



Action plan for  
**VALIDATION IN EUROPE**

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Authors:

Gina Ebner, European Association for  
the Education of Adults (EAEA)

Susana Oliveira, Kerigma, Portugal

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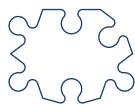
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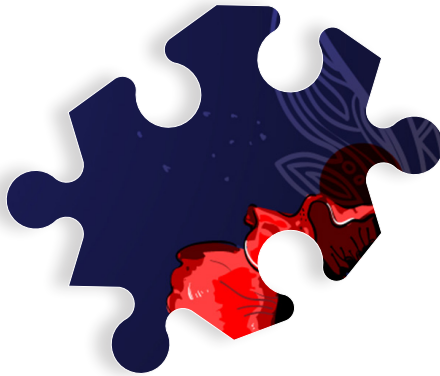
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE IT WILL BE ESSENTIAL THAT ITS INHABITANTS MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR SKILLS, COMPETENCES AND KNOWLEDGE.

**E**veryone should have access to lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways. AVA consortium believes that validation is one of the key tools for achieving this.

**THERE ARE** numerous European policies and initiatives (A New Skills Agenda for Europe<sup>1</sup> adopted recently by EU, Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning<sup>2</sup>) that drive the implementation of validation systems but nevertheless, the situation remains fragmented. In order to achieve permeability and inclusion (especially for disadvantaged groups), additional efforts will be necessary. The AVA partners have therefore put together an evidence-based set of recommendations and an action plan from the point of view of non-formal adult education providers.

**THE OVERALL** recommendations are that all stakeholders should aim at:

- Increasing the accessibility and transparency of the systems benefiting all candidates, especially those with a disadvantaged background.
- Setting up a structured validation process that will make the entire validation process and the individual stages in the process understandable and visible for the candidate.
- Developing or enhancing a structured and cross sectorial dialogue between validation stakeholders that will increase reliability and trust for the validation results as well as foster the cooperation among them.
- Increasing the use of the existing tools and to study their transferability to different contexts.
- Creating further learning: The participation in the validation process should be only one step in lifelong learning – it should open further opportunities for the candidate.

**ADDITIONALLY**, the AVA consortium addresses a number of stakeholders and proposes a number of recommendations, some of which are:

- **For public authorities (national / regional / local levels)** → Develop a (national / regional / local) strategy that includes all lifelong learning sectors as well as comprehensive information about validation. Make sure that the strategy sees disadvantaged candidates as a key target group and that the non-formal sector is adequately heard.
- **For the non-formal sector and validation providers** → Foster the dialogue between the validation stakeholders and be prepared for cross-sectorial cooperation (including the formal sector and social partners)
- **For other education providers, NGOs, etc.**  
→ The formal education system will need to be open to the non-formal sector and more trans-sectoral cooperation.
- **For social partners** → Get involved in the validation process in an early stage. Engage in discussions with other stakeholders (i.e. by estimating wage levels and consequent adjustments for validation candidates).
- **For the business sector** → Get involved in defining the standards of validation and contribute to the legislation and implementation of validation.



The Action Plan then sets out concrete proposals for implementation, following the logic of the validation process:

a

**Before the process**, raise awareness towards a number of target groups, foster engagement by stakeholders, get the broader picture by understanding the context and set the scene by preparing the validation practitioners and the environment.

b

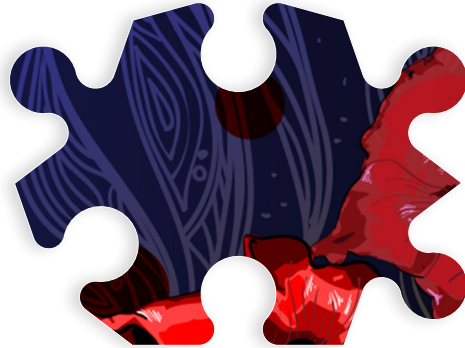
**During the process**, particular emphasis is needed on access, content, quality and guidance.

c

**After the process**, AVA consortium recommends monitoring and communicating the outcomes, taking another step in order to ensure sustainability and access to further learning opportunities.

1 <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-381-EN-F1-1.PDF>

2 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>



## CONTEXT

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AVA CONSORTIUM BELIEVES THAT VALIDATION IS ONE OF THE KEY TOOLS AND MECHANISMS OF LIFELONG LEARNING GIVING PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES AND PROFESSIONAL CAREERS.

**A**s representatives of the non-formal adult education sector, the partners believe that validation is not about formalising the non- and informal but about giving more and equal value to these forms of learning.

**IN 2012**, the Council approved recommendations on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The plan is that member states have validation systems in place by 2018. These systems should include the 4 steps of **identification, documentation, assessment** and **certification**. As Jens Bjornavold, CEDEFOP's specialist on EQFs and validation, points

out, we have now had 20 years of national and European practice, but it is still very fragmented. EAEA and other key stakeholders in Europe believe that Member States will have to face big challenges (and in some even resistance) while putting in place such systems and thus they should be supported more.

Generally speaking, there is still too little knowledge in Europe about the benefits of validation. There is still mistrust on the results of validation processes as well as a traditional preference of certificates and diplomas coming from the formal sector.

A major role could be played by adult education providers and stakeholders, which are often the implementing bodies of the validation systems, sometimes being responsible of the certificate-oriented validation, in other cases of the



## GENERALLY SPEAKING, THERE IS STILL TOO LITTLE KNOWLEDGE IN EUROPE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF VALIDATION.

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formative-oriented validation. By analysing tools and methodologies in different European countries and proposing solutions from the civil society perspective, this action plan wants to contribute to reducing the fragmentation on different levels, namely policy and practice.

**VALIDATION IS** one of the key tools and components for lifelong learning for people's opportunity to move vertically and horizontally in their personal lives and careers, but also has potential to become an important component of social inclusion policies. The Council Recommendation states that disadvantaged groups [...] are particularly likely to benefit from the validation arrangements, since validation can increase their participation in lifelong learning and their access to the labour market. However, too little has been done so far to make the validation systems inclusive.

Recently, CEDEFOP has updated the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning and launched the European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Following up on the Council Recommendation, those documents describe the current situation in 33 countries, monitor the key developments on this matter and propose possible solutions to move forward. The main challenges pointed out

by this study are: the difficult access, the lack of awareness and recognition, the fragmented state of the system; the financial (un)sustainability; consistency; professionalization of staff and data collection.

**DISCUSSING WITH** non-formal learning providers, the AVA consortium has perceived the need for better cooperation among stakeholders at the national level but also the competition that this exchange could also create in some contexts. Furthermore and linked to that, some scepticism was detected about some of the stages of validation. Providers often feel challenged by the assessment stage and fear the formalization of the non-formal among many. Will validation systems lead to a two-class approach to education and training (where formal and validated learning is important and supported, non-validated learning is neglected)?

**ON A POLICY LEVEL**, validation has taken on an even more important role: In the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), the European Commission is therefore proposing a **Skills Guarantee** to help low-skilled adults **acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills** and/or progress towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (EQF level 4), through **three steps**:

### **Step 1**

#### **SKILLS ASSESSMENT:**

Enable low-qualified adults to identify their existing skills and their upskilling needs.



### **Step 2**

#### **LEARNING OFFER:**

Design and deliver an education and training offer tailored to the specific needs of each individual and of the local labour market.



### **Step 3**

#### **VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION:**

Validation and recognition of the skills acquired.





THERE IS A NEED of looking into experiences of addressing disadvantaged groups and the issue of trust building. Solutions and learning about the consequences of validations systems should be found, especially for the individual (and here especially for the low-skilled), which could be achieved by increased dialogue and cooperation across sectors and institutions.





## RESEARCH SUMMARIES & MAIN OUTCOMES

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NVL UNDERTOOK EXTENSIVE RESEARCH IN ORDER TO ANALYSE THE SITUATION IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES<sup>3</sup> FROM THE PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVE, AND INDEED THE ANALYSES ARE AVAILABLE AS NATIONAL REPORTS AND NATIONAL SUMMARIES.

**H**ere, we will concentrate on the horizontal analysis, which has provided the basis for further recommendations.

The research concentrated on three main concepts: permeability, fragmentation, and inclusion. Permeability and inclusion are the two main characteristics necessary for comprehensive validation systems, while fragmentation is the current reality in many countries that stands in the way of achieving them.

*3 This analysis is drafted on the basis of a survey, which was produced by NVL with the support of the AVA consortium. The total number of respondents was 50. 20 countries are represented. Non-formal adult education providers (29) and umbrella organisations (10) were supposed to be the main target group. However, thanks to the broad dissemination, the survey was completed by other 11 organisations.*

## 1

The definition, used for **permeability** of validation processes and results, the AVA consortium would like to use is the following:

*Validation processes must be coherent, transparent and legitimate i.e. carried out with the use of validation structure, methods, tools, criteria and standards which make clear for the candidate the purpose, the progress, outcome and benefit and which provide results that are recognised as valid and reliable by users – both within formal education and by employers.*

The concept of permeability could be structured by using the following terms:

- a** Design of coherent and well-structured system
- b** Use of legitimate standards and criteria
- c** Wider acceptance of validation and its wider benefits for the society
- d** Cooperation with stakeholders and social partners as well as across sectors and among institutions.

## 2

The definition, used for **fragmentation** of validation processes and results:

*Not securing coherent and comprehensive processes bears the risk of fragmentation where validation candidates lose orientation and end up with partial results that do not help them really benefit from their prior learning.*

Respondents state that fragmentation risks are particularly high when there is:

- a** Incoherent and fractional implementation of the validation system
- b** Bureaucratic obstacles
- c** Lack of financial resources
- d** Lack of guidance and training for validation professionals

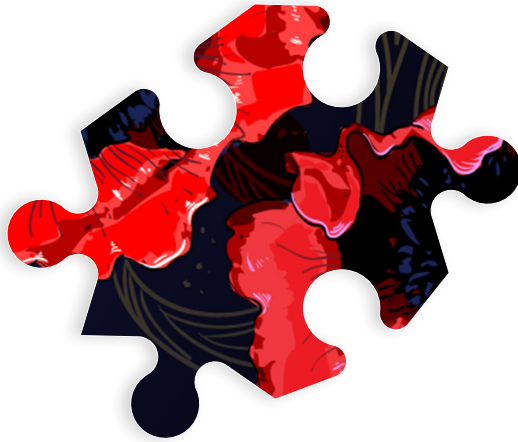
## 3

The definition, used for inclusion due to validation processes and results:

*To make sure – in any respect – that all citizens, especially the disadvantaged groups, are given the opportunity to benefit from validation of non-formal and informal learning in order to increase their participation in lifelong learning and for their access to labour market.*

In order to make the validation systems more inclusive the partners suggest putting in place:

- a** Awareness raising activities
- b** Inclusion strategies at the national and institutional levels
- c** Clarity of the purpose for the organisation and for the individual
- d** Development of guidance and counselling paths for the candidates



## RECOMMENDATIONS/ KEY MESSAGES

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BASED ON THE RESEARCH RESULTS AND A DISCUSSION WITH A WIDER GROUP OF EXPERTS, THE AVA CONSORTIUM DRAFTED SOME KEY GOALS THAT EVERYONE SHOULD AIM AT:

- **Increasing** the accessibility and transparency of the systems benefiting all candidates, especially those with a disadvantaged background.
- **Setting up** a structured validation process that will make the entire validation process and the individual stages in the process understandable and visible for the candidate.
- **Developing** or enhancing a structured and cross sectorial dialogue between validation stakeholders that will increase reliability and trust for the validation results as well as foster the cooperation among them.
- **Increasing** the use of the existing tools and to study their transferability to different contexts.
- **Creating** further learning: The validation process should be only one step in lifelong learning – it should open further opportunities for the candidate.

**THE AVA CONSORTIUM** identified public authorities, adult education providers, social partners, and the business sector as the main validation stakeholders.

The following are specific recommendations that would help each of them to reduce fragmentations and increase permeability and inclusion. The underpinning principle that should guide all stakeholders is that validation processes need to be individual-centred. Indeed, although validation has societal benefits, it is a personal journey.

Professionals and stakeholders involved need to acknowledge it and adopt a tailor-made approach in designing and implementing validation arrangements. Taking the learners' needs into account is particularly important in the implementation phase: transparency and flexibility of procedures, provision of customised learning offers, and continuous and personalised guidance and counselling demonstrated to have a relevant impact on candidates' progresses in their lives and careers.

## A

### For public authorities (national / regional / local levels)

- **Develop** a (national / regional / local) strategy that includes all lifelong learning sectors as well as comprehensive information about validation. Make sure that the strategy sees disadvantaged candidates as a key target group and that the non-formal sector is adequately heard and taken into consideration.
  - ▶▶ The AVA consortium would like to put emphasis on the importance of the municipalities and communes in the process (or provinces and regions in case those are not in charge of education policies), especially when it comes to funding. The sustainability of a validation system is crucial for its own implementation and survival: foreseeing a local funding opportunity, not only will make it easier on a procedural level but also more accessible as geographically closer to AE organisations. This level is also key when it comes to the evaluation of the process, in particular about its scope, the nature of its beneficiaries and its actual benefits.
  - ▶▶ Adult Education organisations have a leading role in validation systems, as they are the front door to achieving the ultimate goal – validation. Adult Education organisations not only testify individual's cases as they are aware of the obstacles that individuals may experience, but can also give concrete feedback on the functioning of the whole process.
- ▶▶ The AVA consortium calls for the development of broader and more comprehensive validation systems which cover a bigger number of professions as well as more skills and competences (i.e. soft and life-skills).
- **Provide** a legal framework that includes the accreditation of validation providers: by fostering the quality of the process and following up on learning development following the validation, you will contribute to building mutual trust between different institutions and sectors.
  - ▶▶ According to the AVA consortium, validation is an individual right. The legal framework should make sure that all citizens are enabled to participate in validation provisions, even through affirmative actions (schedule flexibility, child care provision, etc.).



## THE AVA CONSORTIUM SUGGESTS CONSIDERING THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE CANDIDATES' COMMUNITY AND/OR FAMILIES.

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- ▶▶ Some providers are firmly convinced that validation should be free of charge; others believe that a minor fee may be a way to strengthen individual commitment and increase the recognition of validation results. In any case, the political level should make sure that costs don't hinder the disadvantaged groups' participation in the validation process.
- **Provide a stakeholders'** cooperation framework that enables a common understanding of the needs of and benefits for each group. This will avoid fragmentation, and especially conflicts between the formal / non-formal / informal or a preference for one of those.
- **Quality is** key for the success of validation systems and procedures and is closely linked to the trust in it. Together with the stakeholders (formal education system, social partners, non-formal providers etc.), a reliable and transparent quality framework needs to be developed.
- **Provide national arrangements** for competence development to VNFIL providers to secure that the providers have adequate competences and are offered regular in-service training.
- **Funding is a key issue** as the process should be as affordable as possible for the individual, and free, at a minimum, for disadvantaged groups. While a functioning validation system will mean an initial and ongoing investment, the economic returns will be much higher.
- **Link the validation** system to existing structures, initiatives and policies on regional, national and European levels. It is, for example, highly necessary to link validation to the development of NQFs and give in- and non-formal learning, once validated, an equal position within the framework.

## **B**

### For the non-formal sector and validation providers

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- **Foster** the dialogue between the validation stakeholders and be prepared for cross-sectorial cooperation (including the formal sector and social partners)
- **Develop** a strategy for reaching out to and empowering disadvantaged groups (see also the work done by the OED network – [www.oed-network.eu](http://www.oed-network.eu)).
  - ▶▶ The AVA consortium proposes to match the strategy with appropriate validation approaches, methods and tools (i.e. the environment must create conditions so that the candidate is able to demonstrate (and be aware of) his/her own competences.)
- **Focus** on the individuals and their needs: try to provide Formative-oriented as well as certificate-oriented and offer adequate training for validation staff (grass-root validation professionals need to have or get competence about the business field and culture).
  - ▶▶ The AVA consortium suggests considering the involvement of the candidates' community and/or families.
- **Specify** the learning outcomes in all activities and don't be afraid of collecting statistics, so that greater understanding is created
- **Advocate** the idea/concept of validation to interested people by highlighting their potential benefits as well as show the need for accreditation of providers:
  - a) A common language on validation, especially when it comes to recognising the different types of benefits that the process can bring to the individuals, is crucial.
  - b) Legally based standard criteria for providers, including a systematic and recognised documentation about the validation process and about the organisation carrying it out, are key to foster the mutual trust among sectors and stakeholders.
- **Decide** on the purpose/purposes of validation: A partial validation system doesn't lead necessarily to a fragmented one. Providers should be free to choose whether to carry out the whole process or only part of it. The four phases of VPL are equally important. In particular, the Identification/documentation phases are crucial for disadvantaged candidates as they contribute to boosting their empowerment, civic engagement and well-being. If providers decide to implement a partial validation, they should try to build bridges with other stakeholders and make their validation results meaningful for the formal education and business sectors (i.e. by facilitating possible connections for the candidate to take the next step).

“

HELP TO SPREAD INFORMATION ABOUT  
VALIDATION, INCREASE KNOWLEDGE  
ABOUT VALIDATION.

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C

For stakeholders (other education providers, NGOs, etc.)

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- **The representatives** of the formal education system will need to be open to the non-formal sector and be open for more trans-sectoral cooperation. This is important for the successful implementation of the validation system, but should also give the learner the opportunity to move flexibly between different sectors of education.
- **Lobby for** the creation of appropriate legal frameworks to public authorities and businesses as well as explain the needs of the local society and individuals to them.
- **Create networks** between stakeholders and validation practitioners in order to 1) talk together about the methodology, functionality of the process and benefits of validation; 2) understand each other's language better; 3) work together for validation.
- **Help to spread** information about validation, increase knowledge about validation: find or train “ambassadors” for validation; those who can talk about validation to businesses, employers and who have good knowledge related to the field of activity of the company.
- **Support** different sectors in skills mapping.



## D

### For social partners

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- **Get involved** in the validation process in an early stage: agree on the value of validation and make it part of the agenda. Engage in discussions on advantages and disadvantages of validation with other stakeholders (i.e. by estimating wage levels and consequent adjustments for validation candidates (equivalent)).
  - **Promote** validation within networks and amongst target groups – especially works councils and shop stewards can support the outreach work to disadvantaged groups.
  - **Develop** skills strategies within social partner agreements (on sectoral and company level) that include validation.
- In a number of sectors, social partners are key actors in skills councils, which drive the validation procedures in that particular sector. They should be open to close cooperation with non-formal adult education providers.

## E

### For the business sector

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- **Lobby for** validation with policy makers and advocate benefits of validation among peers.
  - ▶▶ The AVA consortium believes that validation could contribute to increasing transparency in the labour market;
  - ▶▶ The AVA consortium is convinced that action by the business sector will increase the trust among future candidates and employers, giving validation a boost of credibility and visibility from general society.
- **Find partners** from non-formal sector; contribute to the costs of validation and provide space for the validation of practical skills.
- **Get involved** in defining the standards of validation and contribute to the legislation and implementation of validation.
- **Recruit** employees based on validation services and identify potential candidates for validation;
- **Set up** a skills mapping process to investigate what competences are needed now and in the future. If constantly updated, the skills plan should help industries to use the competences people have in the best possible way and help employees to get one step up.



## IMPLEMENTATION

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**A**ll the above-mentioned target groups can greatly contribute to a better implementation of validation systems. It is important for all of them to get involved in the validation systems design, implementation and monitoring from an early stage.

It is essential to strengthen the concrete responsibility of all stakeholders involved and that all feel a sense of ownership for the process. For this reason the AVA consortium would like to suggest a common plan to proceed towards that objective. This includes bottom-up and top-down initiatives throughout the entire process which complement each other.



# ACTION PLAN

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THE ACTION PLAN FOCUSES ON THE STEPS IN A VALIDATION PROCESS; ITS INTENTION IS TO PROVIDE USEFUL AND PRACTICAL TIPS ON WHAT CAN MAKE THE PROCEDURE MORE SUCCESSFUL.

## BEFORE

Raise awareness



Foster the engagement



Get the broader picture



Setting the scene

## DURING

Access



Content



Quality



Guidance

## AFTER

Monitor



Communicate



Take another step



Ensure further learning opportunities



## RAISE AWARENESS

### Towards policy-makers and representatives of the national/regional/local authorities:

- ▶ Make sure they understand the advantages of qualifications described through learning outcomes, the importance of learning outcomes for the validation procedures and the benefits of validation processes;
- ▶ Involve the municipal level

#### *Proposal:*

*You could consider creating guidelines for developing resource models and the national and local levels in order to stimulate their discussion on their costs/benefits and thus increase their motivation.*

### Towards the general public:

- ▶ Effective marketing is needed to convince this target group. Find clear and simple ways of communicating the benefits of validation. Find concrete statistics/analysis to showcase as well as successful stories to highlight.

- ▶ The opportunity to use the 'LLL week' organized in many countries for raising awareness about validation

#### *Critical factor:*

*Although Portugal has implemented a wide-reaching and successful validation system, further work needs to be done in order to achieve full and broad social recognition of the system.*

### Towards disadvantaged groups:

- ▶ Field work happens to be quite effective.

#### *Example:*

*During the project RURAL FORCE within the Romanian rural areas information campaigns were organized to raise the awareness of the target group about the validation process and benefits, followed by guidance sessions for the people identified as potential candidates for validation services. The people (unemployed or living from subsistence agriculture)*

*involved in the validation at the end of the process have gained more self-esteem, knowledge about how to evaluate themselves and confidence in their skills and abilities to get a job. (<http://rural-force.mpa-sibiu.ro>)*

- ▶ Reinforce the discussion and cooperation with organised civil society.
- ▶ Involve communities and families as well as multipliers and door openers.
- ▶ Network to create conditions to participation (methodologies, guidelines, software, transportation, translation, etc.).

**Example:**

*The Cerebral Palsy Association of Coimbra (APCC) works closely with government agencies to publish guidelines and normative that assures the access and success of people with disabilities regarding validation.*

- ▶ Find supporters / ambassadors / relevant role-models (formerly disadvantaged people with a successful “validation story”).

**Example:**

*The Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (WBA<sup>4</sup>) took this approach when addressing deaf people as target group. Had a great impact on the motivation of candidates and gave them a feeling of belonging to somewhere, sharing something (a qualification).*

**Towards peers and other directly involved stakeholders**

- ▶ Take their concerns on board.
- ▶ Find and present benefits and added-values. Bring concrete arguments to your cause.
- ▶ Use the EPAL platform for raising awareness among the professionals from the adult education sector about the benefits of validation process, keeping in mind that this platform is a European level initiative developed in every member state and in some EU candidates and non-EU states.

**Proposal:**

*Consider starting from a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).*

4 The *Weiterbildungsakademie Österreich* (Austrian Academy of Continuing Education) is a validation system for the qualification and recognition of adult educators. More information at [http://wba.or.at/english/about\\_us.php](http://wba.or.at/english/about_us.php)

## FOSTER THE ENGAGEMENT

### Map the potential stakeholders.

- ▶ Bring these stakeholders together by establishing networks, think tanks, organize mutual trainings and reinforce best-practice and knowledge exchange.

#### **Proposal:**

*Create working groups that include ALL lifelong learning sectors (possibly extend to other stakeholders). To do so, make sure that concepts and definitions are understood by all sectors: aim at creating a common language on validation as well as on the concept of competence.*

#### **Example:**

*The International Women's Centre Den Helder (IWC<sup>5</sup>) in the Netherlands has a very broad network of social partners, communities' leaders and educational stakeholders. They contact directly companies and potential employers in order to find job places for the women attending their courses. Furthermore, the IWC created a dialogue with key people that work for and*

*represent the migrant communities. After demonstrating the value and the impartiality of their work, they build a trust relationship with them and thus assured their active involvement for the centre's purposes.*

- ▶ Try to establish a mutual interest in co-operating with the other stakeholders.

#### **Proposal:**

*Pinpoint potentially interesting topics to discuss and collaborate with other stakeholders (i.e. which kind of skills, benefits, etc.). Organise debates on the funding and quality issues, which are the most delicate ones. Start from debating the following questions: Which organisation could provide funding for candidates (if needed)? How best to achieve sustainability?*

#### **Critical factor:**

*Many countries underlined how relying on a project based structure (i.e. application procedures (annual) for having funds) might endanger the sustainability of the validation process and the capability of the validation centres to support the candidates in a continuous way.*



## GET THE BROADER PICTURE

**Get a deep knowledge of validation, the ongoing practices and its actors by:**

- ▶ Understanding and taking into account different legal frameworks.
- ▶ Consulting the European Inventory published by the European Commission to get acquainted with the last policy developments in your country and in the EU.
- ▶ Reading the CEDEFOP guidelines to have an overview of the suggested procedures and methods to improve the validation systems in your country.
- ▶ Examining the AVA horizontal analysis to grasp the opinions of the non-formal adult education sector and the best practice in the field.
- ▶ Exploring existing projects, methods and experiences in your context and beyond.

**Get to know your target groups. Understanding the candidates' needs and purposes will contribute to their success and their willingness to involve other peers in the process.**

### *Proposal:*

*Data collection about the participants can help learn more about access and obstacles. You might need to put into place new services or arrangements in order to allow the participation of certain target groups. Have a look at the ROM-ACT project results to learn how to involve Roma women into the validation process:*

*<http://www.rom-act.eu/>*

5 IWC Den Helder organizes courses, activities and projects to help women integrate, participate, emancipate and become aware of their own ability's within society. More information at: [www.ivcdenhelder.nl](http://www.ivcdenhelder.nl)

D

## SETTING THE SCENE

### Make sure validation practitioners:

- ▶ are experts on validation (assessors, counsellors, process managers...).
- ▶ have a deep knowledge of the field of adult education; have thorough understanding of the labour market.
- ▶ have good communicative, personal and intercultural skills.
- ▶ have no personal interest in the validation outcome (to guarantee impartiality).

**If, after a careful analysis, you find out that any of the above-mentioned competences should be strengthened, organise training for professionals on validation or lobby for that at the policy level.**

### Create an appropriate environment for the validation process.

#### *Example:*

*The Education and Training Service Center (ETSC<sup>6</sup>) in Iceland coordinates training of validation staff, meetings with project managers, career counsellors and assessors to guarantee the process quality. The ETSC set the validation's methodology but many stakeholders are involved when a new area/curricula/job is opened up for validation.*

6 The main purpose of the ESTC is to make curricula for educational provision, develop recognition of non-formal and informal learning, increase quality in Adult Education and develop counselling and guidance for the target group (low-qualified individuals). More information at <http://www.frae.is/>





## ACCESS

### Secure access to validation for all through assuring

- ▶ Neutrality of the methods (prefer a positive approach instead of a negative one)
- ▶ Impartiality of assessors and clear division of roles of validation practitioners
- ▶ No or low fee
- ▶ Methodological, attitudinal and programmatic accessibility
- ▶ The presence of assessment centres in the whole country, not only in some urban areas.

#### *Example:*

*The diversity of stakeholders authorised to develop validation and the existence of a large number of centres for validation is a success factor in Portugal.*

- ▶ Flexibility of the procedure and its duration

#### *Example:*

*Many WBA candidates find the adaptability of the duration of the validation according to individual needs of candidates useful. However, this might also be a drawback for those who would need deadlines in order to achieve a goal.*

B

**CONTENT:**

**Make sure that practical skills usable in daily life are assessed and valued**

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**Focus on the candidate's personal development. Providing the candidate with self-confidence and self-esteem is crucial in order to contribute to his or her entrance to the labour market or enrolment into other educational paths.**

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**If the candidates are from a migrant background, foresee a special strategy for them which will help with the candidate's integration into the local community.**

***Example:***

*The IWC organised a pre-course to allow candidates to face the challenging parts of the process and increase their existing skills. Intercultural coffee mornings, Dutch conversation practice, sports activities, computer courses, assertiveness training and 1-on-1 language training are also used to discover skills, and above all, to increase self-confidence.*



## QUALITY:

**Make sure an adequate quality management system is in place and that the principle of transparency is applied in all the steps of the procedure.**

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**Adopt transparent standards, best if linked to national qualification systems and frameworks and national validation strategy and formulated according to learning outcomes.**

**Example:**

*The IWC uses legitimated standards and criteria which are nationally legitimate and widely recognized such as tests, presentations, discussions, search for evidence, port-folio writing, assessments and certificates (CHQ).*

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**Establish peer review schemes and distribute learnings (also important at an earlier stage)**

**Example:**

*The WBA takes part in a European Peer Review Project and finds the exchange immensely useful as it helps to get feedback on the validation process and achieve several new perspectives.*

**Example:**

*An interesting quality model for a systematic implementation and development of validation processes in provider organisations has been developed in a Nordic cooperation project: <http://nvl.org/Content/Quality-Model-for-Validation-in-the-Nordic-Countries>*



## GUIDANCE:

### **Pay attention to continuous and personalised guidance and counselling throughout the whole validation process.**

#### *Proposal:*

*Providing candidates with a personal counsellor who guides them through the process to provide a learner-centred approach to the guidance. Train the counsellors to avoid the creation of dependency with the candidate.*

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### **Secure availability of or provide further education to fill skills gaps.**

#### *Critical factor:*

*WBA candidates wanted to be provided with further education. If there are no suggestions/offers available, this can lead to the termination of the validation process. Sometimes candidates show a lack of initiative to find adequate offer on their own.*

#### *Example:*

*In Portugal candidates can only end their path to validation with the elaboration of a Personal Development Plan which projects their following achievements, either personal, professional or academic.*

A

## MONITOR

Monitor the policies' functioning, implementation and accessibility (Consider using the criteria proposed by CE-DEFOP guidelines (i.e. validity, fairness, reliability...)).

Test the performance of participants through a ladder model.

Example:

*This model is used in the Netherlands and it can be accessed and run on a website. More info at: <http://www.ivcdenhelder.nl/>*

B

## COMMUNICATE

Make the validation advantages visible to the general public by showing the candidates results (both facts and figures).

Allow and enable the individual witness the personal benefits and success.

C

## TAKE ANOTHER STEP

Use the monitoring of results to optimize the procedure.

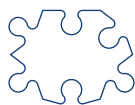
Investigate if the process/methods you are using can be transferred to other fields and if this is the case try to establish an exchange/cooperation with other validation stakeholders.

Take "one step up" in the strategy for implementation bringing it from a project level to a sustainable one (involving the local level if possible).

D

## ENSURE FURTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Successful validation processes tend to give learners much self-confidence and the motivation to continue learning. The end of the process should open more opportunities in formal and non-formal education.



## BACKGROUND

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IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, THE AVA CONSORTIUM HAS CARRIED OUT THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

**Investigated** how to make validation processes inclusive for all groups of citizens;

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**Examined national validation** arrangements in order to identify potentials as well as obstacles in order to further develop transparent, coherent and legitimate validation arrangements;

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**Created and distributed the AVA survey** for the collection of insights and good practice on validation and feedback from organisations and adult education providers, 50 respondents, representing 20 countries;

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Drafted the **AVA survey analysis** that aims at investigating how the EU validation practices for non-formal and informal learning contribute to making validation arrangements and activities inclusive by securing permeability of processes and results and by reducing the risk of fragmen-

tation in validation arrangements. The analysis includes:

- ▶ **National reports** which illustrate data from the country respondents presented in a thematic structure. The aim of the national reports is to provide the detailed and contextualized data as they stand out clearly according to respondents.
- ▶ **National summaries** which present, in a condensed form, the data from country reports. Information has been grouped following the three AVA key-concepts: *permeability, fragmentation and inclusion*.
- ▶ **Horizontal analysis** provides the cross-country and cross-thematic analysis of results. This analytical level comprises the main part of the AVA survey analysis and provides as such the core line for the AVA group's further use of survey results.

Organised an **expert seminar** to debate the main themes and outcomes of the survey, exchange of experiences, challenges and new solutions (Oslo, Norway – 1/2 February 2016);

Broadcast parts of the expert seminar **live on Periscope** with interviews of stakeholders and experts, as well as presentations and plenary discussions;

Produced and published **videos on youtube** with case examples on successful validation projects/methods;

Maintained an **open information channel** and dialogue on validation on twitter, using #actionforvalidation;

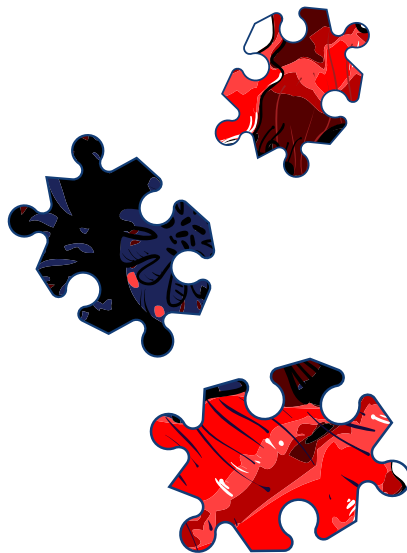
Produced **five articles** on relevant issues related to the project's values and aims;

Drafted an **Action Plan** providing key messages and actions targeted at both policy makers and adult education organizations;

Organised a **Policy debate** in Brussels (Brussels, Belgium – 29 June 2016);

Have taken other stakeholders' opinions into consideration, for example the EESC (<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.34487>) and the contributions of the task force of the Lifelong Learning Platform (<http://lllplatform.eu/policy-areas/skills-and-qualifications/validation-of-learning/>)

- ▶ Produced **five articles** on relevant issues related to the project's values and aims.
  - ▶ **Adult Education providers can improve validation systems in Europe**  
– Susana Oliveira, KERIGMA
  - ▶ **Benefits of validation for the individual – The case of Romania**  
– Mariana Matache, EUROED
  - ▶ **Individual-centered approach to validation: the IWC example**  
– Martin Swart, Learn For Life
  - ▶ **Strong commitment for validation in Oslo, Report from the AVA expert seminar**  
– Marja Beckman, Johann Larjanko – NVL
  - ▶ **The long term impact of validation**  
– Gerhard Bisovsky, VOEV (Available soon)



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