



# **PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY 'THE WRITING OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ASSESSMENT AND VALIDATION'**

19-20 November 2014, Cork, Ireland

## **Summary report**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

On 19 and 20 November 2014, a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) was held in Cork, Ireland, focusing on '**the writing of learning outcomes for assessment and validation**'.

This PLA was hosted by the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), in cooperation with Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), the European Commission and Cedefop. The event was attended by approximately 45 participants from various European countries.

### **PLA objectives**

The main objectives of the PLA were to allow delegates to:

- exchange views and experiences regarding the writing of learning outcomes based standards and how they can facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL);
- exchange views and experiences on the way standards influence assessment and validation practices.

In particular, this PLA sought to practically explore issues related to the integration of different learning contexts, purposes and stakeholder concerns into learning outcomes, on the basis of concrete examples on defining and using learning, looking at specific cases from higher education and VET as well as from the youth sector and the labour market.

The main target group of this PLA were national representatives involved in the development or implementation of validation policies, and practitioners who are involved in writing, assessing and documenting learning outcomes in VET, higher education, youth sector and the labour market.

### **Purpose of this report**

This report has been prepared within Order 81 /01 under Framework Contract DG EAC Lot 1 – No EAC 02/10. It summarises the discussions that took place during the PLA. This report should be used to support the work of the Commission and participants in the PLA in disseminating the results of the activities of the PLA to countries' stakeholders and other social partners.

The report is structured according to the objectives of the PLA and draws on a range of presentations, country cases and workshop discussions that formed the PLA. The agenda for the PLA is included in Annex A.

## **2 PLA STRUCTURE AND PROCESS**

### **Day 1**

Day 1 began with a welcoming address by Brendan Murphy, President of the Cork Institute of Technology. CIT has 10,000 full-time equivalent HE students; many of them pursue part-time continuous professional development. CIT has an ever evolving and increasingly diverse student body; the ways that programmes are structured and devised thus play an important role in supporting the flexibility provided to learners. The increasing use of work-based learning challenges the tradition of many HEIs to consider only learning at the institution as 'valid' formal learning. Long-term relationships with business partners are of increasing importance for CIT.

Chiara Riondino (European Commission) gave an overview of relevant developments at European level which provided a background for this PLA, summarising the central outcomes of the EASQ consultation and Eurobarometer Survey, which were finalised by the European Commission earlier this year.

Jens Bjørnavold (Cedefop) discussed the multifaceted expectations and concerns towards learning outcomes – both from a policy and practitioner level perspective and presented the results of an ongoing and a recent study related to learning outcomes. Study results show that the definition of learning outcomes varies across institutions, education and training sectors and countries. In addition, the level of detail (granularity) of descriptions varies dramatically, leading to reduced transparency and comparability. Most learning outcomes descriptions consist of a combination of action verb + object + context, but 'the devil is in the detail.'

Deirdre Goggin (Cork Institute of Technology) presented an Irish perspective on the writing of learning outcomes for assessment and validation. Many good practice examples for validation of non-formal and informal learning can be found across the country in both VET and HE. Despite good framework conditions and legal arrangements in place to support validation, a clear need for a national RPL policy was expressed.

After these plenary presentations participants were invited to attend two workshop sessions. For the two workshop sessions of the day, participants were divided into two working groups. Each session started with two to three presentations of (national) case studies, followed by an interactive discussion. Workshop session 1 discussed the topic of 'writing learning outcomes which enable the validation of non-formal and informal learning'. Session 2 discussed the topic of 'assessing learning outcomes - principles, processes, standards and challenges, including validation of informal and non-formal learning'.

### **Day 2**

Day 2 began with a performance by a group of Theatre & Drama Studies students which was thematically related to the topic of the PLA. Students had been given several key words related to the PLA, which they discussed and reflected on within the group and then transformed them into a gripping non-verbal theatrical performance. The students afterwards discussed with the PLA participants how they approached the subject and transformed the keywords into a performance.

Afterwards, Monika Auzinger and Karin Luomi-Messerer (3s) presented a synthesis of the presentations and discussions of the workshop sessions held on Day 1, reflecting on the main challenges and recommendations discussed as well as a set of issues to be further explored in relation to the writing and assessment of learning outcomes that enable the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The PLA was concluded with panel discussion on peer-to-peer recommendations supporting VNIL practices, chaired by Bryan Maguire (QQI).

The main key messages can be summarised as follows:

**Writing learning outcomes:**

- Further consideration needs to be put on the format of writing learning outcomes, including the development of a common format or guidelines that could consider the following:
  - Learning outcomes statements should be composed at least of an action verb and an objective. Context information can be included if necessary but with caution in order not to limit possibilities for transfer and validation.
  - They need to take the horizontal (dimensions of learning) as well as vertical (degree of complexity of learning) into account.
  - The degree of granularity and specificity of learning outcomes descriptions should be fit for purpose and open for validating non-formal and informal learning.
- Learning outcomes must be written to be understandable to the learner.
- The quality cycle should be applied for the development and improvement of learning outcomes statements.

**Assessing learning outcomes:**

- Learning outcomes are not sufficient on their own – assessment criteria which are linked to learning outcomes and not to assessment methods in order to facilitate validation are also important.
- While the same standards and assessment criteria have to be respected, assessment methods should be more flexible and different methods should be applied for providing evidence of learning achievements in the context of validation. However, the assessment approach should follow the principle of fairness and not be more or less demanding than assessment in formal contexts.
- The level of assessment in the validation process should be clarified: e.g it should be clear if learning outcomes are being assessed at programme level or at the level of modules/units.

- Learners (VNFIL candidates) should receive counselling on how to provide evidence of learning achieved and how their learning achievements are related to learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Quality assurance principles, frameworks and procedures are essential for building trust in assessment in the VNFIL context. Additional measures could include career tracking activities for providing evidence of success of users of validation.

**Further issues:**

- Guidance, training and capacity building is important and a community of practice should be established.
- The involvement of stakeholders from outside educational institutions in the development, provision and assessment of learning outcomes can be beneficial for both sides and partnerships should be encouraged.
- Discussing learning outcomes in cross-sectoral groups: The PLA facilitated discussion of technical and political issues in cross-sectoral groups, which are usually discussed within the respective groups or sectors only.
- Better communicating the benefits: If we manage to better communicate the benefits of cooperation between HEIs and industry to both sides, less 'pushing' might be needed.
- Cedefop invited participants to signal their interest in participating in a small working group to further explore possible contents and features of the planned learning outcomes platform, and the idea of creating a community of practice.

### **3 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLA**

#### **Why this PLA? Main developments at the EU level (cf. ppt)**

Chiara Riondino (European Commission) provided an overview of relevant developments at European level which provided a background for this PLA. At the same time, it is also the first PLA on the validation of non-formal and informal learning since the adoption of the 2012 Recommendation.

One of these developments is the 'European Area of Skills and Qualifications (EASQ)', on which the Commission carried out a public consultation and a Eurobarometer survey earlier this year, in order to collect the views of stakeholders on the problems faced by learners and workers with regard to the transparency and recognition of their skills and qualifications when moving within and between EU Member States, and on the adequacy of the related European policies and instruments.

Chiara provided a brief overview of central outcomes of the EASQ consultation, which was based on 85 position papers and 289 replies to the online questionnaire, as well as 28,000 respondents to the related Eurobarometer survey. Eurobarometer survey results show, for instance, that nearly three quarters of EU citizens agree that their education or training has provided them with the necessary skills to find a job in line with their qualifications; however, there are great variations across countries. Results from the online questionnaire suggest that there is wide agreement among respondents that the use of the learning outcomes approach could support the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) (83 percent strongly or partially agree). However, there are some differences across different sectors of learning.

It was concluded that a clear and detailed definition of learning outcomes is of paramount importance to ensure transparency and understanding of qualifications. However, there is no straightforward concept of a 'clear and detailed' definition, as this largely depends on the context and purpose for which they are being developed. Also, it was pointed out that the rewriting of standards, curricula and qualifications in terms of requires significant investment in terms of time and resources. It was also argued that not all competences can be described in terms of learning outcomes (e.g. civic competences).

#### **The writing of learning outcomes – main challenges and opportunities (cf. ppt)**

Jens Bjørnavold (Cedefop) presented preliminary results from an ongoing study on the use of the learning outcomes approach. These results demonstrate that the shift a learning outcomes-based approach is clearly gaining speed, increasingly also in the field of higher education, and that learning outcomes are not just a 'policy hype'.

Jens discussed the multifaceted expectations of, and concerns about learning outcomes, from the perspectives of policy and practice. Critical questions about a learning outcomes approach illustrate that learning outcomes alone do not guarantee increased transparency, relevance and quality.

Jens also presented the main findings of a **2014 Cedefop study** on the writing and practical application of learning outcomes. Based on an analysis of learning outcomes based VET standards and HE study programmes in ten countries, the study aimed to identify the main options and challenges in writing learning outcomes, and to identify possibilities for improvement.

Study results show that the definition of learning outcomes varies across institutions, education and training sectors and countries, and, as one might expect, VET sectors tend to have a more harmonised approach compared to HE. The structuring of learning outcomes descriptions varies both with regard to a) the horizontal description of domains of learning and as regards, and b) the vertical dimension, expressing the increasing complexity of learning. Both these dimensions are crucial, but very often are not explicit in standards and programmes. In addition, the level of detail (granularity) of descriptions varies dramatically, leading to reduced transparency and comparability.

The writing of learning outcomes needs to be fit for purpose. The purpose of a learning outcomes description (full qualifications/programme vs. programme or qualification units vs. assessment criteria) will influence its level of detail (granularity). For the learning outcomes approach to be relevant to validation, outcomes must be written in a way which acknowledges the existence of different learning pathways and contexts.

Cedefop plans to set up a learning outcomes platform in 2015, providing examples of learning outcomes descriptions and applications used across Europe, including guidance materials.

### **An Irish perspective on the writing of leaning outcomes for assessment and validation, incorporating informal and non-formal learning** (cf. ppt)

Deirdre Goggin (Cork Institute of Technology) presented an Irish perspective on the writing of learning outcomes for assessment and validation. Education and training in Ireland has been through turbulent times in recent years: the creation of QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) in 2012 has led to considerable changes in further and higher education. Currently in the process of economic recovery after a severe economic crisis, Ireland also has to deal with significant skills gaps. While Ireland performs very well in terms of tertiary education attainment, some room for improvement has been identified in the area of lifelong learning.

As regards the validation of non-formal and informal learning, there is evidence of a large number of examples of good practice, both in VET and HE and often including participation by employers or industry sector. An RPL practitioner network will be launched next February. The VET sector is generally considered to be more flexible in how learning is achieved and evidenced than HE, which is considered to be less open to the diversity of learners and less interested in providing that same level of flexibility. Legal arrangements are in place to support RPL, however there is no systematic approach to validation, i.e. no national RPL strategy. As a result, validation arrangements much depend on the motivation of the respective institutions and organisations. Such national RPL policy would provide institutions with a specific direction and would also help to convince those who are more difficult to convince of the benefits of RPL.

Deirdre also provided an illustrative example from HE: CIT currently offers a degree in Cloud Computing, which has been developed in partnership with several companies. She told the group of the discussions they had at the initial stages about the demand for and the structure of the programme which was all done in consultation with industry experts. As regards delivery, some modules are delivered (and partly also assessed) by workplace experts; they are much involved in CIT's quality assurance procedures. CIT is responsible for validation arrangements.

#### 4 **WORKSHOP SESSION 1: WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES WHICH ENABLE THE VALIDATION OF NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING**

For the two workshop sessions of the day, participants were divided into two working groups. Each session started with two to three presentations of (national) case studies, followed by an interactive discussion. In the first session, delegates were asked to discuss and comment on the following questions:

- What are the **practical challenges** in the consideration and inclusion of informal and non formal learning in the development of learning outcomes?
  - Do the existing systems of using learning outcomes in VET and Higher Education actually prevent the inclusion of informal and non formal learning? Where this is the case, how can these inhibitions be overcome?
- How can learning outcomes be **written in a sufficiently flexible manner** to combine openness to informal and non-formal learning and at the same time protect and uphold **quality and rigour**? Can flexibility undermine rigour? What might challenge this perspective?
- What is the **optimum way of constructing learning outcomes** and programme learning outcomes with a view **to facilitate validation**, within the HE and VET sector? Is there a difference between what works best in either sector?

The first working group focused on the context of vocational education and training. The second group focused on higher education.

<b>Case Study 1: VET context</b>	
<i>Session chaired by Erzsébet Szlamka, Educational Authority Hungary</i>	
<b>Latvia</b> Ina Masule, Deputy Director State Education Quality Service Quality Assurance Department	<p><i>'The Validation of the Professional Competence Acquired outside Formal Education System of Latvia'</i></p> <p>The legal regulation for a procedure for the validation of the professional competence acquired outside the formal education system was adopted in 2011. Since then, the validation procedure has been coordinated by the State Education Quality Service (IKVD).</p> <p>Candidates must be at least 18 years old. Counselling on the process and its requirements is provided free of charge; only the examination procedure itself is subject to payment of a fee. Candidates are admitted to the process upon application. IKVD maintains a public register of professional competence assessment bodies (<a href="http://www.ikvd.gov.lv">www.ikvd.gov.lv</a>). The exam then consists of a theoretical and a practical part. Successful candidates receive a certificate, certifying the completion of a State recognised vocational qualification. The exam can be taken for the full qualification only; for the practical exam, assessors from the professional sector are used. The assessment procedure is basically the same as for candidates from the formal route, with one exception: exams are not centralised.</p>

	<p>Between 2011 and 2013, 1,557 individuals have completed the validation process, mostly for qualifications related to EQF levels 3 and 4. The validation procedure is currently available for 140 different vocational qualifications and at 41 vocational education institutions across the country (which must undergo a licensing programme first).</p>
<p><b>Slovenia</b>  Urška Marentič, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)</p>	<p><i>'National Vocational Qualifications in Slovenia'</i></p> <p>The Slovenian qualifications framework distinguishes between educational qualifications (formal system) and two types of qualifications obtained outside the formal system: national vocational qualifications (NVQ) and supplementary qualifications. There are thus two types of VET qualifications: those acquired in school-based education are included in the educational qualifications, the others are part of the NVQ system.</p> <p>Occupational standards form the basis for VET qualifications. They are developed on the basis of the respective job profile, together with experts from the respective field, and define the related knowledge, skills and professional competences. Occupational standards are the same for the vocational education programmes and for the NVQ. Educational qualifications are however broader in scope, as they include general education as well.</p> <p>On the basis of the occupational standard, the 'NVQ catalogue' is prepared; it defines the knowledge, skills and competence required to obtain certain NVQ. The occupational standards defines a list of core tasks, which are further described in terms of skills and knowledge in the NVQ catalogue, including examples of assessment tasks for each core task. The NVQ catalogue also includes information on the criteria and methods of assessment, examples of assessment tasks, equipment requirements for providers and requirements for members of assessment committees.</p> <p>The NVQ system allows for the recognition of prior learning. Candidates for the validation procedure must be 18 years old. Each candidate is provided with advice and counselling, both on the procedure itself and on how to create the candidate's personal portfolio. Counsellors may suggest additional training programmes for the candidate to fulfil the requirements. The assessment committee will then evaluate the candidate's portfolio in relation to the occupational standard. If candidates fulfil all requirements, they will be awarded the NVQ certificate. Usually, however, some learning outcomes will need to be assessed; the contents of the exam are decided on individually for each candidate, based on the portfolio provided. There are comprehensive QA arrangements in place for the NVQ system (e.g. accreditation of providers, training requirements for counsellors and assessors).</p>

<b>Case Study 2: HE context</b>	
<b>Session chaired by Cat O'Driscoll, European Students Union (ESU)</b>	
<p><b>France</b></p> <p>Alain Nicolas, University of Versailles</p>	<p><i>'How to present and validate learning outcomes using a standardised approach? Presentation of an interuniversity method bound to APEL and LLL'</i></p> <p>Since 2002, the possibility of obtaining whole diploma on the basis of validation of prior experiential learning (VES, VAE) has been offered in France. Also universities have to describe diploma in terms of learning outcomes and display it in the RNCP.</p> <p>The approach presented was jointly developed by three French universities within the project 'UNIVERSUD-VALIDEXPER'. The main objective of the project was to develop on-line support for candidates of accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL). The approach was inspired by the Tuning methodology and includes the description of all diplomas in terms of learning outcomes in a standardised way.</p> <p>Learning outcomes are composed of a 'verb of action' (cf. BLOOM's taxonomy) and a 'direct object' and are contextualised. A distinction is made between</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transversal learning outcomes (related to Bachelor or Master level; not specific to a discipline; acquired in learning activities related to internships, languages, computing; identified and valued by the university community);</li> <li>▪ Specific learning outcomes (disciplinary, professional or pre-professional; contextualised activities; related to the main objectives of teaching staff).</li> </ul> <p>For each learning outcome, the expected degree of autonomy is specified whereby four levels are distinguished ('NAME': N: notion, A: application, M: Mastership, E: expertise).</p>
<p><b>Estonia</b></p> <p>Küllli All, Ministry of Education and Research</p> <p>Inga Vau, Estonian Information Technology College</p>	<p><i>'Recognition of prior learning - Estonian case' / Writing learning outcomes which enable the validation of non formal and informal learning'</i></p> <p>The Estonian NQF (EstQF) is an overarching framework consisting of four sub-frameworks with separate level descriptors. Qualifications included in the EstQF have to be learning outcomes-based and programmes/curricula need to be based on occupational standards (both in VET and HE, if they exist). An occupational qualification standard refers to 'work parts', related competences and performance indicators.</p> <p>HE standards have been in place since 2007 and require that RPL needs to be taken into account for admission purposes, for credit transfer, as well as for RPEL.</p> <p>Learning outcomes are a prerequisite for validating non formal and informal learning (in most cases this refers to work experience).</p> <p>Learning outcomes are composed of the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verb: defines the level of understanding and shows the depths of competences (e.g. SOLO [Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome] can be used for classifying learning outcomes in terms of</li> </ul>

	<p>their complexity); verbs such as 'know' or 'be familiar' should not be used because it is not clear what is meant; verbs such as 'describe', 'analyse' etc. refer to different levels of competence; such verbs also clarify for the learner what is expected from him/her;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Object: specifies the aim the activities are directed at (e.g. write an 'essay').</li></ul> <p>Sometimes, 'limitations' are used e.g. by adding an adverb (such as 'independently') or by specifying the context (e.g. 'in the public sector', 'in the international market') referring to more or less complex situations. It was stressed that unnecessary limitations should be avoided.</p> <p>Additionally, assessment criteria are formulated which provide information on the conditions the competences should be demonstrated/proved. These criteria should be linked to the learning outcomes and not to the assessment methods in order to be open for RPL.</p>
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### **Discussions:**

*What are the lessons to be learned from existing practice and systems in place?*

- It is possible to obtain a full qualification on the basis of validation.
- Social and professional needs as well as academic and research needs contribute to the definition of a diploma.

*What are the practical challenges in the consideration and inclusion of informal and non-formal learning in the development of learning outcomes?*

- Separate the description of knowledge, skills and competence from where it should be acquired.
- Consider how knowledge, skills and competence might be evidenced.
- The heading of the third column in the EQF ('competence') is confusing and not always consistent with other definitions of competences (e.g. key competences for LLL, national definitions).
- Action verbs must be clearly understandable by applicants (=outsiders) – e.g. 'be familiar with' is too general/vague.
- Lack of cooperation between institutions of formal education (especially universities) and institutions outside the formal system. A more intensive and systematic exchange of information would be needed.

*Do the existing systems of using learning outcomes in VET and Higher Education in actuality prevent the inclusion of informal and non formal learning? Where this is the case, how can these inhibitions be overcome?*

- We must use language that is understandable by learners.
- It is resource intensive but well worth it.
- Significant effort in awareness rising and staff development can support inclusion.

- Finding the right balance: if learning outcomes descriptions are too specific, it might be more difficult for learners outside the formal system to have their knowledge, skills and competence validated; if they are too general, this might affect quality.
- It is not so difficult to change the system as compared to changing people's mindset. HE might not be as flexible as VET in this respect.
- VET: Validation of NFIL might be easier when qualifications based on occupational standards and job profiles.

*How can learning outcomes be written in a sufficiently flexible manner to combine openness to informal and non-formal learning and at the same time protect and uphold quality and rigour? Can flexibility undermine rigour? What might challenge this perspective?*

- It is important to consider how the attainment of learning might be evidenced already at the stage of writing learning outcomes.
- Learning outcomes should not be used in isolation, but be accompanied by assessment criteria. Assessment criteria should be written with a reference to the learning outcomes and not to the assessment method.
- Increased involvement of stakeholders in the process of writing learning outcomes (labour market actors, but in particular also the non-formal sector): LO development in an inclusive process should help maintain their openness.
- It is important to refer to soft skills; in many qualifications, they are of great relevance.

*What is the role of other stakeholders beyond policy makers and traditional systems of education and training, such as sectorial organisations, in the development/definition and assessment/validation of learning outcomes? If a more reliable and transparent system is required what are the practical implications for cooperation processes and assessment boards, also with a view to cross-country recognition?*

- Employers and the workplace have a significant role to play.
- Writing learning outcomes is only one part of the equation; it also matters who controls the validation and recognition of learning outcomes (e.g. universities in HE).

*Who is driving this inclusive approach, is it learners, policy makers HE/VET providers, changes in ways of learning, or labour market forces?*

- Role of regulatory bodies and their acceptance of RPL – they need to trust HEIs.

*What is the optimum way of constructing learning outcomes and programme learning outcomes with a view to facilitate validation, within the HE and VET sector? Is there a difference between what works best in either sector?*

- The difference between HE and VET lies in the 'locus of authority for the determination/validation of forms of learning. In VET, it is shared with (labour market) stakeholders. In HE, universities have wide autonomy in deciding what constitutes 'valid learning'. Discussion of the locus of

authority also raised the issue of the opportunity for learners to present learning that they view as valuable, but that might not fit directly into programmes or accreditation units.

- Is increased standardisation in writing LOs the way to go?

*Challenges:*

- Terminology (e.g. 'competence').
- Use of learning outcomes in HE requires a cultural change (from objectives to outcomes).
- Mistrust – but HEIs need to open up.
- Learning outcomes are part of the wider picture of HEIs but also need to reflect the academic perspective.
- Inaccessible language: terms used for writing learning outcomes might not be understood by learners as intended by teachers; learner should be in the focus; language might need to be translated from 'academic speak' to plain language (and illustrated by giving examples); learning outcomes should be clearly understandable and ambiguity has to be avoided.
- Writing learning outcomes for programmes/qualifications and modules: How to identify the appropriate degree of specificity/generality? How to identify the necessary limitations (there might be fewer limitations at programme level but more at module level: it might be necessary to be more specific for facilitating assessment).
- Providers of non-formal learning (e.g. NQOs, training institutes) need to be encouraged to use learning outcomes. However, these providers are not recognised as a sector of their own.
- Learning takes place in many different places, but the places of certification, where validation takes place, are still much defined by the formal system.
- Quality assurance of processes of engagement, quality assurance of writing learning outcomes.
- Cost: how to manage the cost for the process of producing LO that enable validation?

*Opportunities/solutions:*

- Bringing the 'learning by doing' into institutions and bringing HEIs closer to the labour market and getting closer to the learner.
- Consistency and clarity at all levels is required: definition of content of qualifications agreed with the labour market, clear wording that is understandable for laymen, keeping only necessary limitations, clarity of assessment criteria and reliable assessors.
- Assessment criteria should be linked to learning outcomes and not to the assessment methods.
- Individual counselling is essential for VNIL.

- Stronger focus on teaching individual learners how to describe their learning outcomes (not only for the purpose of validation).
- Joint degrees between HEIs and providers of non-formal education (e.g. work places, NQOs) – as equal partners.
- Better communicate the benefits of learning outcomes that enable validation - financial incentives of teaching vs. validation.

## 5 WORKSHOP SESSION 2: ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES – PRINCIPLES, PROCESSES, STANDARDS AND CHALLENGES INCLUDING VALIDATION OF INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

In the second workshop session, delegates were asked to discuss and comment on the following questions:

- How can learning outcomes support the shift towards a more coherent, credible and reliable procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning, also with a view to **avoid the perception of 'A' or 'B' certificates**?
- Should greater consideration be given to **assessment methods** used to validate learning outcomes so that they incorporate informal and non-formal learning? If so how can we drive this nationally and transnationally?
- What are the **main features/requirements of the standards** used for **summative** purposes (i.e. with a view to obtain a qualification or parts of qualifications) compared to those used for **formative** purposes (e.g. for identification, documentation and skills audit)?

### **Case Study 3: The Development of Competence Standards for the validation of practice in Youth Work**

*Session chaired by Corinna Liersch (European Commission)*

<p><b>YEU International</b></p> <p>Marko Paunovic, YEU International</p>	<p><i>'Certification of the qualifications of youth workers in NGOs – road to a greater recognition of youth work'</i></p> <p>The definition of youth work and the context in which it operates differs significantly across countries. In EL, IT, ES for example, youth work is in legislation as part of youth employment and education. In many countries, youth workers' competences cannot be formally recognised. Many youth workers across Europe work on part-time, seasonal or voluntary basis.</p> <p>This led YEU International (Youth for Exchange and Understanding), together with other partners, to develop a tool to validate and certify learning outcomes gained through youth work, in order to provide greater recognition to youth workers. This is being done within a project under the Lifelong Learning Programme which will be finalised January 2015. Within this project, they develop youth worker competence profiles, a methodology for evaluation, and a certification process, which has also been tested. Competence profiles have been developed for junior youth worker and senior youth worker (taking into considerations the EQF descriptors for level 5 and 6), based on eight key areas identified.</p> <p>The certification procedure is carried out by an Advisory Board (three members) and includes five steps: CV evaluation and interview; online test; one-hour case study; philosophical statement; interview. All elements of the procedure can be done face-to-face (recommended) or online. The certificate shall also refer to the most important soft skills of the youth worker.</p>
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	<p>Their main aim is for youth worker to be recognised as a professional across Europe; this is not the case in many countries at the moment. They are aware that they cannot influence this directly, the project outcomes are thus intended as an example of good practice, inviting countries to use them at national level. The project report will be finalised in January 2015.</p> <p>It was also pointed out that there is a recent study by the EU 'Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union' which provides a first mapping on youth work and shows the contribution and value it has in the lives of young people throughout all member states in the EU.</p>
<p><b>Ireland</b> Hilary Tierney, Maynooth University</p>	<p>Hilary provided an overview of youth work in Ireland and how it has changed in the past years.</p> <p>Youth work is understood as a deliberate intervention in the lives of young people; it is intentional and purposeful. Youth work is often voluntary and frequently community-based and less system-based. About 400,000 people are involved in youth work in Ireland; the sector is characterised by a large reliance on volunteers. In the last few decades, the State has become increasingly involved in youth work, leading to a higher focus on outcomes. There is a Department of Children and Youth affairs. Ireland also has a Youth Work Act, which characterises youth work as voluntary, as non-formal and complementary to formal education.</p> <p>However, while there are even academic qualifications related to youth work, there is much room for improvement as regards the valuing and recognition of people's experience in youth work.</p> <p>Many youth organisation give awards for special outcomes, but their value cannot be communicated to a larger society. How can this be achieved? We need national qualifications systems for this. It is a particular challenge to give people from marginalised groups something that can get them further onwards in their lives, to give them the opportunity to have their competences validated and recognised.</p>
<p><b>EFIL</b> Izabela Jurczik- Arnold, European Federation for Intercultural Learning</p>	<p><i>'Competences gained through long-term exchange. Assessment practices and considerations'</i></p> <p>AFS organises long-time exchanges (6-12 months) for young people, aged 15-18. They are immersive – the young people live with host families and attend a local school. Exchanges are characterised by careful preparation, support and follow-up through seminars, individual counselling and ongoing guidance by local volunteers. The exchanges are considered as non-formal learning, which include however elements of formal education (school attendance) and informal learning.</p> <p>AFS have developed their own competence framework, which distinguishes 16 educational objectives in four categories: global, cultural, interpersonal and personal. In order to be able to evaluate the competences gained by young people during their exchange, they launched an Educational Impact Assessment Pilot. It focuses on 7 out of the 15 educational objectives, and is based on monthly assignment before, during and after the exchange.</p> <p>Methods used are mostly qualitative, such as self-assessment questionnaires, individual monitoring, interviews, group reflection, simulations or personal narratives. Narratives will often be related to</p>

	<p>critical incidents and are considered as a particularly important tool.</p> <p>What to consider when assessing intercultural/transversal competences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formative aspect of learning: the learner learns from the assessment to set further learning goals.</li> <li>▪ There are cultural differences in approaching self &amp; external assessment.</li> <li>▪ Longitudinal aspect (comparison over time).</li> <li>▪ Involvement of many actors in the assessment (including the learner).</li> <li>▪ Using assessment scales for competences involving personal values is controversial.</li> <li>▪ Soft skills are hard to quantify and require complex, multi-dimensional assessment; can sometimes only be assessed when interacting with groups and situations.</li> </ul>
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**Case Study 4: Extensibility - validation of learning in employment, and for different purposes, including promotions, access to qualifications, programmes offered in VET or HE**

*Session chaired by Caroline Egerton (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment UK)*

<p><b>Ireland</b></p> <p>Irene Sheridan, Cork Institute of Technology</p>	<p><i>'Extensibility – validation of Higher Education learning in employment. Examples and considerations'</i></p> <p>CIT recognises that learning also happens outside of the traditional educational settings at all levels and that the workplace itself provides an important context for learning. CIT has developed courses in cooperation with employers and during the last years has developed several programmes including workplace learning.</p> <p>Some examples were presented to illustrate how such courses and modules can be jointly designed and how learning outside the formal setting can be assessed and validated as part of higher education awards. The examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work placement in Third Level Programmes: At CIT, work placements are included in many programmes. It is important to plan such placements carefully in terms of learning outcomes to be achieved and how these achievements can be evidenced. Furthermore, the involvement of employers in assessment needs to be considered and learners should gain credits that contribute to their awards.</li> <li>▪ Partnership with the Irish Naval Service: A specific strand has been developed of a Honours degree course in nautical science. Four industry specific modules for employees are designed to be taken at the workplace (whilst at sea) by the members of the Irish Naval Service. This strand of the award runs alongside other modules which can be taken by learners who are not members of the defence forces. Learning and assessment is done in partnership and graduates of both routes receive a CIT award (learning outcomes are the same).</li> <li>▪ Cloud computing programme: Some years ago, EMC identified a need for up-skilling their employees to Masters level. CIT together with EMC and other leading industry players jointly developed the</li> </ul>
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	<p>Masters in Cloud Computing based on these needs. The programme is also delivered in cooperation with CIT and companies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice: This programme was developed in collaboration with American Chamber Ireland, employers, HEIs and the HE Authority. Modules with a total of 30 credits (MA level) were offered as work-based learning. Progression and mobility is an important principle for developing programmes.</li> </ul> <p>The lessons learned include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Professional development of teachers is important (e.g. CIT has developed a module on RPL)</li> <li>▪ Partnerships with employers are important but there are significant challenges for HE in planning for the co-creation of knowledge with enterprise/workplace partners</li> <li>▪ Grades should be given in workplace learning</li> <li>▪ Assessment instruments and methods for 'non-classroom' learning have to be developed</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Netherlands</b>  John Geven, Rockwool</p>	<p>'VPL at ROCKWOOL'</p> <p>Rockwool offers the following certificates based on VPL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Since 2001, a nationally recognized certificate can be gained via VPL (including learning on the job).</li> <li>▪ Since 2009, the ROCKWOOL Professional Competence Assessment (PCA) is offered (company specific certificate; target groups include immigrants, employees with dyslectics etc.). The PCA it is not related to any national qualification but it can be used as a first step. Employees leaving the company can take certificate with them – it includes competence descriptions.</li> <li>▪ Since 2013, special needs students (e.g. with autism) can gain the ROCKWOOL certificate which is related to basic competences. Assessment is done over a period of time based on observation.</li> </ul> <p>A new project starts on 24 November: 'CH-Q project Roermond' (target group: citizens of Roermond with disadvantaged backgrounds ).</p> <p>The lessons learned include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Success factors: appreciation, time, financial, good employer, higher efficiency, more productive use of competences available in the company</li> <li>▪ Critical factors: home front (time consuming for employees), low advice from secondary schools, mentoring in company</li> <li>▪ Pitfalls: manager overestimates employee – de-motivation; cooperation between HR and employee in completing portfolio (different expectations); ownership needs to be clear (who is owner of process, portfolio?)</li> <li>▪ In general: VPL is less cost-intensive than 'standard education'!</li> </ul>

*How can learning outcomes support the shift towards a more coherent, credible and reliable procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning, also with a view to avoid the perception of 'A' or 'B' certificates?*

- Cooperation (dialogue!) for constructing learning outcomes that correspond to needs.
- Consistency of writing learning outcomes is an important aspect.
- Learning outcomes descriptions must not be too prescriptive.
- Better documentation of learning outcomes is needed. Learning outcomes DO include non-formal and informal learning; the problem is often how they are presented/described.
- Some learning outcomes (in particular soft/social skills) tend to never be mentioned: mentioning them would facilitate VNFIL.
- Put more focus on the social/life skills dimension: Is there a vision that people can have youth work, caring for their children or parents validated as part of their (HE) qualification?
- Capacity building needed to develop sharp learning outcomes that also stand the test of time.
- HE, VET, GE: there are often different ways of writing learning outcomes.
- Principle of having a common standard is very important.
- Trust is essential
- The equivalent perception of certificates requires much time. Career tracking might be used for creating trust in various learning pathways to help people believe in the benefits of VNFIL.
- Learning outcomes must be measurable through demonstration, application.
- Learning outcomes must be supported by robust criteria on assessment and validation.

*Should greater consideration be given to assessment methods used to validate learning outcomes so that they incorporate informal and non formal learning? If so how can we drive this nationally and transnationally?*

- Yes, greater consideration should be given to assessment methods that are fit for purpose (VNIL).
- Assessment methods should be broader – e.g. portfolio – but the learning outcomes (as reference for assessment) should be the same. Also consider online tools to display or demonstrate learning.
- Triangulation of methods.
- We should not be stricter in VPL than in the formal system – apply the same principle.
- Concern: methods for assessment should not be too flexible. How to quality assure assessment? How to avoid misuse (e.g. by private providers who want to make profit)? There need to be some quality criteria! Assessment needs to be done in a quality assured way - quality assured procedures need to be in place and these need to be centrally defined.

- Transnational recognition is a function of national recognition of qualifications.
- If a national qualification has been awarded it means it has been recognised at national level and should therefore also be accepted transnationally. The certificate does not show the pathway (VPL or formal education).
- Assessment is a rigid word; terms like 'providing evidence of/presenting/documenting' are more open and point to more flexible ways leading to validation.
- Assessment of informal learning should be based on a quality assurance procedure.

*What are the main features/requirements of the standards used for summative purposes (i.e. with a view to obtain a qualification or parts of qualifications) compared to those used for formative purposes (e.g. for identification, documentation and skills audit)?*

- Formative assessment: Should come first – including self-reflection, identification of achievements and gaps as well as possible pathways.
- Formative purposes are much wider than 'identification' or 'documentation'. It is also about learning to learn and improving the educational processes.
- Summative assessment: An existing framework/standard is needed as reference for measuring competences of a learner.

#### *Further issues*

- Start to consider that non-formal education on its own can prepare people for their work. Non-formal education often continues to be considered as something that feeds into VET or HE, but not to have a value of its own.

## 6 **SYNTHESIS – WRITING AND ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES THAT ENABLE THE VALIDATION OF NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES- WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE ARISEN WITHIN THE WORKSHOPS?**

Monika Auzinger and Karin Luomi-Messerer (3s) summarised the presentations in the workshop and presented observations, recommendations and further issues pointed out in the workshop sessions.

### **1. General observations / challenges**

First of all, when discussing the writing of learning outcomes, **it needs to be clarified whether we are talking about the same thing**:

- Learning outcomes can be written for programme/qualification level, modules/units, or assessment criteria. They can be written for different purposes focussing on different degrees of specificity or details.
- Across different countries or sectors, a wide range of terminology is used. In particular the term 'competence' seems to be challenging as the discussions related to the heading of the third column of the EQF descriptors table ('competence') show.

It needs to be acknowledged that **countries are clearly at different stages when it comes to VNIL**. In France, for example, the possibility of obtaining all diplomas through validation has existed since 2002, whereas in other countries only few possibilities for VNIL are offered at HE level.

**Stakeholder involvement** (including representatives of youth sector, voluntary work, companies) is possible in all phases - development of learning outcomes, provision of learning, assessment. Cooperation and partnerships can be beneficial for providers in the formal system as well as for stakeholders outside the formal system.

### **2. Writing Learning Outcomes - Recommendations**

The use of learning outcomes should follow the '**quality cycle**': design – achievement of learning – assessment/validation – credit/award – reflection/review/redesign (e.g. is the verb right, is the learning outcomes statement clear enough, is it well written, well designed). It is of particular importance to not skip the review stage

**Transparency and comprehensibility** are crucial aspects and the learner has to be clearly kept in mind:

- Learning outcomes are to be written to be understandable to the learner;
- Transparent information should be provided to the learner;
- In the context of VNFIL, counselling is important for 'translating' learning outcomes to an applicant's experience.

When writing learning outcomes, the following aspects need **to be considered**:

- Sources and references to be taken into account – e.g. degree profiles, occupational profiles, academic needs, research. Which are relevant for the specific purpose the learning outcomes are expected to fulfil?
- Programmes/qualifications usually include different types of learning outcomes (e.g. transversal, professional and/or disciplinary). The balance between these different types needs to be established.
- Learning outcomes should reflect the specific degree of complexity. Different approaches can be used. For example, in the Estonian case presented (HE), the level of understanding is used by referring to the SOLO-taxonomy, whereas in the French case (HE) different levels of autonomy are distinguished (by referring to 'NAME' - Notion, Application, Mastership, Expertise). In each case an approach that is fit for purpose needs to be identified.

There seems to be a common understanding that **learning outcomes statements should be composed of an action verb** and an **objective**. Whereas the definition of the objective seems to be quite straight forward, the selection of the relevant verb seems to be more challenging. For example, discussions are related to the type of verbs that are suitable for describing learning outcomes: Should they refer to observable actions only or to the representation of learning and is 'know' a suitable verb?

In many cases, guidelines for writing learning outcomes also recommend to include information related to the **context**. However, there are different views on how much context information should be provided. On the one hand, learning outcomes statements without any context information could be too broad, general or – in the worst case - meaningless. On the other hand, too detailed descriptions limit possibilities for validation (and transfer). Thus, it is recommended to reflect on the necessary 'specification/limitation' of the context and to unnecessary degree of detail.

**Awareness raising and capacity building** activities are important to enhance recognition of the benefits of learning outcomes-based approaches and the acceptance of VNIL. For example, training is needed for writing/understanding/using/applying learning outcomes.

Guidelines for writing learning outcomes are useful tools for informing practitioners. **Examples** can provide concrete pictures on how learning outcomes statements could look like. However, when using examples one has to be **cautious** because they can be informative but might also impose a specific format (which is not necessarily fit for purpose in another context).

### **3. Assessing Learning Outcomes - Recommendations**

It is suggested considering which **terminology** should be used in the context of VNIL: The term 'assessment' is often considered as too rigid and too much linked to the formal system; maybe 'providing evidence', 'demonstrating' could be used instead.

For the purpose of assessment or providing evidence of learning, learning outcomes are not enough: **assessment criteria** are needed. Assessment criteria should be **linked to learning outcomes** and not to assessment

methods otherwise VNIL is not possible. For example, the assessment criteria for a learning outcome statement referring to 'writing a scientific text' should not be linked to a specific 'scientific text', such as an essay with a specific number of words and references. It should be possible to include other forms of evidence for facilitating VNIL, such as previously published articles.

Thus, while the same standards and assessment criteria have to be respected, **assessment methods** should be more **flexible** and different methods should be used (e.g. portfolio, self-assessment, interviews, narratives, case studies, work samples, observation, skills demonstrations). It also needs to be considered that learning outcomes can be achieved AND assessed in different environments (classroom, workplace).

In general, it is advisable to **anticipate the required evidence** already **when writing the learning outcomes**.

**Fairness** is an important aspect in the context of VNIL: The assessment approach should not be more or less demanding or strict etc. than in formal contexts. Sometimes a tendency can be observed to pose higher standards to candidates of VNIL than to 'traditional' learners. However, it needs to be considered that the process is demanding for candidates anyway and they need to be highly motivated. Thus, additional barriers should be avoided.

Learners (VNFIL candidates) should receive counselling because they might need support on how to provide evidence of learning achieved and how their learning achievements are related to learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Assessors need to be professionally trained for assessing in validation contexts (e.g. regarding the application of different assessment methods and procedures or the counselling of learners).

Quality assurance principles, frameworks and procedures are essential for building trust in assessment in the VNFIL context.

#### **4. Issues to be further explored**

When discussing the writing of learning outcomes for assessment and validation a lot of assumptions can be observed. These assumptions are not always supported by evidence. Examples include:

- There are huge differences between disciplines or areas regarding the degree of difficulty of writing and assessing learning outcomes.
- Assessment of transversal competences is difficult.
- Some learning outcomes cannot be assessed at all.
- While not totally ignoring the knowledge dimension, VNFIL shifts the weight to skills and competences
- The use of learning outcomes narrows learning.

Further issues that could be explored include:

- What is the reference for VNFIL: programme level learning outcomes or learning outcomes of modules/units? What are the pros and cons, challenges and implications of the choice made?
- How should the results of assessment in the context of VNFIL be expressed: by a 'pass/fail' statement or by giving grades?
- What is the value of in-house certificates outside the specific company? To what extent should companies encouraged to link such certificates to qualifications from the formal system?
- How is the ownership of the VNFIL process and of its result defined? What are the implications of the specific choice made?
- Learning takes place in many different places, but validation is still much defined by the formal system. How and to what extent can this hierarchic relationship be changed? What are the prerequisites for such change?
- What is the value of qualifications gained through VNFIL without any equivalent counterparts in formal education (i.e. VNFIL is not just another pathway leading to a qualification from the formal system; it leads to a qualification outside the formal system)?
- Cost-benefit analysis: It is assumed that validating existing skills and competences can be less expensive than having individuals follow traditional educational programmes to achieve/recognise the same learning outcomes. How can the costs actually be calculated? Which aspects must be included? What other economic benefits can VNFIL bring? How can they be calculated?
- Partnerships between education providers and industry partners can be beneficial for both sides but also include the potential of tension. For example, companies are interested in qualifications satisfying their commercial interests whereas education providers see the need for more transferable qualifications (i.e. not too closely linked to a specific company). The challenges and success factors of achieving an appropriate balance could be further explored.
- How successful are users of VNFIL actually in their future career (e.g. at the labour market or in further learning)? Career tracking activities could be used for providing evidence of success of users of validation (and for promoting trust in VNFIL).
- Who are actually the drivers behind validation and what are the specific aspects encouraging these activities (e.g. regulatory requirements, national strategy, demand from labour market [e.g. demand for new skills], local businesses, corporate social responsibility of companies, individual learners)?

Based on the aspects presented, the group discussed on how these issues could be taken forward in a European setting. Central ideas mentioned are the planned **inventory of learning outcomes** to be developed by Cedefop, the possibility of developing a **community of practice** and the formation of country groups or clusters.

*Inventory of learning outcomes:*

- The idea of developing an inventory of learning outcomes was clearly welcomed by participants.
- Awareness of the level of operation: It needs to be decided which level will be focused on. At which level can we intervene?
- Existing/under development EU initiatives must be taken into account (e.g. ESCO; EQF; competence reference frameworks).
- Several countries already have a significant collection of guidance materials or interactive tools on writing learning outcomes, which other countries could benefit from. It was however also pointed out that the context should be carefully considered before deciding whether a document or approach can be transferred. What is good practice in one country is not necessarily good practice in another. Do we need a 'taxonomy of contexts', i.e. some strategy to arrange the material in a purposeful manner?
- It was suggested exploring the core principles of learning outcomes as a starting point – to make sure there is a common understanding of the concept of learning outcomes.
- Possible contents: examples of learning outcomes, guidance material, case studies, interactive content.

*Community of practice:*

- Participants generally welcomed the idea of forming a community of practice. It was suggested forming subgroups on specific issues. There could also be clusters of countries facing similar challenges.

It was also pointed out that the 2014 Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning has recently been published on the Cedefop website<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

## **7 PANEL DISCUSSION: FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The peer learning activity was concluded with panel discussion on peer-to-peer recommendations supporting VNIL practices, chaired by Bryan Maguire (QQI).

Panelists: Jens Bjørnavold (Cedefop), Yolande Fermon (FR), Gudmunda Kristinsdottir (IS), Marko Paunovic (YEU International), Evgenia Pekaj (BG), Chiara Riondino (COM), John Scattergood (IE).

The group in particular discussed the main outcomes and issues raised at this PLA, on possible ways to move forward and specific steps ahead in the process.

### *About this peer learning activity*

- Discussing learning outcomes in cross-sectoral groups: The PLA allowed to discuss technical and political issues in cross-sectoral groups, which are usually discussed within the respective groups or sectors only.
- Bridging role of learning outcomes: The PLA showed that learning outcomes can be the focus of dialogue between HEIs and employers.

### *Key issues raised – learning outcomes*

- LO must be written at a more capacious – 'welcoming' – level. Clarity is paramount.
- No standard way to describe learning outcomes: Programme outcomes differ from module outcomes. For module outcomes, the only ones who can really write them are those directly involved in the matter (e.g. by teaching the module).
- Learning outcomes cannot be considered as a technical issue only.
- It must be considered that in many countries, learning outcomes are still not ubiquitous.

### *Key issues raised – other aspects*

- Importance of awareness raising and capacity building for teachers/trainers.
- Notion of evidence for learning: Providers have to extent their notion on what is evidence for learning. What else can be considered – such as portfolios, narratives, presentations, non-verbal methods, interviews.
- Better communicating the benefits: If we manage to better communicate the benefits of cooperation between HEIs and industry to both sides, less 'pushing' might be needed.
- There is quality assurance in non-formal learning too – QA principles and methods, and assessor requirements. This should be better communicated to generate trust in the outcomes.

*What's ahead?*

- The central outcomes of this PLA will be reported to the EQF Advisory Group at its next meeting, 2-3 December 2014.
- There are rough plans to organise a PLA in France in 2015 on validation and employment – the use of validation to build a career pathways. This has not been discussed in detail yet nor has it been yet proposed to the EQF AG.
- Cedefop invited participants to signal their interest in participating in a small working group to further explore possible contents and features of the planned learning outcomes platform, and the idea of creating a community of practice.

## ANNEX A – AGENDA



### THE WRITING OF LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ASSESSMENT AND VALIDATION

#### Peer learning activity in Cork, Ireland

**Date:** 19 and 20 November 2014

**Place:** Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland [www.cit.ie](http://www.cit.ie)

**Number of participants:** cca 45

#### AGENDA

**Wednesday 19 11 2014**

#### **08.45 – 09.10 Registration**

09.15– 9.25 **Opening of the meeting** – Dr Brendan Murphy , President, Cork Institute of Technology

09.25 – 9.45 Why this PLA? Main developments at EU level – European Commission - Chiara Riondino

9.45 – 10.15 The writing of learning outcomes – main challenges and opportunities - Cedefop – Jens Bjornavold

10.15– 10.30 An Irish perspective on the writing of learning outcomes for assessment and validation, incorporating informal and non formal learning - Cork Institute of Technology- Deirdre Goggin

#### **10.30 – 11.00 COFFEE BREAK**

11.00 – 13.00 **Workshop session 1: Writing learning outcomes which enable the validation of non formal and informal learning.**

11.00 – 11.15 Plenary setting out key questions for case study presentations by country representatives. Chair, Mr Ernesto Villalba –Garcia, Cedefop

11.15 – 13.00 Case Studies and Discussions in two parallel workshops considering national approach, internal challenges and actions, integrating negotiated employment standards, leading to recommendations regarding writing enabling learning outcomes.

**Case Study 1: VET context** - Chair Erzsébet Szlamka - Educational Authority Hungary

Ms Ina Masule – Latvia

Ms Urška Marentic – Slovenia

**Case Study 2: HE Context** – Chair Cat O’ Driscoll – ESU

Mr Alain Nicolas – France

Mrs Inga Vau – Estonia

**13.00 – 14.30 LUNCH**

14.30 – 16.30 **Workshop session 2 Assessing Learning Outcomes- principles, processes, standards and challenges including validation of informal and non-formal learning**

14.30 – 14.45 Plenary setting out key questions for case study presentations by country representatives. Chair: Mr Ernesto Villalba –Garcia, Cedefop

14.45 – 16.30 Case studies and discussions in two parallel workshops, considering the practical challenges of assessing learning outcomes in the context of individual learner achievement.

**Case Study 3: The Development of Competence Standards for the validation of practice in Youth Work** - Chair Corinna Liersch – European Commission

Mr Marko Paunovic – YEU International

Ms Hilary Tierney – Maynooth University

Ms Izabela Jurczik-Arnold – European Federation for Intercultural Learning

**Case Study 4: Extensibility- validation of learning in employment, and for different purposes, including promotions, access to qualifications, programmes offered in VET or HE** - Chair Caroline Egerton - Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment UK

Ms Irene Sheridan – Cork Institute of Technology

Mr John Geven – Rockwool, Training and Education partner

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**Thursday 20 11 2014**

09.00 - 10.00 **Stimulus – An inspirational/ motivational presentation teasing out some of the issues and experiences of VNFIL**

10.00 – 11.00 **Synthesis** – writing and assessing learning outcomes that enable the validation of non formal and informal learning for different purposes- what recommendations have arisen within the workshops?

**11.00 – 11.30 COFFEE**

11.30 – 13.00 **Final conclusions and recommendations**

***A panel response and open conversation, leading to peer-to-peer recommendations supporting VNFIL practices.*** Chair Mr Bryan Maguire, Quality and Qualifications Ireland

Panel discussion involving representative input from national authorities, education and training institutions, employers, European Commission and CEDEFOP.

**13.00 – 15.00 LUNCH**

