

The background features a white field with scattered grey dots of various sizes. Overlaid on this are several thick, curved lines in teal, orange, blue, yellow, and purple. In the bottom left, there are three circular icons: a blue one with a checkmark, a yellow one with a thumbs-up, and a purple one with a grid of speech bubbles.

# VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE YOUTH SECTOR: KEY SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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This publication presents the position of the European Youth Forum concerning the implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning<sup>1</sup>. Hereby we provide recommendations for the successful development and implementation of validation arrangements, together with good practice on recognition and validation in the youth field. The publication has been developed based on the input received from our member organisations through several online and face-to-face consultations in the last two years. As the deadline of 2018 for implementation of the Council Recommendation is approaching, we hope this document will support the efforts of Member States to develop validation arrangements in line with the principles and needs expected from the youth sector.

## CONTEXTUALISATION: YOUTH ORGANISATIONS, NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND VALIDATION



### The 2012 Council Recommendation in brief

On December 2012, the Council of the European Union adopted a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, based on the European Commission's proposal. The Recommendation invites Member States to establish validation arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The deadline for Member States to put in place national validation processes is 2018.

The European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group is the body responsible for following up the implementation of the Council Recommendation. The Group is composed of representatives of all Member States, as well as social partners and civil society organisations, including –inter alia– the European Students' Union, the Lifelong Learning Platform LL, European Volunteer Centre and the European Youth Forum.

### Youth organisations as NFE providers

Youth organisations provide learning opportunities that offer numerous young people a space to develop key competences for life. Recognising the value of youth organisations as quality education providers, as well as their impact on young people's competences development, is a necessary step in implementing lifelong learning policies and ensuring quality education is accessible to everyone in different settings<sup>2</sup>.

Recognition relates both to the individual – as a means to gain self-awareness and feel empowered about their capacities and abilities – as well as to external stakeholders (such as formal education institutions, employers and societal actors at large), as a means to foster opportunities to build synergies and establish cooperation among them<sup>3</sup>.

By offering the opportunity to get competences acquired through non-formal education validated, young people are given the opportunity to obtain proof of these competences and to use them in other spheres of their life.

### Validation in the youth field: why and what for?

The validation process can have multiple effects for the individual as well as for youth organisations and society at large.

**Individual benefits:** For a young person, recognising and validating the competences gained in youth organisations can contribute to increasing their awareness of and confidence in their capacities, while reinvigorating their self-esteem and motivation to learn. Making their learning outcomes tangible and visible helps them become aware of their learning experiences in youth work/volunteering while improving their communication skills when presenting their strengths to others. This process also represents an acknowledgement of their role and often long-term engagement in the organisation.

As a result, validation may lead to new opportunities to enter into a (new) learning path in formal education (for instance, for those who have dropped-out of school or for the so-called NEETs (those not in employment, education or training) or to get awarded exemptions and/or credits for formal education studies. In the sphere of the labour market, the recognition and validation of non-formal education can provide more opportunities for young people to take up a (new) job; through validation they can prove to their future employer that they have the required competences, and give visibility to how youth organisations helped them develop those. This process can also reinforce their capacity to clearly present the competences they have and how they are linked to the job opening. Altogether recognition and validation contributes to enhancing young people's employability as well as their mobility.

Overall, this process empowers the young person to become a life-long learner who is aware of the value of developing key competences in order to live a fulfilled life, both in the professional as well as social and personal sphere. Being aware of what you are capable of can reinforce your position in society, promoting more active citizenship<sup>4</sup>.

**Youth organisations' benefits:** validation is an opportunity to give visibility and recognition to the educational role of youth organisations and their impact on young people's competence development. This can lead to increased recognition of the youth sector by external stakeholders, including formal education institutions, policy-makers, public authorities, employers, etc. As a result, cooperation mechanisms and partnerships may be developed, and new funding opportunities may be offered to support youth organisations in providing learning opportunities.

Those working with young people report that some students do not engage in exchange programmes because they are not valued/recognised by their schools/universities. Adherence of formal education institutions to validation can increase the chances and motivation of young people to engage in learning opportunities in a youth organisation.

An additional positive impact of validation on youth organisations relates to impact. This process can contribute to proving the long-term impact of being engaged in youth work.

**Societal benefits:** The knock-on impact of validation can be felt in society at large. If widely practiced and embraced by all stakeholders, validation can lead to lifelong learning societies where education is valued and fostered in all its dimensions. This generates trust in all education systems, including non-formal, and fosters a culture of cooperation and complementarity between all education providers, thus increasing access to and the quality of education. Validation also touches upon the economy and progress. Research shows that a learning society correlates to innovation and development, leading to a more mobile and inclusive society.

The success of the validation process will depend on its capacity to respond to young people's needs, while respecting the way non-formal education is provided by youth organisations.

### Validation in the youth field: potential beneficiaries

There are several ways in which a young person can be involved in youth organisations. Whether they are volunteers or paid staff, youth workers/leaders, trainers or participants, they are all potential beneficiaries of validation.

For youth workers/leaders and trainers going through a process of validation, it can offer proof of their competences to work with young people and open up a door to gain a formal qualification in this field. In countries where there are no higher-education studies in this field, this can enhance the employability of the youth worker, particularly if moving to another country. This also applies to volunteers, who can find a new career opportunity thanks to the competences acquired in a youth organisation.

Young people participating in activities run by a youth organisation can also benefit from engaging in a validation process by increasing their self-awareness of the competences they have and boosting their motivation to continue learning. Validating their competences may also trigger a reflection on the study or career opportunities they wish to pursue.

## THE RATIONALE OF VALIDATION: KEY PRINCIPLES



**Developing validation arrangements at national level will provide young people with an opportunity**



### Validation, a milestone for recognition of NFE and lifelong learning

Validation offers the opportunity to take a holistic approach to education by acknowledging the contribution of non-formal education to the development of key competences and, in turn, the complementarity between formal and non-formal education. Validation can contribute to putting lifelong and life-wide learning policies into practice, opening the door for further cooperation between different education providers.

For validation to support the advancement of recognition of NFE, the arrangements developed need to take into account the nature of the context in which the competences subject to validation have been developed. This means adjusting the process to the specific characteristics of the non-formal education setting, instead of forcing a change in the way it is provided.

### Validation is an investment

Developing validation arrangements at national level will provide young people with an opportunity to give value to the competences they have acquired outside formal education.

This will contribute to their employability, supporting their transition from education to employment; it will also have a positive impact on their self-confidence and their chances to (re)enter education and, in turn, engage actively in civic and political life. Altogether validation represents a high return on investment in terms of social welfare, social inclusion, participation and well-being. Validation is a means to both reach out to a wider population by offering an alternative path and to integrate disadvantaged groups socially and economically. Sufficient funding needs to be secured to effectively support the implementation of validation.

### More than occupational competences: validation is also about transversal competences

Validation includes the wide range of "knowledge, skills and competences" acquired through non-formal and informal learning, as captured in the Recommendation. Therefore, the focus of validation goes beyond occupational competences acquired in the workplace or through VET; it encompasses transversal competences, including personal and social. A learning outcomes approach to validation can support validation of such type of competences. The European Key Competences framework for lifelong learning should serve as a reference in this process.

# VALIDATION INTO PRACTICE: KEY SUCCESS FACTORS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1

## Multi-stakeholder coordination and involvement of youth organisations

Validation is a complex process that requires the involvement of many different actors, with different responsibilities and functions. The 2012 Recommendation emphasises the importance of coordination among all relevant stakeholders and mentions youth organisations among the stakeholders to engage with.

Multi-stakeholder cooperation is essential to ensure a common understanding of the value of validation and identify each actor's contribution to make it happen.

Indeed, the participation of youth organisations in this process, both in the design or review of national arrangements as well as in their implementation is key to ensuring that validation truly meets the specific needs of young people, and that the process respects and integrates the specific characteristics of non-formal education. Today there are still very few examples of cooperation between youth organisations, such as national youth councils and government authorities responsible for validation. Cooperating with grassroots organisations reinforces the bottom-up approach needed for validation to respond to the needs of the learner and ensure that the relevant tools are used.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) To facilitate this coordination, multi-sectoral working groups should be created at national level. There should be an open and transparent call for applicants.
- b) Organisations in the voluntary sector, including National Youth Councils, should be involved in the national working groups (following the example at European level, where the European Youth Forum is a member of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group). Their expertise in the field, particularly in the development of documentation and identification tools, should be capitalised upon.
- c) In addition to the working groups, governments should explore the set up of an advisory committee that assesses and gives feedback to the implementation process; this body should represent the diversity of the sectors concerned about validation.
- d) Through the network of stakeholders involved in the national working groups, undertake a needs analysis on the type and degree of demand by potential beneficiaries followed by a pilot project with a focus group to test the validation arrangements.



**“In 2015, only 36% of the National Youth Councils responding to the survey were involved in national processes towards the development of national validation arrangements” (from the European Youth Forum Shadow Report on Youth Policy- A Youth Perspective” (2015)**



## GOOD PRACTICE:



**Austria:** The National Youth Council of Austria is involved in validation process through their contact with the Ministry of Youth. They are part of the national coordination group of the lifelong learning strategy at the national level, which includes the strategic development of validation. The National Youth Council of Austria also hosts the office of the aufZAQ, a national validation system for non-formal and informal learning in Austria.



**Czech Republic:** The Czech Council of Children and Youth (CRDM) has initiated and played a strong role in a project called Keys for Life managed by the National Institute of Children and Youth. This project enabled discussion between youth organisations, the formal education sector and employers, which resulted in a jointly signed Memorandum on recognition of NFE, expressing willingness to cooperate further. A set of so called “minimum competence profiles” was developed, which are now being turned into professional qualifications within youth work (youth

leader, coordinator of volunteers, first aid etc.), designed by experts coming from youth organisations within the National System of Qualifications. <http://znv.nidv.cz/projekty/realizace-projektu/klice-pro-zivot>



**France:** Youth organisations that provide non-formal education offer training for educators. This training is recognised nationally, and the diploma obtained is a national one (BAFA and BAFD) certifying the capacities and competencies of a non-formal educator, and of a director of a non-formal education structure. These youth organisations are entitled to deliver these diplomas. [www.jeunes.gouv.fr/bafa-bafd](http://www.jeunes.gouv.fr/bafa-bafd)



**Portugal:** The Government has set up a national working group on validation to work on developing a youth worker profile. The National Youth Council is part of the group, together with representatives from the Ministry of Education, the VET national agency and the Portuguese

Institute of Sports and Youth. The initial training of the youth worker is now established and is already part of the National Qualifications Catalogue (the list of certified non-higher education qualifications).



**Slovenia:** The process of establishing a national vocational qualification for youth workers in Slovenia involves stakeholders from the youth sector, who work together with the Ministry for Education and the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs. Representatives of the youth sector include, inter alia, the National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS), the Scouts organisation, the umbrella organisation of youth centres, the national agency for Erasmus+, Union Youth as well as the Social Academy. In addition, the youth sector is also represented in the recently established working group for the development of national documentation tools for non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Representatives from the student organisation of Slovenia and from Nefiks are involved in this working group.

②

## Information/Communication strategy:

For validation to reach its potential beneficiaries, all citizens must be informed about validation opportunities. This requires a cross-sectorial communication strategy and active participation of all relevant stakeholders. For the outreach to young people, the involvement of youth organisations and related structures working with youth is key, particularly in reaching disadvantaged youth.



### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) Information on validation should be made available close to where young people live, study and work, including promotion in public spaces, and it should be youth-friendly.
- b) Organisations working with/for youth should be involved in the design and implementation of the information/communication strategy with young people, including, for instance: youth organisations, youth information centres, employment services, formal education institutions, career guidance centres, etc.
- c) Funding should be available for all relevant stakeholders to implement the information/communication strategy among their target groups.
- d) The multi-sectoral national working groups (see proposal above), should define a joint national communication strategy to specifically reach out to drop-outs and NEET young people.
- e) Public campaigns at national, regional and local level should be in place to raise interest among potential beneficiaries as well as to ensure buy-in by key potential stakeholders on validation, such as formal education institutions, employers and civil society organisations.



### GOOD PRACTICE:



**Slovenia:** e-Studentski Servis, the largest employment agency for mediating student work in Slovenia, has initiated a national campaign for the better recognition of young people's competencies gained outside formal education, targeting a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. youth NGOs, policy makers, formal education, employers, etc.).  
[www.studentski-servis.com](http://www.studentski-servis.com)

③

## The learner at the centre of the process: a bottom-up approach

The value and efficiency of a validation process lies in its capacity to respond to the specific needs of the beneficiaries. Putting the learner at the centre of validation acknowledges the fact that this process is voluntary and it should be accessible to anyone who wishes to engage in it.

This requires a bottom-up approach to the process, engaging all different stakeholders as well as individuals (including young people) at all phases of developing the validation arrangements. Regulations are crucial to stabilise and secure the bottom-up process in order to ensure the sustainability and transferability of validation processes and procedures.



### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) Validation should be free of charge
- b) The privacy of the individual must be protected and respected; the outcome of validation should be the property of the individual and not be made public without his/her consent;
- c) The right to re-evaluation must be guaranteed, as well as the possibility to stop the process at any time;
- d) The validation framework should include a mechanism to gather feedback from individuals engaged in the process, to take into account their views and needs for a potential revision of the validation arrangements.
- e) Terminology of the validation process should be understandable by all individuals and it should be youth-friendly. A glossary could be created to this end.

# 4

## Quality Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling are essential for individuals to be able to adapt validation to their needs and interests. Young people, especially disadvantaged youth, need support not only to learn about the benefits and opportunities of validation, but also in identifying the competences they have and which can be validated. Given their close contact with young people, youth organisations can play a key role in providing information, guidance and counselling to young people, including those from disadvantaged youth, about the validation arrangements and the potential benefits for them.



### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) A training programme for counsellors and assessors should be set up in order to develop knowledge and understanding of the different sectors that will be subject to validation, such as non-formal education in the youth sector;
- b) Training opportunities should be available for interested social/street workers, youth leaders/workers and other actors from the youth sector to provide guidance and counselling, given their expertise in dealing with young people
- c) Quality mentoring for young people should be ensured; safe and youth-friendly environment should be created in order to build trust with the mentor/counsellor; a too institutionalised setting should be avoided, as this may put off some young people who may not feel comfortable in this type of setting.
- d) Funding should be allocated to training of counsellors, assessors and mentors involved in the validation process.
- e) Employment services should actively ask for youth work experiences when auditing the skills of young unemployed people and making the learning visible on their CVs; self-assessment tools should be used in skills audit as a way to empower the individual in their learning development.



### GOOD PRACTICE:



**Austria:** The Ministry of Families and Youth set up a project called “WIKI” where young people are supported to identify results of their non-formal and informal learning through narrative self-evaluation. A trainer/coach provides support when it comes to the documentation of their competences. These workshops are provided by regional youth information centres in several Federal States in Austria. (more information at: <https://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/jugendarbeit/wiki.html>)



**France:** the Students network Animafac proposes tutoring sessions for volunteers consisting of group work sessions followed by an exchange with human resources professionals who give them further advice for their CV and for preparing for a job interview. As a result, these sessions help volunteers to value their voluntary engagement and improve their self-esteem in a recruitment process. [www.eucis-ill.eu/good-practices/volunteering-and-skills-animafac](http://www.eucis-ill.eu/good-practices/volunteering-and-skills-animafac)

In order to ensure the quality of the guidance and counselling, the professional competence-development of counsellors and assessors is essential. Likewise, mentoring is crucial for young people participating in the validation process, from identification to certification; it can help young people to identify their needs and motivation to engage in the process.

Since guidance can originate from a range of services, which include education, training, employment services and local administration, cross-sector coordination is fundamental. Guidance needs to be coordinated and integrated within validation procedures. The linkages between employment services and education and training are particularly important.



# 5

## Recognition/validation tools: capitalise on the expertise of the youth sector

A wide range of tools for recognition and validation of competences acquired through non-formal education in the youth field exist. Several youth organisations have developed tools to support young participants and/or youth leaders/workers in the process of self-awareness and self-recognition of their competences; some others have also developed internal validation tools. Such tools can be of great value for validation processes, in particular for the phases of identification and documentation, and can complement other tools such as European credit systems (ECVET and ECTS). Between employment services and education and training are particularly important.



**“50% of the member organisations responding to the survey have actually developed internally within their organisations, validation frameworks to support their volunteers in the process of self-awareness and of valuing the skills and competences acquired”. (From the European Youth Forum Shadow Report on Youth Policy- A Youth Perspective”, 2015)**



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) A mapping and compilation of existing recognition/validation tools at national level from different sectors should be done by the body responsible for validation in order to identify their potential use for the validation process; the multi-stakeholders national working groups mentioned above could play a valuable role in this process.
- b) Explore synergies and potential use of recognition tools by the youth field, at both national and European level – such as the Europass framework, Youthpass, Youth workers portfolio of the Council of Europe – to support validation.
- c) New validation tools should be developed in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure their different experiences and perspectives on this process are captured.
- d) Ensure that the validation tools include self-reflection and self-assessment, as these are valuable phases in any validation process seeking to empower the individual.



## GOOD PRACTICE:



**Belgium-Flemish Speaking Community:** The Government of Flanders supported the development of 'Oscar', an online portfolio to recognise the competences gained through (voluntary) youth work. More information, in Dutch, at: [www.oscaronline.be](http://www.oscaronline.be)



**Czech Republic:** An online Personal Competence Portfolio was created during Keys for Life project, enabling to complement EuropassCV with experience, skills and competences acquired through youth work – in a structured way. <http://znav.nidv.cz/okp#page1>



**The Netherlands:** A large partnership from Public/State bodies, private organisations and third sector organisations, including Scouting Gelderland in the Netherlands developed and supported a portfolio-based model for validating informal learning gained during voluntary activity for scouting groups in Gelderland.



**Slovenia:** The University of Ljubljana recognised Nefiks, an online portfolio recording competences acquired through non-formal learning experiences, as a relevant tool for the recognition of non-formal learning experiences. More information at: [www.talentiran.si](http://www.talentiran.si)

# 6

## Changing mindsets: seeing the value and impact of NFE

The implementation of validation mechanisms goes against strong beliefs in society that good education can only be delivered by formal education institutions. Changing mind sets as regards the quality and value of non-formal and informal learning becomes a prerequisite to make progress in this area. As research shows, most employers do not know or understand what it means to be involved in youth organisations, or do not trust this type of experience; few are still the examples of recognition of prior learning by formal education institutions. This change in the mind sets requires creating opportunities to meet and discover each other's work, as well as cooperation mechanisms at local, regional and national levels in order to build trust and understanding.

In order for validation systems to be successful, it is necessary for individuals to know they have skills to be validated. Research has highlighted the need to support young people involved in youth work and volunteering experiences in becoming aware of the effects in terms of competence-development.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) Develop awareness-raising campaigns at national, regional and local level, targeting policy-makers as well as employers and formal education and training institutions, to discover the value of non-formal education, particularly as provided in youth organisations.
- b) Support awareness-raising actions/tools aimed at developing young people's self-awareness about the competences they have gained through youth work/volunteering.
- c) Establish cooperation mechanisms to bring together in the same space different stakeholders, including both policy-makers as well as employers and education providers from formal and non-formal settings to exchange about their understanding of, and experience with, non-formal education.
- d) Explore integrating the validation process into unemployment programmes, to better assess the competences unemployed people have and adjust the training programmes accordingly.



## GOOD PRACTICE:



**Austria:** The Scottish school curriculum, "Curriculum for Excellence", strongly encourages schools and education providers to work in partnership with local organisations to ensure young people get the proper recognition for what they are learning, wherever the learning takes place. The Scout Association in Scotland is supporting local volunteers to foster partnerships with the schools their young participants attend. In addition, the Scouts of Scotland have a programme in which learning gained in scouting is incorporated into the formal primary education through the use of a badge system. (More information at: [www.scouts-scotland.org.uk/education.aspx](http://www.scouts-scotland.org.uk/education.aspx))

# LIST OF RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION TOOLS IN THE YOUTH SECTOR



## AUSTRIA:

**aufZAQ** – A certification system for training courses for people engaged in youth work. Developed and provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Families and Youth, the Youth Departments of the Federal States of Austria, and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano – South Tyrol (Italy). [www.aufzaq.at/english](http://www.aufzaq.at/english)

**WIKI** – A programme for lower qualified young people so that they could identify and document competences gained from informal learning <https://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/jugendarbeit/wiki.html>

**WBA** – A portfolio validation method for adult educators [http://wba.or.at/english/about\\_us.php](http://wba.or.at/english/about_us.php)



## BELGIUM

**Oscar** – An online portfolio tool for identification of competences gained in youth work and adult education in Flanders, Belgium. Oscar is an easy-to-access web-based platform where organisations can generate ‘competence documents’ for the participants of their courses. In order to work with Oscar the organisations should pass an introductory training session and receive the user’s manual. The participants/volunteers can create their personal parts in the platform where they can store their ‘competence documents’ received in various activities and engagements. Developed by Socius (support centre for adult work), Steunpunt Jeugd, De Ambrassade (National Youth Council), and the Flemish Government, Belgium [www.oscaronline.be](http://www.oscaronline.be)

**C-stick** – A digital portfolio for identification and documentation of acquired competences, with a personal development plan, a screening and scaling tool and a job application tool. This tool also includes a set of techniques for the identification of competences and competence development, with the core elements: observation of competences, feedback, group dynamics, peer learning and experiential learning. Developed by JES <http://www.jes.be/C-Stick>

**Scout Leader Skills** – An online assessment tool that aims at supporting competence development of scout volunteer leaders and managers. It contains an online inventory, assessing the 20 selected competences (interpersonal skills, functional skills and attitudes) developed by the leader, thus providing the person with information for reflection and for the planning of further development. Developed by the Belgium Scout associations ‘Les Scouts’ and the Scouts en Gidsen Vlaanderen. Available in English, French and Deutch <https://scoutleaderskills.lesscouts.be>



## CZECH REPUBLIC

“A set of self-evaluation tools – or value your competences gained through youth work” brings Czech translations of foreign materials (CoE European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers. Francie, Valorise-toi and others), as well as a guide how to fill in the original Czech online Personal Competence Portfolio. <http://crdm.cz/download/KPZ-sebeevaluacni-nastroje.pdf>



## FRANCE

Valorise-toi (Empower yourself) – a self-assessment tool enabling young scout leaders to translate the competences gained in the scout movement to the ‘employer’s language’. The tool aims at building the self-confidence of its users, as well as contributing to their better employability. Developed by the youth organisation “Scouts et Guides de France”. The tool is currently available in 7 languages: French, English, Spanish, Danish, Serbian, Polish, and Czech. <https://www.scout.org/node/6335> (EN) <https://www.sgdfr.fr/actualites-chefs-cadres/toute-l-actualites-chefs-cadres/les-actualites/valorise-toi> (FR) <http://euroscoutinfo.com/2012/02/27/how-to-translate-your-scouting-skills-to-the-language-of-employers/> (other languages)

**Volunteering and skills: a portfolio for students** – A portfolio of competences to enable students to describe their volunteering experiences and translate the competences, skills and knowledge they acquired into a skills language understandable by employers. An initiative to help students identify and value skills that have been acquired and

developed through volunteering experience, with a view to their future professional integration. Developed by Animafac, the French students’ network. [www.animafac.net/actualites/savoir-valoriser-ses-competences-associatives](http://www.animafac.net/actualites/savoir-valoriser-ses-competences-associatives) (French) [www.eucis-ill.eu/good-practices/volunteering-and-skills-animafac](http://www.eucis-ill.eu/good-practices/volunteering-and-skills-animafac) (English)



## LUXEMBOURG

**Attestation et Portfolio de l’engagement (The Engagement Portfolio)** – A tool to provide assistance to youth organisations and youth movements through the development of an official document attesting to a young person’s engagement/commitment and competences acquired through non-formal education. It encompasses two main elements: the ‘Portfolio’ – a personal folder that allows the young person to keep track of the volunteer work experiences they have done, and the ‘Attestation’ – an official recognition mechanism of the competences acquired during a young person’s engagement as a volunteer. The Portfolio has been designed based on the experience from the project ‘certification of skills acquired in the framework of non-formal education’ conducted between 2006 and 2007. Developed by the Luxembourgish National Youth Service. [www.youth.lu/index.php?option=com\\_youth\\_pages&task=view&Itemid=1&id=87](http://www.youth.lu/index.php?option=com_youth_pages&task=view&Itemid=1&id=87) <http://www.benevolat.public.lu/fr/publications/brochures-articles/attestation-de-engagement/portfolio-brochure.pdf>



## SLOVENIA

**NEFIKS** – A record book and an online portfolio for recording knowledge, experience and skills of young people, acquired through different types of non-formal learning experiences. [www.talentiran.si/en-nefiks](http://www.talentiran.si/en-nefiks)

**Moje izkušnje (My Experience)** – A digital tool to certify young people’s working experience in student jobs, including secondary school pupils. These experiences include youth leaders that are paid. The digital portfolio can be accessed electronically and the certificate can be exported to PDF file and be printed out. This tool is validated by the Nefiks certification system. The tool was awarded a good practice

award by the youth section of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and mentioned as good practice in the 'Resolution on Recognition of Non-Formal Education in Slovenia'. Developed by the largest employment agency for mediating student work in Slovenia, 'e-Studentski Servis', in cooperation with Institute Nefiks.

[www.moje-izkusnje.si/en](http://www.moje-izkusnje.si/en)

**TaPas-** A self-assessment tool for identifying and evaluating skills gained during voluntary work within scouting.

<http://stencas.taborniki.si/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/tapas.pdf> (in Slovene):



## SPAIN:

**Reconoce** – An online tool to certify competences gained through volunteering <http://reconoce.org/>



## SWITZERLAND

**Reconnaissance** – A think tank promoting the recognition of skills gained through youth exchange programmes and (youth) voluntary work.

[www.reconnaissances.ch/en/](http://www.reconnaissances.ch/en/)



## UK

**Get Ahead: Scouting and Employability** – A guide to help scout members to identify a range of skills they have developed through Scouting, and show them how to include them in CVs, application forms and interview answers to gain an advantage.

<https://members.scouts.org.uk/documents/Get%20ahead%20Scouting%20and%20Employability%20Final.pdf>



## EUROPEAN-WIDE TOOLS/ PROJECTS

**Certification of Youth Workers' Competences** – A project to develop a process of certification of youth workers' competences by using ECVET system as an instrument, which gives youth workers in NGOs the possibility of assessment and validation of learning outcomes and recognition of qualifications across Europe, particularly those acquired through experience acquired in non-formal and informal contexts. Developed by a consortium composed of youth organisations, universities and companies, under the coordination of Youth for Exchange and Understanding <http://youth-workers.eu/>

**European Portfolio for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers** – A tool developed for intercultural youth work, based on the values and principles of the Council of Europe. It is a tool through which youth workers, volunteers or professionals, can identify, assess and describe their competencies based on European quality standards and set learning and professional development goals.

[www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Portfolio/Portfolio\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Resources/Portfolio/Portfolio_en.asp)

**GR-EAT Project (2014-2016)** – Aimed at proposing a comprehensive tool for the implementation of recognition systems and contributing to the overall advocacy process toward the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) taking place within youth organisations. Led by AEGEE, the Lifelong Learning Platform is one of the six partners (KA2 Strategic Partnership, Erasmus+) and is responsible for conducting research among employers in order to find out about their needs and expectations regarding the recognition of NFIL.

[http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EUCIS-LLL\\_Survey\\_Recognition\\_volunteers\\_competences\\_by\\_employers\\_July2015.pdf](http://www.eucis-lll.eu/eucis-lll/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/EUCIS-LLL_Survey_Recognition_volunteers_competences_by_employers_July2015.pdf)

Internal tool for validation (in progress) – An online tool aimed at helping active members of AEGEE – European Students Forum to evaluate and get a certificate of the learning gained through their engagement in the organisation. After passing the 5-step process, including the self-assessment and peer review, the European Board provides its members with an official certificate.

**VaPoVo Project (Validation Policy for Volunteering Organisations)** – An ongoing project run by the European Alliance for Volunteering and partners. Its aim is to develop training for policy makers / board members of volunteer organisations on how to design internal validation schemes. It will be flexible, so form and content can be adapted to the needs of the organisation. The final outcomes will be ready in Summer 2016.

<http://www.volunteering-alliance.eu/vapovo-project/>

**Youthpass** – A European recognition strategy and tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work, available for projects of Erasmus+ Youth in Action. The Youthpass can help young people to analyse their learning process and outcomes, as well as helping youth workers reflect on their own learning when taking part in training activities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that have been developed in the project can be described within the framework of the European Key competences for lifelong learning, the set of competences needed in order to be active citizens within the future Europe. Developed by SALTO Training and Cooperation Resource Centre at JUGEND für Europa (German National Agency for Erasmus+ Youth in Action)

[www.youthpass.eu](http://www.youthpass.eu)

Additional information on other existing tools can be found on:

- **Mapping of tools and good practices for better recognition of youth work and non-formal learning/ education at European and national levels, on the website of the Youth Partnership of the Council of Europe and the European Union**  
<http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/mapping>
- **Mapping Study on EU practices in recognition of competences gained through nonformal learning in youth work for the employability of young people**  
<http://napor.net/images/pdf/mapping%20study.pdf>



1 Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01

2 European Youth Forum Policy Paper on Quality Education, 2013 (0317-13)

3 European Youth Forum Policy Paper on Recognition of non-formal education: Confirming the real competencies of young people in the knowledge society, 2005 (0716-05)

4 European Youth Forum Policy Paper on Citizenship Education, 2013 (0450-13)

5 2012 Study "The Impact of non-formal education in youth organisations on Young people's employability", University of Bath/ GHK Consulting

6 Idem

# ANNEX 1: ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHT (TO) VALIDATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE YOUTH FIELD LEVEL



The tips included below have been developed based on the consultations held with members of the European Youth Forum between 2013 and 2015.

## Before starting...

- **Agree internally!**  
Have an internal discussion within your organisation to define your views on validation and agree on your position. Doing a needs analysis on the potential benefits of validation for your beneficiaries (i.e. identify what is the demand for validation by the group you work with/represent) may help you in developing your position and your advocacy message. Creating a glossary on this topic may facilitate developing a common understanding within your organisation.
- **Research!**  
Do research on how other stakeholders are seeing/approaching the topic in order to plan effective advocacy work: identify your target group and the language to use when engaging with them.
- **Map!**  
Map what other youth or civil society organisations are doing around this topic and organise a meeting to exchange your views and strategies, and identify opportunities to join forces in your advocacy work. If you are an international non-governmental youth organisation, connect your national members with the National Youth Council in each country.

## Join forces!

- Create networks with other youth and civil society organisations
  - Mobilise your own members at national, regional and/or local level to engage in the advocacy strategy;
  - Exchange practices with your members and other relevant youth and civil society organisations on how to lobby for validation of non-formal education in your Member State.
  - Create a joint advocacy strategy at national and local level, with key messages to each target group.



## Tip

- in Slovenia, the National Youth Council has established an expert group composed of organisations in the youth field working on youth workers profile, with the aim of bringing the whole youth sector onboard and be one voice towards the other institutions.
- in Portugal, the National Youth Council is working with its members on the definition of a common understanding on validation and a joint approach to their advocacy.
- in Spain, the National Youth Council has promoted partnerships between youth organisations and other key organisations in the third sector concerning the recognition and validation of NFE through the thematic portal Observal (Observatorio de Validación de Competencias, <http://observal.es/>)

## Reach out to your target!

Be proactive, do not wait for things to happen and push the agenda by reaching out to all relevant stakeholders involved in validation.

- Meet the governmental authorities responsible for the validation process where you live (most likely the body responsible for the National Qualifications Framework, if there is one, or the Ministry of Education) and seek opportunities to cooperate. (For countries where laws are decentralised, National Youth Councils can play an important role in supporting their members to participate in this process by providing them with relevant information and contacts).

This meeting is key to:

- Explain to the governmental authorities the importance of validating the competences acquired by young people in youth organisations (for instance, by providing evidence through the needs analysis and on impact of NFE on competence-development)
- Express your concerns on the validation process and put forward proposals on how to best meet the needs of young people interested in engaging in validation.
- Clarify the terminology used and your common understanding of what validation is about (take as a reference the 2012 Council Recommendation)
- If not set up, advocate for launching an open call to set up a national multi-stakeholder working group and for youth organisations to be involved.

- Propose an awareness-raising campaign to be run by the governmental authorities to make the validation opportunities known by all, including young people.
- Present the recognition and/or validation tools that you (or other youth organisations in your country) have developed and explore potential use within the national validation process.
- Remind them about the 2018 deadline and the Roadmap prepared by the Commission to support them in the development of the validation arrangements by this date



- the European Youth Forum is part of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group, the European intergovernmental body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the 2012 Council Recommendation on validation – this is a good example of engagement of the youth sector in this process, and so a good example to use for your national advocacy!

- Address other key stakeholders dealing with validation, such as education providers (including formal education institutions) and employers, as part of the strategy to change mindsets on the value of non-formal education. This will help enhance their knowledge on and understanding of what non-formal education in youth organisations and foster a more positive attitude in accepting competences validated from these type of experiences.
  - Define the key messages to use for each target group
  - Organise meetings, seminars and similar events to exchange on your views and experiences concerning validation, and discuss the benefits of recognising youth organisations' experience
  - Share with them results of conferences/meetings on recognition and/or validation as well as evidence on the impact of NFE on young people.
  - Explore cooperation with research departments of Universities to develop competences profile (including type of activities they are linked to) that would help for validation and the development of National Qualifications Framework.

## Spread the word among young people!

Reach out to the young people you work with/have access to, in order to:

- Provide clear information about the validation process: what it is about and the potential benefits.
- Emphasise the value of the process for self-recognition, as well as a means to demand a validation of their competences to access formal education institutions or certain positions in the labour market.
- Provide them with guidance and counselling throughout the process, particularly in the identification and documentation phases.
- Run awareness-raising campaigns on the competences gained through involvement in youth organisations, targeting young people and society more generally.



**Be proactive, do not wait for things to happen and push the agenda by reaching out**

# ANNEX 2: SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS OF THE 2012 COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING



As per the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, Member States should have in place, no later than 2018, arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning with a view to offering individuals the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned outside formal education and training — including through mobility experiences.

Below is a summary of the key points addressed in the Council Recommendation:

## Expected Validation outcomes

The 2012 Council Recommendation calls on Member States to have in place arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning which enable individuals to:

(a) have knowledge, skills and competences which have been acquired through non-formal and informal learning validated, including, where applicable, through open educational resources; (b) obtain a full qualification, or, where applicable, part qualification, on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences, without prejudice to other applicable Union law, in particular Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

Member States may prioritise certain areas and/or sectors within their validation arrangements in accordance with their needs.

## Phases of validation

The 2012 Council Recommendation calls on member states to include, as appropriate, the following elements in arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, whilst allowing each individual to take advantage of any of these, either separately or in combination, in accordance with each the individual's needs.

- (a) IDENTIFICATION of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- (b) DOCUMENTATION of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- (c) ASSESSMENT of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- (d) CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate;

## Coordination of stakeholders

The 2012 Recommendation emphasises the importance of coordination of and appropriate information on validation:

(Points 4 a-b and 5) The Member States are invited to '...promote the involvement in the development and implementation of the elements and principles [...] of all relevant stakeholders, such as employers, trade unions, chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, national entities involved in the process of recognition of professional qualifications, employment services, youth organisations, youth workers, education and training providers, and civil society organisations. The Member States are furthermore (point 5) called to promote coordination on validation arrangements between stakeholders in the education, training, employment and youth sectors, as well as between those in other relevant policy area.'

## Involvement of youth organisations and civil society organisations

The 2012 recommendation (4 a) points to the importance of actively involving the voluntary sector in the implementation of validation.

'[...] youth organisations and civil society organisations should promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired at work or in voluntary activities, using relevant Union transparency tools such as those developed under the Europass framework and Youthpass'. (point 4a)

## Guidance and counselling

From 2012 Council Recommendation (points 3 b and 3 e):

Member States should provide within validation arrangements (3 b)'... information and guidance on the benefits of, and opportunities for validation, as well as on the relevant procedures, are available to individuals and organizations, and (3 e) the validation of non-formal and informal learning is supported by appropriate guidance and counselling and is readily accessible...

## Validation tools

The 2012 Recommendation emphasises the need for appropriate tools and instruments allowing for validation of non-formal and informal learning, also drawing attention to the relevance of common European tools for transparency and recognition and their possible support to the process:

'[...] the use of Union transparency tools, such as the Europass framework and Youthpass, is promoted in order to facilitate the documentation of learning outcome'; and asks Member States to assure that (3 j) ' [...] synergies exist between validation arrangements and credit systems applicable in the formal education and training system, such as ECTS and ECVET'; as well as asking Member States to foster participation of stakeholders that (4 a): ' [...] should promote and facilitate the identification and documentation of learning outcomes acquired at work or in voluntary activities, using relevant Union transparency tools such as those developed under the Europass framework and Youthpass'. (point 3i)

## National Qualifications Framework

The 2012 Recommendation stresses the importance of linking validation arrangements to national qualifications frameworks:

Member states should enable individuals to (1b)' [...] obtain a full qualification or, where applicable, part qualification on the basis of validated non-formal and informal learning experiences'. They should ensure that (3 a) ' [...] validation arrangements are linked to national qualifications frameworks and are in line with the European Qualifications Framework', that (3j)' [...] synergies exist between validation arrangements and credit systems applicable in the formal education and training system such as ECTS and ECVET' as well as ensure that (4 b) ' [...] education and training providers facilitate access to formal education and training on the basis of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal

and informal settings and, if appropriate and possible, award exemptions and/or credits for relevant learning outcomes acquired in such settings.'

## Validation in formal education and training

The 2012 recommendation recognises the key-role played by education and training institutions in taking forward validation:

(point 4b)' [...] education and training providers should facilitate access to formal education and training on the basis of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings and, if appropriate and possible, award exemptions and/or credits for relevant learning outcomes acquired in such settings;

## Skills audit

The 2012 Recommendation furthermore states (3 c) that:

' [...] disadvantaged groups, including individuals who are unemployed and those at risk of unemployment, are particularly likely to benefit from the validation arrangements, since validation can increase their participation in lifelong learning and their access to the labor market'. It further states that (3 d) ' [...] individuals who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment have the opportunity, in accordance with national legislation and specificities, to undergo a 'skills audit' aimed at identifying their knowledge, skills and competences within a reasonable period of time, ideally within six months of an identified need'. (point 3c)

