfried 2005).

There is a need for action above all in the case of small and medium-sized enterprises. Competence-oriented human resources and organisation development is a decisive competition factor for these companies as well; for practical implementation, however, these enterprises require external support, model projects and pilot schemes – such as *exemplo* – that help to develop manageable solutions.

Poland: example of a country in transition

The Polish VET system is undergoing a fundamental reform process launched by the Ministry of National Education in the late 90th of the last century. Similar to other countries in transition, the proportion of VET was over average compared to the European level. A large number of programmes with too narrow specialisations led to a high rate of unemployment among those who completed them. For long the efforts to reform of VET in the late 1990 have been targeted mainly to decrease the vocational part of the education and training system.

The reform of 2002, which had the explicit goal of orienting the educational system more closely to the requirements of the labour market, has a very strong emphasis on the area of general education. The objective is to *“raise access and quality in education and increase school leavers’ mobility on the labour market by putting greater emphasis on general secondary and higher education”* (Country report Poland, p 5). The reform also contains approaches that could increase the opportunities for integrating graduates in the labour market: teaching key qualifications, flexibility through modularisation and more emphasis on practical learning phases at companies. More and more introduction of experimental learning in real work situations has become a goal of Polish VET activities: In an agreement between the Polish government and the umbrella organisation of employers, a company network was created in 2003 to promote vocational learning in the framework of internships.

Adult continuous vocational training mainly takes place in secondary vocational schools. In addition, there are offers from private providers. Despite numerous incentives – tax concessions, release from work by companies for further training – the involvement of adults in further training is very low and is far below the average of the EU 15 (OECD 2001). The incentives also include the possibility of certifying non-formally acquired knowledge and skills. The legal basis for this was created in 1993 by a joint decree of the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 67).

There are some other long established practices of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Poland. The oldest one is the possibility of further training and examinations in crafts established by the Crafts Act of 1989. This allows trades people to take an examination for the degree of apprentice and foreman in crafts, which is recognised by employers and state administration at the national level.

“In addition, in certain occupations (e.g. security worker, engineers and technical staff in the electrical power sector, work safety and hygiene technicians and officers), the award relates to sector entities and professional associations, to issue and deliver state-recognised certificates following training and examinations organised within the respective occupation or craft.” (ETF 2002, p. 3)

Although there are some first approaches for validating non-formal and informal learning in Poland, the methods are very different and the certificates issued by the various institutions are difficult to compare.

The implementation of a uniform system is one of the objectives set out in the Strategy for the Development of Continuing Education and Training until 2010.

Conclusion

The analysis of the individual countries related to the goal of identifying competence promotion and validation methods for SMEs shows that further action to support SMEs might be required in all countries involved, even in those that have implemented national systems for validating non-formal and informal learning. On the other hand productive approaches can be

found even in countries in the experimental stage. Thus the collaboration of countries with uneven state of development has proved to be promising in terms of identifying and further developing innovative approaches of competence development and assessment that are applicable to the wide range of demands and prerequisites of European SMEs.

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Endnotes

¹ Bjørnåvold (2005) continues the classification of European countries that was done in Making Learning visible (2000) according to the above-mentioned approaches by classifying them according to the different stages in which the vocational training systems of the individual countries currently are – de iure and de facto:

“In Member States, three sometimes overlapping stages of policy formulation and implementation can be identified:

(a) experimentation and uncertainty. Certain countries are at an experimental stage, but accept the need for initiatives. To what extent these initiatives will influence existing structures and systems on a more permanent basis remains uncertain;

(b) national systems emerge. Other countries move towards national systems based on legal and institutional frameworks;

(c) permanent systems already exist. Finally there are countries where permanent systems were introduced earlier; this does not mean, however, that further policy development is ruled out. There are substantial debates on the subject.

This simplified picture illustrates the dynamic character of policies on validating non-formal and informal learning.” (Bjørnåvold 2005, p. 7 f.)

² This refers to Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In 2005 „five countries“ are mentioned, including Iceland.

³ Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal

Part II

- **Good practice of social partners – two examples**

The Competence Club of MEDEF Franche Comté

Valérie Brenot/Tarana Aliyeva

The quiet revolution at the workplace – The Union Learning Fund

Bert Clough

- **Experiences with “Transparency of competences” in three European countries**

Exemplo Team (DE, UK, FI)

Good practice of social partners – two examples

The social partners – both the employers' and the employees' representatives – play an important role in the process of competence development and assessment. The relevance of social dialogue for broad acceptance of methods for assessment and evaluation of employees' competences has been described in chapter 1 of this volume.

Beyond that, various social partners' activities in European countries cater for dissemination of competence based approaches towards SMEs by linking companies to networks or providing advice to companies and their employees.

In the following two examples of recent initiatives of social partners from France and the United Kingdom are presented:

- The “*Competence Club*” – an activity initiated by the MEDEF Franche Comté together with two further employer organisations and five trade unions of the Franche Comté region – promotes the social dialogue on competence issues and facilitates a regional network of companies.
- The “*Union learning representative*” is a trade union driven initiative in the United Kingdom. As an answer to “the quiet revolution at the workplace”, the unions have established a number of innovative union-led projects to drive up the skills of the workforce and widening access to skills development in companies.

The Competence Club of MEDEF Franche Comté

Valérie Brenot/Tarana Aliyeva

From the National Interprofessional Agreement (December 5th, 2003), most French people only remind that it is an additional reform on the vocational training policy forgetting that social partners, which are the initiators of this reform, wanted to focus on the priority given to the development of the competences of men and women who constitute the active strengths of the firms.

The intention to link “management of the competences” and “vocational training” is a key point of this reform that social partners expressed and are concretising within a con-

tract with the regional representative of the Ministry of Labour in the Franche-Comté region.

The aim of this regional initiative is to come within the framework of a deep evolution of the management in firms that is usually named “Management of the competences” (*gestion de compétence*). The employee is placed in the centre of this so called participative management which implies to carry out a regular and permanent updating of knowledge and know-how. This proc-

ess leads to a strong investment under the frame of the life-long learning.

Companies know that their main current and on-going challenge is and will be in the coming years to be able to mobilise, develop and keep the competences which they need or will need for ensuring their competitiveness.

With the Competence Club of Franche-Comté which was created by the MEDEF Franche-Comté in partnership with the Regional Council and the representation of the Ministry of Labour, the MEDEF Franche-Comté proposes to the firms a structured network for the development of competences which should match their needs and which should foster a leverage effect for a quick increase of the implementation of such management strategies.

Currently, 108 firms from the Franche-Comté region are part of this Club, implementing such strategies or benefiting from the experience of other firms in that frame stressing on the importance of the personalisation of each process. Any firm whatever the size (small firms up to large firms such as Peugeot or Nestlé), the type of activities (Industry, Services,...) is welcomed in this Club.

As the social dialogue is often seen as a quasi permanent negotiation, according from which point of view we are placed, for some to provide the minimum possible and for others to give the maximum possible, social partners in Franche-Comté want to overpass these stereotypes by implementing constructive and concrete strategies on the ground.

This unanimous will from the social partners involved within the joint regional and interpro-

fessional committee for Employment and Training (COPIRE Franche-Comté) may seem ambitious for some people but is all the more needed in order to finally reconcile the social and economical spheres. And that is because the "Management by the competences" can answer to these criteria that it has been chosen as a privileged field of observation by the social partners.

A regional meeting dedicated to the sensitisation and information on the Competences strategy will be organised by the social partners on the 22nd of June 2006. This meeting which is expecting more than 200 employers and employees will be organised under the frame of testimonies and exchanges of best practices so that other firms appropriate the methodology and implement tools which are promoted by others. This meeting represents a key step in this process of appropriation and already implemented dialogue. Indeed, social partners are also involved in firms visits to meet both employers and employees and convince them of this strategy. The social partners also contribute to the organisation of workshops on this theme.

That is why social partners in Franche-Comté chose this simultaneous and interactive construction of the "social dialogue by the competences" and the "competences by the social dialogue". Is it a revolution? Probably not, but obviously it is an innovative and unique strategy in the region !

The Quiet Revolution at the Workplace

Bert Clough

There is a quiet revolution in British workplaces. The need for skills is not just higher on the board room agenda but it is also much higher on the union negotiating agenda. Un-

ions are increasingly recognising the wage premiums from the acquisition of higher skills. Since the effect of training on productivity is around twice as great

as its effect on wages, employees and employers can share in the gains from work-based training. This powerful signal from the labour market has not however yet changed the behaviour of a long tail on employers who

do not train. Nor has it reached many employees who have been turned off learning since leaving school at the first opportunity.

The Training Challenge

Although there has been an increase in workplace training in recent years there are still major inequalities in the distribution of learning opportunities and the possession of qualifications. The more education you have had the greater chance of further training. Whilst a quarter of those with degrees participated in training in the preceding weeks of the Labour Force Survey only 4 % of those without any qualifications did (DfEE, 2000). The link with earnings is equally stark. Participation is twice as great for those in the top earnings quartile as opposed to the lowest quartile. The British education system is thus very polarised. Over a third of young people are educated to degree level and it is planned that as many a half of people up to the age of 30 will benefit from higher education by 2010. At the lower end of labour market however, almost one in five adults fall below the level of literacy and numeracy expected of an 11 year old. This is not just a blight on individuals; it results in an annual

loss of £10bn. to the economy. Furthermore, merely 55% of the workforce are qualified to level 2 and above compared to Germany with over 80% at this level.

It is seductive but over simplistic to think that the relatively narrow training needs of employers will coincide with all the life long learning requirements of their employees or will meet the wide needs of the state, including enhanced productivity across all sectors and social inclusion. Too many employers would sooner poach than train staff and contribute to the pool of skills required by the economy as a whole. Many employers also see little incentive to train their workforce in transferable skills leading to national vocational qualifications. Employees however require such qualifications to provide transparency and recognition of their skills as they progress through their careers. The challenge is to reconcile these conflicting demands.

Employer Incentives

One way to do this is to provide incentives for employers with little capacity to train their workforce up to vocational level 2 and above. An equally important challenge is to meet these workers' more general needs such as basic skills and ICT under the umbrella of employee development. This requires interventions by the state as well as more responsibility from employers for the development of their workforce and a more formal role for trade unions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer as part of his Productivity Initiative has asked the TUC and the CBI to recommend measures on how training activity can be increased, particularly for those in the workforce with no or low qualifications. The resulting joint TUC CBI report proposed the introduction of employer training tax credits to assist employers to train their workforce up to level 2. Qualifying costs under such a tax credit would cover training needs analysis, assessment and also replacement costs in

the case of small organisations with low capacity. Such a tax credit would also cover costs in supporting employees' improvement in basic skills including their running of such courses in work-based learning centres. The report identified the lack of small company involvement in the Investors in People standard which provides a framework for organisations to maximise their training in relation to their business objectives. The TUC CBI report thus recommended a tax credit for small organisations to cover costs related to developing a training strategy and the IIP assessment.

The question which needs to be addressed is what is needed in addition if these fiscal measures together with improvements to the supply side do not incentivise employers sufficiently and

the Learning and Skills Council's targets for workforce development are not being met. The TUC and its unions have for many years argued that where there is market failure in training then there must be some statutory intervention by the state. The CBI would be opposed in principle to such regulation although some major employers are beginning to recognise the limits of a predominantly vol-

The Enhanced Role of Unions

An important factor in the drive for increased learning and skills is the involvement of unions. There has always been a long and strong tradition of craft unions being involved over decisions on apprentice training and white collar unions promoting continuous professional development. Over the last decade however many more unions have been involved in raising the skills levels and broadening the learning opportunities of all their members including those with low skills. Both UNISON's "Return to Learn" and the FORD EDAP schemes are exemplars of this activity. The TUC and many of the former TECs

The Union Learning Representative

With the election of the Labour Government came formal recognition of the role of unions through the establishment of the Union Learning Fund. It also heralded the end of employer hegemony over training policy with the replacement of the TECs by the Learning and Skills Council whose Vice Chair is the TUC General Secretary. The Union Learning Fund set up by David Blunkett has established many innovative union-led projects to increase learning opportunities for employees. The vast majority of these have involved union capacity building on learning. A central feature of this activity has been the training of union learning representatives (TUC, 2001). The key roles undertaken by learning representatives are promoting the value of learning, offering learning information, advice and guidance to their members and negotiating learning opportunities with employers.

Evidence suggests that union learning representatives are the most effective at reaching the lowest skilled workers and those who are the most disadvantaged in accessing training opportunities, such as part-time workers,

untary system in generating sufficient skills which is resulting are acute shortages in some key sectors. Significantly, the Government has indicated its willingness to introduce statutory machinery where employers and unions in an industrial sector jointly request it.

formed *Bargaining for Skills* regional projects to raise the awareness of unions at the workplace to TEC targets such as NVQs and IIP. The projects provided unions with practical support to work with employers to help achieve the targets. The outcomes were significant given the limited funding but the activity narrowly prescribed by the TEC targets. They did however show how unions could work with employer controlled bodies within the structures of an entirely voluntary system.

those on fixed contracts and shift workers. Uniquely, they have the trust of their members and can help identify their needs particularly in sensitive areas such as literacy and numeracy. They can also add value to employers' efforts to develop their workforce and provide a source of expertise and act as a catalyst to action on training in organisations which have a weak training culture. A survey carried out by York Consulting of the first 2,000 learning representatives revealed that they had promoted learning opportunities to 178,000 people (York Consulting, 2000). Over 3,000 union learning representatives have now been trained since the establishment of the Union Learning Fund. The vast majority of them have gone on bespoke TUC courses accredited through the Open College Network. Some have even gone the extra mile and done additional units such as in advice and guidance, learning needs analysis and NVQ assessment.

The Need for Statutory Recognition

Union learning representatives do not however currently enjoy the same rights as other workplace union representatives such as health and safety representatives. According to an evaluation for the DfES by York Consulting, there is strong evidence that this lack of recognition is minimising their effectiveness. Eight out of ten learning representatives face some sort of barrier in carrying out their activities. Learning representatives lack time to carry out duties and lack support from employers. The same evaluation found that a third of current learning representatives did not get any paid time off to train for their role, and less than a half received paid time off to carry out their duties. Unions are already beginning to exhaust the number of employers who are prepared to voluntarily sign up to supporting union learning representatives through providing them with time off. Unions are now achieving only a half of their targets for recruiting and training such representatives. There is thus a real danger that the number of learning representatives will reach a plateau under the present "grace and favour" arrangements, reaching no more than a total of 5,000 by 2010. This compares with the 250,000 health and safety representatives at the workplace. As many as 14,000 new health and safety representatives are trained each year as a result of well established rights to paid time off for such training. With the introduction of statutory support, as many as 22,000 learning representatives could be trained within the decade, potentially helping as many as half a million employees into

learning over this period. All the evidence points to the fact that the productivity benefits of a better trained workforce will greatly outstrip employer costs of providing time off and Exchequer costs of funding the union training. At a minimum they will be twice as much as costs, and they could outstrip them by as much as a factor of 30 or more (DfES 2001).

The Government in its last Manifesto recognised the need to put these representatives on a statutory footing. A consultation paper has been issued and legislation is planned for the autumn. Although there has been wide support for such measures outside as well as inside the union movement, there has been resistance from the CBI who still cling on to the principle of employer hegemony over training matters at workplace. Whilst the CBI accept that union learning representatives can add value, their view is that such representatives should only be recognised with the employer's agreement when the rights to paid time off would only then kick in. The TUC and its unions however have argued strongly that in recognised workplaces unions should have the right to appoint such representatives and those employers must recognise and support them, as they do in the case of union representatives in general.

Bargaining for a Well Trained Workforce

The legislation will not extend negotiating rights over training to unions in recognised workplaces like rights to collective bargaining over pay and conditions. The TUC has however long argued that putting training on the bargaining table would increase the amount of provision, broaden its scope and result in a fairer distribution of learning opportunities. Such negotiations could lead to more training agreements on developing the workforce, including arrangements for paid educational leave. At present union representatives are not even able to share information over training in 43% of workplaces (Cully et al 1999). All this will soon change. There could soon be an obligation on employers to share informa-

tion and to consult with unions on training. Unions that have achieved workplace recognition under the Employment Relations Act 1999 already have this right. This is likely to extend to all recognised workplaces with 50 or more employees on the Government's implementation of the EC Directive on Information and Consultation. Establishing consultation/ negotiating rights over training could underpin any future statutory obligation on employers to train their workforce just as employers are obliged under health and safety legislation to ensure that the workplace is safe for their workforce.

Unions are playing an increasingly important role in both driving up the skills of the workforce and widening access to them. Strengthening their role through statutory support and

recognition can ensure that this quiet revolution is extended to all unionised workplaces.

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Experiences with “Transparency of competences” in three European countries

Exemplo Team (DE, UK, FI)

With national levels of VET development, documentation and validation of both non-formal and informal learning processes being rather inhomogeneous – as has also been evidenced by the country-reports submitted by the exemplo partners – the requirements formulated with respect to the exemplo toolkit, accordingly, differ widely from each other: While within the outcome-oriented educational system of the United Kingdom, e.g., the interest lies primarily in the formative aspect of certifi-

cation tools, in more learning-process oriented countries like Germany the emphasis is being placed in particular on the documentation of the transfer of learning, notably of continuing education results gained in formal settings, into the workplace. Taking the “Transparency of competences” as an example, in the following it will be shown how a certification instrument may cater for such variety of demands.

Documentation of on-the-job learning subsequent to organised training

The “Transparency of competences”, an instrument contained in the exemplo toolkit, evolved from a concept for the development of a practice-oriented certification tool which was devised within the framework of the BIBB-launched pilot project “Transparenz beruflicher Qualifikationen TbQ” (transparency of vocational qualifications) and envisages the combination of self-evaluation and evaluation by others. The model serves the documentation of on-the-job learning results gained informally subsequent to organised continuing training with the focus lying on two central aspects: a) Transfer securing: Which of the learning contents appropriated by the seminar participant can actually be transferred into the concrete work practice? b) Practicability: How should a documenta-

tion tool be devised to provide for maximum simplicity of use, on the one hand and preciseness as regards the evaluation steps so as to be sufficiently valid for implementation at the workplace, on the other? In the course of testing by European partners under the exemplo project the instrument was subjected to modifications: According to some partners’ demands to place greater emphasis to the formative aspect some requirements were added: c) Learning process control: How could the learning process be facilitated by the employment of a formative certification tool? d) Documentation of “on-the-job-training” results: Is the practice-oriented certification tool also appropriate for documenting competences acquired informally at the workplace?

Sequence of steps of the practice-oriented certification procedure

The practice-oriented certification procedure as developed under the TbQ pilot project starts in the framework of the continuing education seminar and ends with the issue of a certificate signed by both the employer and the educational provider: While attending work-related continuing

education seminars organised by an educational institution the participants are supposed to draw up with reference to the seminar contents a transfer list of goals to be transferred into their own work practice. The goals which are defined as practical

activities will lay at the basis of the certification to follow.

During a working phase of 4–12 weeks following the seminar the learners are encouraged to integrate the seminar topics into the work practice. In doing so they will be supported by the transfer list or the educational institution, if need be. That phase will involve an ongoing process of self-evaluation with the learners entering tasks and activities, as well as skills and knowledge acquired such way into a form at regular terms.

Ongoing self-control as concerns the extent to which learning contents have been transferred into the work practice requires from the participants a high degree of both discernment and discipline. Considering various self-assessment-based procedures it cannot be excluded that “individuals tend towards distorted (and, as it were, all too positive) self-assessment” (Moser, K. in Schuler, H. (ed.), 2004, page 83). Hence, one has to be aware of the participants miscalculating the share of seminar contents that have actually been implemented in their work practice contending achievement of goals beyond the actual degree as they would take both their individual objectives and the seminar goals as the yardstick.

However, the procedure provides for control mechanisms to prevent that by involving representatives of both the employer and the educational provider in the evaluation process the following way: At the beginning of the working phase, the educational provider will inform the employer on the documentation procedure to be adopted whereupon a staff member will be designated to coach the learner and to evaluate the learning transfer with a view to the issue of a certificate. Who exactly is going to act as an internal coach will depend on the size and structure of the enterprise although it is crucial that the person be closely familiar with the participant’s tasks so as to be able to monitor the transfer process and to assess the extent of successful transfer. Ideally, this role will be delegated to the line manager who, in turn, will coordinate this task jointly with the staff manager. In small-sized enterprises – which, as a rule, do neither have a staff department nor separate divisions –

coaching of the transfer process might be delegated to any experienced fellow-worker by the owner.

The internal coach’s task is to contribute to the formulation of the certificate contents by continuously assessing which goals have been achieved, and which competences have been acquired in practice. Evaluation of learning processes will be based upon the form, the learner’s own records from the practical phase and the coach’s observations. Objectives that have neither been tackled nor achieved will be crossed out so that they will not show up in the revised transfer list which will finally lay at the basis for the issue of the certificate. Thus, the internal coach exerts an essential control function ensuring that the certificate lists only those activities that the participant has successfully implemented in the work practice.

In order to keep control of the procedure and to ensure its validity it is envisaged to involve the educational institution as a service centre that would accompany the transfer process in close cooperation with the responsible staff-member (with the moment of entry and the intensity depending both on the individual model and on bilateral agreement). However, the educational provider will in any case be responsible for the issue of the certificate. The certificate will be issued on the basis of the transfer minutes drawn up by the participant and evaluated by the employer whereupon it will be signed by both the employer and the educational provider. Since the responsible staff-member’s statement is decisive when it comes to the assessment of the degree of successfully implemented learning contents in the work practice cases of doubt have to be settled prior to the issue of the certificate between the educational institution and the employer’s representative. The certificate contains the concrete listing and description of activities actually appropriated.

In the course of implementation in practice it has been shown that

- the procedure is easy to handle;
- the learners are closely involved in the documentation of learning processes;

- in addition to self-evaluation, on-the-job evaluation-by-others is taking place (validity assurance);
- compared to conventional seminars, the educational institution's scope of duties is expanded covering also the transfer of learning into the work place;
- the procedure is completed by the issue of individual certificates describing the actual working activity, i.e. measuring the effective continuing education transfer;
- the extent to which the employer takes part in the procedure is calculable and not too time-consuming. The enterprise's participation in the certification process enhances acceptance as against traditional certificates since there is a considerably stronger link to the work context.

Piloting of the certification procedure in the hotel business

Within the framework of the pilot project "Transparenz beruflicher Qualifikationen TbQ" the instrument was subjected to tests in the hotel trade, a sector characterised by extraordinarily high fluctuations of employees (Ebbrecht 2003, p. 55). Higher transparency as regards the actual level of qualifications is therefore essential for both the employer and the employees. However, this is not always simple: Essentially merely confirming participation the certificates issued in this sector, rather than to fully cover the qualifications acquired, would describe skills and knowledge actually gained in a highly abstract manner. As continuing education in this sector is practice-oriented and strongly depending on demand it seems reasonable that subsequent to formal learning processes non-formal learning were identified, as well. The piloting phase is in particular directed at imparting "soft" qualifications and their transfer into the work practice. From a number of seminar contents the field of complaint management was selected.

Experience and responses:

- Comments on the tool were most positive. Apart from the instrument's ability to document actual professional skills the participants appreciated its overall conception as a process that would acknowledge their professional efforts.

"At last, someone cares about what we really do and know", as one of the participants put it.

- The organisers of the continuing education programmes, too, realised the potentials inherent in the tool. On the one hand, they explicitly welcomed the establishment of a closer link between theory and practice and on the other hand, they appreciated the procedure as a rare opportunity to subject an educational institution's offers to systematic transfer evaluation thus ensuring the success of continuing education at the transfer level. This might open new ways for certification to become an instrument for quality assurance in continuing education.
- The employers are mainly interested in the aspect of education controlling which is also supported by the instrument.

Piloting of the "Transparency of competences" tool under the exemplo project was extended to other target groups and other sectors, as well as carried through against the background of different educational systems. In addition to the experience described above, two other aspects should be underlined:

The Finnish experience:

Preparation of informal learning in organised learning settings

Implementation of the seminar contents in the working environment is possible only if the employee, after completion of organised continuing education, continues learning in an informal setting on the job.

Largely on his / her own he / she will have to

- decide which of the learning contents are relevant to his / her scope of tasks

- integrate the newly acquired contents into the organisational context of the job environment
- relate general insights to concrete requirements of the workplace
- develop problem solution competence.

In the exemplo partner country Finland, the procedure was employed in a number of study courses in non-formal adult education with the emphasis being placed in particular on the preparation of informal learning processes in an organised con-

text. It proved to be helpful that from the very beginning learning in the framework of continuing education seminars was organised with a view to facilitate the development process at the workplace and to create the basis of ongoing self-evaluation at that early stage. Thus, prompting the learners to consequently reflect their working practice when pursuing the seminar goals, as well as to develop an awareness of informal learning processes made sure that the seminar contents could successfully be implemented in the work practice.

The UK experience: documentation of on-the job training results

Regarding the experience gained in a SME operating in the engineering sector in the UK it can be said that the procedure may also be transferred to informal learning processes that are independent from organised continuing education measures. In the given case, employees interested in participation were handed out a competence list based upon *their job description* which they were to process according to the steps described above – collection and reporting of vocational skills, self-assessment and assessment by the coach, as well as formulation of the certificate. In this case, too, an individual certificate was issued upon the agreement of trainers, employees and internal coaches.

Résumé:

Innovation transfer to other countries, sectors and target groups by a procedure developed within a pilot project is not a one-way street. The experience gained by European partners indeed had an effect to the procedure adopted in Germany: The certification tools were developed further in cooperation with educational experts from Germany and the exemplo partner countries with the emphasis being put on the formative aspect as well as on the possibility of assessing informally acquired competences on the basis of job descriptions.

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Part III

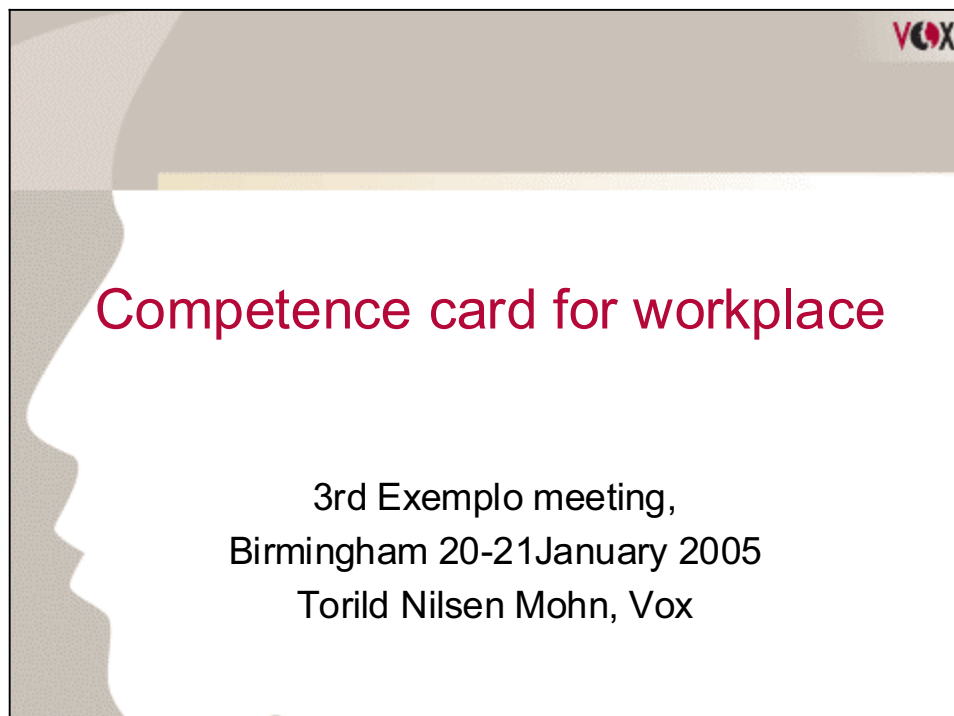
Instruments and Guidelines

- **Tool: Competence Card for workplace**
- **Tool: Transparency of Competences**
- **Tool: Planning, instructing, evaluating and building skills development at companies**
- **Guidelines for Training Consultants**



Tool:

Competence Card for Workplace



The central focus of the method is on measuring/characterising/describing

- *personal competence* (tendency of a person to act reflectively and in a self-organised manner)
- *activity and implementation-related competence* (tendency of a person to act in a proactively and overall self-organised manner)
- *professional–methodological competence* (tendency of a person to act in an intellectually and physically self-organised manner to solve methodological problems)
- *social–communicative competence* (tendency to communicate and cooperate with others in order to act in a self-organised manner)

The method

- A subjective measuring tool (self-assessment)
- Qualitative competence research
- Focus primarily on the immediate or actual level of competence
- The method is usable for SMEs.
- The method is internationally applicable.

Key words describing the instrument

- a) Process Guidance
- b) Format for description of skills and competences from working place, divided into: working areas, responsibilities, professional skills needed, capability, social skills, management skills
- c) Format for individual CV
- d) Guidance for filling in the formats
- e) Examples of final results
- f) Database for searching internally in company

Objectives of the instrument

- For the individual: for better self-awareness, for getting documentation of knowledge and skills, for tailored training, for visualising tacit skills and knowledge
- For the company: for better overview of the human resources, for competence development strategy

Steps involved in the measuring process

- Clarification of the status of the company
- Agreement of “why”, “how” and “who”
- Information to all involved
- Individual guidance
- Filling in formats in individually/working groups
- Dialogue manager-employee
- Signed documentation
- To be continued.....

Consideration of the independence

- The instrument is independent of specific enterprise cultures; it is possible to adapt the format to the specific need for the company
- The instrument is independent of national vocational training systems, but the documentation could be used in the validation of non-formal and informal learning process in the vocational education system

European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning- **individual entitlements**



“The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should, in principle, be a voluntary matter for the individual. There should be equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals. [...] The privacy and rights of the individual are to be respected.”

- The principle of voluntary participation in validation processes is vital in Norway. The social partners are deeply involved in most activities in companies. We have seen that good information about the benefits for the individual and anchoring of the process is necessary.
- The results of the validation process are the property of the individual, but the stakeholders maintained that in the working life most employers would demand access to validation results carried out in the enterprises. It is only dedicated persons who have access to the information in the instrument.

Obligations of stakeholders



“Stakeholders should establish, in accordance with their rights, responsibilities and competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These should include appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Stakeholders should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.”

- A process guidance is a part of the instrument. The process guidance is a step by step recommendation of how to carry through the mapping and documentation procedure. In the development of the instrument all stakeholders were involved at different levels.

Confidence and trust

“The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and [...] underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.”

- The methodology must be presented and understood by the participants in the validation process, and this underscores the need for proper guidance. Costs and use of resources designed for validation purposes are important for the working life, in addition to trust in the usefulness of validation for the individual as well as the employer.

Credibility and legitimacy

“Systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests [...] ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders [...]. The process of assessment should be impartial and mechanisms should be put in place to avoid any conflict of interest [...]. The professional competence of those who carry out assessment should also be assured.”

- In Norway we have enjoyed an active co-operation of all parties involved, and there is a need for further co-operation and commitment. The usefulness and benefits of validation of prior learning will provide credibility for a system of validation.

CV - Curriculum Vitae

Personal data:			
Surname	First name:	Gender:	
Address:		Mother tongue:	
Post code:	Town/community:	E-mail :	
Date of birth:	Tel. work:	Tel. private:	Mobile:
Present job/position:	Present employer:	1 st year in position	% of full time employment

Work experience					
Employer	Position	Period from – to	%	Areas of responsibility	Encl. No..
		–	%		
		–	%		
		–	%		
		–	%		
		–	%		
		–	%		

Education			
School/course	Trade/profession	Completed year	Encl. No.

Valid licences – publicly approved certificates:			
Name of licence	Specification of what the licence contains	Valid from – to	Encl. No.
		–	
		–	
		–	
		–	
		–	

Competence card for workplace

Personal data			
Surname:		First name:	Date of birth:
Job/Position	Employer	% of full-time employment	1 st year in position

Main areas of work responsibility	Closer descriptions of responsibilities

Specification of professional skills needed to carry out main responsibilities		Level
Knowledge of trade		
Skills within trade/ profession / areas of responsibility		
Organising of work		
Development of products/ services		
Quality control		
Computer software skills		
Finance/ economy		
Language skills		
Level A = Carries out elementary tasks under supervision Level B = Works independently within own area of responsibility		Level C = May hold professional responsibility, may council and advise Level D = Has a very good insight in subject area of profession, may be in charge of development on own workplace

Specification of professional capability		Level
Marketing skills		
Technical skills		
Other professional skills		

Specification of social and personal skills		Level
Cooperation and communication		
Effort and quality of work		
Customer service		
Initiative -flexibility – creativity		
Work related to restructuring – acquisition /use of new knowledge		

Specification of management skills in position		Level
Staff and labour management		
Training and instruction		
Goal and result-oriented work – making decisions		
Motivating skills		
Level A = Carries out elementary tasks under supervision Level B = Works independently within own area of responsibility	Level C = May hold professional responsibility, may council and advise Level D = Has a very good insight in subject area of profession, may be in charge of development on own workplace	

Additional information – other skills

Place:	Date:	Signature of employee:
Place:	Date:	Signature on behalf of business/company:

Tool:

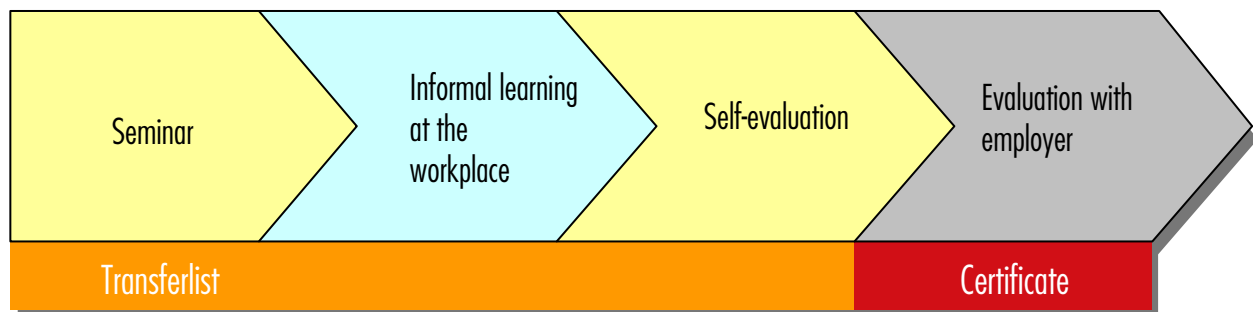
Transparency of Competences (TC)

Activity-oriented certificates in further training

How often does it happen that somebody gets a certificate for further training, which he/she cannot put to use because the documented abilities do not indicate how they can be transferred into work experience?

And how often does it happen that further training is not transferred into the context of work, since links for transfer cannot be found, or because routine is an obstacle?

Within the pilot project „Transparency of vocational competences for deployment in SMEs“¹ a new way is tested: a certification process that promotes and documents the transfer of training content into practice. With this method learners obtain confirmation of the activities that they master in their occupational practice. The content of these certificates is derived from vocational activities and is independent from the form of learning, that is to say, a course will be certified in the same manner as learning at work.



¹ Project funding body: Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung (f-bb) gGmbH, Ursula Krings. Research assistance: Büro für Qualifikationsforschung (BFQ), Christiane Koch. The pilot project ran from June 2002 until May 2006. It was sponsored by the BMBF and professionally accompanied by the BIBB.

The TC-process

Designing a transfer list	Within the context of vocational training, participants develop a transfer list of the training content to include targets of its application in their work practice. Objectives are to be formulated in the form of descriptions of practical activities. Such descriptions build the basis for the subsequent certification.
(Self-)reliance for transfer	During the following working period, participants commit themselves to utilise training themes in their everyday work. This is supported by the transfer list from the course.
Self-evaluation	Continuous self-evaluation takes place: participants note tasks, activities, and the newly transferred learning content on a form sheet.
Assessing the achievement of objectives	Whether the objectives were met will be assessed on the basis of the form sheet and other notes/observations from the practice period. This assessment will take place at the end of a transfer period of several weeks, which can be internally supported (through managers or experienced colleagues). Objectives that were not addressed or unsuccessfully attempted will be cancelled and do not appear in the finalised certificate.
Support by the training provider in formulating the certificate	In order to support and validate this process, the training provider starts to be engaged as a service point, according to bilateral negotiations. Its function is to request the transfer evaluation forms of the participants and to propose a draft certificate that includes an activity orientated description of the achieved learning/training objectives.
Issuing the agreed certificate	The finalised certificate will then be issued by the training provider as well as signed by the employer. Those activities that have been learnt and mastered in practice will be described in detail and listed in the certificate.

The Transparency of competences instruments documented as follows illustrate the process of transfer of competences from an organised training to the workplace and the process of generating certificates based on the example of a seminar in the tourism sector: Subject of this seminar is “Dealing with complaints”.

The TC-Instruments

1. Transfer list for course contents

You should formulate targets below for the transfer of the course content into your own work practice.

Please answer the following questions while creating the list.

Delete certain propositions as appropriate or supplement further targets.

Questions for self-assessment:

What am I *not* able to do?

What difficulties occur?

What do I have to learn?

What do I need to consider?

What is difficult for me?

What are my deficits?

Personality aspects:

I would like to

- improve on coping with stress
- keep patience
- feel not personally offended
- have the right attitude: to search for solutions instead of being right
- take on positive formulations
-

Behavioural-/conversational techniques:

I would like to

- react adequately towards a complaint
- take a customer and his/her concerns seriously
- show understanding of the problem
- shift the conversation in a positive direction
- assess the significance of complaints
- make suggestions for solutions and decisions
- thank customers for the possibility of improvement
- acknowledge complaints as a chance for improvement
-

Please keep on utilising your transfer list at your work place.

Try to apply your targets towards your work.

Vary routines, try also something new!

Do not be discouraged by a failure.

Please fill in your outcomes in the activity report.

2. Transfer minutes

Implementation of vocational training contents “*Dealing with complaints*“.

Period of implementation: 3 months

task to put into practice	February 2005	March 2005	April 2005	outcome
1. basics				
dealing with complaints and their causes				
preparing possibilities for solutions				
complaint stimulation				
review of complaints				
optimisation of internal reactions to complaints				
forwarding insights to colleagues				
prevention of complaints				
2. personality aspects				
self-analysis				
self-assessment/ -improvement				
separating factual level and emotional level				
maintaining positive charisma				
3. behaviour/ conversation techniques				
developing possibilities to react				
correct acceptance of a complaint				
defusing challenging situations				
excluding internal problems /causes				
conveying competence/ competent action				
positive termination of conversations				

3. A “Transparency of competences” - certificate



Dealing with Complaints

The activities listed below were successfully transferred into the work place:

Basics

- Knowledge of complaints and their causes
- Knowledge of the problem of a factual and emotional level
- Expectations of a customer
- Recognising consequences/ effects of complaints
- Acknowledging complaints as chance for improvements

Personality aspects

- Coping with stress
- Keeping the inner balance
- Feeling not personally offended
- The right attitude: searching for solutions instead of being right
- Using positive formulations

Behavioural/conversational techniques

- Right reactions towards complaints / correct acceptance of complaints
- Taking the customer and his/her concerns seriously
- Showing understanding for the problem
- Shifting the conversation in a positive direction
- Assessing the significance of complaints
- Searching for solutions / making propositions for solutions and making decisions
- Thanking customers for the possibility of improvements
- Forwarding complaints to the people in charge

Supplements for further activities:

.....

.....

.....

.....



Tool:

**Planning, instructing, evaluating
and building skills development at
companies**

I. Planning, instructing, evaluating and building skills development at companies:

Step-by-step

The following presents an overview of the individual phases of the skills development process at a company.

The respective checklist or form that supports the process in each phase is listed in the right column. (⇒ II.)

Phase		Tool(s)
1	<p>Analyse the future skills needs of the company and of individual areas</p> <p>Correspondingly determine learning aims for teams and individuals</p>	<p>Checklist 1: SWOT analysis</p>
2	<p>Determine the current status of competences. Further training needs analysis "Who needs training in what?"</p>	<p>Checklist 2: Training Needs Analysis Grid</p>
2.1	<p>Procedure:</p> <p>Break down the work (of the group) into individual activities: Task analysis Method: Observation, discussion. Define key points, record necessary equipment/requirements for each work step</p>	<p>2A: Task analysis</p>
2.2	<p>Find out: <i>How well can what person / the team as a whole perform the individual tasks at present?</i> Enter in the grid (scale, e.g. 0-4)</p>	<p>2B: Skills analysis: status quo</p>
2.3	<p>Determine what level is aimed for by whom each time</p>	
2.4	<p>Estimate the gap between the required level to perform the tasks and the status quo. Determine the main emphases of the individual training needs, taking into account the frequency and importance of the tasks to be performed.</p>	<p>2C: Skills development needs</p>
3	<p>Identify suitable and suitably challenging learning aims and tasks; plan and implement training</p>	<p>Checklist 3: Training plan</p>
3.1	<p>Design a training plan: Who is to train whom – in what and when?</p> <p>Who? In SMEs: group leaders, experienced coworkers who may have more knowledge in special areas than group leaders; instructors, however, need training themselves (⇒ checklist 5)</p>	<p>- For the team - Individual training plan</p>

<p>3.2 Design of the training</p> <p>3.3. Deliver the training</p>	<p>Whom? Inclusion and communication with the learners when agreeing upon learning aims and skills to be acquired:</p> <p>What? –</p> <p>When? Coordinate learning with the requirements of the work routine at the company, workplace</p> <p>Estimate and monitor the cost of the training measures!</p> <p>Starting point: Determine what each individual should be able to do after the training. It is important not to simply define testable knowledge as a training success, but to include practical know-how at work in the evaluation (behavioural objectives whose attainment can be observed and measured).</p> <p>Based on the breakdown of jobs into individual (sub-)tasks, a form is created for each work (sub-)task that shows the activities to be performed, the crucial points, the corresponding basic knowledge and the respective quality criteria for good work and gives a visual picture of them through sketches or photos.</p> <p>Instruction of employees at the workplace by experienced coworkers or other company instructors.</p>	<p>Checklist 4: Standard Operation Sheet</p> <p>Checklist 5: Tasks of Instructors</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Documentation and monitoring of learning progress</p> <p>Learning success is checked – when the learning success can be measured in number of pieces or time, for example, by learning success curves of visualisation and motivation.</p> <p>Trainees keep a log of their progress themselves.</p> <p>On the form for recording progress in skills development, the determined progress is documented by the trainee and the trainer and signed by both.</p>	<p>Checklist 6: Form for recording progress in skills development</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Final evaluation – showing future possibilities and needs for further development</p> <p>Overview of learning progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self-evaluation by the learners and assessment whether the contents and form of the training have benefited them, whether they can implement what they have learned at their workplace etc. - Assessment by the instructors <p>The <i>Skills Matrix</i>, a simplified version of the Training Needs Analysis Grid, is publicised and gives an overview of who is currently able to perform what tasks.</p> <p>It is important to update the documented training status of the individuals / the group at regular intervals and above all to show future possibilities for further development. Recognition of skills development with (in-house) certificates etc. increases motivation.</p>	<p>Checklist 7: Skills Matrix</p>

**II. Planning, instructing, evaluating and building skills development at companies:
Checklists and forms to support the process**

Checklist 1: What competences will the company need in the future?	1
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Answering the following questions helps companies to understand their own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in relation to future challenges.

This basis can be used to determine the training needs of the company and its staff for future challenges and to agree upon corresponding training aims and contents.

	<i>Here we know:</i>	<i>Here we do not know enough yet: further information needs</i>
Where will the company be in five years, how will it be positioned in the market?		
What will have changed in comparison to today?		
Will the company expand or rather shrink?		
(How) will the structure of the company change?		
(How) will the ownership structure of the company change?		
What will change in respect to international business activity and globalisation?		
How and in what respect will the markets change to which the business activity of the company is oriented?		
How and in what direction will the products and services offered by the company develop?		
What production technologies and processes will probably change?		
How many old, reliable executives will the company still be able to fall back on?		
What changes in the staff structure are expected?		
What basic external conditions of the company business activities such as e.g. legal regulations, quality criteria, standards and certificates will change in a foreseeable way?		

**Checklist 2: Training Needs Analysis Grid -
2 A: Who does what work tasks?**

2A

1st step: Work(place) analysis: Breakdown of the activities at the workplace into individual work steps and tasks

2nd step: Determine what tasks each employee (in the team) has to perform in his or her work

Note: The Training Needs Analysis Grid is completed in the following steps!

Example:

Tasks Name	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task n	Notes
<i>Johnny Walker</i>							
<i>Francois Hardy</i>							
<i>Karol Walesa</i>							
<i>Johan Johansson</i>							
<i>Umberto Sico</i>							
<i>Mark Mustermann</i>							
<i>Michel Michelsen</i>							

For example

The work of warehouse workers could be broken down into the tasks of folding, assembling, packing, storing, outgoing goods / consignment sales ... and possibly further tasks as well.

**Checklist 2: Training Needs Analysis Grid -
2 B: Who can do what task(s) how well?**

2B

3rd step: Determine what and how many tasks each individual can do how well and how many employees in the group are able to perform the individual tasks.

Important: Supplement self-evaluation with external evaluation, e.g. by group leaders.

Tasks Name	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task n	Notes
<i>Johnny Walker</i>							
<i>Francois Hardy</i>							
<i>Karol Walesa</i>							
<i>Johan Johansson</i>							
<i>Umberto Sico</i>							
<i>Mark Mustermann</i>							
<i>Michel Michelsen</i>							
Actual: Employees performing the task	5	5	6	4	6		



= cannot do the task well, training necessary / planned



= can do the task with supervision



= can do the task almost completely














= can do the task completely; can supervise others

**Checklist 2: Training Needs Analysis Grid -
2 C: Who has what skills development needs?**

2C

4th step: Determine skills needs of the group / of individuals.

Note: Best done by group leader, involvement of the team important.
Everybody does not have to be able to do everything - and not all tasks are equally important!

Tasks	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task n	Notes
Name							
<i>Johnny Walker</i>							
<i>Francois Hardy</i>							
<i>Karol Walesa</i>							
...							
<i>Actual:</i> Employees performing the task	5	5	6	4	6		
<i>Target:</i> Number of employees who <i>should</i> be able to do the task							
Difference = training needs)							
Difficulty							1 to 5
Frequency	Daily	Weekly	Weekly	Monthly	Daily		

– An example from the area of occupational safety:

	Job – e.g. <i>replace belt</i>	Area – e.g. machine XYZ	Written by N.N.		Date
No.	Major step(s)	Key point	Reason for key point - Safety - Quality	Underpinning knowledge	Sketch or photo
1	Check that the power is off	Isolation sign in place	Electrical danger	Basic electrical safety	
2	Remove cover and place aside	Check for damage	Bent cover can damage belt		
3	Remove old belt	Use no. 5 spanner	Use correctly-sized spanner to prevent damage/injury	Basic hand tool safety	
4	
<p>Personal protective equipment to be worn</p> <p>General</p> <p>Eye</p> <p>Ear</p> <p>Hand</p> <p>Nose/mouth</p>					

Checklist 5: Tasks of trainers / instructors**5**

Decide what occupational background knowledge is required for each workplace	
Coordinate training times and premises with the requirements of work routines at the company	
Make sure that all required training materials and aids are available	
Ensure that learners do not feel under pressure and learn without fear	
Activate previous knowledge and existing skills and abilities	
Arouse or support interest in learning	
Make the necessity of learning information in the proper context - of the workplace, factory, company – clear to the learners	
Demonstrate the work routine to be learned	
Demonstrate again the work routine to be learned and explain what is done step by step	
Perform the work routine together with the learners	
Have the learners perform the work independently	
Give the learners feedback and encourage them	
Allow the learners to practically implement what they have learned in order to test and practically experience the crucial points	
Ask the learners in order to ensure that they have correctly understood everything.	
Encourage the learners to ask questions.	
Determine, record and give a visual picture of the learning progress.	

Important: Give the learners sufficient opportunities to practically apply and check what they have learned!

Example of a form for recording progress in skills development

Employee: <i>Johnny Walker</i>		Job: <i>Unloading steel</i>		Area: <i>Goods inward</i>		
		<i>Insert date in the respective column</i>			Completion	
Competency	Instructed	Assisted	Competent to perform the task independently	Employee signature and date	Instructor signature and date	
Task						
Wear correct safety clothing						
Use crane controls correctly						
Carry out emergency stop on control						
....						

Important: Visualising progress is important for the learning process and the motivation of the learners.

Feedback should be given continuously by the trainer and within the group.

Some jobs are measurable in terms of time or output; in this case, learning progress can be displayed in the form of a learning curve.












Test pieces of work or other (written) material can also be used to document progress in skills development.

Individual training plan – an example

Name		Department / company division		Job, workplace, activity	
				Date completed	Notes

A Skills Matrix is a simplified version of the Training Needs Analysis. This makes the current ability of employees to perform individual jobs transparent and gives a visual picture of skills development needs. However, a Skills Matrix is only a momentary snapshot; it can only show specific needs for further development in relation to the *continuous skills development* of employees as a process.

- Important:**
- Determine and document *future* training needs as well
 - Document special abilities and skills of employees that have appeared in the course of training

Tasks	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task n	Notes
Name							
<i>Johnny Walker</i>							
<i>Francois Hardy</i>							
<i>Karol Walesa</i>							
...							
<i>Actual:</i> Employees performing the task	5	5	6	4	6		
<i>Target:</i> Number of employees who <i>should</i> be able to do the task							
<i>Difference</i> (= training needs)							

Guidelines for training consultants

Implementing competence assessment in SMEs

The procedure for introducing tools to survey and evaluate the skills of employees at SMEs is outlined in individual steps in the following.

Points that are especially decisive for success are emphasized as *important*.

A checklist in the Appendix helps you to keep track of and check the status of your work.

1st Step	Preparation: Informing, ensuring acceptance, establishing trust
<p><i>Goal of a skills survey</i></p>	<p>The detailed informing of all people involved –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • company management • people responsible for company further training • superiors • workforce – <p>should take place at the beginning. Everyone must be informed of the goal of the skills survey and the procedure of the used tool, and they must agree on the benefit of a skills survey. Clarity on the use of results and understandable, transparent evaluation methods establish a necessary basis for trust.</p>
<p><i>Views of companies and employees</i></p>	<p>The different viewpoints of the various sides must be included in the discussion and examined, in order to ensure that all people involved have the same understanding of the goal and results of the skills survey.</p> <p>While the <i>company</i> will be primarily concerned with a strategy to develop the skills of the workforce and with pursuing future-oriented strategies for human resources development, the focus of the <i>employees</i> will primarily be on developing their own skills and on their own professional advancement.</p> <p>Executives have to realise that skill surveying measures are not just aids for individual advancement or a means of improving résumés. Employees have to realise that skill evaluation measures do not focus on discovering the weaknesses of individual workers but on increasing the skills of the workforce.</p>
<p><i>Kick-off</i></p> <p><i>Definition</i></p> <p><i>Reason</i></p>	<p>Before a skill evaluation method is applied, it is recommended to hold a kick-off meeting.</p> <p>The invitation to such an event – posted on the bulletin board, sent as a circular or via e-mail/Intranet – can simultaneously provide initial preliminary information.</p> <p>In the framework of a kick-off meeting, detailed information can be provided on why a skills survey is necessary, and it can be made clear how each individual employee can profit from this.</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills – what are they? In contrast to report cards, professional degrees etc., skills are what a person really can do and knows: abilities acquired in the work process and in everyday life, which are not documented anywhere and therefore not known to anyone initially. Individual people are often unaware of everything that they are able to do. • Skills survey – why? Tools for surveying and possibly even evaluating skills document employees’ “real” abilities. The goal is to develop the skills of every individual person and to strategically orient human resources development to the future skill needs of the company.

<p><i>Necessity and benefit for employees</i></p> <p><i>Necessity and benefit for the company</i></p> <p><i>Developing skills for the future</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills surveys help you and others to realise everything you are able to do. - Abilities are recognized and documented. - Strengths and weaknesses are revealed and - Qualifications can be used to selectively correct weaknesses and increase existing strengths; unnecessary repetitions and double qualifications can be reduced - Your own self-confidence is increased when everything you can do is documented “black on white” - Employability is increased: A written record of your skills informs employers more easily and clearly about your own abilities - The company gains an overview of the actual skills of the workforce; “sleeping talents” and unused potentials are recognized - Strategies can be developed for skills that will be needed at the company in the future. <p>An important part of informing employees before using skill surveying tools is to explain the future skill needs of the company.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where do we stand? - In what direction do we want to develop? - Necessary (qualification) steps to attain the goal <p>Explaining the current company situation and the coming challenges make it easier to understand the resulting future requirements for employee skills. The fact that existing skills have to be surveyed to provide a basis for their selectively further development can be made clear against this background.</p>
<p><i>Explaining the procedure step by step</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills survey – how? The tool used at the company and the corresponding procedure are presented and explained step by step. <p><i>Examples from the employees’ own everyday work are used to explain the individual skills or skill dimensions that will be surveyed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Methodical</i> skills – are required, for example, when ... - <i>Social</i> skills – especially play a role when ... - <i>Staff</i> skills – are emphasized when the following tasks are performed, for example: ... - <i>Etc.</i> <p>The more vividly and practically you can link particular skills with specific activities of the employees’ work environment, the easier the skills survey will be!</p> <p>Examples of previously performed skills surveys and possibly evaluations as well (e.g. previously filled in skills survey forms of the tool used at the company) illustrate the procedure and can serve as a guide.</p>

<i>Explaining tasks and responsibilities</i>	Tasks and responsibilities that must be agreed upon in advance by the company (representatives), (representatives of the) employees and training consultants are disclosed. This is also an important contribution to the necessary basis for trust.
<i>Establishing a basis for trust</i>	Important: The establishment and maintenance of a reliable basis for trust among employees, superiors, company management and training providers is an essential prerequisite to obtain meaningful results from skills surveying and evaluation measures. Employees will only actively cooperate in a skills survey when there are reliable agreements on the use of the results.

2nd Step	Ensuring framework conditions
<i>Coordinating the skills survey with company procedures</i>	<p>Skills surveying measures must be adapted to work processes and routines at the company. Different and sometimes contradictory viewpoints must be reconciled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embedding the measures in work routines and connecting them to the workplaces of individual employees as closely as possible ensure the greatest possible informational value and authenticity of the results. - On the other hand, work processes and company routines should be disturbed as little as possible. - Finally, make sure that employees are not unduly burdened with additional tasks.
<p><i>Reaching agreements on</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Length</i> ▪ <i>Time</i> ▪ <i>Involved people</i> ▪ <i>Location</i> <p>▪ <i>Use of the results</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Voluntary involvement</i></p>	<p>In the “give and take” among these points of view, agreements must be reached on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What time frame is set for skills survey measures - When the measures are to be implemented: During working hours – at what time? Outside of working hours? - Who is to be involved – superiors, members of work groups etc. - Where necessary meetings etc. are to be held as part of the skills survey <p><i>Legal</i> questions also have to be clarified in advance – especially the question of whose <i>property</i> the results of the skills survey will be and who will decide on how the results are <i>used</i>. Clear agreements between the company and employees on the purposes for which the results will/should be used – and not used – greatly contribute to establishing trust. They play an important role in making employees more willing to be involved in the skills survey in an unbiased and committed way.</p> <p>Important: A skills survey should always be done on a voluntary basis. The voluntary willingness of employees to have their “non-objectively” documented skills determined is the prerequisite for a meaningful and “objective” result, especially with self-evaluation methods.</p>

<i>Clarification of tasks and responsibilities</i>	Before skill measurement methods are used, responsibilities must also be clarified among executives, employee representatives, people responsible for company further training, foremen and group leaders as well as external training specialists who supervise the process: Who is in charge of what parts of the process; who is responsible for success in each case?
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3rd Step	Supervising the process and supporting the application of the tool
<p><i>Support in each process phase</i></p> <p><i>Future skill needs</i></p> <p><i>Actual state of skills</i></p> <p><i>Skill development needs</i></p> <p><i>Planning and organising skills development</i></p>	<p>The use of tools to survey and evaluate the skills of employees requires support in all phases of the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determination of future skill needs based on strategic company goals - Analysis of strengths and weaknesses in relation to a future-oriented strategy for human resources development - Analysis of work tasks and the correspondingly required employee skills - Determination of the actual state of employee skills in relation to (future) skill needs - Determination of skill development needs at each workplace / in a work group / in a department / at the company - Drawing up of individual skill development plans - Organisation of possibilities for developing skills in the work process - Identification of learning opportunities in the work process - Organisation of further training opportunities close to the workplace, possibly also using ICT - Helping employees transfer knowledge and skills
<i>Analysis of work routines and the required skills</i>	<p>At the beginning of every skills survey, it is recommended to first consider the routines and individual activities of a perfectly normal work day at a particular workplace / in a work group and then to analyse the following together with the employees: What does the activity basically consist of, on what skill area does it focus etc. (e.g. planning activity, coordinating activity, contact with third parties etc.).</p> <p>The employees learn to observe their activities “from outside” – an important step for reflecting on their skills.</p>
<i>Determination of existing skills</i>	<p>Regardless of whether it is a tool for self-evaluation or not – in every case, employees will need support and supervision in the process of surveying their skills.</p> <p>The need for support, however, is especially intensive where employees are confronted with the task of determining and documenting their own skills. (⇒ Step 4)</p>

<p><i>Evaluation of the actual state of skills</i></p>	<p>In order to establish a basis to create selective skill development strategies, the actual state of employee skills must be compared with the requirements at the workplace and in the professional environment. The results of self-evaluations are assessed by third parties and/or the skill state is immediately evaluated “from outside” - by superiors or by “external people” such as e.g. training consultants.</p> <p>Important:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarity on how the results are used ▪ Avoid test situations and stress: the purpose is not to reveal gaps, weaknesses or deficits, but to identify strengths, develop them and close gaps. ▪ Transparency in the assessment procedure ▪ Understandable assessment criteria ▪ Involvement of employees in the evaluation ▪ Understandable and transparent evaluation
<p><i>Determination of future skill needs</i></p>	<p>Future tasks are studied based on an analysis of the current company situation and future challenges. The necessary skills are determined, in order to manage them competently. This is the basis for developing a future-oriented skill development strategy. (⇒(Step 5)</p>

4th Step	Helping employees to use the tool
<p><i>Knowledgeable support and contact people “on site”.</i></p> <p><i>Online support</i></p> <p><i>Use of the Intranet</i></p> <p><i>Identifying support needs</i></p>	<p>The amount of support required will be different according to the tool; there will also be differences among individual employees.</p> <p>Some employees may already have experience with similar skill surveying tools or procedures, while others will be confronted with the challenge of identifying and assessing (their own) skills for the first time. These employees will naturally require an especially large amount of support.</p> <p>Regardless of the individual need for support, however, each employee should be confident that knowledgeable support will be available at all times when needed, during the entire process. A competent contact person should be available “on site”, in the workplace environment; at the very least, a regular consultation should be scheduled.</p> <p>Online support, e.g. via e-mail, is an excellent way to support skills surveying processes. A company’s Intranet, if available, also provides a good platform for information, communication and cooperation during the surveying and development of employee skills.</p> <p>Important: Reliable support and feedback, as well as sometimes motivation etc., are decisively important for success, especially in the case of self-evaluation tools!</p> <p>Do not forget: People who need help will not ask for it!</p>

5th Step	Ensuring sustainability: Initiating and supervising skill development processes
<i>Ensuring continuity and sustainability</i>	<p><i>Important: Skills surveying is a process!</i></p> <p>The skills of the employees, the group, and the company are continuously developing – the surveying and conscious management of this process are what matters.</p> <p>A skills survey in the sense of a snapshot of the current status quo of existing skills is therefore not very practical. Only a constant continuation / repetition at regular intervals makes it possible to follow progress and identify further-development needs that are future-oriented and in line with demand. Human resources development and individual skill development thus require skills surveys to be continuously updated.</p> <p>This also includes the task of identifying or creating learning opportunities at the workplace together with superiors and employees. The more familiar employees and companies become with the relatively new tools and their use, the more smoothly this process will go.</p>

Checklist for training consultants

	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make oneself thoroughly familiar with the tool and the requirements for <i>one's own</i> skills; find help oneself and close knowledge gaps if necessary 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform all involved people about the goals and procedures of the skills survey 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarify the viewpoints of company management and employees 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invitation to kick-off meeting 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preliminary information 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare kick-off meeting: explanation of how to use the tool, examples etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hold kick-off meeting 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarify responsibilities 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreement on the use of the skills survey results between the company and the employees 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine the procedure and time frame for the skills survey in agreement with company management and employee representatives 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinate the skills survey with company routines 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the determination of future skill needs for strategic company goals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the analysis of work routines and the skills necessary for individual work steps 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the determination of the actual state of the skills of individual employees 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the determination of the actual state of the skills of work groups / teams 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the assessment of the actual state of skills 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guide and supervise the individual skill development planning of employees 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooperate in the strategic skill development planning at the company 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify skill development possibilities in the work process / at the workplace 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organise skill development possibilities in the work process / at the workplace 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure support for employees during the skills survey 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help to integrate continuous skill surveying processes in the corporate culture 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	

ANNEX

Glossary

accreditation (of programmes, institutions)

Process of accrediting an institution of education or training, a programme of study, or a service, showing it has been approved by the relevant legislative and professional authorities by having met predetermined standards. [EQF]

assessment

The sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how, skills and competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification. [EQF]

certificate/diploma

An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following a standard assessment procedure. [EQF]

certification (of knowledge, skills and competences)

The process of formally validating knowledge, know-how and/or skills and competences acquired by an individual, following a standard assessment procedure. Certificates or diplomas are issued by accredited awarding bodies. [EQF]

comparability of qualifications

The extent to which it is possible to establish equivalence between the level and content of formal qualifications (certificates or diplomas) at sectoral, regional, national or international levels. [EQF]

competence

Competence includes: i) cognitive competence involving the use of theory and con-

cepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially; ii) functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they are functioning in a given area of work, learning or social activity; iii) personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation; and iv) ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values. [TWG ECVET]

formal learning

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in a school / training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification. [EQF]

informal learning

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification. [EQF]

knowledge

The facts, feelings or experiences known by a person or a group of people [EQF]

learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do, or is able to demonstrate, after completion of any learning process or at the end of a period of learning. [TWG ECVET]

mobility

The ability of an individual to move and adapt to a new occupational environment. [CEDEFOP]

module

A self-contained, formally structured learning experience. It should have a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of competences to be obtained, and appropriate assessment criteria. [ECTS]

non formal learning

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It normally does not lead to certification. [EQF]

qualifications

Qualifications are a formal expression of knowledge, skills and wider competences of the individuals. They are recognised at local, national or sectoral level and, in certain cases, at international level.

A qualification is achieved when a competent body determines that an individual's learning has reached a specified standard of knowledge, skills and wider competences. The standard of learning outcomes is confirmed by means of an assessment process or the successful completion of a course of study. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through a programme of study and/or work place experience and/or any type of formal, non formal or informal learning pathway. A qualification confers official recognition of value in the labour market and in further education and training. A qualification can be a legal entitlement to practice a trade. [TWG ECVET]

recognition

a) *Formal recognition*: the process of granting official status to skills and competences either

-through the award of certificates or

-through the grant of equivalence, credit units, validation of gained skills and/or competences and/or

(b) *social recognition*: the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders. [EQF]

skill

The knowledge and experience needed to perform a specific task or job. [EQF]

transparency of qualification

The degree to which the value of qualifications can be identified and compared on the (sectoral, regional, national or international) labour and training markets. [EQF]

unit

A unit is part of a qualification. It can be the smallest part of the qualification that can be evaluated, validated or certified. A unit can be specific to one particular qualification or common to several qualifications. The knowledge, skills and competences that make up the credit form the basis for the assessment and validation of people's outcomes. Units are validated at the end of the assessment of outcomes, the results of which must comply with the requirements of the qualification. [TWG ECVET]

validation (of non formal and informal learning)

The process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, know-how, skills and competences, which people develop throughout their lives within different environments, for example through education, work and leisure activities. [EQF]

valuing learning

The process of recognising participation in and outcomes of (formal or non-formal) learning, in order to raise awareness of its intrinsic worth and to reward learning. [EQF]

vocational education and training

Education and training which aims to equip people with skills and competences that can be used on the labour market. [CEDEFOP]

workload

The workload includes all learning activities required for the achievement of the learning outcomes (i.e., lectures, practical work, information retrieval, private study, etc.). [ECTS]

Sources

[CEDEFOP] CEDEFOP (Philippe Tissot), Terminology of vocational training policy. A multilingual glossary for an enlarged Europe, Luxembourg 2004

[ECTS] Directorate-General for Education and Culture, ECTS users' guide. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and the Diploma Supplement, Brussels 2005

[EQF] Commission of the European Communities, Commission Staff Working Document. Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, 2005

[TWG ECVET] European Credit System for VET (ECVET). Technical Specifications (Report 2005 of the Credit Transfer Technical Working Group)

The exemplo-Team

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Tarana Aliyeva is project manager at MEDEF Franche Comté. She is especially involved in the development of the Competence Club.

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Valérie Brenot

Masters Degree in European policies (University of Besançon) has been working for the MEDEF Franche-Comté since 1999 in the frame of the development of European projects dealing with vocational training programs. In that field, she is involved in projects dedicated to the recognition of competences and the implementation of Competence strategies within regional firms. She is deeply involved in the animation of a competences Club in Franche-Comté with more than 100 firms implementing such strategies.

Stéphane Bigeard

As an executive in Work Psychology (Master degree in Work Psychology), he has been working for AFPA for 6 years, which is a large French Training organisation promoted by the Ministry of Labour. He works within the vocational orientation department as a consultant and expert among different public in all fields of activities. His main activities focus on the orien-

tation, insertion, vocational training as well as management of the competences and the carrying out of the change in firms. He promoted the « Training Integrated on the Workplace – FIT » which has been developed by AFPA within the Exemplo project.

Bert Clough

Bert Clough is Senior Training Adviser to the Trades Union Congress.

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Starting his professional life with a law qualification (Vocational training Certificate in Metal Industry), he is a pure product of the acquisition of non formal competences as he is the Employment and Training coordinator of the regional Trade union CFE-CGC. His main activities lay on the defence of employee's rights and he is deeply involved in the social dialogue process so as to implement strategies promoting the personal development of employees and success of the firms.

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Diploma Sociologist. As a research associate and author Annette Junge has cooperated with bfz Bildungsforschung since 1996 and has published and edited numerous articles on the subject of vocational training. She played a major role in designing, performing and assessing a national study on international activities of German vocational training providers and was one of the editors in charge of the publication of the study's research results by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in 2003. Her current areas of interest include the use of new media in the realm of job training as well as internationalisation and trans-national validation and certification of vocational competences.

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Graduate from the Technical University of Gdansk, Poland. Certificate authorizing to participate in meetings of Board of Super-

visors of Public Purse Corporations. He is member of the Presidium of Gdansk Regional Board of NSZZ "Solidarnosc" and has been working in this institution for 12 years. He is the member of Gdansk Employers Union. His additive function is to lead the group engaging in social politics. He coordinates the activities in the frame of European projects realized by Gdansk Regional Board of NSZZ "Solidarnosc": Leonardo da Vinci, EQUAL, Phare 2002.

Lech Kunc

Msc, Eng. in Naval Architecture, graduate from the Technical University of Gdansk, Poland. He worked as a Production Manager in the Shipyard Sector. He is an entrepreneur in automotive industry and a member of Gdansk Employers Union. He also works as a lecturer at schools on university level and as a trainer at non-formal learning provided by TNOiK (Scientific Society for Organization and Management). He is certificated expert at social dialog, negotiation and mediation. In TNOiK Gdansk, he is a Member of the Scientific Board and a Manager of European projects in frame of Leonardo da Vinci and CI EQUAL.

Patrick Monin

Mechanical Engineer has been working for the CFE-CGC French union representative of the executive employees (managers, engineers and technicians) in the General Electrics Firm since 1993. Focusing on the competence aspects, as a union representative, he stresses the importance of the competences paths for the future of the "European employee".

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Masters Degree in Social Sciences (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany) with focal point in HR and Sociology. She works for Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung (Research Institute for Vocational Educational Training) since 2003 in European Projects. Her main research interests are lying in the field of internationalisation of vocational and educational training.

Bill Nicholls

Director Education and Training Development for the Engineering Employers' Federation for the West Midlands region of England. Trained as an engineer before moving into training and development. He developed and implemented a large company apprenticeship programme as well as being responsible for management development for a large multi-national company. Bill moved on to become the expert 'trainer of trainers' with the University of Wolverhampton before taking up his existing role, where he has been responsible for setting up the EEF West Midlands Technology Centre which manages 250 apprenticeships across the region as well as advising companies on education and training issues.

Torild Nilsen Mohn

Senior Advisor, VOX - National Institute for Adult Learning. Torild Nilsen Mohn, at Vox - the National Institute for adult learning (Norway), has since August 2000 been involved in the national initiative for valuating non-formal and informal learning in a life-wide perspective. She is also representing Vox in different international projects on the subject.

Graham Randle

Union learning organiser for the Transport and General Workers Union in the UK. Has worked in the TGWU midlands region education department for 3 years as a tutor in Industrial relations. Currently he is the "skills for life" co-ordinator in the regional union learning fund project.

Teresa Razny

NSZZ "Solidarnosc" Trade Union representative and trainer, Head Former of Education Department on national level of "Solidarnosc", specialist of adult education methodology, eurotrainer cooperated with ETUC (former member of Advisory Committee). She collaborated in a few transnational training projects, for example with CFDT (France) - leadership project for TU reps, with LO (Sweden) - equality of women rights and with Batory's Found and

US Congress - project for Belarus - support for democracy process. She is a certificated expert at social dialog, negotiation and mediation. She cooperates with Teacher's Development Institute. Currently she is expert of European projects in the frame of Leonardo da Vinci and IW EQUAL projects.

Thomas Reglin

Master's degree in humanities (M.A.), University Erlangen-Nuremberg. Specialist in the field of adult education and training. Since 1995 development co-ordinator for the online products-line bbw-online of bfz Bildungsforschung and bbw. bfz Bildungsforschung project coordinator and assistant director of Forschungsinstitut Betriebliche Bildung (f-bb) gGmbH. His main areas of interest are enterprise eLearning planning, including teaching methods, development, quality assurance and implementation of eLearning and knowledge management programs, credit-transfer in VET. At present he is a project leader of the study ECVET reflector, launched by the European Commission.

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Bob Sissons

Regional Education and Development Organiser, Transport and General Workers Union. Bob Sissons has worked for the Transport and General Workers Union in the Midlands region since 1990. Before that he was a leading lay representative for the union in the transport industry. His job involves organising the training of the regions union representatives, full time officials and members of staff. Over the last ten years his work has been increasingly around lifelong learning and skills development. Bob is involved in a number of UK government funded projects around learning at work and is heavily involved in the development of the regions Union Learning representatives.

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Previously teacher in an agricultural college, he has been in charge of the regional secretary of the CFDT Trade union for 5 years. Apart from the common activities in trade-union, he stresses the importance of the recognition of competences in all firms whether their size and field of activity with

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Dominique Vilain

As the Regional secretary for Vocational Training in the CFDT trade union for more than 15 years, she is in charge of the development of the social dialogue in the Franche-Comt  region especially within joint commissions with social partners. She is involved in the competences Club for the promotion of the implementation of such strategies and the information among employees.

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Executive, Education and Training Development for the Engineering Employers' Federation for the West Midlands region of England. He is a qualified mechanical engineer and also a graduate, of Wolverhampton University, in Design Studies. Martin project managers the development and implementation of initiatives which aim to provide skills for industry and to ensure the quality and quantity of young people entering industry.