



## Seminar

### Assessment of (non formal) learning – a 360° exploration

Vienna, 27 March – 2 April 2010

#### Background

UNIQUE experts have been involved for a number of years in European level training of trainers programmes as well as developing studies and products like the portfolio for European youth workers. Around those experts almost two years ago a working group in UNIQUE was formed to deal with the topic of Learning to Learn in adult education. The first result was the GRUNDTVIG Multilateral action research project on learning to learn which started in November 2008.

In the discussions of the working group the topic of (self-) assessment was often dealt with – a topic closely connected to the relevant policy theme of recognition of non-formal learning.

*See below the UNIQUE paper on questions and answers around assessment of non-formal learning.*

#### Aim of the seminar

- A more holistic understanding of the topic through being confronted with different perspectives .
- New inspiration and input for the future design of educational programmes and activities, policies and research projects.
- Concrete cooperation projects in the field of assessment of (non-formal) learning between actors from the three target groups – policy, practice and research.
- New questions which inspire and motivate to go further and deeper with the topic.

#### Main contents

The programme will be designed around the input from the “educational triangle” – policy, practice and research:

- Clarification of terms used: What are we talking about when we talk about assessment of (non-formal) learning?
- The policy framework: Relation to the KeyCompetence Learning to Learn & Recognition of Non-Formal Learning
- Assessing of (non-formal) learning outcomes – who, when, how?
- The potential of self-assessment – becoming more competent in Learning to Learn
- Role of educators when it comes to assessing (non-formal) learning

#### Venue

Europahaus Wien, Linzerstrasse 429, 1140 Wien; [www.europahauswien.at](http://www.europahauswien.at)

#### Participation

Please fill in the appropriate application form and send it in before **15th of December 2009**. We will inform you about the results of the selection of participants by the 22nd of December.



### Costs

This seminar is funded under the GRUNDTVIG programme of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU. All costs of participation including travel costs, board and lodging will be reimbursed 100%.



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

### Travel

Your travel costs will be reimbursed 100%. Please choose economic means of transport and – as soon as you have a confirmation of participation from our side – book as soon as possible.

**You should arrive in Vienna on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> of March and leave on Friday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2010.**





## Non formal learning – questions and reflections around assessment

**Firstly, let's clarify** the terms self-assessment and assessment:

- assessment means that somebody else (a person or body) is responsible for the description and valuation of the learning outcomes of a learner
- self-assessment means that the learner is responsible for the description and valuation of his/her learning outcomes

Or to say it in simple words: a self-assessment is signed by the learner and an assessment is signed by an external person/body.

### Assessment

Bringing (external) assessment into a non-formal learning activity would, when done in an appropriate way, certainly raise the recognition of the activity and of the participants. It would mean 'formalising' it.

From a methodological point of view there should not be so many problems. In a way it would add an extra step after the self-assessment, through confirming or checking the self-assessment by others.

The challenges are however in more political dimensions. Three main questions need to be answered before going into that process:

- who are external assessors?
- what is going to be assessed against what standards?
- how and by whom is this assessment recognised?

External assessment means persons or a 'body' accepted and recognised by all stakeholders involved: participants, educators (trainer, youth worker, facilitator) and institutions. It needs persons who have the competences to assess people in this very special (and for this field) new circumstances.

When speaking about the competences of trainers we see a wide variety of different competence fields. What can be assessed by external assessors? Following the whole activity by external assessors is not realistic. Assessing a 'product' (paper, video, website etc.) at the end of the activity gives only an impression of a limited amount of competences.

External assessors would need criteria to assess against. These criteria should be there at the beginning of the activity and known by participants and educators.

For participants it is crucial to know how and by whom this assessment is recognised. Does it give me more chances on the job market? Do I get paid more? Does it give me access to other learning opportunities? Who in Europe knows about this activity and recognises it? Just putting 3 or 4 experts on the end of the course to assess some aspects of the learning outcomes doesn't lead to recognition.

### Self-Assessment

Especially in the last year the need for further development of the concept of self-assessment has been expressed in different meetings within the context of the Youth in Action and Lifelong Learning programme, Council of Europe and Partnership. This all inspired by increased emphasis on topics and processes associated with Life Long Learning, Learning to Learn, Youthpass, Portfolio etc.

This need for further development comes from two main concerns:



- how to support and assist learners to assess themselves? We see in our practice that self-assessment is often complex and difficult for learners and, despite our best efforts, we lack sufficient strategies, methodologies and tools.
- how to make the self-assessment of learning outcomes into something which is recognized by others?

Work needs to be done to come up with a wider variety of coherent approaches, methodologies and tools. Many ideas are there which should be worked out and at the same time existing materials coming from other fields should be explored.

For the recognition of the self-assessment of learning outcomes we see two aspects that could be worked out further:

- transparency of the self-assessment process
- promotion of the educational activity (including the self-assessment)

At the moment concerns go mainly to describing learning outcomes in such a way that others understand it. Which of course is important. Next to that it is important that learners describe how they got to their self-assessment. Describing the methods they used (e.g. dialogue with mentor/trainer, feedback from colleagues, learning diary/blog) and showing the outcomes of these methods concretely (e.g. report of the meeting with mentor or feedback session) and in what way that influenced their self-assessment.

This would help to take away the idea that self-assessment is a solo-job done by the learner with limited value.

Recognition of the learning outcomes cannot only be reached by an active and appropriate description of these outcomes by the learner. The educational activity has to be recognised as a valuable activity (including the self-assessment). So, promotion of and sufficient information about the activity is of great importance.

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UNIQUE