

# INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT

04

Training Module for practitioners  
of validation of prior learning



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## Introduction – How to use this Training Module

This Training Module is the result of a collaborative development process of the Erasmus+ project on the Effectiveness of VPL Policies and Programmes for Labour Market Inclusion and Mobility – Individual and Employer Perspectives. This project was carried out in four European countries (Germany, Denmark, Poland and Turkey) and comprised a collection of data on the policy level, the individual level and the employer's level in relation to validation of prior non-formal and informal learning. As thus, it has compiled the different relevant perspectives throughout a validation of prior learning process and transferred it into this Training Module.

### WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS TRAINING MODULE?

The aim of this Training Module is to provide culturally-sensitive didactic plans which can be used to train VPL practitioners across Europe. It is practicable in but also adaptable to different national contexts of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning. Hence, training institutions across Europe can use it to teach and train VPL practitioners in their national context.

### TO WHOM CAN THIS TRAINING MODULE BE RELEVANT?

The Training Module has the aim to target those persons that are relevant and active in the broad field of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning. Therefore, it aims to provide content and guiding principles to those who work in the broad context of validation of prior learning. We understand these persons as VPL practitioners, as they are practically involved in the broader context of validation of prior learning. The target group consequently comprises of counsellors, managers, and teachers at the same time. Beyond that, this Training Module is, of course, open to all those who are interested in the topic of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning.

### TARGET GROUP

- Validators
- Counsellors
- HR managers
- Social workers
- Trade union consultants
- Teachers
- Job consultants
- Assessors
- Advocates for labor legislation
- Employers

## HOW TO USE THIS TRAINING MODULE

This Training Module shall serve as a template to be used to train VPL practitioners across Europe. Training institutions and trainers working in the context of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning are invited to use it in order to train VPL practitioners.

The Training Module covers 3 different didactic plans with different objectives:

1. **Webinar:** The overall aim of the webinar is to inform about VPL policies, approaches and processes. It first and foremost allows reaching a broad audience of VPL practitioners and disseminating information about VPL in Europe.
2. **Conference:** The overall aim of the conference is to provide a forum for exchange of experiences with and amongst practitioners (national and/or international) while at the same time discussing current VPL issues in the respective national context. The conference targets a medium range of VPL practitioners.
3. **Small Group Training:** The overall aim of the small group training is to work with local VPL practitioners on the topic. At the same time, it shall serve as platform to gain a deeper understanding of the biographical approach which fosters counselling processes in the area of VPL. This training shall furthermore facilitate an exchange of experiences of VPL practitioners while at the same time promoting empowerment of VPL practitioners.

## Rationale – our understanding of effective VPL

### HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING?

According to the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop 2015), VPL can be defined as a major tool to make "visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals" which "frequently takes place outside formal education and training [...] and is frequently overlooked and ignored" (Cedefop 2015, 14). Following this understanding, we define validation as a process with multiple possible outcomes that should increase the visibility and value of learning that takes place outside the classroom. Based on the Councils' recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning from 2012, the guidelines furthermore define four phases of validation covering identification, documentation, assessment, and certification. In addition, the possibilities for validation should be clarified and communicated the approaches should meet the individuals' demands (Cedefop 2015, 15).



Throughout the project period these guidelines were relevant for our work and complemented our understanding of validation of prior learning as a process which is enriched by a biographical research approach. This means that we consider it necessary to focus on changes and transitions in a person's life and to listen carefully to a person's stories of their lifetime in order to get a comprehensive insight. For more information on the biographical research approach, you can find a selection of literature in the annex.

In practice, validation is implemented within the education and training sector, but also by other stakeholders and labor market actors, such as the job agency, trade unions or chambers. Across these areas of implementation, we consider guidance as the key aspect for a fruitful and successful validation process. Thus, VPL practitioners guiding individuals through validation procedures need to be competent counsellors as well as coaches that are empathic, empowering and sensitive. Therefore, we suggest the following principles as guiding principles for a sustainable validation procedure:

### Put the individual at the centre!



An overall rationale guiding us through this Training Module is the focus on the individual. In order to carry out an effective and comprehensive validation of prior non-formal and informal learning, we consider it to be of particular importance to give special attention to the individual that would like to complete a validation. In the second stage, it is also important to keep in mind the institutional framework of the education system and the labour market in which the individual is situated. Nevertheless, in our view, a process focusing on the individual is much more promising in the long run.

### Take the biography serious!



Consequently, it is very important to focus on the biography of the individual. This means that the VPL practitioner should first and foremost ask questions about the individual's life course and listen to the relevant stages of life and experiences. Likewise, the validation process shall be a development of mutual trust. Accordingly, the VPL practitioner shall be (or become) a good interviewer – being competent to ask the right questions at the right time, uncovering the hidden competences and creating linkages between professional and non-professional experiences (or formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences).

### Follow a holistic approach of guidance!



While guiding a person through the validation process, the VPL practitioner shall follow a holistic approach. This entails asking questions and listening closely in order to identify the individual's experiences, competences, and qualifications. Guidance in this context can be described as a search process through the life course of the individual with the aim to uncover experiences, competences, and knowledge that the person has gained not only in the professional area but also beyond.

On the following pages, you can find the **templates of three Training Modules**. We have developed schedules for three different scenarios (webinar, conference & small group training) that contains key points concerning the method used to present the content, the material needed and the goal of the respective section. These templates can serve as a starting point for a training. They can be altered according to the national, regional or local context but they can also be used unchanged. Material, further information and videos which are mentioned in the templates are included in the annex (page xx).

## 1. Training Module I – Webinar

Time	Goal	Content	Method	Material
5 Min.	Provide basics for the participant, in order to be able to follow the webinar	Introduction to the programme/structure of the webinar	Lecture  Three questions for reflection	Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ From your perspective, what could be the benefit of VPL?</li> <li>▸ What would you need to guide a person through a validation process?</li> <li>▸ Who are the stakeholders that could support you in a validation process?</li> </ul>
10 Min.	Give the participants an idea of the possible outcomes of a VPL process	Statement – short personal statements to describe the meaning and effect of VPL	Small film presentation of these stories – statements about benefits for the individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ For example: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2ZJelDn9Os">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2ZJelDn9Os</a></li> </ul>
10 Min.	Give a basic understanding of the background for and framework around VPL	What is VPL? The European Guidelines – 4 phases of validation	Lecture Short introduction – What does VPL stand for? What are the principles? Description of the four phases – graphic presentation – drawing – other effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ The Road Map from The Nordic Network for Adult Learning</li> </ul> <a href="https://issuu.com/nvlnordvux/docs/roadmap2016">https://issuu.com/nvlnordvux/docs/roadmap2016</a>
20 Min.	Give a basic understanding of the background for and framework around VPL	Key topics for the project EffectVPL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Benefits for the individual</li> <li>▸ A holistic approach with a biographical focus</li> <li>▸ Effectiveness</li> </ul> Introduction of the biographical method	Presentation of key topics by keynote speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Podcasts</li> </ul>
15 Min.	Present perspectives of employers' and individuals' needs in a VPL process	Individual and employer perspective according to the four phases.  Story telling – videos or quotations from the interviews/case stories	Small videos: one for each phase, shifting between the individual and the employer perspective	

Time	Goal	Content	Method	Material
<b>20 Min.</b>	Involvement and reflection of the participants.	Q and A session.	Getting back to the three questions from the beginning of the webinar: What are your reflections?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Chat</li> <li>▸ Digital whiteboard</li> <li>▸ Possibility of sharing the screen</li> <li>▸ Loudspeaker</li> </ul>
<b>10 Min.</b>		What comes next? Announcement of the following steps of the training session, e.g. a conference or a small group training.	Room for questions Evaluation by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Evaluation</li> <li>▸ Roadmap of subsequent training sessions (if applicable)</li> </ul>

## 2. Training Module II - Conference

Time	Goal	Content	Method	Material
15 Min.		Welcome remarks  Goals and agenda  Communication and network tools	Speech and presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Presentation of the Agenda</li> <li>▸ Laptop/Beamer</li> <li>▸ PPT</li> </ul>
<b>Session 1 (90 minutes)</b>				
10 Min.	Develop a common understanding of VPL processes	VPL system in Poland (or in the respective country) <i>What do you need to know about VPL?</i> <i>Do you need to know competences of people before the VPL process?</i>	Video/IBE See annex p. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Internet</li> <li>▸ Technical support</li> </ul>
30 Min.	Present the international understanding of VPL	Berlin Declaration on VPL: organization, financing, procedures, instruments, support structure, post-validation, legal foundation	Presentation See annex p. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Laptop/Beamer</li> <li>▸ PPT</li> <li>▸ Copies of the declaration</li> </ul>
30 Min.	Discuss the practicability of the declaration in the respective (national) context.	Berlin Declaration on VPL Each group will discuss one section of the declaration	Socratic discussion in small group  <i>What are your experiences?</i> <i>What do you think about the declaration?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Cards with questions to be discussed</li> <li>▸ Cards with the sections of the declaration</li> <li>▸ Flip chart</li> </ul>
20 Min.		Summary of the discussion	Plenary discussion, collection of key words on flip chart	
<b>Coffee break</b>				
<b>Session 2 (90 minutes)</b>				
30 Min.	Introduce the biographical perspective of VPL	The biographical approach in a VPL context	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Laptop/Beamer</li> <li>▸ PPT</li> </ul>
30 Min.	Experience the biographical approach in a VPL context	Conversation between VPL practitioner and VPL applicant; Counseling interview	Role play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Cards with roles</li> <li>▸ Cards with questions</li> <li>▸ Flip chart</li> </ul>

Time	Goal	Content	Method	Material
30 Min.	Reflect your experiences with the biographical approach		Discussion/reflection: use of biographical perspective in the interview  <i>Do you think the biographical perspective will be helpful in practice? Where do you see chances and challenges?</i>	
Coffee break				
Session 3 (90 minutes)				
30 Min.	Introduce the relevance of professional effectiveness and quality in VPL processes	Presentation of a case (for instance, from EffectVPL Manual I) Highlighting dilemmas & challenges	Case work Pro/Contra discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Laptop/Beamer</li> <li>▸ PPT</li> </ul>
30 Min.	Discuss cases from your professional experience and develop strategies and solutions to handle these cases	<p>Discussion in smaller groups about dilemmas embedded in the cases.</p> <p>Discussion about possible actions to handle the dilemmas. What could be a solution for this case?</p>	<p>Small group discussion</p> <p>Exchange of perspectives on the dilemmas <i>What do you think from your professional perspective about the case?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Questions for discussion</li> </ul>
20 Min.	Feedback discussion about the conference	<p>Discussion in smaller groups in order to reflect the day</p> <p>Collect the main points of each group, write them down on moderation cards and present them in the plenary</p>	<p>Evaluation</p> <p><i>What was new? What was surprising? Were your expectations met?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Moderation cards</li> <li>▸ Pens</li> </ul>
10 Min.	Final reference on follow up trainings and further information	<p>Presentation and closing remarks by the facilitator.</p> <p>What are the next steps? How can you continue your training? Where can you find further information about the topic?</p>	Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Laptop/Beamer</li> <li>▸ PPT</li> </ul>

### 3. Training Module III – Small Group Training

The Small Group Training consists of a 2-day-training with VPL practitioners on the ground.

Day 1

Time	Goal	Content	Activities	Material
60 Min.	Get to know each other	Opening session Presentation of the participants and the facilitator	<p><b>Round I:</b> Each participant tells a short story where (s)he has experienced good learning outside of school learning.</p> <p><b>Round II:</b> Sociometry Each participant positions itself in the room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Stand together with the others in the institution you represent</li> <li>▸ Position yourself on a hypothetical geographical map: <i>Where are you living now?</i> <i>Where are you born?</i> <i>Where would you like to live?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Circle of chairs</li> <li>▸ Ball</li> <li>▸ Name cards</li> <li>▸ Group tables</li> <li>▸ Flip chart or PPT with agenda</li> </ul>
		Presenting the agenda of the day	Short lecture by the facilitator	
30 Min.	Recognize your role in the VPL process	Short presentation of the Roadmap	Presentation and plenary discussion of the roadmap in order to highlight the VPL context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Roadmap poster</li> <li>▸ PPT</li> </ul>
<b>Coffee break</b>				
30 Min.	Share your VPL experiences	Peer to peer learning and sharing VPL experiences	<p>Small mixed groups with representatives of different institutions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>What is your experience with VPL?</i></li> <li>2) <i>Find similarities and differences.</i></li> <li>3) <i>What are the challenges? Find good practices / examples.</i></li> </ol> <p>Write 3 good examples and 3 challenges on a Flip chart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Flip chart</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch break</b>				

Time	Goal	Content	Activities	Material
20 Min.		Summarizing the work group	Short oral summary by every participant	
60 Min.	Experience your role as VPL practitioner	Role play: Biographical approach	<p>Short theoretical introduction: What is the biographical perspective?</p> <p>Get together pairwise and play the role of a VPL practitioner and a VPL applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ The VPL practitioner asks questions in accordance with the biographical perspective</li> <li>▸ Change the roles after 5 minutes</li> <li>▸ It is also possible to work with three persons per group where the third person has the role of an observer and gives feedback to the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Flip Charts with the roles</li> <li>▸ Handouts</li> <li>▸ Hats and scarfs for the roles</li> </ul>
Coffee break				
20 Min.	Reflection and Evaluation	Reflection and evaluation of the role play and the day	<p>Individual or pairwise</p> <p><i>What do I take with me from the day?</i></p> <p><i>What will be my next/first step for implementing the VPL practice?</i></p> <p>Writing it down and clustering at a pin board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ Flipchart</li> <li>▸ Moderation cards</li> </ul>
15 Min.		Closing session Outlook for day two	Remarks, questions, outlook	

Day 2

Time	Goal	Content	Activities	Material
20 Min.		Opening Session	Icebreaker Agenda	▸ Flip chart
40 Min.	Exchange of VPL experiences	Peer to peer learning Experiences in your practices	Small groups discuss their practical experiences	
Coffee break				
45 Min.	Empowerment of VPL practitioners	Creative process i.e. Brainstorm -  Developing arguments in small groups to activate VPL applicants  Raising ideas how to support VPL  Identifying new good practices	Small group work  Find 3 arguments to promote VPL in your working context  Find 3 examples to support VPL applicants in the VPL process  Presentation/summary of the group discussion	▸ Flip chart
30 Min.		Summary	Find the two best ideas	
Coffee break				
45 Min.		Closing session  Next steps Implementation in the work context  Networking – make connections, establish the network and make the world a better VPL environment	<i>How can we develop a VPL network?</i>  <i>Meetings online or offline?</i>  <i>Who is responsible and for what?</i>  <i>How often should we meet?</i>  <i>What outcome do we want?</i>  <i>What content and form should it have?</i>  <i>Further upcoming questions</i>	▸ Questions

### Preamble of the Berlin Declaration

Validation of Prior Learning is the process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying the learning outcomes of individuals acquired within and outside formal education and training. It gives visibility and value to all forms of learning and seeks to uncover and unlock latent talent in the workforce and in society. Globalization, digitalization and migration are changing the way we work and learn. Where it is already established, we can see that VPL performs an invaluable bridging function between the individual and society, between learning and working. [...].

## Conclusions

As the Preamble of the Berlin Declaration puts it precisely: validation of prior learning has to be seen as a search process. This process shall have the aim to uncover crucial stages and turning points in an individual's lifetime that can be of relevance in the working life. This publication shall serve as an inspiration to all VPL practitioners. At the same time it shall provide easy access to the content, understanding and practice of VPL. The Training Modules covered in this publication are suggestions that can be used and adapted to the respective context and needs.

If you wish to give us feedback in terms of the usability of the Training Modules or would like to have further information, please get in touch with us via our website:

<https://blogs.uni-bremen.de/effectvpl/>

## Annex

In this section you will find material that you can use for the implementation of the Training Modules.

### BERLIN DECLARATION

*The Berlin Declaration covers principles of effective national VPL systems. These principles were developed during the 3rd VPL Biennale in Berlin 2019 by the international VPL community (researchers & practitioners) and shall be distributed across the globe in order to push stakeholders and policy makers to improve validation systems. You can find more information here: [Berlin Declaration on Validation of Prior Learning](#)*

### § 1 Organisational arrangements

They are fundamental to the success of a VPL system. Key stakeholders' areas of responsibility need to be clearly demarcated, with extensive collaboration and cooperation across sectors.

### § 2 Financing

Validation costs money. For this reason, the creation of financing structures and a response to the question of who pays what towards the cost of validation or qualification procedure are of crucial significance.

### § 3 Procedures and instruments

Procedures include structured pathways for validation of learning outcomes, training for assessors and guides, as well as mechanisms for quality assurance of validation processes. Instruments are tools that make learning outcomes visible or help to assess them.

### § 4 Support Structures

Access to guidance is essential for learners trying to navigate recognition procedures. A combination of face-to-face support and online tools and information form a valuable component of any functioning VPL system.

### § 5 Post-validation Pathways

The value of VPL results on the job market and to education providers determines the success of a VPL system. VPL results must facilitate an individual's mobility, opening up pathways which were previously closed off.

### § 6 Legal Foundations

A clear legal framework, which coordinates and oversees quality provision of VPL, is the bedrock of a sustainable VPL system.

## Useful information/documents

Cedefop (2015). European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning.

Download: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3073_en.pdf) (23.05.2019).

Cedefop (2016): European Inventory on Validation: 2016 update.

Download <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/de/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory> (23.05.2019).

European Union (2012): Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01).

Download: [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Council\\_Recommendation\\_on\\_the\\_validation\\_20\\_December\\_2012.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/Council_Recommendation_on_the_validation_20_December_2012.pdf) (01.07.2019).

Field, John/Merrill, Barbara/West, Linden (2012): Life history approaches to access and retention of non-traditional students in higher education: A cross-European approach. In: European journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults, 3: 1, p. 77-89.

Laudenbach, Franziska/Lis, Aleksandra (2019): Enhancing mobility – validation of prior non-formal and informal learning and its impact on individuals' employment biography: Qualitative insights from Germany and Poland. In: Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 21: 1, p. 8-28.

Merrill, Barbara/West, Linden (2008): Using Life History and Biographical Methodologies in Researching Adult and Lifelong Learning: Challenges and Achievements in Building a Global Conversation. In: Thinking Beyond Borders: Global Ideas, Global Values, Online Proceedings of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE), l'Association Canadienne pour l'Étude de l'Éducation des Adultes (ACÉÉA). 27<sup>th</sup> National Conference 2008 at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia. Edited by Janet Groen and Shibao Guo.

Villalba, Ernesto (2016): The Council Recommendation on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Implications for Mobility. In: Journal of International Mobility.

Download: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-journal-of-international-mobility-2016-1-page-9.htm>

West, Linden/Alheit, Peter/Andersen, Anders Silig and Merrill, Barbara (2007): Using Biographical and Life History Approaches in the Study of Adult and Lifelong Learning: European Perspectives. New York: Peter Lang.



## ROADMAP – VALIDATION AND THE VALUE OF COMPETENCES

You can find more information here: [Validation and the value of competences](#)

## Videos

Kwalifikacje dla wymagających (Poland), see:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nf3A3hG2y4>

ValiKom (Germany), Können sichtbar machen – Berufliche Kompetenzen validieren. see:  
<https://youtu.be/PREn0kkrrp4>

What is a case study, see:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuG8AzK9GVQ>

How to do the Socratic Method, see:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPLu3qCbSU>