

EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY OF VALIDATION OF NON FORMAL & INFORMAL LEARNING - CASE STUDY ICEALND



Value of Work: Validation in banking

Brief description of project / initiative: What sector does the initiative apply to? Which learners are eligible to take part? What are the methods used and what are the outcomes (e.g. qualifications)?

The project focuses on validating the competencies of service representatives and cashiers in banking. Individuals with work experience and working in the field are eligible. The target group is people with little formal education who have developed their competencies in banking through non-formal and informal learning. The main methods used are portfolio work, self –assessment, supervisor assessment, interviews and cases. The outcomes are validated learning outcomes specifying work related competencies and a portfolio describing the overall competencies of the individual. Participants have in several cases been able to have their results validated into Upper Secondary Schools and Universities towards the shortening of a study path, others have used the results for work promotion purposes or changing jobs.

Costs and benefits: costs and benefits for individuals. Please quantify cost whenever possible.

The validation process is free of charge for the individual. The project has been financed in cooperation with the Confederation of Banking and Finance Employees, the Education and Training Service Centre and the banks. Individuals have to invest their time in developing their portfolio and attending interviews usually after work hours. On the average, each participant spends about 12-15 hours directly on the project, in addition to homework.

The majority of participants are middle aged women who have not received any formal recognition of their competencies. That has been a hindrance regarding their continuing education and opportunities for promotion within their workplace. A validation of competencies, recognized by their employer, the union, Mímir – the Lifelong Learning Centre and the Educational and Training Service Centre provides them with a document which they can use for further development of their competencies and has proven to be an effective motivational factor towards continuing learning.

Duration / sustainability: How long has the project / initiative been in place? What is the potential for sustainability (e.g. is the funding sustainable, or was it short-term funding for a pilot project)?

The project started as a Leonardo pilot project; The Value of Work (2005-2007) promoted by the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC). Mímir has been the national

coordinator in close cooperation with the Confederation of Banking and Finance Employers since then. Five projects have been carried out since then, one each semester. The project continues as long as recruitment is successful and stakeholders are willing to finance it.

Quality assurance: Does the project / initiative have a quality assurance process in place? If yes, please provide a brief description of the process (and, if available, a link to further information).

The process developed and tested in the Leonardo pilot project has been followed and reviewed for improvements with regular evaluation meetings of relevant stakeholders.

Stakeholder involvement: Who are the actors involved in the validation project / initiative and what are their roles?

The Confederation of Banking and Finance Employees works towards raising the educational level of its members and was the initiator of the project. The Confederation has played a big part in the success of recruiting participants, running the projects and assisting the participants in further development after the validation. A representative from the Confederation participates actively in the steering group. They also finance the project partially.

Mímir-Lifelong Learning Centre coordinates the project, provides career guidance linked to portfolio work and personal development through individual interviews during and following validation. Mímir is responsible for gathering relevant stakeholders into a steering group for each project for regular meetings during the project and works closely with assessors.

Various banks participate in each project. Their role is to participate in the steering group and assist with recruitment and assessment through supporting their employees. Each bank provides a co-assessor who assists the main assessor in validating specific competencies of the participants. The banks finance the project partially.

The Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) has served as an advisor, mediating the experience from the original project and following developments. The ETSC also finances the project partially.

Evidence of results: Is there any data available on the results of the project / initiative so far? How many beneficiaries has the project / initiative supported?

So far, 119 participants have been validated through the five projects. All participants set educational goals for themselves at the end of the process. Success stories include increased self-confidence through discovering their strengths and potential through the development of their portfolio, validation towards the shortening of study paths at Upper Secondary Schools and at University level, as well as promotions at work. After the economic crisis, participants have expressed gratitude for this opportunity to focus on increasing their self-esteem and developing their competencies further. Many individuals return to their career counsellors long after the project for guidance and support.

Note from Haukur Harðarson about the way the validation has benefited the participants (in terms of furthering their education, career progression etc):

one of our main goals is to give out information and no one goes to VPL unless s/he has spoken to a counsellor. So the dropout is mainly before the VPL starts or after a self validation. So 119 participants have been validated: some of them come out with a full qualification but some of them only get part of the standards validated. There is as yet no data on the participants' progression, but we know that some of them have gone to HE, some of them obtained better jobs but mostly, they say that they are standing stronger in their own company and they have more self-confidence. Personnel managers in three of the (big) banks in the project agreed. The VPL is working both for the company and staff.

Evaluation: Has an internal / external evaluation been carried out? If yes and the report is available, please provide a link to or copy of the report.

No formal evaluation is in place, except for the original Leonardo project where an external and internal evaluation were conducted and reported (see: www.valueofwork.org). Regular evaluation meetings are held with relevant stakeholders for improvement purposes (internal review).

Further information: Where can further information about the project / initiative be found? Please provide links or copies of relevant reports etc.

For further information:

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Project website: www.valueofwork.org