

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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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. TRANSVAL-EU have addressed **validation of transversal skills and guidance provisions both from the perspective of the practitioners as well as from the perspective of the validation and guidance candidates and evaluate these simultaneously based on real-life, field trials** taking account of the diversity of practices in validation and guidance in the EU countries. The tools and methods used during these field trials can be found in the **database of TRANSVAL-EU**.

Besides, the TRANSVAL- EU Competence Framework, the European and national (regional) training and the competence profile of practitioners have been implemented in the different field trials. Practitioners have been trained during five pilots in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Lithuania and Poland. This exercise has helped them to optimise the validation process of non-formal and informal learning among several validation candidates. An extra pilot has been done in Portugal. 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 validation candidates and the practitioners involved, who have guided them during this 'renewed' validation process.

In order to evaluate the impact of the field trials among practitioners several research questions need to be answered, to mention:

- Have validation and guidance practitioners been supported with a suitable practice-oriented and innovative training and tools focusing on validation of transversal skills?
- Have the competences of validation and guidance practitioners 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?

In order to evaluate the impact of the field trials among the validation and guidance candidates several research questions need to be answered, to mention:

- Have transversal skills systematically been embedded into validation and guidance processes and procedures?
- Do adult learners perceive an increase of 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 to validate transversal skills for upskilling, reskilling, job seeking or self-empowerment and development been offered?

The TRANSVAL-EU field trials offer real-life environments comparing quantitatively and qualitatively the outcomes and impact on these two target groups. Impact evaluations answer cause-and-effect questions to determine whether and to what extent an intervention caused an observable change. To maximise the understanding and learning about "why" the interventions of the field trials of TRANSVAL-EU worked, or did not work, we used mixed-method approaches, which build on qualitative and quantitative data and make use of several methodologies for analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE TRANSVAL- EU FIELD TRIALS ON PRACTITIONERS

The scientific study investigates the impact of the field trials on the knowledge, skills and attitude of the practitioners guiding the process of validation. The results focus especially on the increase of their competences in order to optimise the validation process for the validation and guidance candidates. First, field research has been conducted. The main aim of the research was to provide an evaluation of the competences in validating transversal skills possessed by guidance and validation practitioners from five European countries, as well as to understand their perspective and identify their needs related to the topic of transversal skills. This has been realised by conducting both quantitative and qualitative methods by implementing a Computer Assisted Web Interview ('Competence Survey') for the competence evaluation and Design Thinking workshops with the practitioners for identifying their needs.

Second, a questionnaire has been developed in order to measure the increase of the competences among validation and guidance practitioners. These practitioners filled in the questionnaire twice (which refers to a pre- and post-test design). The basic questionnaire has been translated into the different languages of the field trials countries (French, German, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish and Portuguese). Third, in order to reveal the success factors and hindrances of the innovative guidance and validation process (as supported by TRANSVAL-EU) an in-depth analysis has been conducted. The in-depth analysis captures the complexity of the field trials as a result of the heterogeneity of the stakeholders in VNFIL and the different infrastructures in the six field trial countries.

Sample: Practitioners from six European countries



A total of 181 practitioners were involved in the overall study and filled in the questionnaire at the beginning of the field trial (pre-test). 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). 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 center of education or school, guidance organisation, 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
	Portugal	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	3.9
	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	3.9
	Private sector company	9.0
Years of experience	Vocational Education and Training (VET) provider (including VET schools)	17.9
	Other	17.9
	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

RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE TRANSVAL- EU FIELD TRIALS ON CANDIDATES

The participants in this part of the study were the different candidates of validation and guidance of the field trials in six countries in Europe. These adults followed the validation and guidance process during the field trials in order to increase their confidence in addition to their key (inter-) personal and social competences based on the defined transversal skills. The sample encompassed a diversity of learners who have been stratified in the field trials in the different involved countries.

For the pre-test, data have been collected on individual characteristics of the validation and guidance candidates in addition to the variables of social inclusion and labour market participation and transversal skills. At the beginning and at the end of the validation process (post-test) data was gathered on the impact of field trial on the variables of social inclusion and labour market participation and transversal skills in addition to individual characteristics. The hypothesis was that the perceived social inclusion and labour market position will be increased after joining the validation and guidance process provided by the field trial.

Sample: Candidates from six European countries



Among 256 candidates a pre- and the post-test has been realised, before and after the validation process. According to table 2, slightly more women than men were included (circa 55% versus 45%). Besides, most of them (85%) were born in the country they live in. Also, around 82% of the involved candidates were younger than 46 years. Furthermore, in terms of education, the study covered both high-skilled as low-skilled adults (see table 2). Finally, most of the involved candidates have paid work (38%) or are unemployed (30%).

Table 2: Sociodemographic characteristics of candidates (N = 256)

Sociodemographic characteristic	Category	Nr. of candidates (%)
Country	Austria	12.9
	Belgium	8.6
	Italy	22.3
	Lithuania	19.9
	Poland	23.0
	Portugal	13.3
Gender	Male	45.3
	Female	54.7
Nationality	Autochthone	84.8
	Foreign	14.8
Age	0 – 25 years	37.8
	26 – 45 years	44.6
	46 – 65 years	17.7
	66+ years	1.7
Highest form of education	Primary school	10.5
	Secondary school	24.6
	Vocational school	11.7
	High school	21.1
	University	25.8
	Other	1.6
Years in education	5 years or less	5.9
	Between 6 and 10 years	14.8
	Between 11 and 15 years	48.0
	Between 16 and 20 years	25.8
	Over 21 years	3.5
	Paid work	38.3
Job status	Self-employed	6.6
	Voluntary work (unpaid)	1.2
	Paid work and voluntary work	1.6
	Unemployed	30.1
	Looking for a job	16.8
	Missing values	

Missing values are excluded in percentage calculations

RESEARCH RESULTS

Experienced increase in competences among validation and guidance practitioners



Second, most of the involved 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.

Experienced increase in competences among validation and guidance candidates



According to the results among the candidates, 30% to 50% of them experienced that some of their transversal competences increased. Besides, 35% to 42% of candidates experienced an increase in social inclusion. According to the European study of Lupi et al. (2011), circa 30% to 45% of a comparable target group experienced an increase on some comparable competences and social inclusion. 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%.

Influential factors of experienced increase of competences among validation and guidance candidates



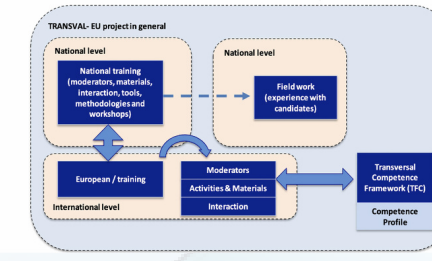
Furthermore most of the involved candidates (89%) felt that they were involved in a constructive process of validation and guidance of transversal skills and perceived to be among others more aware of their transversal competences. In order to determine the most important influential factors on the several competences a logistical regression analysis has been conducted. According to the results of the analysis three variables seem to have the most important impact on five competences. First, the validation and guidance process of transversal skills seems to be a significant predictor on 'solving problems and reacting to unforeseen', 'cooperating and fostering cooperation', 'building one's career path' and 'developing one's competences and profile'. Second, also gender seems to be a significant predictor on 'solving problems and reacting to unforeseen' and 'cooperating and fostering cooperation'. Finally, according to the results of the analysis 'age' seems to be a significant predictor on 'apprenticeship'.

Influential factors of experienced increase of competences among validation and guidance practitioners



Based on the analysis it becomes clear that several elements of the TRANSVAL-EU project influenced this increase. According to figure 1, the basic elements of the European and national training supported the increase in competences of the validation process in addition to the increased involvement in the validation and guidance process, awareness of transversal skills, possibilities of cooperation with stakeholders and the improvement of the using and embedding of transversal skills in guiding candidates and advising them in using transversal skills in daily or working life. In addition to this, the translation into and the use of national training, workshops, tools materials, methodologies and workshops seems to be very important to support this experienced increase of competences among the validation practitioners. Furthermore, the Transversal Competence Framework (TCF) proved to be helpful when optimising the validation process. Also the experience with the candidates themselves or in other words, the field work seems to possibly influence the increase of competences among some practitioners. Finally the TRANSVAL- EU Competence Profile proved to be supportive for an experienced increase of competences among some practitioners.

Figure 1: Interplay of influentials on increase of competences among practitioners



According to the results of the analysis referring to the influentials on the experienced increase of competences among the candidates especially the validation and guidance process of transversal skills in addition to gender and age seem to be a significant predictor on several of the competences.

LESSONS LEARNED AND EXPERIENCED CHALLENGES OF THE FIELD TRIALS

Although the field trials seemed to be successful, some challenges and problems occurred during the implementation of the innovative way of providing guidance during the validation process. Problems reported include the fact that integrating the pre- and post-tests was a very time-consuming endeavour, as well as difficulty in understanding the language, both of the competence framework, and of some of the pre-/post-test questions. For example in Austria or Belgium: 'Concerning the Competence Framework, some participants – as well as some practitioners – although they had extremely good language skills and an excellent way of expressing themselves, found the classification of the transversal skills into the individual EQF levels as very abstract and formulated in a theoretical concept language'. They proposed to add concrete context and a simple language, or other tools for localisation, like pictures, or "check questions" to help in this respect. Especially for candidates with language barriers or cognitive impairments a simpler language was mentioned to be beneficial. The pre- and post-test questions, which included a scale from 1 to 10, and did not have the option to select multiple answers regarding employment status and job search, were also reported to have created problems in some cases (e.g. in Austria and Belgium).

Practitioners actively involved in the field trials were asked to provide additional information on the type of validation arrangements they used in trying out the methods and tools presented in the national trainings. Data was collected for a total of 257 candidates across the 6 participating countries. Two countries (Belgium and Lithuania) chose the same setting for all of their field trials, while Austria, Italy and Poland have applied the methodology in differing settings. In Belgium, all candidates were informed about transversal competences, without identifying or documenting them, while in Lithuania, on the other hand, all candidates went through all four stages of the validation process and received a certificate for their transversal competences.

Overall, the majority of candidates were supported in identifying their transversal competences (71), and the least candidates assessed their transversal competences without certifying them (9), as shown in figure 2 below. Regarding the assessment of transversal competences, both in Italy and Poland, this was not done in an official way, but rather through self-assessment or informally.

It becomes clear that in each field trial a different 'scenario' of validation has been used. This means that each field trial implements a different way of providing guidance during the process of validation.

Figure 2: Validation scenarios in the national field trials (N = 257)

