Validation of non formal and informal learning.
Towards the definition of a Governance model in Italy
Report of Activities

Introduction. The transfer of innovation

The **SiQuCAE** project mainly aims to adapt and transfer in the Veneto Region the French-speaking Belgium institutional model of RPL quality assurance device developed by the Consortium de Validation des Compétences, associated partner of the project.

Adaptation and transfer, however, start from an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of all partner countries' models.

The initial phase of the transfer was crucial due to the fact that the Veneto Region adopted a specific RPL model -at the methodological level- only after submission and approval of the SiQuCAE application form.

Through an instrument called *Job Endowment* (or voucher), the Veneto Region has promoted active policy paths since 2009; these paths aim at ensuring income support and, at the same time, enhancing the workers' skills, thus facilitating their relocation in the labour market. The "Job Endowment" is a package of services, accompanied by an economic compensation, offered to workers to encourage employment or conservation of a job. In order to strengthen the quality of services offered to workers and businesses, in 2011 the Veneto Region introduced two new tools: the worker who faces and completes the service of skills audit is released a **dossier of evidences** and, at the end of a training programme successfully completed, a **certificate of learning outcomes**.

The "Dossier of evidences" -and the methodology to produce it- is exactly a direct result of analysis and evaluation of all projects financed under the regional directive n.1758/2009 "*Systemic Actions for the implementation of operational tools to support the processes of recognition, validation and certification of skills*".

In the application form, partners stated that "the content of the transfer will be driven by the choices that the Veneto Region will operate within the system actions provided by dgr. 1758/2009. If, in fact, the Belgium RPL system differentiates the accreditation on the principle that the validation/certification differs from job to job (the methodology adopted there implies that a candidate undertakes a practical trial in a professional situation recreated in a RPL Centre on the basis of a rigorous Validation Referential), we are still uncertain that this will be adopted by the Labour Department too: the debate is still open".

This awareness let the partners concentrate more on the institutional framework and the participatory approach of the Belgian experience than on procedures and tools.

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WP 2. Definition of a governance model

According to WP2 -as described in section D.4.1- the activity has been essentially based on the comparison between partners starting from in-depth presentations of systems of validation of non formal and informal skills in the different partners countries: France, Spain, Ireland, Belgium and of course Italy.

After this initial presentation, and as agreed during the first transnational meeting in Venice at the end of November 2011, a grid was prepared to collect more common information about the different partners countries' national system of governance of RPL processes.

The grid proposed contained a list of *8 dimensions*: 1) State/degree of the system implementation; 2) Unity of territory and context; 3) Ways of implementation of methods and tools; 4) Responsible body(ies); 5) Stakeholders involved in the process; 6) Professionals; 7) Targets; 8) Costs.

After filling in the grid, each partner had to make a **SWOT analysis** of these dimensions, explaining the choice made.

A first comparative analysis was prepared to be discussed during the second transnational meeting in Belgium (Gosselies) in April 2012. Explanations and integrations were asked to all partners before the meeting if answers were not clear enough or could be misunderstood.

Critical dimensions
(emerged from the SWOT analysis)

implementation degree of RPL connected to the dimension of targets (making people aware of the possibility to access RPL)

territorial unity to facilitate mobility of citizens

involvement of stakeholders

professionals' qualification

costs (availability of public funds or funds at risk)

Lessons learnt:

- Tackling, from the very first steps, the value of the certificate/award provided at the end of RPL and about targets who can most benefit from it (this assuring that there will be candidates for RPL when the system is implemented).

- Involving the social parties (enterprises and trade-unions) from the very beginning of the design and implementation of an RPL system, discussing with them about the added value of RPL and what issued at the end (urgent need for marketing RPL).

- Providing for a big information campaign to different targets (candidates, intermediates bodies, social parties, etc.).

- Paying more and more attention to the very first steps of an RPL process -information and welcoming- and to improve accompaniment to RPL in order to increase potential candidates' chances of success.

- Providing for the training of the professionals involved in the

steps of the RPL process towards certification.

Some general principles emerged in the discussion, such as: equity (equal access and treatment for everybody and anywhere), and transparence, thus introducing quality assurance issues.

...At the Italian regional level

All materials and results obtained in the meantime were shared in May 2012 with the 3 Wises (Committee of the Wises).

The Committee -for both the governance model and the quality assurance model (obviously linked one to each other) suggested to:

- analyze the use made of the "dossier of evidences" within the "job endowments" up-to-date with direct involvement of the professionals;

- consider the social value and usability of what issued at the end of an active policy measure;

- ponder who could certificate skills acquired in non formal and informal contexts;

- decide about universality or not of an RPL service (governance model will be different accordingly).

The work of analysis had the following operational objectives:

- Collect all the documents released as a result of active policy paths;

- Identify and share analysis criteria

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THE WISES

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of dossier;
- Analyse a sample of dossiers;
- Identify best practices;
- Detect the most critical mistakes;
- Identify effective methods and contents for transfer practices and methodologies.

Strengths

- common reference to learning outcomes
- same format for all accredited organizations
- syntax used
- working in group and motivation
- it helps building a "winning" CV

Weaknesses

- constraint of time spent with the candidate
- voluntary base
- difficulties in finding evidences
- time needed for back-office work
- lack of national professional standards
- perception of little utility of the instrument by candidates
- service unknown by citizens

For the analysis of the dossiers, BENCHMARKS have been identified as indicated below:

- Syntax of competencies

- Choosing of competencies

- Description of knowledge

- Description of skills

- Syntax of knowledge

- Syntax of skills

- Description of the type of evidence

- Motivation of evidence

- Compilation of the formal format (unstructured / structured, signature, stamp, format ..)

- Overall assessment of the dossier usability.

For the evaluation of each parameter a scale of two, three or four levels has been used.
For example, for the "evaluation of the dossier" the levels detected were two "usable" / "unusable" for "syntax of knowledge" levels detected were three: "correct syntax" / "partially correct syntax" / "incorrect syntax".

First of all, dossiers created during the active policies by the professionals have been downloaded, cataloged and organised to carry out a detailed analysis of a sample of the dossiers.
We then proceeded to complete census of the material produced (2,600 dossiers).
It was built a file that has collected progressively the results of the analysis.
The analysis had considered a sample of 400 dossiers.

At the end of June a focus group was made with professionals for a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses found during the first application of this methodology.

After this first confrontation with professionals, the Veneto Region went on to investigate a sample of dossiers of evidences made during 2011-

The Wises were asked to make a "control analysis" of a small sample of dossiers (10).

In September, the Wises met again in order to share the results of investigation on the dossiers.

The effectiveness of the entire process leading to the validation / certification of skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning is closely linked to the expertise of professionals who are involved in providing services.

The Veneto Region is drawing a model of governance that is based on the results of two actions:

- "Systemic Actions for the implementation of operational tools to support the processes of recognition, validation and certification of skills" (regional directive n.1758/2009).

- Interventions of active policy paths dedicated to workers affected by the economic crisis.

The results of these actions suggest to implement two types of services dedicated to workers and citizens:

- A support service to the construction of the dossier

- A validation service that requires the activation of a commission of experts.

The experience of professionals that support the person and work throughout the path leading to the validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning is one of the key

elements to guarantee the quality and thus lays the foundation for the credibility and usability of the contents of the devices.

It is therefore necessary to provide training activities dedicated to both operators involved in service support for the construction of the dossier and experts involved in the commission of validation with different paths of improvement. These training activities will have a strong connotation workshop and be regularly scheduled

The training will be aimed at the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that are critical to the regional system.

Two strategic kinds of contents and use of these contents will be offered in the training activities. The first is aimed at supporting the use of methods and devices consistent with the rules defined. The second is designed to strengthen the use of procedures for the provision of services in connection with the regional system including the use of regional information systems.

The Committee of the Wises is supporting the Veneto Region in the drawing of the governance model and for this purpose it met again in October.