

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The GR-EAT project (2014-2016) will as an end result provide guidelines for youth organisations, supporting them to develop internal recognition systems for their volunteers' competencies. Additionally, this project aims to provide policy recommendations in order to improve the recognition of volunteering and to bring to the forefront the acknowledgement of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) taking place within youth organisations.

As validation bridges all stakeholders in lifelong learning strategies, the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) conducted a joint report analysing external stakeholders' expectations and needs regarding competences and recognition processes of non-formal and informal learning. EUCIS-LLL wrote a report from a European perspective, taking into account employers' needs and expectations on the competences of young people and existing recognition tools. VUB provided an in depth review identifying the needs and expectations from formal education stakeholders in regards to competences and recognition processes of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Both output reports equally brought to light similar concerns. To date, stakeholders involved have their own existent validation procedures. Therefore, all partners should be involved in their areas of expertise. The reason for this collaboration being twofold, 1) to gain confidence and 2) in order to obtain a shared 'currency' in the labour market and educational sectors. More financial incentives to recognise prior learning and to build expertise regarding this matter may encourage all stakeholders to reckon with NFIL outcomes.

The studies also revealed several gaps between the different stakeholders on the level of communication. Communication is a vital component in ensuring the right fit and addressing the possible gap between education providers' curricula and employers' needs. Additionally, when employers place more importance in defining skills and qualifications required, the resulting impact and ability to embed these functionally into education programmes for young people is heightened. Also, the mismatch or complementation between the validation initiatives of both stakeholders is an area for future research.

Another point that was raised is that there is the existing tools to support the validation process in youth work are mainly unknown. Showing certificates is often the only thing that matters. Therefore, broaden the understanding of these tools is needed for all stakeholders because the tools not only aim to validate learning skills but also to increase overall self-confidence of volunteers. The use of self-assessment tools is important to equip young people to effectively negotiate with employers and education providers.

Indeed, it is essential that the acquired learning experiences of young people (i.e. youth field) in a NFIL context are transferable, enabling respective individuals for future professional mobility and cross-sectoral opportunities. All stakeholders need to understand the skills involved of the volunteering experience. Alternatively, youth volunteers should equally increase their employability skills and understanding about employers' respective expectations. Furthermore, volunteers should be able to have a record of their learning trajectory and communicate it in an efficient way to stakeholders. Their learning path record would enable youth to act in an informed manner: drawing up a learning agreement with education providers or responding to employers' needs. The use of self-assessment tools serves as an important validation to equip young people in effectively negotiating with employers and education providers.

Conclusively, all stakeholders should collaborate to obtain comparable measures to formal learning for NFIL. Shared understandings, trust and comparability of procedures and outcomes is therefore of crucial importance. Therefore, more qualitative research exploring the depth of informal learning is needed.

In 2015, on the occasion of its 10th anniversary, The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) became the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL-P) and adopted a new shortened name and visual identity.

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