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TRANSVAL-EU

THE IMPACT OF A RENEWED VALIDATION AND GUIDANCE PROCESS ON PRACTITIONERS AND THEIR CANDIDATES

Results of the **Belgian** field trial of the European project TRANSVAL-EU

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Introduction

TRANSVAL-EU is a cross-country policy experimentation with a focus on training of validation and guidance practitioners for identifying, documenting, assessing, and certifying transversal skills. During six pilots, practitioners have been trained in order to optimise the validation process of non-formal and informal learning among several validation candidates. An extra pilot in Portugal has been realised. This specific field trial has only been evaluated among the involved candidates. This report describes the results of the scientific evaluation focussing on the impact on the Belgian validation candidates and the Belgian practitioners involved, who have guided them during this 'renewed' validation process.

More specific background information concerning the research methodology has been provided in the European research report (for more information see: www.transvalproject.eu).

Research questions from the perspective of the practitioner (= focus on training and competence profiling of candidates) which will be answered are:

- Have validation and guidance practitioners been supported (during the field trials) with a suitable practice-oriented and innovative (referring to their current practice) training and tools focusing on validation of transversal skills?
- Have the competences of validation and guidance practitioners of the standardised training curricula and profiles been improved?
- Have the validation and guidance practitioners been more involved in the validation and guidance processes towards the learning environment of the validation/guidance candidates?

Research questions from the perspective of the validation and guidance candidate (= focus on impact innovative and inclusive validation & guidance) which will be answered are:

- Have transversal skills systematically been embedded into validation and guidance processes and procedures?
- Do adult learners perceive an increase concerning chances on education, training, leisure, work, voluntary work, etc. due to improved access, support and guidance to validate their transversal skills gained?
- Have innovative tools for adults (referring to their current practice) to validate transversal skills for upskilling, reskilling, job seeking or self-empowerment and development been offered?

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Sample of the involved practitioners

In the overall study 181 practitioners were involved in total. In order to conduct an analysis, only the practitioners who joined the pre- and the post-test were included in the current sample, to mention 78 practitioners (in Austria and Italy most practitioners have been involved due to the fact that in these countries two field trials have been conducted). This sample is too small to describe the sample per country. Therefore the total European sample has been analysed. As shown in table 1 most of them describe their occupation as career guidance counsellor, educator / teacher / trainer / coach or have multiple functions. Besides, most of them work in a centre of education or school, guidance organization, or VET provider. Finally, it seems that the majority has over 5 years of experience in their current occupation (65.4%).

Table 1: Characteristics of work setting practitioners (N = 78)

Characteristic of work setting	Category	Nr. of practitioners (%)
Country	Austria	24.4
	Belgium	7.7
	Italy	32.1
	Lithuania	23.1
	Poland	12.8
Occupation	Career guidance counsellor	27.6
	Validation of non-formal and informal learning counsellor	2.6
	Educator – teacher – trainer – coach	18.4
	Examiner – assessor	0
	Multiple occupations	18.4
	Other	32.9
Organisation type	Centre of education or school (excluding VET schools)	25.6
	Guidance organisation	20.5
	National office concerning the EQF	1.3
	National office concerning validation of prior competences	2.6
	Non-profit employer	3.8
	Private sector company	9.0
	Vocational Education and Training (VET) provider (including VET schools)	17.9
	Other	17.9
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	12.8
	1-2 years	5.1
	3-5 years	15.4
	5- 10 years	23.1
	Over 10 years	42.3

Missing values are excluded in percentage calculations

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Sample: Candidates from Belgium

Among 22 candidates a pre- and the post-test has been realised, before and after the validation process. According to table 2, more women than men were included (circa 91% versus 9%). Besides, most of them (77%) were born in the country they live in. Also, around 63% of the involved candidates were between 26 and 45 years old. Furthermore, in terms of education, the study covered both high-skilled as low-skilled adults (see table 2). Finally, most of the involved candidates are unemployed (50%).

Table 2: Sociodemographic characteristics of Belgian candidates (N = 22)

Sociodemographic characteristic	Category	Nr. of candidates (%)
Gender	Male	9.1
	Female	90.9
Nationality	Autochthone	77.3
	Foreign	22.7
Age	0 – 25 years	0.0
	26 – 45 years	63.2
	46 – 65 years	36.8
Highest form of education	Primary school	0.0
	Secondary school	54.5
	Vocational school	9.1
	High school	18.2
	University	13.6
	Other	4.5
Years in education	5 years or less	0.0
	Between 6 and 10 years	13.6
	Between 11 and 15 years	36.4
	Between 16 and 20 years	40.9
	Over 21 years	9.1
Job status	Paid work	13.6
	Self-employed	4.5
	Voluntary work (unpaid)	0.0
	Paid work and voluntary work	0.0
	Unemployed	50.0
	Looking for a job	31.8

Missing values are excluded in percentage calculations

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Description of the field trial

In Belgium, the field trials have been conducted by the 'Consortium de validation des compétences' and included several steps: the first step was dedicated to the training, which was either delivered individually - to each Center involved - or during a workshop that gathered around the table validation Centers belonging to all the operators that form the Consortium. The trainings left out the competence profile for practitioners, and only briefly presented the database, since it does not include tools in French. Two of the Centers agreed to take part in the field trial following this training, including a total of around 40 practitioners and finally around 30 to 35 candidates. Several working meetings in each Center (between 2 to 5 per center until the end of the field trials) allowed the practitioners to identify the transversal competences that the candidates need in order to increase their chances to be successful in the practical test. These competences were always linked to the task that the candidates need to perform in order to validate their competences. Hence, transversal competences have been identified so far (linked to the task of the practical test) for the occupations of administrative employee, roofer, barman, waiter and reception agent. Some centers were interested in including these competences in the positioning tool that they use in the guidance interview preceding the practical test, or even creating a positioning tool from scratch, having as a starting point the transversal competences. In some centers the candidates could also identify and self-assess their transversal competences – these however, did not return monitoring data and are thus not included in the data analysis. Centers joined the field trials progressively, and some of the trials were still ongoing at the cut-off date for data collection.

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Impact on competency level of validation of transversal competences of practitioners

This sample is too small to describe the sample per country. Therefore the total European sample has been analysed.

Based on the analysis of the pre- and post-test it becomes clear that most of the practitioners have experienced an increase in their competence level in terms of providing guidance of validation of transversal competences. According to table 3, all scales seem to be reliable and the experienced increase for each of the variables is significant (based on the T-test).

First, circa 76% of the practitioners experienced an increase in their overall competence related to validation of transversal competencies. This means that they feel themselves more capable in e.g., creating a validation and guidance process, procedure, using a method or tool for working with transversal competences, teaching others how to work with transversal competences and defining transversal competences.

Second, most of the practitioners feel themselves more capable in providing guidance in the process of validation (see table 3). As regards, providing guidance in relation to a typical validation process, circa 68% experienced this increase in their competency level. Besides, circa 76% of the practitioners experienced an increase in providing guidance in relation to validating transversal competences. This means that these practitioners have experienced to be more capable in e.g., communicating effectively with the candidates and with other practitioners involved in the process, identifying and adapting the ways to communicate with the candidates, building a relationship with the candidate and conducting the activities required to ensure the quality of the identification and documentation of the candidate's competences.

Third, most of the practitioners have experienced an increase in their competency level related to assessment (see table 3). Based on the analysis circa 72% experienced an increase in their competency level of assessment in relation to a typical validation process and circa 74% experienced an increase in their competency level of assessment in relation to validation transversal competences. More specifically, these practitioners experienced to be more capable in e.g., analysing the evidence and statements provided by the candidate, conducting the activities required to ensure the quality of assessing the candidate's competences, acting in accordance with rules and regulations and characterising the principles of working together with other practitioners involved in the process.

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Table 3: Experienced increase of competences among practitioners (N = 78)

Variable	Experienced increase among practitioners (in %)	Cronbach's Alpha of Scale	Significance of T-test
Competency level of transversal competences	75.6	0.96	$t(77) = -6.48, p < .05$
Competency level of providing guidance			
In relation to a typical validation process	67.6	0.97	$t(73) = -4.68, p < .05$
In relation to validating transversal competences	75.7	0.97	$t(73) = -7.58, p < .05$
Competency level of assessment			
In relation to a typical validation process	71.6	0.98	$t(73) = -5.08, p < .05$
In relation to validating transversal competences	74.3	0.98	$t(73) = -6.87, p < .05$

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Impact of field trial on experienced increase of competences of Belgian candidates

By conducting a pre-and post-test among the 22 candidates involved the experienced increase in several competences of the TRANSVERSAL Competence Framework (TCF) in addition to the rate of social inclusion and labour market position has been analysed.

First, according to table 4, most of the used scales seems to be highly reliable according to the high scores for the Cronbach's Alpha (based on the total European sample). Besides, it becomes that based on the Paired Samples T-test that the experienced increase is significant for almost all variables (based on the total European sample).

Second, according to the experienced increase, it became clear that a significant share of the candidates involved experienced an increase in competences. This varies between circa 40% until 50%. For example, the candidates experienced to be more able to solve problems or foster cooperation or using oral or written communication.

Third, it becomes clear that most of the candidates experienced to be better involved in a validation process concerning validation of transversal skills. According to table 4, circa 50% of the candidates experienced after joining the validation process that they know what transversal skills are, and they are aware of their transversal skills. Besides, they seemed to complete an assessment to test their skills and received a certification. Finally, they experienced that they could discuss which skills they have learned with their teacher and experienced that their learning experiences have been written down.

Table 4: Experienced increase of competences among Belgian candidates (N = 22)

Competences	Used or newly constructed variable	Experienced increase among candidates (in %)	Cronbach's Alpha of Scale
Solving problems and reacting to unforeseen	Assertiveness (SIT)	45.5	0.87
Cooperating and fostering cooperation	Assertiveness (SIT)	45.5	0.87
Managing information and critical thinking	Newly constructed	40.9	0.76
Transversal skills (incl. guidance & validation	Newly constructed	50.0	0.81

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Interpretation of impact

The TRANSVAL-EU project aims to contribute to a more constructive and reliable validation and guidance process. In order to do so, in six European countries (Austria, Belgium, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal) eight field trials have been organised in order to optimize the validation process concerning transversal skills.

According to the results among the Belgian candidates, 40% to 50% of them experienced that some of their transversal competences increased. This study showed that learning interventions referring to formal, non-formal and informal learning for adults have impact on a significant share of these learners. The results of the field trials of TRANSVAL-EU are comparable and seem to be promising especially in comparison with the earlier published results of the study of Taris (2007) showing the impact of training of 10% to 20%.

Furthermore a lot of the involved Belgian candidates (50%) experienced that they were involved in a constructieve process of validation and guidance of transversal skills and perceived to be among others more aware of their transversal competences.

Second, most of the involved European practitioners (68% to 76%) experienced to have an improvement in their competency level of transversal competences, providing guidance during the validation process and providing an assessment. This increase seems to be significant.

References

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