

REFINE

« tool report »

June 2005

This document includes proposals relating to:

- **The diploma / certificate supplement**
- **The European language portfolio**
- **Advice, guidance and support**

At the REFINE meeting on January 18th in Lille, the decision was taken to come forward with proposals to “improve” the tools.

The following comments are based on the analysis of the feedback from the « vocational training » sector. The experimentation for each tool was only made with a small number of candidates, therefore the reflections and possible proposals must be read with caution.

The diploma / certificate supplement

- **Europass Diploma Supplement** – the diploma supplement is a personal document developed jointly with the Council of Europe and UNESCO which records the holder's educational record. It is provided by the same establishment that issues the diploma and should in principle be provided to all new higher education graduates from 2005.
- **Europass Certificate Supplement** – this is a supplement to a vocational education and training certificate, clarifying the professional qualifications of all individuals holding such qualifications.

The purpose of these tools is not the recognition of informal skills. Their improvement does not seem to be necessary. In the report sent to the project coordinator in April 2005, we have already brought up this fact :

We have the feedback from two candidates (Italy) who have tested the diploma supplement. Although the very low number of candidates does not allow any conclusion, we can assume that this tool, designed to improve the legibility of the diplomas and others certifications, will not be used in the scope of APEL. The reference to the formal scope (studies level) seems to be a brake on the expression of informal assets which are often hardly comparable with a study level. As one of the candidates said, the main problem of the diploma supplement is the fact that « in a lifelong learning course, there is no final test. »

Apart from the legibility of diplomas and certificates for a potential employer, the interest of these documents, especially the certificate supplement, lies in the fact that **qualification becomes visible for the candidate himself**. If need be, it can ease the expression of his own know-how, for example in the framework of an APEL, in view of getting another certificate, but also in a larger perspective of the awareness of his skills.

Ideas for consideration :

The content of the supplements must be intelligible for the candidate. If for example the supplement contains some extracts from a system of job analysis, which seems to be likely, we should make sure that the holder of the particular job understands the adopted language so that the supplement be useful for the explanation of his experience.

The European language portfolio

- **Europass Language Portfolio** – the language portfolio is a document in which citizens can record their linguistic skills and cultural expertise. It was developed by the Council of Europe and is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages that is becoming the European standard to identify the level of language skills.

In the report mentioned above, you can find the following remark :

The European language portfolio did not arouse particular enthusiasm among the candidates. Even if they acknowledged that the informal learning of languages is taken into account, other questions were seen as very « academic », such as the number of books read (with author and number of pages...) and these irritated the candidates, all students of vocational training and in principle familiar with self assessment.

The document was viewed as too long (the language passport as well), not suitable for use in job searching, and somewhat « elitist ».

The Portfolio has to be paid for the distribution network must be known. It is particularly used in schools and high schools, and seems to be considered in these contexts as a motivation tool for students.

The adult who is looking for a tool that makes visible his professional linguistic skills (which would be then useful in the framework of a job research or a recognition of non formal and informal learning) will not be able to resort to the Portfolio, which is very “young” and of an “academic” design.

Another obstacle to the use of the Portfolio lies in the fact that self assessment of linguistic skills is not an easy thing. The candidate must first get familiar with the reference framework, the European level scale, and then compare his own skills with the given descriptions. Few candidates will have the necessary skills to do it.

In May 2005, the Leonardo agency has selected a project of assessment of linguistic and professional skills, entitled TransVALP (**T**ransparence et **V**alidation des **A**cquis **L**inguistiques **P**rofessionnels). The origin of this project was the acknowledgement that *professional* linguistic skills were difficult to find and make visible, although the recognition of non formal and informal learning focuses on them¹.

TransVALP posts the following objectives :

- Elaborate profiles such as language-jobs,
- Design an on-line tool for assessment of professional linguistic skills from these profiles,
- Give recommendations on the integration of the tool in the professional qualification systems of partner countries,

¹ It is interesting to notice that the « language » working group who met in Kaunas during the last REFINE meeting acknowledged the same thing, and has stressed that the existence of language-jobs profiles would ease the recognition of linguistic skills !

- Promote languages at national and European levels as a full component of vocational training and APEL paths.

The work on assessment, self assessment and recognition of linguistic skills is going on at the European level, and the Portfolio will soon be completed with other tools.

Ideas for consideration :

Would it be useful to introduce the TransVALP project in Rome in order to demonstrate that works are in progress and to extend the range of European tools ?

Advice and guidance

Guides from AFPA and Université de Brest are not intended for the same target group: the AFPA guide is intended for advisers, while that of Université de Brest is intended for persons who are searching for the possibility to validate their skills via a university diploma.

However, an analysis of the two underlines three crucial aspects concerning the adviser's work in the framework of a recognition of informal learning:

- Help the candidate in his awareness of his skills and to articulate them - help the candidate to understand his/her own skills (=become informed about him or herself),
- Obtain the necessary information (= get informed about the other),
- Know the frames of references, for example the job system of reference, or the content of the diplomas, in order to put together the candidate's experience and a standard.

Advisers play an essential role in facilitating the candidates' awareness of their own skills: via a adapted questionnaire, they advise in the exploration of experience and formalization. They lead the candidates towards the description of what they have really done in their own words rather than towards the normal abstract discourse that is often marked by value judgments.

Teachers, psychologists and professionals see their sphere of activity enlarged by the task of « advice and guidance for APEL ». They must have a specific know-how in order to assume this role with professionalism, and the question of the advisers' training arises.

Ideas for consideration :

National measures in the recognition of skills should integrate the questions about advice and guidance in their assessment : What is its content ? What's exactly happening during the guidance ? Can we say that advice and guidance are essential ? What are the competences required from an adviser ? How should they be vocational for that new role ? ...