



PROMOTE: Needs Analysis

PROMOTE: Promoting and Validating Competences in Mobility and
Traineeships in Europe

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1 Introduction

This needs analysis is part of the PROMOTE project. The PROMOTE project aims at promoting and validating the following European Lifelong Learning competences:

- KC5: learning to learn
- KC6: social and civic competences
- KC7: sense of initiative and entrepreneurship

The project aims at setting up holistic, needs driven and competence oriented open learning environments to promote and validate key competences at the interface of academic education and learning in practice business contexts.

Within this needs analysis of the PROMOTE project we describe and analyse the current understanding and awareness of these three main PROMOTE competences throughout Europe.

Additionally, we aim at getting a more detailed idea about which sub-competences are being considered as important for both professional and personal life, and in which educational field and learning settings these competences can best be acquired.

A final aim of this needs analysis is to get an overview of existing methods and demands for the validation of the three key competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning settings.



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1.1 PROMOTE partners

The promote project is run by a multi-stakeholder consortium of six universities, two networks, six business partners and two public entities, comprising a large variety faculties and business sectors.

The following table shows the full list of all PROMOTE partners involved.

Tabel 1: List of PROMOTE partner

Partner	Country	Type of organisation
Die Berater	Austria	School/Institute/Educational centre – Adult education
Alden Biesen	Belgium	National cultural centre
Trendhuis BVBA	Belgium	Research Institute/Centre
CATRO	Bulgaria	Counselling body
Landkreis Kasse	Germany	Regional Public body
Blinc eG	Germany	EU-wide network
BUPNET	Germany	School/Institute/Educational centre – Adult education
Aristotelio Panepistimio Thessalonikis (AUTH)	Greece	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
Scuola Superiore di Studi e di Perfezionamento Sant'Anna	Italy	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
Materahub	Italy	Small and medium sized enterprise
Vilnius University - Faculty of Economics	Lithuania	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
VŠĮ Švietimo ir kultūros mobiliųjų technologijų institutas – IMOTEC	Lithuania	Small and medium sized enterprise
Vytautas Magnus university	Lithuania	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
Polytechnic Institute of Leiria	Portugal	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
EUCEN	Spain	EU-wide network
University College London (Centre for Applied Archaeology)	UK	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
Q21 – Agentur für Qualifizierung und Transfermanagement GmbH	Germany	School/Institute/Educational centre – Adult education



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1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Target group

The target group of this needs analysis consists of educational stakeholders and potential users of the techniques pioneered by PROMOTE, mainly decision makers in both the private, public and social profit sectors. Note that we use the term decision maker throughout this report to mean respondents in places of importance in the private and public sectors and NGOs.

1.2.2 Research method

In order to get a well-rounded view of the opinions, experiences and preferences of our target group we conducted both a quantitative questionnaire and qualitative in-depth interviews. All subjects of the questionnaire and interviews are related to in regards to the validation and acquisition of the three key competences ‘Learning to learn’, ‘social and civic competences’ and ‘sense of initiative and entrepreneurship’.

1.2.3 Questionnaire

In order to get a first overview of the needs and demands of the PROMOTE target group regarding to the validation of the key competences we conducted a questionnaire by a broader, European-wide population. In total 477 questionnaires were taken, with respondents from the different European countries. The analysis of the questionnaire is described in section 3 of this report.

1.2.4 Interviews

To get a wider and more in depth understanding of the needs and demands for validating informal and non-formal learning within different fields of education and professions the questionnaire was substantiated by in-depth interviews with experts. Every partner conducted three to ten in-depth interviews with national experts and in one case with experts from different European countries. Moreover, these interviews give a view on the potential pitfalls signalled by the target group in regard to the validation and acquisition of the three key competences.

All the in-depth interviews were conducted according to the Delphi-method (more specifically mini-Delphi or Estimate-Talk-Estimate). In this way interviewees are encouraged to revise their earlier statements on the subject, and they are steered towards a consensus on the subject discussed. Anonymity of the participants is guaranteed in this process, names of interviewees will thus not be released. Reference will only be made to their occupations as to sketch the composition of the expert panels. The results of the in-depth interviews will be discussed in section 4 of this needs analysis.



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2 Summary

The PROMOTE needs analysis was designed to understand the demands of different target groups and educational sectors with regard to validation of service-related learning outcomes, the survey focused on the level of knowledge and awareness of the main PROMOTE competences, the European Lifelong Learning-key competences Nos. 5.6.7: „learning to learn“, „sense of Initiative and entrepreneurship“ and „active citizenship“.

The online questionnaire was answered mostly by educational professionals (>70%). The level of awareness about the key competences is relatively high. There is a high familiarity with the key competences and all of them are considered to be very important in most professional and life contexts.

While more than 70% consider the validation of Key competences as very important (less than 5% consider validation as not important) nearly 40% of the respondents do not know any validation instruments for it. Less than 50% (25-50%) of the respondents are well familiar with European validation instruments, obviously due to the target group 50% with ECVTS while ECVET is only little known.

The interviews revealed that (despite the results of the online questionnaire) there are different understandings and connotations of central terms like “competence”, “entrepreneurship” or the concept of key competences. Here also differences among professions became obvious. However all PROMOTE key competences are considered being very important, KC7 with a higher value for professional development and Active Citizenship (KC6) for private life. Learning to learn competences were valued most important for all purposes.

The need for validation is almost universally recognized by interviewees. Ways, and particularly tools, to do it are not well-known. There is a strong demand for the diffusion of knowledge on these issues across Europe and All interviewees clearly stated a large support in the field of validation.





3 Questionnaire

In this section we present and analyse the results of the questionnaire. Firstly, the characteristics of the respondents are described. Secondly, the results are analysed according to different subjects, namely: familiarity with the key competences, importance of the different key competences, identifying important sub-competences and importance of learning environments and validation tools. We concluded this section by analysing how opinions diverge depending on the occupation of the respondent.

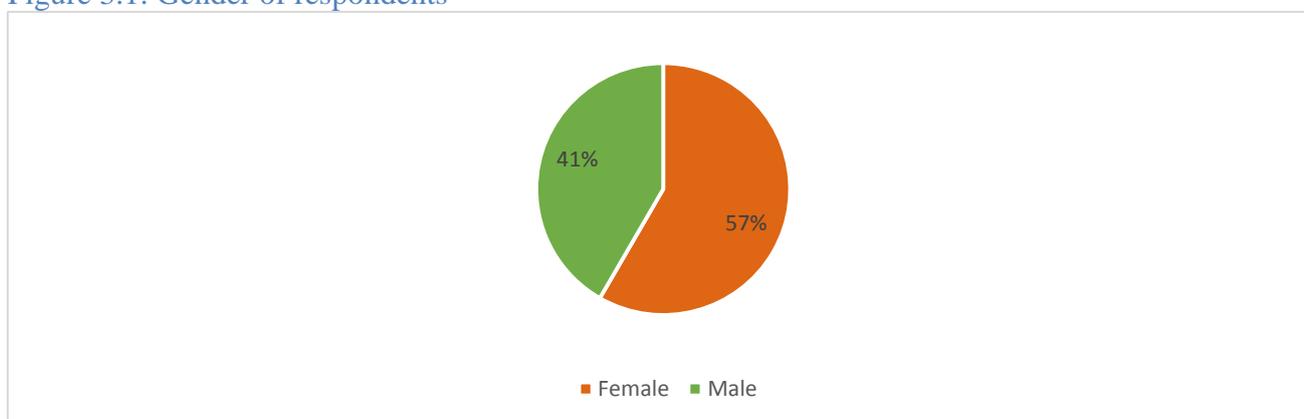
3.1 Description of sample

In total 477 respondents took part in the survey, of which 365 finalized the complete survey. The large majority of the respondents having an educational professional background, about 35% in HE, 22% in AE, 8% in school and 6% in VET. Business, (8%), NGOs (6%), public administration (4%) and youth (2%) are representing the non-educational sector, which comes to around 20%. It's important to note, that the distribution (>70% educational stakeholders, with a large majority of HE institutional members) has effects to the results.

3.1.1 Gender

Among the respondents we see a predominance of women, with females amounting to 57% of the total amount of respondents. Among the respondents who completed the entire survey this number increases further, to 59.2% being female. 216 females reaching the end of the survey compared to 145 men (4 people not filling in their gender). This predominance, however, does not impact the results of the questionnaire. The female and male respondents are from the same countries, professional backgrounds, ages, and hold largely the same opinions in the survey.

Figure 3.1: Gender of respondents



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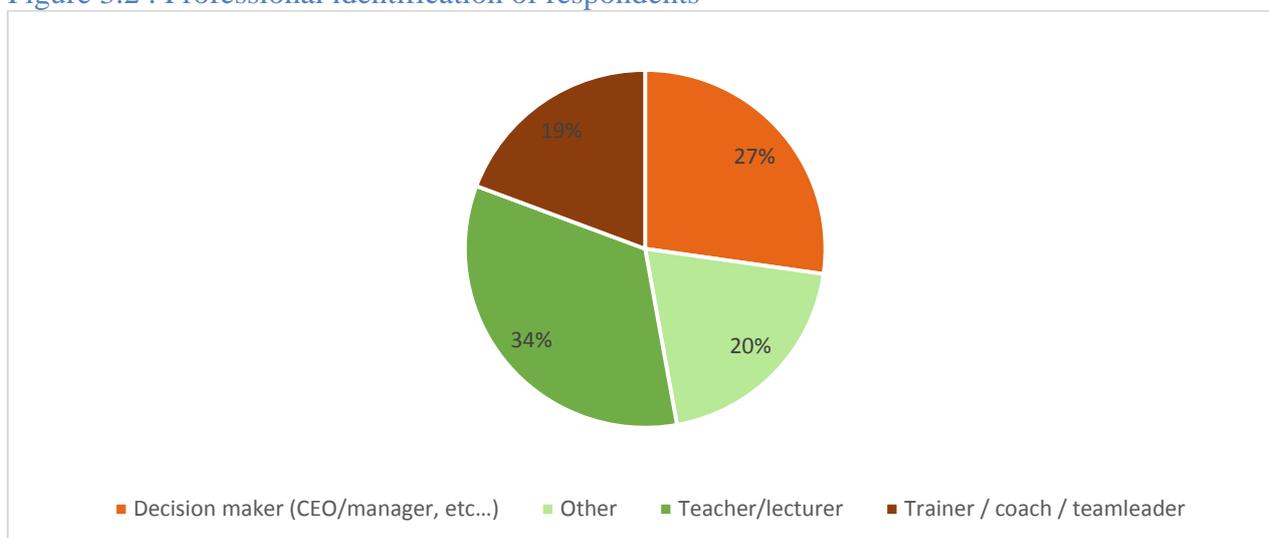
3.1.2 Geographical distribution

The geographical distribution of the sample shows an imbalance between countries. Some countries provide high numbers of respondents, other countries only contribute a handful. Nevertheless when we consider the regions of Europe the number of respondents is in balance, with at least one country in either Southern, Western or Eastern Europe being a strong contributor. For Southern Europe this high scorer is Greece, with 81 respondents, for Eastern Europe this would be Lithuania, with 69 respondents, and for Western Europe this would be Belgium, with 86 respondents. Each of the areas furthermore has secondary high scorers such as Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany and the United Kingdom. Thus even though the respondents tend to concentrate around a number of countries, they still are able to provide us with a clear picture of European opinions on the validation of informal learning. Only Scandinavia has the issue of having too few respondents to make wider conclusions, their high scorer being Finland with only five respondents. That PROMOTE does not include a partner in Scandinavia probably contributed to this gap.

3.1.3 Profession

The questionnaire set out to study perceptions in both educational stakeholders and potential users of the developed techniques. Particularly this first category is strongly represented in the survey with teachers/lecturers composing 34% of the total amount of respondents. Respondents engaged in educational activities are also contained under the fourth category (for example trainers and coaches) and under the second category (other) in which we see quite a number of academics. Decision makers are also prominently represented, not unimportant seeing that this group will eventually have to adopt the tools developed by PROMOTE. All in all we can conclude that the target groups have been reached by the questionnaire.

Figure 3.2 : Professional identification of respondents



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A more detailed survey of the respondents yields similar results. All target groups have been reached to varying degrees. And, except for the category youth, all categories have sizeable quantities of respondents.

the large majority of the respondents having an educational professional background, about 35% in HE, 22 in AE, 8 in school and 6 in VET. Business,(8), NGOs (6), public administration (4) and youth (2) are representing the non-educational sector, which comes to around 20%.



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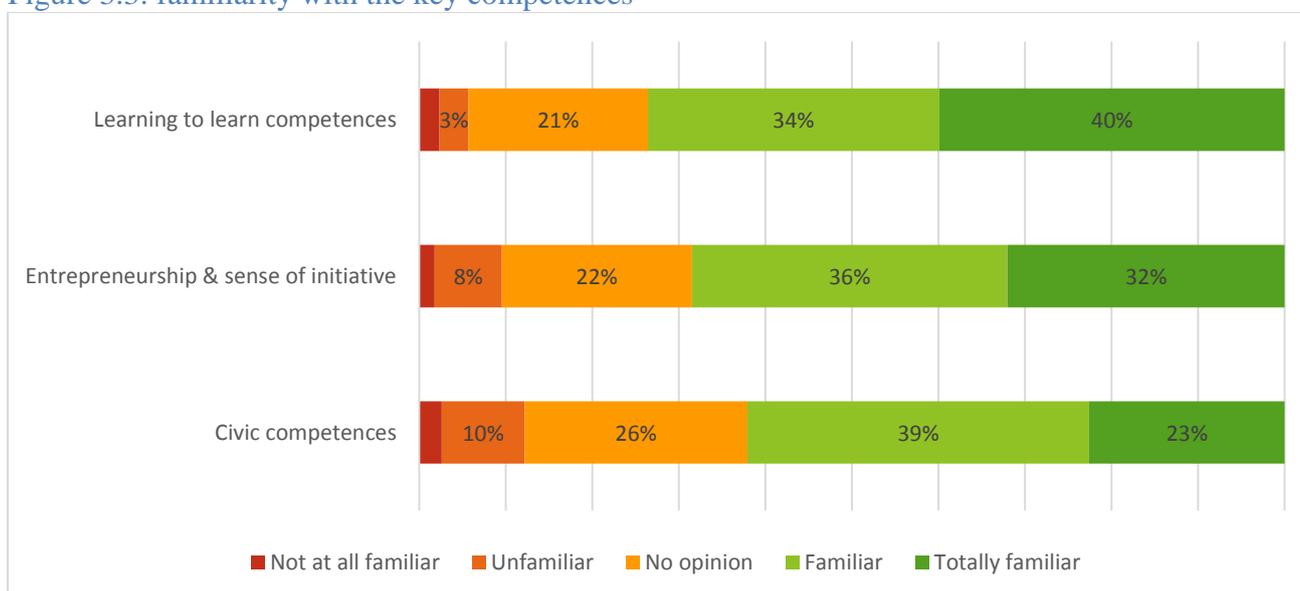
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3.2 Familiarity with the key competences

The three key competences tend to be quite well known among the respondents. Learning to learn being the most well-known of the competences, with more than one in three of respondents (40%) signalling they are totally familiar with the competence. Civic competences being the least well-known, with “only” 23% of the respondents signalling total familiarity. More than half of the respondents see themselves as familiar (in categories four or five) with each one of the three competences. A general strong familiarity with the three PROMOTE competences is thus present among the respondents.

Figure 3.3: familiarity with the key competences





3.3 Importance of key competences

Certain competences and sub-competences are regarded as being more important for employability related areas than others.

The learning to learn and entrepreneurship competences are considered to be the most important competences when referring to job-related areas, mainly the first three characteristics: career development, continuing professional development and job opportunity. Civic competences are considered the least important in relation to work. The ability to learn is valued besides entrepreneurial behaviour, although entrepreneurship still scores higher than learning to learn. Learning to learn, however, has a high overall score in all of the five job-related characteristics.

Figure 3.4: Importance of entrepreneurship and sense of initiative in relation to ...

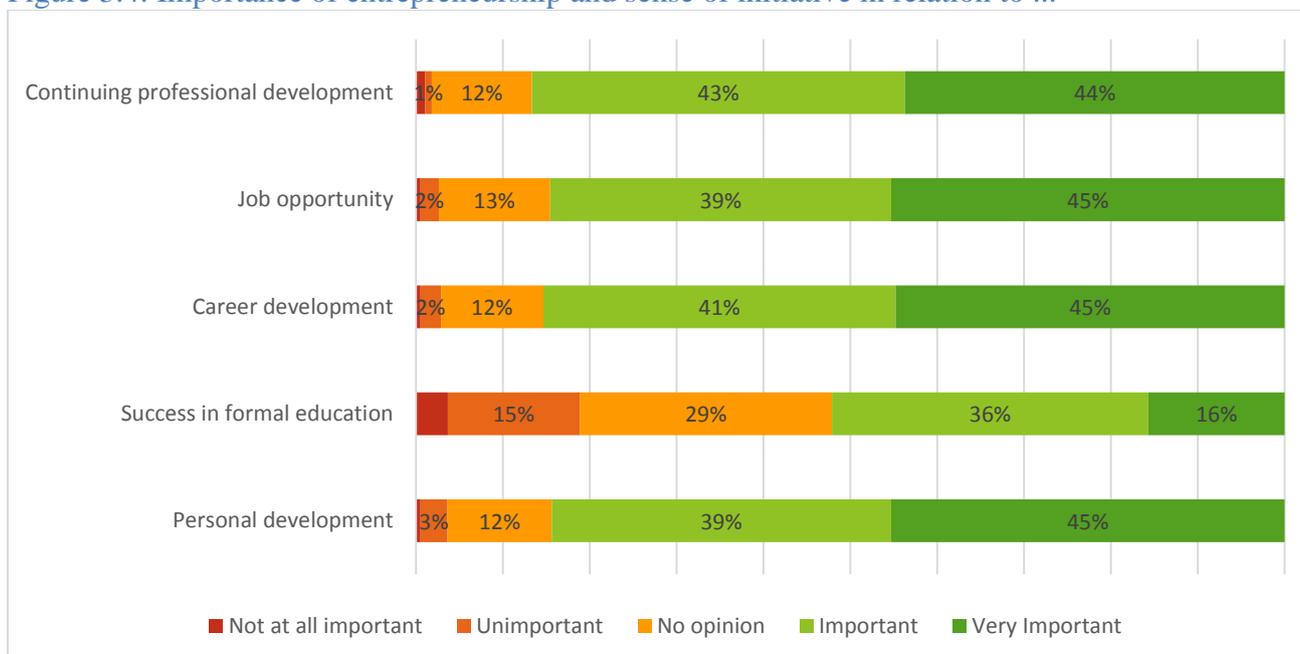




Figure 3.5: Importance of civic (active citizenship) competences in relation to...

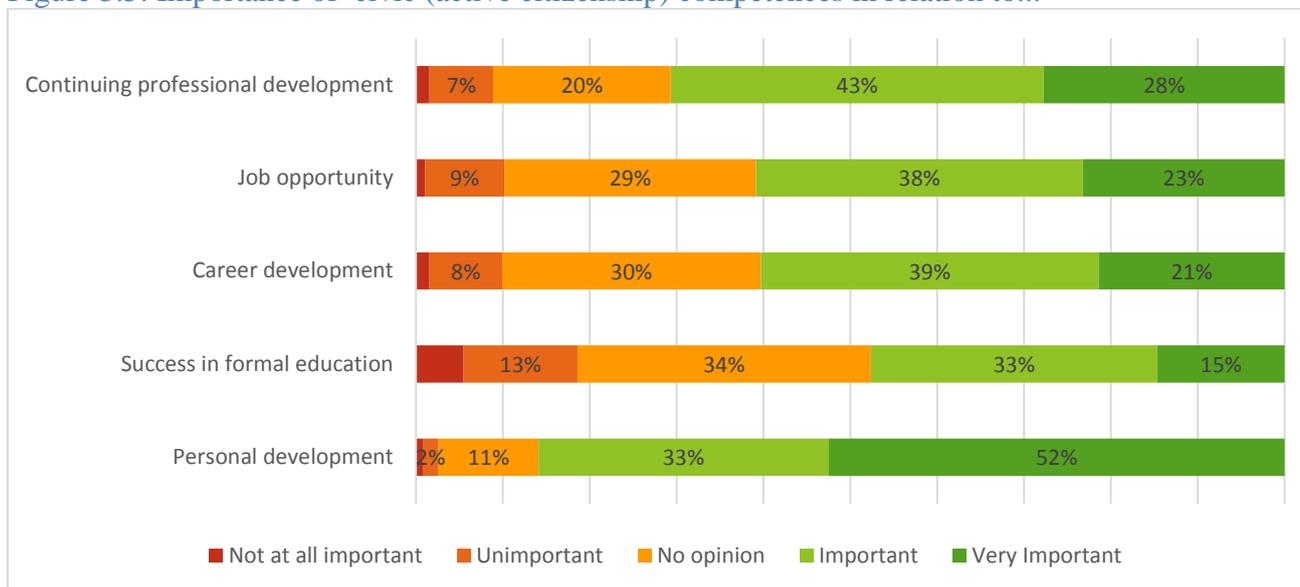
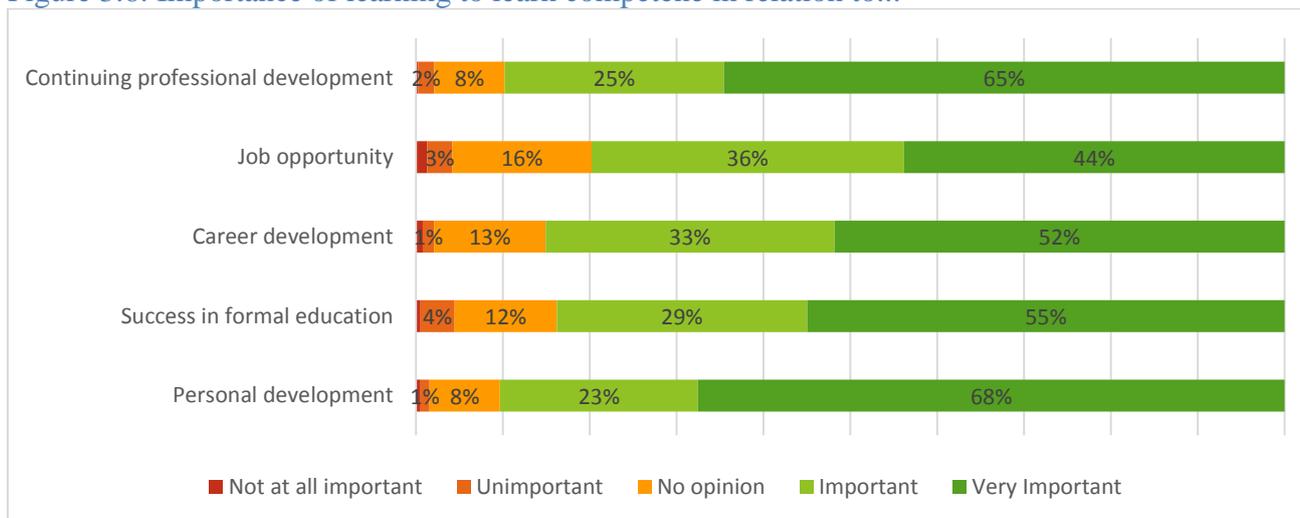


Figure 3.6: Importance of learning to learn competene in relation to...



3.3.1 Sub competences

When we look for the top three sub-competences for the two competences regarded as being most important for employability we come to: leadership, communication and creativity for entrepreneurship, and: critical thinking, self-reliance/autonomy and evaluation/reflection in the case of learning to learn. Giving us six sub-competences that are regarded by the respondents as being the most important for employability.

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There is a high familiarity with the key competences and all of them are considered to be very important in most professional and life contexts.

Asked about the importance of specific sub-competences in regard to these key competences the participants of the online survey answered according to the following ranking:

Tabel 2: Ranking of sub-competences

Rank	entrepreneurship competences	civic competences	learning to learn competences
1	Communication	Communication	Critical Thinking
2	Leadership	Intercultural Communication	Self-reliance/ Autonomy
3	Creativity	Critical Thinking	Evaluation, Reflection
4	Teamworking	Teamworking	Knowledge and Skills management
5	Networking	Conflict management	Problem Solving

However, all other proposed sub-competences that will be further processed in PROMOTE received relevant percentages except “virtual communication”.

3.4 Informal learning environments and the key competences

Informal learning settings are in general perceived less favourable among respondents for acquiring the different competences. Something that can partly be ascribed to the strong presence of educational experts in the sample. Even though the general level of affirmative answers is similar compared to questions regarding formal training environments, stretching between 55% and 70% affirmative answers, outliers are more prominently present. Opinions on the use of informal learning environments for learning the three competences are thus more marked, with some scoring relatively high while others do not.

Out of informal learning environments entrepreneurship can, according to the respondents, be best learned at the workplace and would least likely be learned with family and friends, with only 36% of respondents signalling family and friends as an environment for learning entrepreneurship compared to 72% considering the workplace as a good site to learn the competence.

Family and friends, together with voluntary work, on the other hand are considered to be the most



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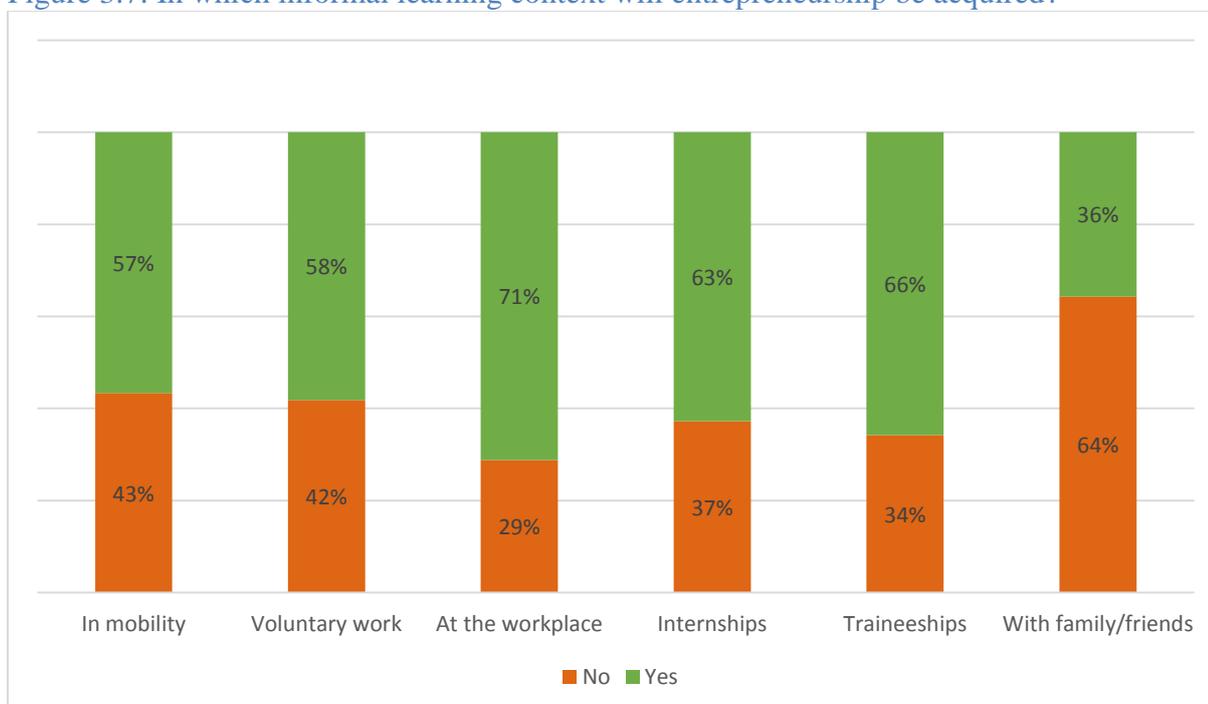
important informal learning environments for civic competences, 72% answering affirmatively for family and friends and 79% for voluntary work. The workplace, internships and traineeships on the other hand are received quite negatively in regards to civic competences.

Traineeships, however, are considered to be quite important sites for the learning to learn competence with 77% answering affirmatively. Friends and family again losing out, with only 44% of the respondents regarding it as a site for learning to learn competences.

When singling out traineeships we can see that their importance is regarded as moderately strong in regards to entrepreneurship, 66% of respondents seeing it as a site of learning that competence. A low importance is attached to traineeships for civic competences. And a very high importance is attached to it in regards to learning to learn.

Mobility is quite the average scorer throughout the three competences. 57% seeing it as a site for learning entrepreneurship, 59% seeing it as a site for learning civic competences and 64% seeing it as a site for acquiring learning to learn competences. Concluding we can say that mobility is regarded as a moderately important site of learning the three competences throughout, yet, this it never reaches high importance for any of the three competences.

Figure 3.7: In which informal learning context will entrepreneurship be acquired?



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Figure 3.8: In which informal learning context will civic competences be acquired?

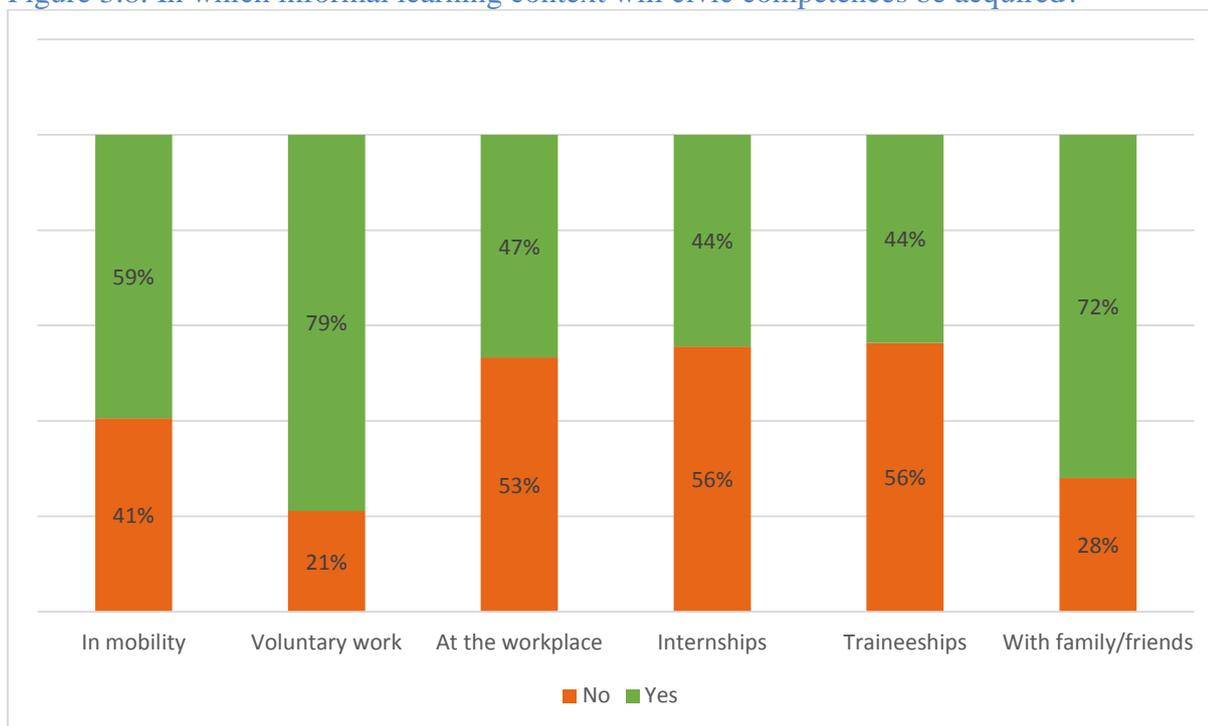
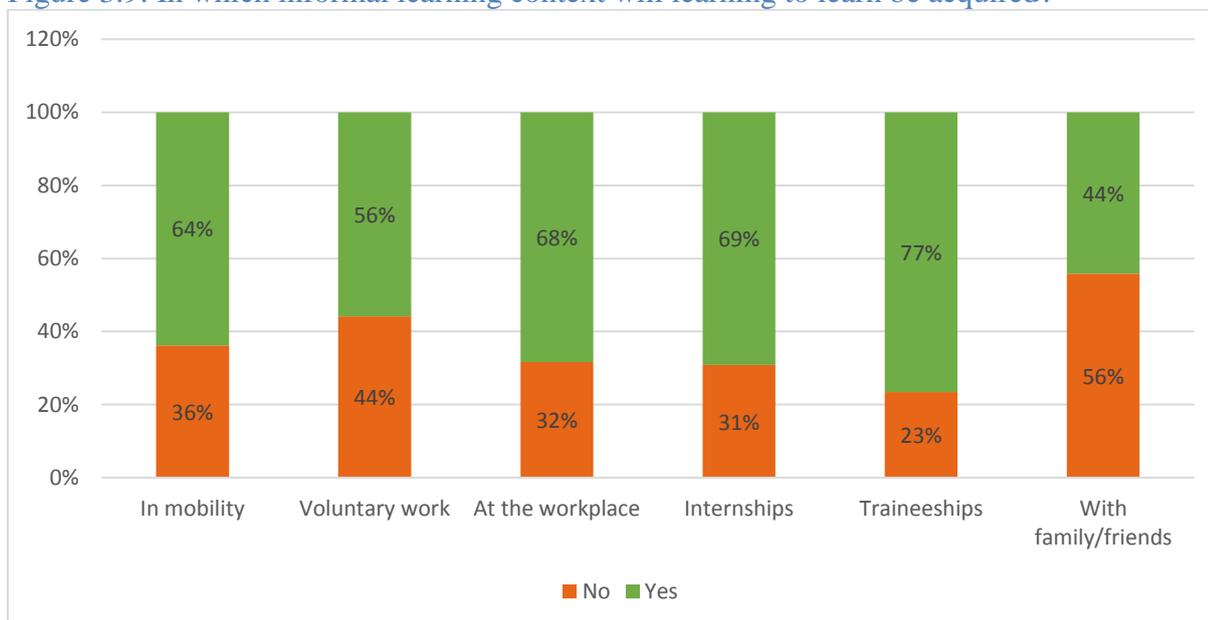


Figure 3.9: In which informal learning context will learning to learn be acquired?





3.5 Tools for validation and learning

The perceived need for the validation of competences is almost universal, with only 4% not considering the validation of competences as important and 71% answering that they do think it is important. However, only 62% are familiar with any tools for validating competences. A first conclusion is that although validation of competences is regarded as quite important among the respondents, tools to validate them are less known. 38% answering they do not know of any tools to validate competences. This shows the significance of the PROMOTE project since validation is still unknown territory for more than a third of the experts.

Figure 3.10: Do you know approaches for validation?

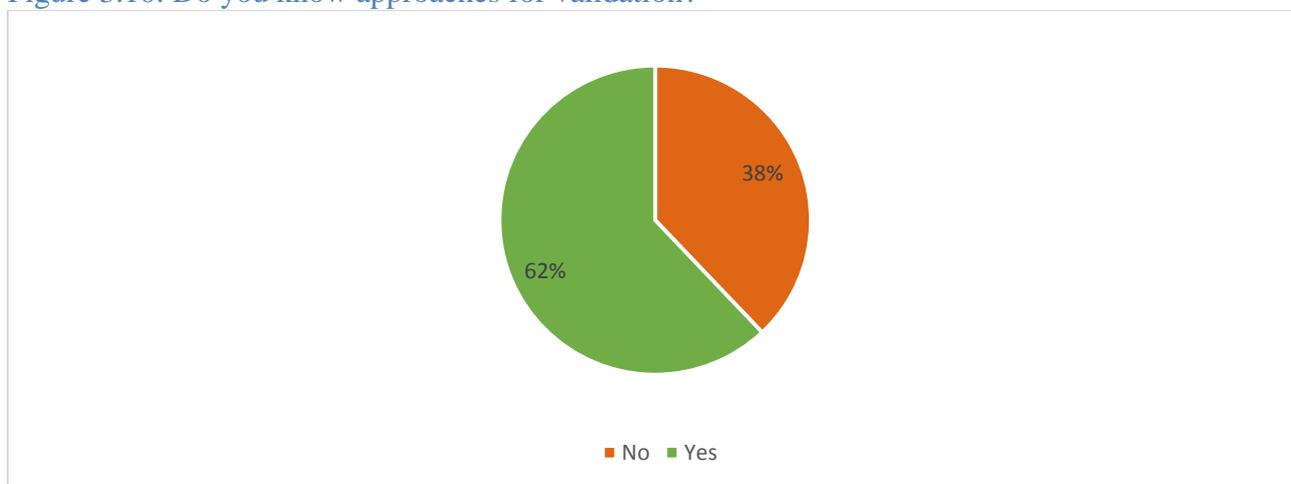
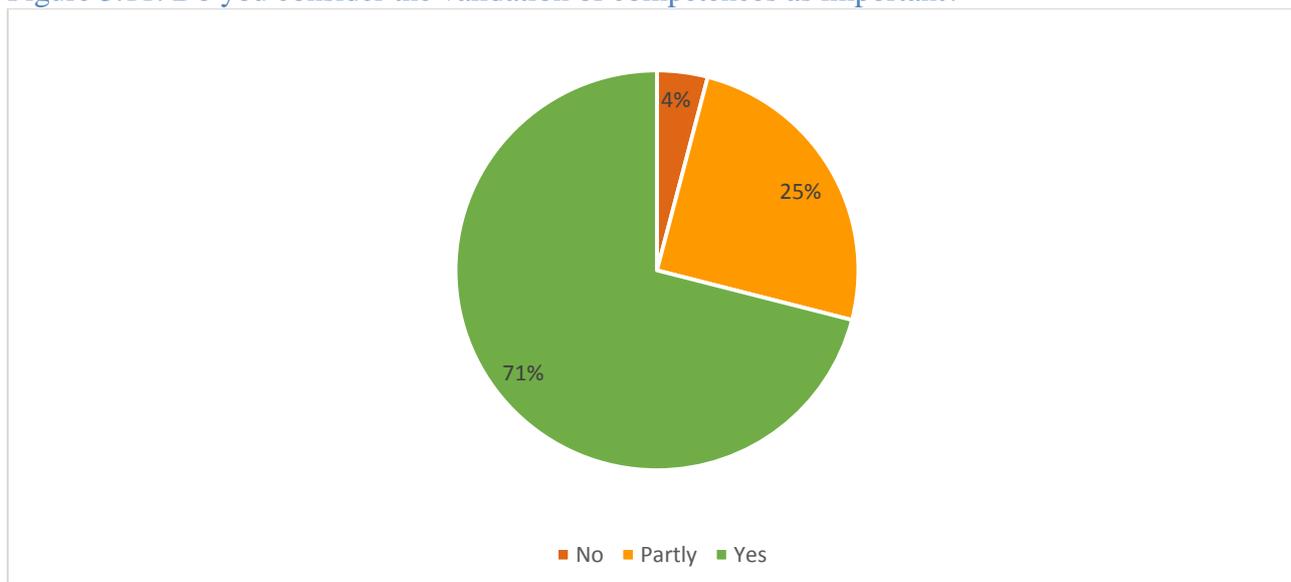


Figure 3.11: Do you consider the validation of competences as important?



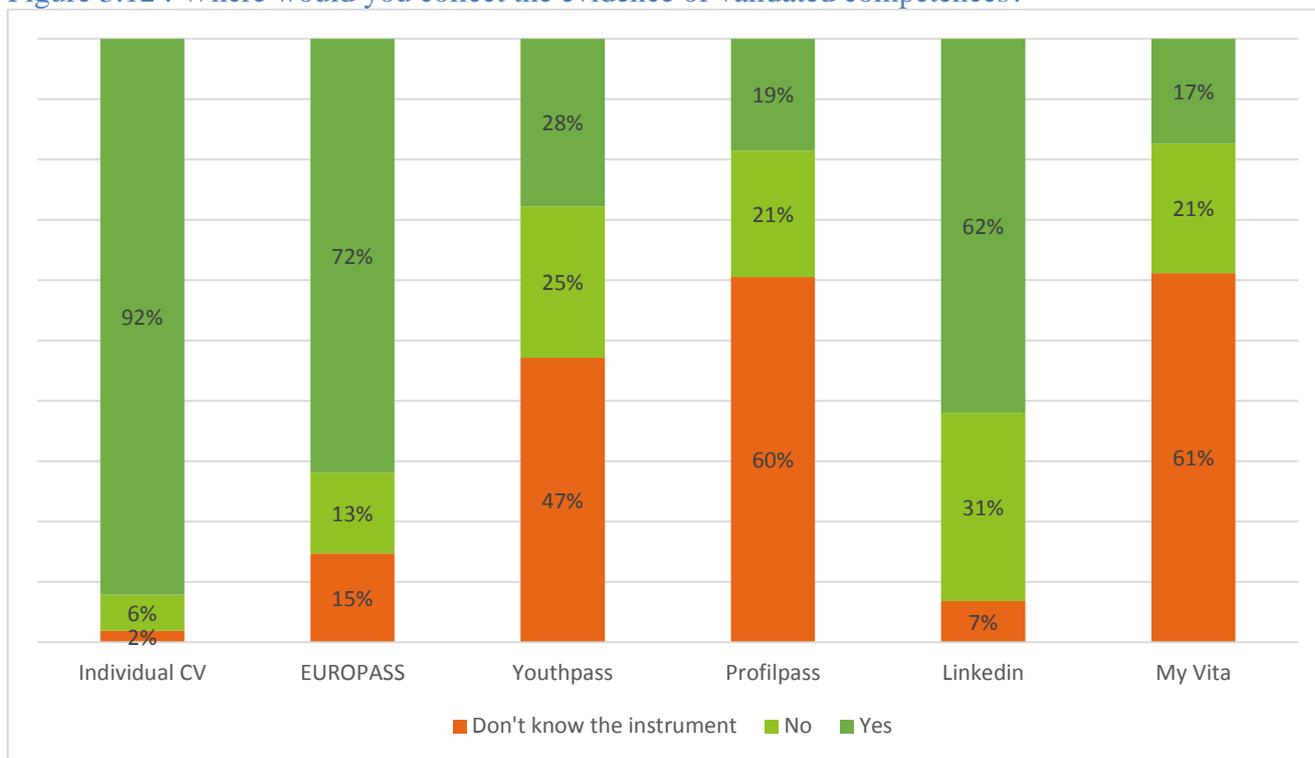


3.5.1 Tools for validating

When it comes to containers in which validation evidences can be put it does not come as surprise that the most well-known are: EUROPASS, CVs and LinkedIn. 15% not knowing EUROPASS, 2% not knowing CVs and 7% not knowing LinkedIn. Unsurprising seeing that CV is used almost universally, EUROPASS is promoted by the EU and LinkedIn is a very popular international career platform.

In this regard 38% know my-VITA even though it has been established in a relatively small network. This coincides with 40% of ProfilPASS; which is surprising since this tool was also largely pushed by German authorities and the EU. Youthpass, as a European instrument is slightly better known with 53% of the respondents signalling familiarity.

Figure 3.12 : Where would you collect the evidence of validated competences?



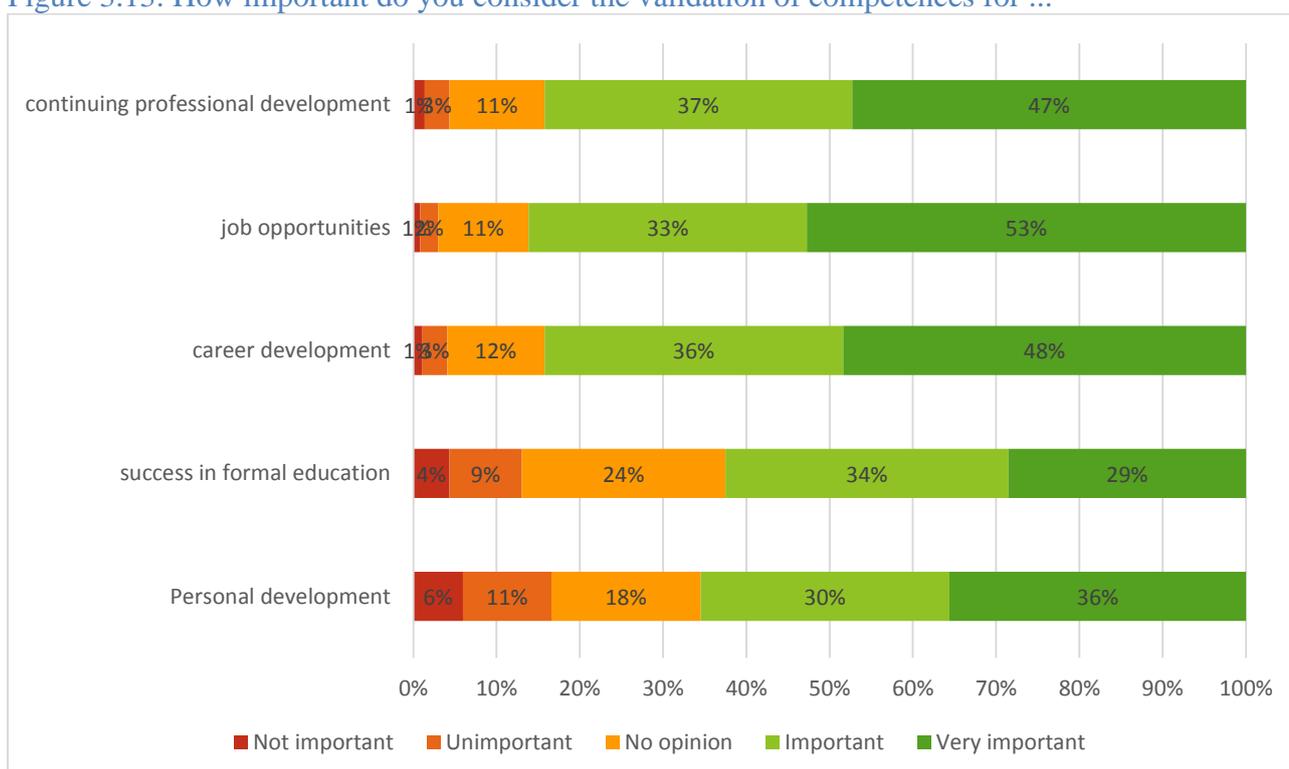
To conclude: tools to validate competences are considered to be important, but knowledge about these tools is quite low.



3.5.2 Importance of validation for different subjects

Validation of competences is regarded as quite useful for job related areas of development. Validation of competences is regarded as less useful, however, in regards to personal development and success in formal education. This specifies the results we obtained from the question asking whether the respondents found the validation of competences to be important. Again we can see a consensus among respondents that it is, and particularly so when dealing with job related areas of life.

Figure 3.13: How important do you consider the validation of competences for ...



What immediately becomes clear when reviewing the familiarity among respondents for European standardized instruments is that this familiarity is quite low. In the case of ECTS a respectable 42% of respondents is very familiar with the instrument, but in the case ECVET only 17% regard themselves as very familiar with it and even 30% saying they are not familiar. EQF/NQF scoring slightly higher with 28% seeing themselves as very familiar and 26% as not familiar at all.

This reflects on the one hand the origin of the respondents and the history of the tools (ECTS is well known in the HE) while ECVET is only seldom introduced and EQF is the underlying meta-system.

However, against the background that ECVET shall be implemented in Europe in 2018 the level of awareness and knowledge on the systems is not convincing.



Figure 3.14: Are you familiar with the following European standardized instruments?

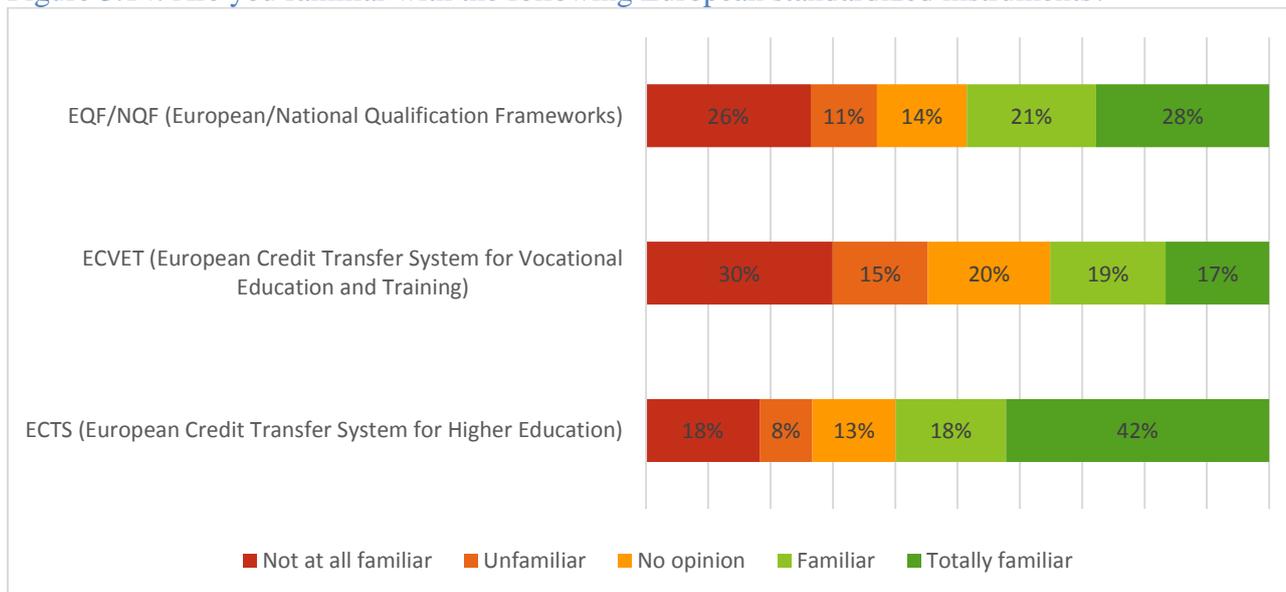
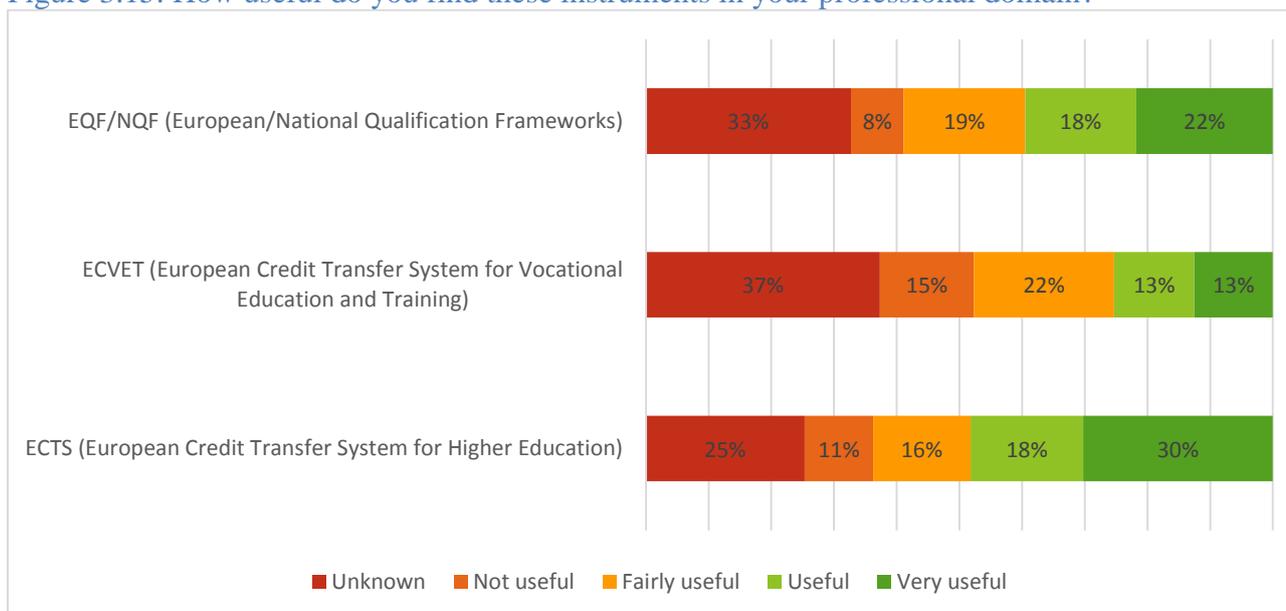


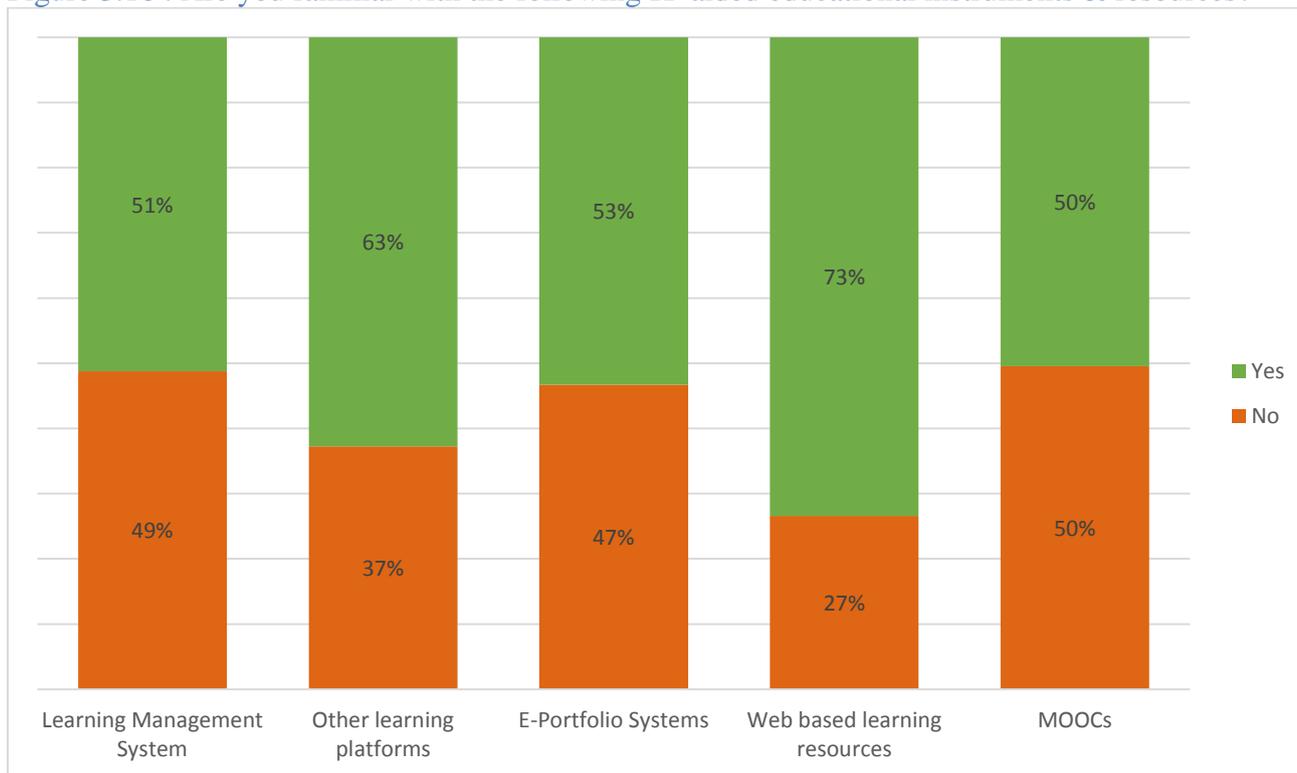
Figure 3.15: How useful do you find these instruments in your professional domain?



Familiarity with IT-based educational tools can be regarded as moderate to low. Most of them hovering around 50% of the respondents signalling that they are familiar with them. The exception is web-based learning sources which are known by 73% of the respondents.



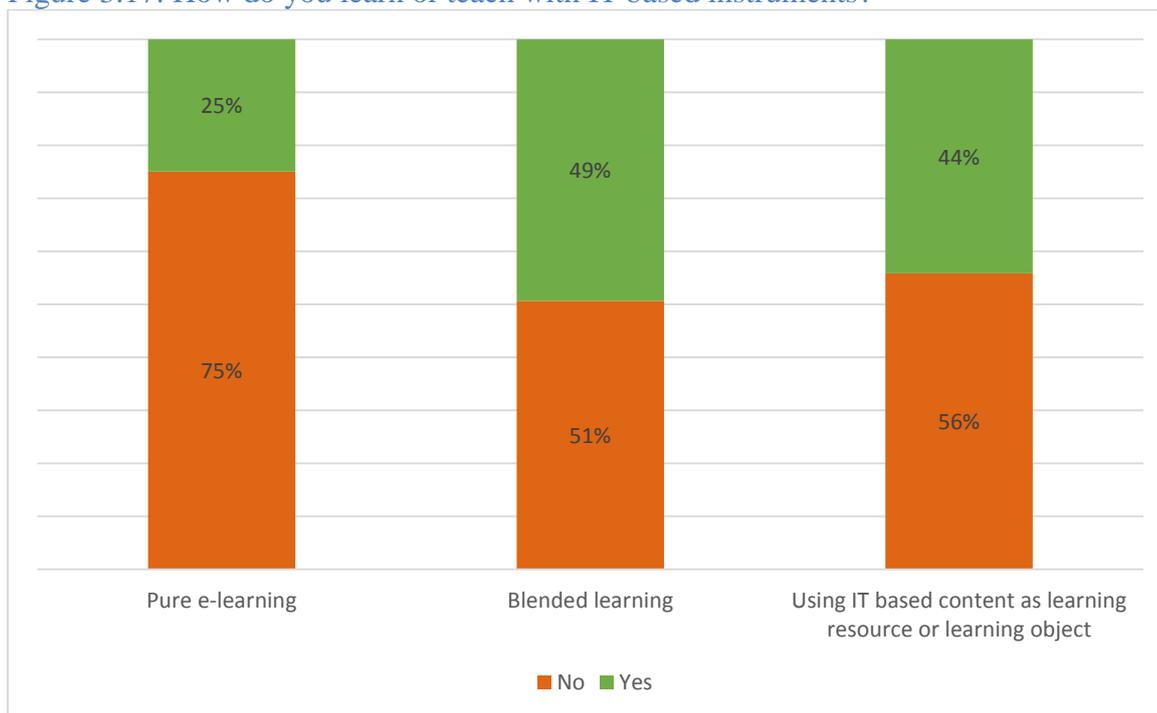
Figure 3.16 : Are you familiar with the following IT-aided educational instruments & resources?



Familiarity with types of IT-based learning also seems to be quite low. Blended learning and using IT based content as learning resource or learning object are the most familiar among respondents with respectively 49% and 44% signalling that they are familiar with them. Only 25% of the respondents say they are familiar with Pure E-learning.

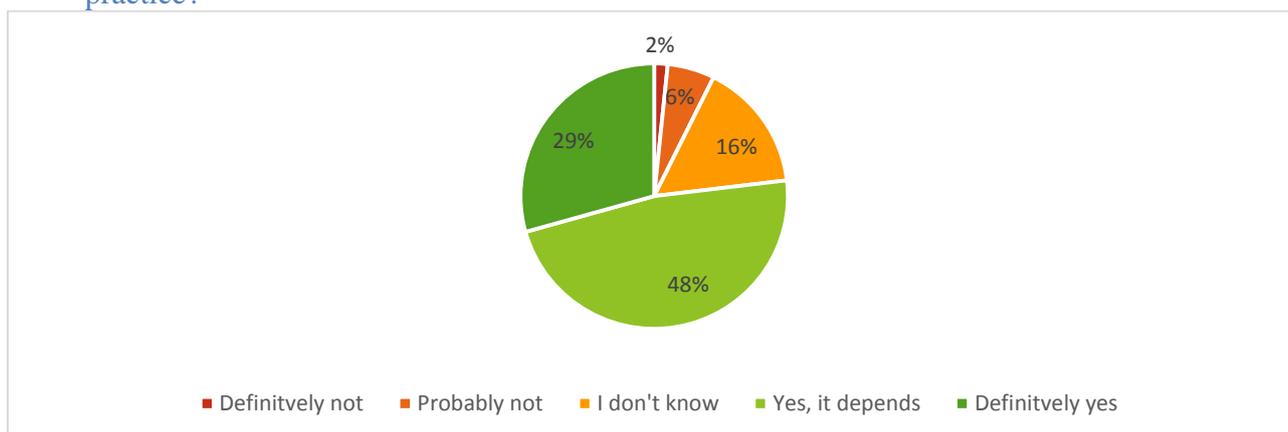


Figure 3.17: How do you learn or teach with IT based instruments?



In regards to IT-based learning and validation methods we can, similar to validation of competences, conclude that there is a great interest towards it. Yet previous charts make clear that familiarity with these tools is very limited, even among the educational specialists that predominated our sample.

Figure 3.18: Would you consider IT-aided learning and validation helpful in your professional practice?





3.6 Results according to occupational group

Decision makers, as could be expected, seem to be more predisposed towards entrepreneurship compared to the other competences, recalling that decision makers here also includes business leaders. The ‘Other profession’ category has an overall lower familiarity with the three competences in general, particularly the entrepreneurship competence. As could be expected, again, both the teacher/lecturer and the Trainer/coach/teamleader category are quite familiar with all three the competences.

Figure 3.19: Familiarity with civic competences by occupational group

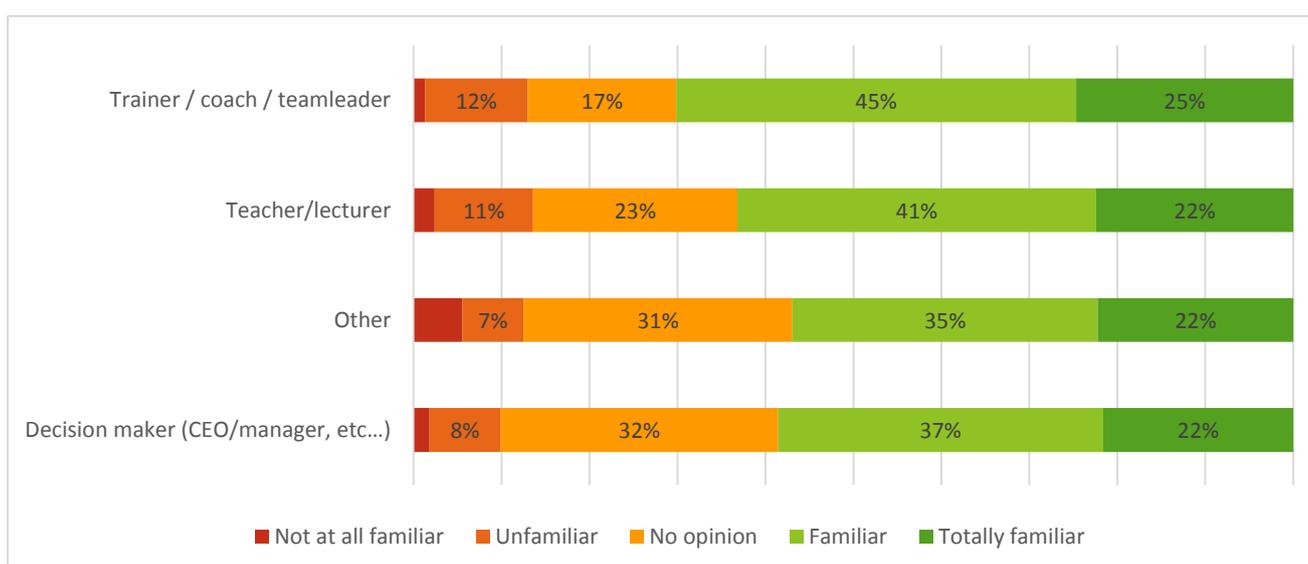


Figure 3.20: Familiarity with entrepreneurship by occupational group

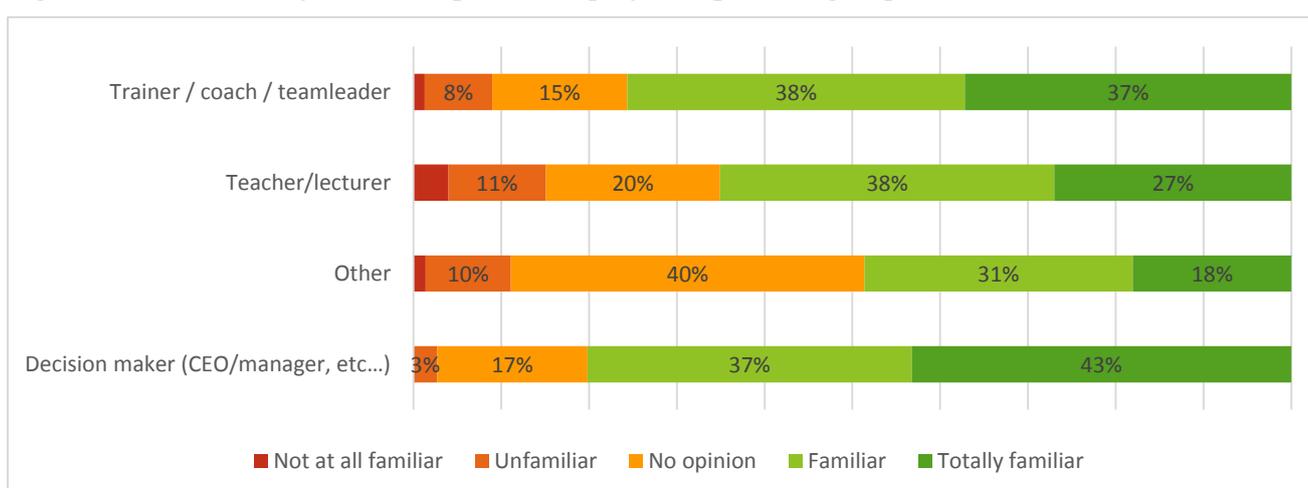
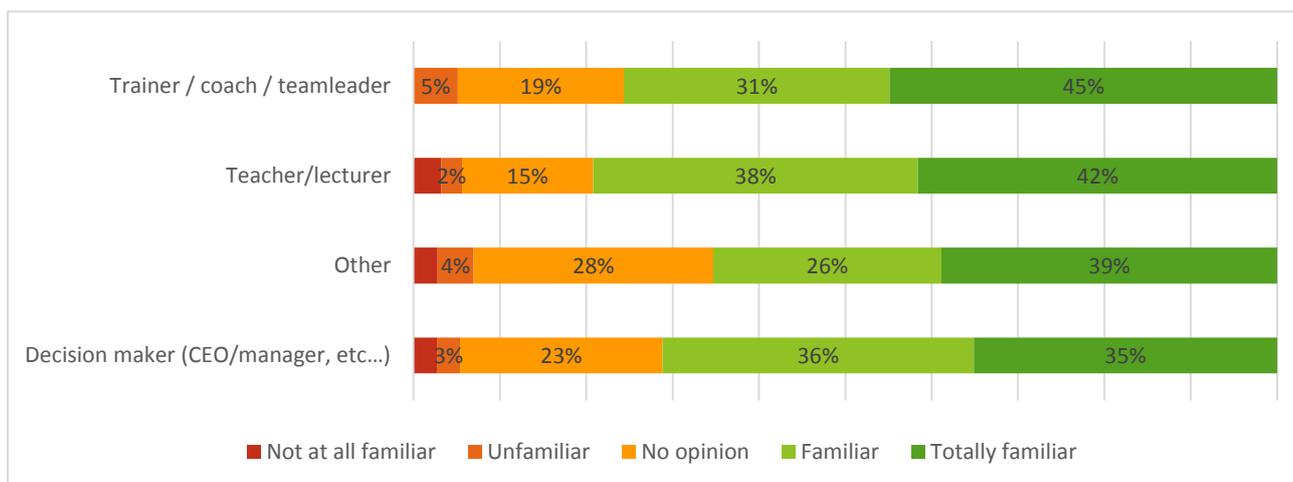


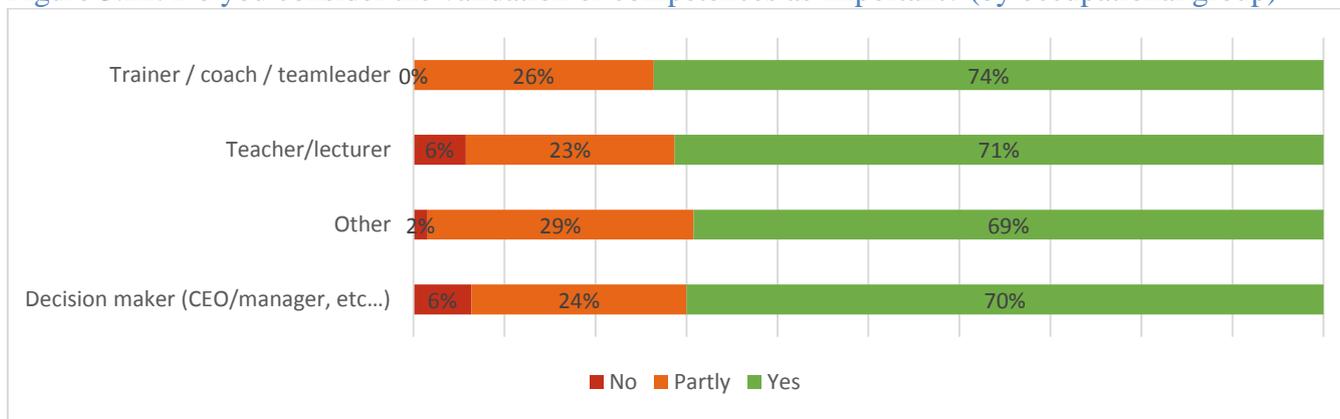


Figure 3.21 Familiarity with learning to learn by occupational group



The importance attached to the different key competences hardly diverges between the different occupational groups and are mainly positive for all competences and occupations.

Figure 3.22: Do you consider the validation of competences as important? (by occupational group)



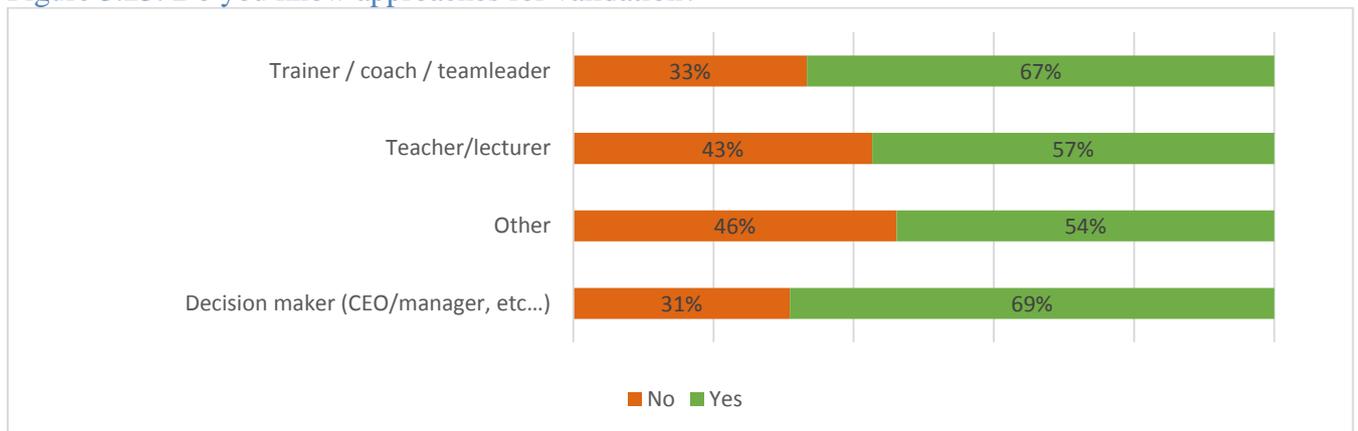
Only in regards to knowledge on validation techniques there seems to be a difference according to professional categories. Teacher/lecturers and the ‘Other category’ being notably less familiar with validation techniques. Odd seeing the educational character of both groups.

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Figure 3.23: Do you know approaches for validation?





3.7 Conclusion questionnaire

Based on the desk research an online questionnaire was carried out in the framework of the PROMOTE project. This questionnaire reached 477 European stakeholders working the field of education and decision makers. Most respondents were educational professionals (<70%), which has an influence on the results of the questionnaire.

The three competences – entrepreneurship, civic competences and learning to learn – are well-known among the respondents. Furthermore, these key competences are considered to be important in most professional and life contexts. However tools for validating these key competences are not well known.

While more than 70% of the respondents considered the validation of key competences important, nearly 40% do not know any validation instruments for it. Less than 50% of the respondents are familiar with European validation instruments. However, 50% of the participants is familiar with ECVTS, probably due to the high amount of educational professionals in our sample.

The most important sub-competences are ranked as followed (ranked according to indicated importance):

Rank	entrepreneurship competences	civic competences	learning to learn competences
1	Communication	Communication	Critical Thinking
2	Leadership	Intercultural Communication	Self-reliance/ Autonomy
3	Creativity	Critical Thinking	Evaluation, Reflection
4	Teamworking	Teamworking	Knowledge and Skills management
5	Networking	Conflict management	Problem Solving

Generally, formal education is considered a good place to acquire these competences, however this could be because of the predominance of educational professional respondents in our questionnaire. Despite this high number of educational professionals in our survey, 30%-50% of the respondents answered that the PROMOTE key competences could not be learned in formal education. This clearly indicates the need for promoting validation methods for informal and non-formal learning.

The general conclusion of the questionnaire is that most of the respondents consider the validation of key competences important, but a large number of the respondents do not know any validation instruments for this purpose (even though the largest part of the respondents are educational professionals). This demonstrates a clear need for projects such as PROMOTE, and their role in

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making different stakeholder groups familiar with tools to validate informal learning.

4 Interviews

To get a wider and more in-depth understanding of the needs and demands for validating informal and non-formal learning the questionnaire was substantiated by in-depth interviews with experts. Moreover, these interviews give a view on the potential pitfalls signalled by the target groups in regards to the validation and acquisition of the three key competences

Every partner conducted three to ten in-depth interviews with national target group experts and in one case with experts from different European countries. All interviews were conducted following four main topics:

- Knowledge about the European Life Long Learning competences ‘learning to learn’, ‘social and civic competences’ and ‘sense of initiative and entrepreneurship’
- Learning programmes and/or learning activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences
- Validation of competences and learning outcomes
- External expertise and potentially needed support related to validation of non- and informal learning

Using these topics as a guideline for every in-depth interview enabled us to get a clear view on the needs and demands for validating informal and non-formal learning throughout Europe. Moreover, it enabled us to make comparison between the European countries.

This section is structured per country, with a final section for other European cases. All the country reports are subsequently structured by the four different topics as described above. First, this section starts with a description of the used methodology.

Methodology

All the in-depth interviews were conducted according to the Delphi-method (more specifically mini-Delphi or Estimate-Talk-Estimate). In this way interviewees are encouraged to revise their earlier statements on the subject, and they are steered towards a consensus on the subject discussed. Anonymity of the participants is guaranteed in this process, names of interviewees will thus not be released. Reference will only be made to their occupations as to sketch the composition of the expert panels. The results of the in-depth interviews will be discussed in section 4 of this needs analysis.



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4.1 Austria

Three experts working in the educational system and media sector were interviewed.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

There is a common misunderstanding of how the term competence is defined or to be understood, it is often misinterpreted as “knowledge” or “skill”. The respondents were, however, quite aware of the issue overall in Austria. Regarding non-formal and informal learning, there is also more discussion going on but one interview partner had the feeling that it will take another 10 years until the issue of VINFL will be of real importance in Austria.

Key competences are highly relevant, but the concept of key competences as defined by the EC is little acknowledged in the private sector (furthermore, the term “key competences” is often used in a different meaning without reference to the EC key competences) – although there might be differences in various industrial sectors. Even for career development, personal development, job coaching and job searching there is little evidence to a person’s competence level of certain key competences.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

The most researched area of acquisition of competences in informal areas at the moment is the voluntary sector (Freiwilligenpass).

Mobility actions and workplace experiences of students are often required in FHs (universities of applied sciences), but acquisition of competences often focuses on technical skills, key competences might become more relevant in the future. Overall, formal learning environments continue to focus on (factual) knowledge and the acquisition of skills, although the importance of “soft skills” or competences continues to gain ground in these areas, too.



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Validation of competences and learning outcomes

Validation for formal purposes is highly formalized and technical, there is little to no room for the validation of key competences. In informal settings, the focus is on empowerment and activation (in particular for job-seekers).

One interviewee mentioned the KODE system (“Kompetenz-Diagnostik und –Entwicklung” / the diagnosis and development of competences) which detects strengths of a person and opportunities for improvement and concentrates on the development of competences (cf. www.competenzia.de and www.kode-project.eu). This system is computer-aided and allows to track competence development through questionnaires (individual questionnaire for youth is available). The cost for a competence profile is approx. 35€ per person.

In the field of volunteering, the validation of competences and learning outcomes gains momentum.

In the field of job qualification / counselling, the focus is on finding individual strengths and to develop action plans based on existing competences, rather than tracking the development of a competence over a certain period (see the guideline for the Kompetenz+ Beratung).

Austrian universities – and this is probably true for all German-speaking countries – have little interest in validating learning that happen “outside” of the university.

External expertise and support related to validation

There is little to no mention of “key competences” in job advertisements, currently no real issue in personnel search and selection (“social competences” are more important and given higher importance). There are a couple of psychological tests in place to measure competences (not “key competences”) of applicants – these are widespread and well known, so no further need for external expertise and support in this area. But in general certificates (also those proofing certain levels in a key competence) may always be an important factor for job seekers

One important issue that must be kept in mind is the existence of funds to implement validation offers (e.g. there is the consultation process for validation of non-formal and informal learning supported by the Ministry of Education and all relevant stakeholders are involved, but it is still open whether the results will then be implemented on a big scale if the necessary funds are not available)



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Conclusion interviews Austria

Two important aspects of the interviews are the low importance that key competences play in universities and in business. That does not mean that competences are not considered important as such, but mainly that the concept of key competences and the measurement of competence levels play a rather minor role when it comes to applying for a job or having informal and non-formal learning outcomes validated.

The good news is that the issue is currently gaining momentum due to the public consultation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning.



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4.2 Belgium

Six experts were interviewed in Belgium: two HR-managers; one managing director of a labour union; three managing directors of (semi-)public institutions responsible for social- and work related topics in Belgium and finally one keynote speaker on the topic of learning and learning environments.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

All, except one, of the interviewees knew about the three PROMOTE-competences. One of the interviewees (the head of a labour union) had not heard of these key competences. Furthermore, some of the interviewees whom knew about the competences were lacking a more in-depth knowledge about them. For example, some interviewees, especially from the private sector, stated that they found the competences too general and thought that they should be more specific. This shows they are not fully aware of the fact that these key competences function as a more holistic competence, rather than a more specific sub-competence.

Nonetheless, they all saw the importance of these competences.

All interviewees agreed on the importance of the civic-competence which was seen as a key skill for the proper functioning of society. As one interviewee stated: *“Civic-competence is learning to live together”*. So the main relevance of this competence was found in both personal and social development.

The given definitions for entrepreneurship varied the most between the interviewed professionals. The interviewees working in the private-sector tend to define this competence mostly as a practical skill (i.e. starting or running a business), whereas the policy-related interviewees saw this competence as a broader and soft skill, necessary to function in a modern society. In this context one of the interviewees clarified this difference: *“you don’t need to be an entrepreneur to have entrepreneurship-competences”*. Furthermore, it was mentioned that entrepreneurship is *“the individual courage to take risks in both private and personal life”*. Despite the difference in definition all interviewees agreed on the importance of this competence, mainly in career development.

The learning-to-learn competences was predominantly explained as the most relevant for both personal development and job opportunities. Learning-to-learn is seen as a highly important competence in the modern knowledge-society. In connection with the learning-to-learn competence two interviewees mentioned the sub-competences “ability to adapt” and “flexibility” as highly important.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences



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Most interviewees are familiar with the Flanders public employment service tool ‘mijnloopbaan’ (VDAB). This online tool helps unemployed people discover their own competences and making them visible to future employers. Furthermore, it’s used to make a competence-based match between job opportunity and employee.

Apart from this tool, most of the interviewees were not familiar with any specific learning program or activity promoting these competences. Some of the interviewees noticed that to obtaining the key competence ‘learning-to-learn’ is one of the general objectives within the formal educational system, nevertheless they noticed that these goals mainly exist on paper and no validation of these competence is taking place.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

The interviewees disagreed most about the topic of validating competences and learning outcomes. Especially noticeable is the differences between policy-oriented interviewees and HR-managers. The former recognizing the importance of VINFL but at the same time pointed out the lack of comprehensive policy and useful tools in Flanders. The latter were clearly less familiar to the concept of validation, and none of the HR-managers were using any form of validation relating to informal or non-formal learning. This is especially noticeable since they do underline the importance of informal and non-formal learning.

External expertise and support related to validation

In an interview, the representative of the public employment service (VDAB), emphasized their belief in making competences visible. Validating is seen as highly important but not necessary, because it might increase the threshold to further trainings. The VDAB focuses on competence-based matching between job-seekers and employers. Both the VDAB and other interviewees underlined the rise of competences e-matching.

Most interviewees focused on the importance of validation for a better matching between unemployed people and available jobs. Furthermore, validation of competences should lead to the increase of competence-based recruiting.

Most of the people interviewed are themselves professionals on the topic of Life Long Learning and/or the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and stated to not be interested in support related to validation.

Despite this, they mostly all agreed on the fact that a more comprehensive way of validating these forms of learning and competences is crucial. Some cooperation between different social actors already exists. For example Flanders social economic advisory board (SERV) and the public employment service (VDAB) both highlighted the importance of their corporation in separate



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interviews. Within this partnership the two organisations work together on defining different competences and e-matching between jobs and unemployed people.

One area where validation support is welcome would be in small and medium enterprises (SME). In an interview with UNIZO (employers federation of SME), it became clear that these companies do not have much knowledge about informal and non-formal learning. UNIZO was stating that support for both, the learning and the validating, is much needed.

Conclusion interviews Belgium

The three PROMOTE-competences are quite well known in Flanders. The civic-competence being seen as most useful for society as a whole, entrepreneurship being seen by employers as only related to starting businesses while policy-minded experts produced a broader interpretation of the concept associating it with innovative behaviour, learning to learn being considered a the most useful competence for career development.

In terms of learning programmes only the “mijnloopbaan” tool and the general objectives are known. Lack of knowledge and enthusiasm for these general objectives, however, is worrying.

Disagreements between policy-oriented and business oriented interviewees arises when discussing validation. Business mainly argues for rather informal ways of validating, at the level of the company, policy-oriented respondents argued in favour of a centralised validation system.

Support is rejected by most interviewees, except in the case of small and middle-sized enterprises. The need for cooperation between different social and governmental actors is, however, considered to be crucial.



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4.3 Bulgaria

Within Bulgaria three interviews with experienced human resources experts in different sectors were conducted: a coach and career consultant, a senior training expert in a globally operating IT company and a university lecturer in human resources and organizational behaviour.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

All the three experts are familiar with the European concept of the key competences in Lifelong Learning but there are some differences in their individual understanding of those competences. The main ideas behind entrepreneurship are being pro-active and searching for new ideas, innovative and creative, taking responsibility and reasonable risk, being flexible and adaptive. The main associations with civic competences are being socially responsible not only in words but also in actions – supporting causes (e.g. ecological, educational etc.) which are for the benefit of the community or the society as a whole. And finally the main perceptions about the ability: learning to learn is proactive searching of new information, applying it in different contexts, the general attitude to try out something new, to be curious and flexible. The three experts underlined that in their professional fields the desire and the ability to constantly learn are of the utmost importance for personal and career development, as well as for success in formal education, whereas the entrepreneurial competences and sense of initiative are crucial in the process of searching new job opportunities, or continuing professional development.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

The common finding among the interviewed experts here is that most of them could state many examples for learning programmes and initiatives fostering entrepreneurial skills, and a few examples about the other two competences.

In higher education there are at least 2 relevant programmes: a Bachelor in Entrepreneurship with Master in Family Entrepreneurship (University of National and World Economics) and a Master in Innovations, Entrepreneurship and Finances (in cooperation between a private university and Cisco Entrepreneur Institute in Bulgaria). In secondary education there is one successful example: the Bulgarian Training Firms Net which has been organized since 1995. The aim is to establish and manage “training firms” in schools which are simulations of real companies, with all the documentation, systems, and procedures used in real business.

In business, the examples which were shared were not directly connected to entrepreneurship in the sense of founding an own business but more about gathering and assessing various, innovative and creative ideas how to support the society development, e.g. social entrepreneurship initiatives for communities in less developed countries or societies by helping them implement their own ideas or run a project via coaching/mentoring/consultancy which is pro-bono (so called skill-based



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initiatives). These initiatives also foster the development of civic competences and learning-to-learn skills of the employees, who are transferring their knowledge to different areas and becoming more sensitive to different social issues beyond their own personal and professional field. For all of them the skill learning to learn is fostered mainly by changing the working and / or social field of a person (interns/employees rotation i.e.), which requires him/her to look at the things from a new perspective, to broaden their horizon and then make transfer of the knowledge and skills to the own area of responsibilities.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

The topic validation of competences was the main cutting point between the interviewed experts. The university lecturer from the higher education sector shared that a system for assessing and validating learning outcomes (regarding both hard and soft skills) might be useful for a formalized structure as the university as they are used to assessing the results with notes and credit points. It would be great if the Learning Management System of the University could be connected with this validation system – something similar is already available at the private college Adam Smith where she is teaching project management. The online system there integrates all the specific data and results of the students with all learning materials and other available resources (similar as moodle). For the other two experts who are mainly working in the private/business sector, assessment tools are used as part of the performance or potential evaluation of a person and they prefer not to have it so formalized, but instead giving appropriate and regular feedback for further development. Thus, for the companies there might not be that much added value to formalize the process of assessment and validation, at least concerning the soft skills (for the hard skills it would be more reasonable and acceptable).

In the context of the career development of the employees, some formalized assessment and validation tools might only be used as one of the various means for gathering information and facts, others are 360 degree feedback, calibration meetings between the managers, etc.

From the individual career development perspective however it might be useful for each individual to have some objective assessment at certain periods of his/her life in order to track records and may be re-consider some changes/ new or further qualifications etc.

External expertise and support related to validation

The interviewed experts shared that one training/workshop explaining how to use the specific validation system would be enough for them, as all of them are working with different LMS systems and are well familiar with learning and assessment software. Additional support might not be necessary for them, may be only for the final users – other trainers/lectures/professors as well as students/adult learners.



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Conclusion interviews Bulgaria

All of the interviewees are familiar with the key competences in PROMOTE – entrepreneurship, civic competences and learning to learn and as all of them are dealing with personnel development they consider these skills as very relevant for the personal and career development and also for the continuous professional development. They gave lots of examples for fostering the acquisition and the development of these skills in their organizations mainly focusing on entrepreneurship, but also some related to the other 2 competences.

The main cutting point between the experts was the validation system and its relevancy for their fields – while it was assessed as very practicable and useful in the university field, the business didn't consider it as great added value as it would formalize a process, which they try to make more flexible and adapted to the employees' needs.

Finally, from the individual development perspective, assessment and validation system might be seen again as an additional tool to visualize personal progress, to track some records and may be re-think some changes in qualification in the future.





4.4 Germany

A total of nine experts were interviewed in Germany: one entrepreneur (business person), three educational experts (from the scientific community and from two educational providers), one teacher, two members from NGOs (from the youth sector), and two persons from a city administration.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

Most interviewees feel familiar with the idea of key competences, however, some relate them rather to professional competences and were a bit surprised when we confronted them with the idea of the European catalogue of key competences. Thus it seems to be reasonable to use the term key competence, however, the respondents could not agree upon a fully consistent definition of it. But the general notion is correct and respondents without a fundamental understanding could still relate to the concept based on their life and professional experiences.

Groups who did not professionally deal with competences, mainly decision-makers, had to think about what the competences mean and had the closest relation to KC7 (entrepreneurship) and to civic competences (in case of the NGOs). Here they derived from their own practice what is needed in the field. They applied a simple deduction from the challenges to the activities and further to the aspired competences. Being asked what sub-competences they would put in the concept of KC7 (entrepreneurship) they came up with team management, creativity, autonomy, project planning and management to name the most important ones.

As far as civic competences are concerned the most important sub-competences were communication, intercultural skills and competences, cooperation, diversity management, tolerance but also project management skills and creativity.

Most unclear for the majority of interviewees was the concept of learning to learn competences though everybody considered it as extremely important since people have to learn and develop their competences in every situation. Only the educationalists (and not all of them) could answer in a comprehensive way what learning to learn competences would comprise, one person even came up with the concept of mathetics – the art of learning. The most important sub-competences are: managing the own learning (pathway), problem solving, creativity, autonomy and teamwork.

All groups consider all competences as being very important and relevant, it goes without saying that civic competences were associated more with personal development and “unprofessional life” while entrepreneurship was associated most strongly with professional development and job opportunities.

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Learning to learn competences are considered to be equally important in private and professional life. There was no real difference between the answers of the respondent groups on this question.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

In regards to entrepreneurship there are a number of courses in the academic field, however, they are rather scattered. They are mostly organised by Universities. This University staff and the entrepreneur were familiar with courses offered, the entrepreneur also pointed to singular learning offers from different umbrella organisations such as the chamber of commerce or the association of industry designers who also promote exchange (mobility) offers. The EYE programme was mentioned as a very efficient way to gain practical knowledge and skills in business situations abroad.

Theoretical courses are generally not being well regarded by respondents since the competences have to be acquired and applied in practice according to them. Hence this is a strong hint for learning projects. Similarly KC6 (Active Citizenship; AC) is supposed to be learned, trained and applied in practice.

There is no information if and where learning to learn competences are explicitly trained and taught -it seems to be a competence that is acquired in parallel to other learning processes. In a situation when employers are complaining about employees missing basic and where a PIACCC study still shows a high rate of unskilled people in European member states it seems learning to learn should receive more attention and concrete learning approaches should be integrated better into existing educational sectors.

However some are considered more – others less appropriate to be learned in educational sectors. For example entrepreneurship is perceived to be less likely to be learned in educational sectors because pupils do not have a strong relation to business. The respondents also reported on successful projects and case studies on entrepreneurship in school and VET education.

Entrepreneurship education is also not really common in German adult education courses, however, if it comes to more informal learning (non-formal and informal) entrepreneurship, but also civic competences can be acquired in a very good way.

Respondents felt that key competences can be best learnt in practice, though a good preparation and embedding in a learning programme would increase the efficiency and would sometimes be a pre-condition for the practice phase.



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Validation of competences and learning outcomes

The concept of competence validation has not yet reached actors in the field, employers for example are not familiar with it and are rather surprised to learn that it shall be implemented in 2018. Universities are familiar with ECTS, of course. Some educational providers have heard about it but do not relate the theme to their specific fields yet.

The educational experts (research institutes) are aware of EQF and ECVET. However, there are strong arguments against the implementation – especially since the VET sector in Germany has a very good reputation (the famous dual system which combines theory and practice in apprenticeships). The VET sector in Germany is at the moment rather unhappy about efforts to put more people into higher education since there is a lack of skilled workers in the practical professions. Students seem to strive more for theoretical qualifications than for practical. Hence there is some discussion going on in the practice.

However, there seem to be a tendency for stakeholders in the field of becoming more aware of validation. There is an increasing consciousness that validation will also affect the own field of work.

If validation relates to certification, the interviewees feel that there is a rather extensive (bureaucratic) system of acknowledgements in place (universities, chambers of commerce and crafts, public authorities) and that the procedures for new job descriptions, curricula etc. are rather slow. One respondent named the IT sector in which new requirements pop up so fast that the official bodies have no chance to react on that in a timely way.

Every respondent, however, mentioned the great demand for recognition of prior learning and the comparability of qualifications (even if some didn't directly connect this to validation). All interviewees reported a high demand of skilled workers in certain sectors in Germany, be it technical, health and socially related and IT-professions.

There is not much knowledge on the validation in rather informal learning settings even though the validation of soft skills (key competences) was very logical to all respondents. This relates, on the one hand, to migrants (who are a big issue in Germany at the moment), since we need a good concept for integrating refugees. This requires also a high level of intercultural competences, critical thinking and learning to learn competences. On the other hand, the NGOs and the volunteers working with the (partly traumatised) refugees need these competences, too.

Secondly these social, personal and organisational competences are reported to become ever more important also in the professional field – higher education people reported about big enterprises who



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would not select candidates on the basis of their formal marks but rather on the basis of their competences like teamwork. There was also the story of a hospital medical director who rejected the very young candidates who graduated from their medical studies with extremely good marks. He deducted that these students had a lack of social and personal competences since they did nothing else but study for all of their lives. This underlines the fact that informally acquired competences become more important. The educators also emphasised that a skill validation can also be used in formative settings – in order to give feed-back to the participants to empower them to go on with their learning.

From the point of view of the employers validation is a possible means to find adequate staff more easily and quickly. However, nobody has a real idea on how this could be operationalised and on how employers could find suitable future staff members. In this connection the PROMOTE idea, which relates learning in internships and in mobility to business (the enterprises) is highly appreciated. The employer also states that new competences are required from their HR departments because the matching of the needs of the enterprises and the competences of the new workers, especially if they come from different cultures, has to be facilitated by them.

External expertise and support related to validation

In general, most decision makers lack support and assistance. In the educational field staff may have heard about EQF (and some are quite reluctant since they feel disadvantaged themselves by EQF – e.g. occupational therapists in Germany). In the overwhelming part of the cases the field-staff has no relation to it since it is not (yet) obligatory.

Once it will have been implemented all interviewees responded that they would need assistance to implement it. In other words: If validation is not be only an “appendix” of the learning (and as such sometimes harmful and painful) the educationalists in the field need good training or counselling on how to implement it in their practice.

For educational institutes there is (as always) a rather strong anxiety that the implementation of validation would lead to additional work. This means as a consequence that there is a need for rather general information on validation, combined with tailor-made concepts that could be convincing to overcome the reluctance to change (here to invent new system approach).

Secondly, teachers and trainers are sometimes not well equipped in terms of assessment and do not know how the assessment could be integrated in the learning (e.g. in combination of good instructional design, contents, competence levels, good assignments and suitable assessment methods). This second need clearly relates to the teaching personal.



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Thirdly, also the organisations are not equipped –neither with competent people nor with IT based competence management systems to reach a high performance and to reduce workload. Especially in public schools the directors are in a difficult situation to implement these measures. Eventually also the learners seem to have a lack of consciousness on the value of their validated competences.

All respondents signalled that schools, VET and HE institutes but also the stakeholders in practice should do more to make students aware of what they know and what they are able to do.

4.5 Greece

Six interviews were conducted with experts in Greece. Five with experts from the educational sector with expertise in a variety of academic fields and NGO's. One administrative assistant of a scientific research centre.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

The interviewees were all familiar with the three key competences. The experts explained entrepreneurship and sense of initiative as understanding the structure of the economy and the law of supply-demand as decriminalization of profit, not being afraid of taking risks and trying new ideas that involve creativity and innovation, effectively managing ideas and transforming them to product/services which produce value for people and the entrepreneur. This means to know how to develop and craft ideas, how to enhance them, to plan and manage projects in order to achieve business ideas, to communicate and co-operate with the project team members and to promote them via idea pitching in order to identify resources to implement them. Last but not least, some participants underline a very important personal skill: soliciting government aid especially about youth entrepreneurship. Experts describe Civic competences as being a responsible, mindful and skilful active citizen (at both a national and European level) who wants to solve problems effectively through participation in society and having a clear knowledge of their rights and obligations. Furthermore, they mention the importance of being able to co-operate in job or in life with various people from different cultures and backgrounds in order to produce value for all. They explain Learning to Learn competences as skills in relation to learning but also taking advantage of learning about their quality of life, being open to gain new abilities and updating skills they already have, managing the projects of their own learning process, recognizing the value of skills and their continuous enrichment and extension through life, seeking and exploiting opportunities to organize their personal and professional lives. Participants link these three competences with social cohesion, community development, establishment of educational and cultural capital that facilitate equitable participation in the European scene, enhancement of lifelong learning concept, success in informal



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education, up-to-date knowledge and skills linked to the labour market, competitive in the international job market and practically useful to develop creative, critical and innovative spirit.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

Most of the professionals mentioned EU funded programs (Youthpass certificates for Erasmus+ Youth in Action that validates that the participants have acquired these three main competences; Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) was designed to enable people to take part in stimulating learning experiences, as well as developing education and training across Europe; Erasmus; Erasmus plus; Creative Europe (the new European Union programme for the cultural and creative sectors); Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training; Comenius for school education, through mobility actions, partnership, language skills, quality in education, pedagogical innovations and school management; Grundtvig for adult education; Within the Erasmus+ Programme Jean Monnet for European integration. Experts stressed the important impact of some NGOs Making specific references to Ergani Centre on enhancing female participation in the workforce and eliminating factors that lead to women's exclusion from the labour market and other NGOs.

Professionals analyse that these competences can be promoted through certain initiatives undertaken by the EU, governments, private entities but following the same guidelines by funding projects which will reward innovative ideas or foster partnerships in the field of the social economy, local or interregional employment. Their main perception is that ICT based initiatives using well-structured and designed LMSs could play major role in promoting these competences. Additionally, they underline the importance of projects based on case studies (experiential education) which promote face to face co-operation using real life problems and materialized in real life conditions. They all regard the youth pass certification and Europass curriculum vitae as good practices.

All the experts are also familiar with such programs in HE and other educational agencies. They strongly believe that these competences should be promoted via well designed curricula at every level of school education—from kindergarten (new generation of people), in vocational education to higher education. Project-based learning is the core learning method for promoting these competences. Furthermore, experts believe that we need to fund actions that enhance the development and application of appropriate methodology for promoting creativity and innovation. In school education we need courses related to problem solving and creative thinking. In vocational education we need to promote critical thinking and innovative entrepreneurship. In HE we need projects promoting innovation and initiatives.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes



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All the professionals use various validation methods for formal and informal purposes. Many aspects are relevant to their professional domain. According to the experts' opinion validation in Greece takes place largely through European Union-funded programs. Validation installs a rather objective evaluation system and introduces quality characteristics in the field of adult education and qualifications certification; makes the matrix assembly transparent and the selection of the appropriate employee. Validation and learning are interrelated as through validation knowledge associated with its scope and learning is raised. All of the above underlines that validation concerns every aspect of the learning process (identification, documentation, assessment and certification of learning). Furthermore, if someone wants to be an effective trainer then they have to use a validation system. Also the experts noticed that they use some e-learning platforms providing open source courses and giving the participants the opportunity to assess their competences and have their own e-portfolio such as: coursera, Schoox, Europass etc.

External expertise and support related to validation

The experts agree that there are various approaches to support. Furthermore, they need a well-structured platform for external assessment of competence development and of course a training course on how to use it (it could be embedded into the platform). Secondly, they prefer an education and advisory services package. It is their firm belief that over the course of years there will be more and more know how about LMS. In such a case, they are interested in everything new about assessment of learners, certification, learning technologies, IT tools supporting assessments and/or learners competence management, integrating the assessment/validation in the learning processes and networking good practices.

Conclusion interviews Greece

The experts derived information about Key competences in LLL from international conferences, adult education certification process, relevant EU documents and scientific literature as by their involvement in relevant programs. According to their opinion:

Key competences refer to the basic skills/abilities necessary for personal fulfillment in the professional field but also in society and should be promoted in every learning environment through projects based on case studies which promote face to face co-operation using real life problems and materialized in real life conditions.

Greece is trying to “build” a validation system based on EU guidance but till now there isn't any complete and integrated system based on advanced technology. In the future our country needs to establish a long term educational strategy referring to these competences and certain initiatives undertaken by EU, government, private entities by funding projects which will reward innovative



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ideas or will foster partnerships.

EU funded programs –despite bureaucracy, unequal contribution, expensive results - are important contribution parallel with civic society and private initiatives.

ICT based initiatives using well structured and designed LMSs could play major role in this effort.

There is no question that experts have a major positive opinion about getting further assistance and support related to validation.



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4.6 Italy

Nine experts were interviewed in Italy. The interviewees being composed of academics, private sector representatives and representatives from NGOs. Different partners conducted interviews in Italy, therefore this section will exist of two ‘national’ reports.

4.6.1 Italy I

European concept of key competences in life long learning

The three key competences were relatively well-known among the respondents. Entrepreneurship was mostly defined in terms of business, for example the ability to set up one’s own business, recognize market needs and develop skills accordingly or the ability to turn an idea into a marketable product or service; this entails proactivity and transitioning from an employee mindset to a business-owner attitude. Entrepreneurship was also found to include broader skills, however, such as the capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and react to change.

Civic competences were most strongly associated with: job ethics and a keen sense of duty and responsibility towards society, active participation, construction and reconstruction of society and active citizenship.

Learning to learn is most strongly associated with a willingness to constantly update one’s own knowledge and ability to apply learning outcomes in work settings, an understanding of one’s own strengths and weaknesses and capacity to learn from one’s own mistakes and finally the acquisition of a critical method of study and analysis, and willingness to improve one’s own knowledge and skills.

There is a consensus among the interviewees that these competences are crosscutting and are relevant to the achievement of personal development, success in formal education, career development, job opportunity, and continuing professional development.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

Both the Erasmus programme and NGO-run workshops in schools are mentioned as sites for the acquisition of key competences. The Erasmus programme is extremely useful, as it allows young people to acquire specific and highly professionalising competences, develop advanced linguistic skills and build a professional and personal network of contacts for future career. NGO-run workshops in schools help develop civic competences and active citizenship among youth.



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Respondents' suggestions to promote the acquisition of key competences in the field of formal environment are: enhanced awareness of European, national and regional programmes promoting the acquisition of competences, with particular reference to those supporting start-up creation. And to incentivise students to involve in extracurricular activities such as sports and fine arts to develop self-esteem, team working and cultural sensitiveness. As regard to non-formal settings, volunteering is considered as a useful instrument to develop key competences.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

Validation of competences is truly important in the work of a placement officer even if in Italy there is a lack of defined standards and benchmarks. Validation takes place in a very fragmented and random fashion. As a result, in many cases validation becomes just an additional bureaucratic burden. Validation is usually conceived as an ex-post instrument while, it would be more appropriate to consider validation as the starting point for re-designing training programmes to better meet professional development needs. Validation is a pressing issue also in the third sector, with special regard to voluntary work. It has become a key step in the transition from pure voluntary work to career volunteering.

So far, the only way to validate skills were CVs, questionnaires or letters of reference. The E+ project "DesTeVa" (destination e-validation), aims at developing a web platform to give volunteers the opportunity to receive an assessment of the skills acquired during their volunteering experiences. The platform will allow any volunteer to register and upload all relevant certification to create a portfolio describing knowledge, skills and qualification level according to EQF description.

External expertise and support related to validation

External expertise and support are considered particularly useful. Mainly to support to the assessment of participants/learners, to provide support for certification, to provide external assessment of competence development and to integrate the assessment/validation in the learning processes.

Conclusion interviews Italy part 1

All respondents are well acquainted with the concept of validation of competences and learning outcomes. In different ways and from different perspectives, all of them perceive this topic as extremely relevant in their respective fields.

The second topic was the most challenging to answer. Some interviewees argued that it would have been better to have the questions in advance so to have more time to think about the answers.



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4.6.2 Italy II

European concept of key competences in life long learning

The people selected for this step of the project were all expert of entrepreneurship education therefore for them it was not a problem to define the “sense of initiative”. They were also aware of the European concept of key competences and they all agreed on the needs for Europeans to follow learning paths improving all of them. The area were they recognized importance for these competences were: personal development, job opportunity and professional development for those already on the job market. Participants recognized the existence and relevance of non-formal learning as a key model to improve these skills.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

The interviewees were all aware of learning programmes focused on developing the “spirit of initiative” for target groups going from children to adults. However there is a common opinion that there is nothing like a plan on this at country level but several individual initiatives proposed by public or private learning providers.

A common opinion was also that specific professionals would have been needed to work on this area.

The link of these competences with formal learning environment was somehow difficult to develop while there was a common opinion that the most suitable learning environment would have been a non-formal.

Another common opinion is that sooner or later the Italian educational system should take care of this area of learning and so a link would be created between the formal and non formal.

In non-formal area the participants have been able to name different sector: in adult education, in mobility, in European project, voluntary work, in job environment.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

Validation of competences and learning outcomes is for the majority of participant an area which needs more information and with scarce familiarity.

Participants knew some of the EU tools for validation but were not really familiar with their practical use and functionality. A general understanding was shared on the credits system in higher education. Participants declared the need for a connection between learning and validation of competences and outcomes. The majority of them showed interest in the idea of validation for competences developed in non formal learning environment.



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Interviewers were familiar with e-learning platform and MOOC and they all considered it very relevant for their career.

External expertise and support related to validation

Participants declared their interest in getting more information on validation, in particular they shared the idea that online system would suit better for their area of interest.

The majority of them saw a clear interest in the connection of validation with continuous development in a working environment and in the learning by doing methodology.

Conclusion interviews Italy part II

Generally speaking key competences are a known topic (with entrepreneurship related one more known for the area the interviewees are coming from) and it is a common idea that they are needed and relevant for the development both personal and professional.

In Italy there are some programs that focus on the development of some of these key competences but they are usually managed in the non formal learning sector. A lack of competencies is perceived among trainers and educators.

Non formal learning is the domain where the participants saw the easiest development of these skills. The validation as a concept is not so known and few knows system for validation of competences outside the common EU tools.

The participants declared interest in having more info and exploring validation tools particularly online.



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4.7 Lithuania

Eight interviews were conducted in Lithuania. Six are linked to higher education spread over a variety of academic fields and professions, including the heads of different academic divisions and professors specialised in adult education, informal and non-formal learning. Additionally, two decision makers were interviewed. Different partners conducted interviews in Lithuania, therefore this section will exist of two ‘national’ reports.

4.7.1 Lithuania part I

European concept of key competences in life long learning

Not every professional is familiar with European concept of key competences in lifelong learning (LLL). Interviewees gave definitions that are close to LLL but sometimes not exactly correct. The closest definitions were given on civic competences. Though for the competences of entrepreneurship and sense of initiative was the most difficult to define and definitions were mostly related to doing business, for example “to try business many times and never give up”, “competences to understand the changing business context (e.g. PESTEL), anticipate changes and ready to act to gain benefits”. One of the experienced professionals gave a more precise definition of the competence of entrepreneurship and sense of initiative, e.g. “abilities and skills necessary to adapt to challenges at the workforce market; closely related to sense of ownership”. All key competences were recognised to be of great importance for personal development, career development, job opportunity and continuing professional development because of the followings reasons “they help increase adaptation to societal challenges, also to improve subjective wellbeing”. According to interviewees point of view the least it is important to success in formal education because “in Lithuania ... formal educations asks for knowledge, but not for competences”. It could be summarised that interviewees admit the importance of LLL key competences for personal development and individual and social thriving, but that given definitions sometimes are less than correct.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

There are learning programmes or learning activities that promote the acquisition of these competences in Lithuania. Some of them are developed by universities, some by the private sector and some are developed by professional psychologists. Nevertheless, there is a lack of local professionals to teach/ train all target groups on national level. Different learning programmes and learning activities have different advantages, for example “acquisition of most recent knowledge” in certain field, “people can learn at any suitable time”, “professionally developed learning program, professional teachers/lectures, highly adapted to target groups”, “help people learn resolve conflicts



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in non-violent way”, “wide access for different age groups”. Disadvantages mentioned by interviewees could be summarized in that learning programmes or learning activities cannot reach all interested parties and if this is a university initiative it is not recognised “as a mission to public society”. Disadvantages indicate that learning programmes and learning activities that promote the acquisition of these competences are not developed enough and there is a lack of professionals who could train or teach the competences.

The interviewees’ opinions on the promotion of these competences in formal learning environments vary from “no formalities would increase the level of involvement in LLL”, to “very important”, “These competences are also integrated into degree programs; they are assessed as students’ achievement”. There was no common opinion among interviewees about the issue of promotion in different educational levels. The school education was recognised by all. Though opinions about other levels were different. Some stressed vocational education, others – higher education.

It could be summarised that these competences could be best promoted in informal learning environments and are acquired mainly in the following domains: in adult education, in mobility, voluntary work, at the workplace and in youth organisations.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

The decision makers are less familiar with concept of validation of competences and learning outcomes. It depends on the relevance in their professional field. The most relevant are aspects of professional domain, e.g. “very relevant, because people usually work during the work week, but changes in ... business are very rapid” and aspects of assessment, certification, for example, “– it gives possibility to work in international construction projects”, “mainly personnel certifications / qualifications”. The relevancy in Lithuania was high as stated “very relevant” even if one of interviewees stated “33 higher education institutions provide validation of competences that are acquired in informal learning settings”.

A connection between validation and learning was recognised by interviewees, some however raised the issue that: “concepts should be connected but they are not necessarily”. Most of interviewees connect validation as follows “the validation is made only at the end of trainings”, “use as many simulations or tests in real environments”.

Interviewees are most familiar with open (web-aided) learnings systems such as Moodle, portfolio system and EDX. Most of the interviewees consider this as helpful in their professional practice except for one who claimed that “our training is too specific/small scale”.

External expertise and support related to validation

Depending on the interviewee’s professional experience they could be interested in getting assistance



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and support. Some of them already have the system; some of them would not be interested and for others all service (external assessment, consultancy, training/workshop) would be relevant.

Most of professionals would be interested in following fields of expertise: learning technologies, IT-tools supporting assessments and/or learner's competence management.

Conclusion interviews Lithuania part I

Interviewers admit the importance of LLL key competences for personal development and individual and social thriving.

It was indicated that learning programmes and learning activities that promote the acquisition of these competences are not developed enough and lack for professionals who could train or teach to gain the competences.

Because there was not common opinion of interviewers on promotion in different educational levels it could prove the need of promotion of LLL key competences. The promotion in informal learning environment were important for all domains, especially in in adult education, in mobility, voluntary work, at the workplace, in youth cations.

The lack of cooperation with formal educational institutions is one of the reasons of poor development of validation of key competences of LLL.

Depending on the field of interviewers they would be interested in getting assistance and support, especially in these fields of expertise: learning technologies, IT-tools supporting assessments and/or learner's competence management.



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4.7.2 Lithuania part II

European concept of key competences in life long learning

The concept of key competences is quite well familiar in the circles of higher, vocational and adult education in Lithuania. The formal systems of school, higher and vocational require learning outcome descriptions of any course in terms of competences acquired. Adult and non-formal education is also increasingly referring to the competence-based learning. Competencies of learning to learn, civic competence and entrepreneurship are important to all spheres of human life.

Educators and education policy makers emphasize the importance of gaining learning to learn competences as early as in pre-school education establishments and later – in school, to equip individuals learning skills necessary for their lifelong learning.

Entrepreneurship is one of those key competencies that has received the most attention since 2000 when Memorandum on Lifelong Learning has outlined key skills for life and employment. This is partly due to the fact that it was especially needed after Lithuania's shift from occupational planned economy to market economy.

Civic competencies are also very important and are gaining increasing attention through different non-formal education programs for all age groups. The notions of social responsibility, volunteering and active community spirit are gaining more support, but are still rather fragile in the Lithuanian society.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

The gaining of civic, learning to learn and entrepreneurship skills is possible through different NGOs: civic organizations as well as non-formal clubs, e.g., senior clubs that may organize socially responsible activities and volunteering. This is especially to be said of a civic competence.

There is potential to use more after-school education to boost not only subject oriented learning but also supporting competencies for social and civic participation. This is not to say that there is no civic competence education at all, but to indicate that subject oriented education should not be overestimated in regards to social and civic competences. Lithuanian children, youth and adults need development of social, civic and entrepreneurial skills be free individuals for a free society. There is still some negative heritage from the occupational past that needs to be overcome by education of non-formal competencies.

Currently the development of these competencies mostly rely on non-formal sector, whereas the possibilities of formal education – school, vocational and higher education need to be further developed as well. However, certain secondary schools take systematic steps to develop learning to



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learn competences, there are non-formal adult education programs to boost learning to learn. Entrepreneurship is more and more often being integrated into subject teaching.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

University students gain non-formal competences in their studies through academic mobility, participation in different clubs (teams, groups, ensembles, etc.), but the level of their up-take depends on the students themselves.

Individual institutions (some universities, colleges) practice validation of non-formal competencies gained in non-formal environments or practical training. However, no mainstream practice is known. Usually if validation of non-formal competencies exists it is usually related to some formal competences, e.g., client orientation skills. Otherwise, these are random projects that relate to validation of non-formal competences. However, nothing formal or systematic is functioning in terms of validation of non-formal competences in Lithuania.

External expertise and support related to validation

Learning process connection to the processes of validation would be very useful and functional, especially if it were in any way programmed through virtual learning environments or learning management systems.

Conclusion interviews Lithuania

The development of civic, entrepreneurship and learning to learn competences is very important for Lithuania, but they are developed mostly in unregulated manner and through non-formal sector. Development of entrepreneurship is more coordinated in school education. Some secondary schools integrate development of these skills in subject programs. The potential of after school education may be more used to develop the civic, entrepreneurship and learning to learn competences and not just subject training (e.g., math skills, etc.). In higher and vocational education these skills are being developed but their validation is usually related to formal competences. There is no comprehensive and functioning validation of civic, entrepreneurship and learning to learn competences, just single project-based initiatives.



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4.8 Portugal

Four experts working in the educational sector in Portugal were interviewed.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

The European concept of key competences in lifelong learning in Portugal is disseminated by Cedefop and ANQEP, in two of the interviews some references were made to the European key competences but not very extensively. New opportunities centres use national references for the competence validation.

Related to the PROMOTE competences, it was mentioned that entrepreneurship and sense of initiative as to do with the way with which someone deals with worries and goals. It is specially related with an attitude through life of taking risks and pursuing fulfilment, well-being and being motivated to grow.

Related to civic competences it was mentioned that it implies morality, responsibility, social awareness, and other abilities, attitudes or behaviours related to society, in general, and the respect for others in specific. Learning to learn implies two complementary aspects, an attitude that enables someone to be constantly in contact with the world and also being aware of what is needed to be integrated with the surrounding reality, being proactive and curious in the search for new answers and new knowledge with some flexibility to accept the learning needs and to think about new information or new methods.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

In the New Opportunities Centres many activities were planned and developed for the acquisition of the competences that the learners were missing. For example, research abilities, working with a computer when preparing their portfolio and presentation, communication skills and autonomy in learning.

Outside the mentioned program there are many short courses that promote competence acquisition, for example directed at entrepreneurship, in HE and also in adult learning. There are also some few actions and/or programmes related to learning to learn, namely in higher education institutions. There are also some actions for the unemployed, but it is hard to say if the learners are really interested in lifelong learning or are at these training sessions only because they have to. Besides those, every context has the potential to be a learning environment, especially in the case of transversal competences. Everything learned can be applied in different contexts, due to the human ability to reason and connect knew and different knowledge. Some forms of competence acquisition are informal, through voluntary civic activities, participation in non-profit associations, in the



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organisation of events, gamification, individual coaching, participating in sports and other activities involving team work, etc.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

In all interviews some familiarity with the concept of validation was mentioned. The person with experience in the new opportunities centres mentioned that her work was to help the candidates to prepare the documentation for validation within the national reference system. Several people mentioned the potential difficulty of developing a European-wide validation method applied to transversal competences considering the cultural differences across the continent. Although it was considered extremely important to develop some kind of system, even a simple one, that could give value to all the different learned competences obtained in training, in curricular programs, but also in informal context. It was also mentioned that: “The industrial age brought us the industrial school – the same for everyone, and now we are at a new stage of human development, where everyone can search in the internet and easily accumulate some knowledge. The learning paradigm has to change and adapt to this new reality, setting the competences as the main training goal, and not the knowledge by itself. Thus, all of this is essential to the future of mankind, and the sooner we adapt to this new conditions, the faster we can grow and adapt”.

External expertise and support related to validation

Generally in interviews people seem interested to cooperate and willing to know more about the possibility to have a good validation of transversal competences, considering it, nevertheless, a difficult process. In one case the person is working directly with transversal competence development and showed also interest in the integration of the validation in the learning process, stating that:

“I’m interested in collaborating in: support to assessment of participants / learners; Human resources development, continuing professional development and/or career development; Integrating the assessment/validation in the learning processes; or any other aspect of competence development and assessment.”

Summary Portugal

As conclusion it may be stated that in Portugal the New Opportunities program already allowed some validation and certification of non-formal learning, nevertheless that validation used a national referential and not an European one, and was certified in formal learning levels.

It was also clear that the validation of transversal competences and their development is an important issue, for instance for job selection purposes, but there is not much practice in this kind of validation and not much tools for it.

Finally the interviewed people showed some interest in the development of validation tools and



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processes essentially for transversal competences.

4.9 The United Kingdom

As part of the interview process four in-depth interviews were conducted with experts from the United Kingdom. Two of the interviewees were the participants of the previous EDUCCKATE project and the other two were the professionals whose work involved mentoring and assessing the informal/non-formal learning processes.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

All interviewees informed us that they were aware of the idea of key competences in lifelong learning. All were able to explain the three key competences, although in varying degree of comprehensiveness. The entrepreneurship and sense of initiative was the easiest one for all to explain. Its connection with creativity and seeing opportunities was particularly highlighted. One of the respondents pointed out that entrepreneurial competences could be useful in social life too.

The civic competences were very clear to two of the respondents, while the other two had some hesitation in pinpointing its exact meaning. Nevertheless, all of them demonstrated understanding of the civic competences in general. The learning to learn competences were explained as willingness to learn new things and in ways and as the process of being able to learn effectively.

The relevance of the key competences in personal development was important because, as one interviewee pointed out, it helped to become more satisfied and accomplished as a person. It was also considered relevant to receive externally validated certification that will be formally recognised by third parties, and the competences were expected to be important for progression within the workplace. All agreed that these competences should be absolutely critical in the job recruitment process – employers and recruiters should be able to use them to assess the suitability of candidates for jobs. As one said, the professionals should hold responsibility for their own CPD (continuing professional development) – and the key competences are ideal tools for structuring CPD planning, activity and recording. It was also highlighted that these competences are important to show young people that there are multiple career paths out there and open their horizons to different opportunities to develop their own ideas; it promotes a different way of thinking since job descriptions are no longer clear-cut and employers are looking for independent, initiative-taking employees.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

Two of the interviewees were very familiar with previous EDUCCKATE programme and they discussed the importance of the mentored internships and the significance of UCL Enterprise



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Bootcamp for promoting acquisition of the key competences in their experience. Two other interviewees were well aware of different schemes under the Erasmus+ and other European projects and they were able to describe much more varied and lengthy learning curve.

First two respondents with EDUCCKATE experience give slightly different views. One said that the goals of EDUCCKATE were unclear to start with and that it sounds as promoting very ‘European’ competences that were unfamiliar to people raised in the UK. Its only advantage seemed to be for business and entrepreneurship and the approaches to learning was provided in later stages. The other responded said that EDUCCKATE’s selection of smaller businesses was an advantage as it provided significantly different places where learning took place. The main advantage was that students not only learn about the competences, but also put them in practice and gain work experience at the same time. Both said that the experience was very valuable for finding future employment and both regretted that these projects were of limited availability for the students.

Two other respondents with wider European knowledge saw clear advantages of large European-wide projects (such as PROMOTE) that bring together European participants/expertise. Disadvantage – quality of learning experiences, and certification of those experiences, can be variable. Both believed that the assessment of competences can be seamlessly integrated into learning programmes for vocational education, and should be done so throughout VET. One considered that it was difficult for these competences to be incorporated into HE, as many HE educators do not see this as their role – they are guardians of academic knowledge, passing on knowledge rather than competences.

All agreed that the competences can be blended into adult learning opportunities and could be explicitly set out in work contracts and implicit in all professional activity in the workplace. Internships should be about learning about the world of work and while trainees should be working towards VET certification of their technical skills, they should be developing their competences simultaneously.

All were in favour of turning the competences from abstract concepts to concrete examples in order to make it more understandable and of making internships more wide-spread.

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

All were familiar with the concept of validation, both in its formal and informal purpose forms. One respondent highlighted that the validation was overly relevant in her current position, and as being very relevant in the UK as a whole. The other respondent was supportive of formalising and certifying the competences more rigorously, although the competences were not formally recognised



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in his current job and he did not see the competence validation being a big development in the UK. The third responded with the opinion that the validation and learning can be seen as two completely separate concepts if you tie the former to informal learning and the later to formal learning. However, while engaged in informal learning, for example job training in an apprenticeship one can learn valuable information and while engaged in formal education such as a Master degree one can learn practical things such as lab work and writing skills. By going through a validation process one can identify what skills and formal knowledge you have acquired through your work placement or course. This respondent also was experienced in Level5 and said that, although it helps identifying and rating the competences acquired, it is quite complicated and can be weary. The respondent thought that the validation process through a workshop or other exercise could be much more personable and productive, although this is more labour intensive. It's important to note, however, that LEVEL5 is supposed to be integrated in a workshop and not just put at the end of a learning experience.

For two respondent learning and validation definitely were connected concepts and they suggested tying them together through competence testing. They both knew learning systems connected with validation, but one of them thought that they were under-used. One mentioned that these systems would help professional practice, but they would encounter significant amounts of resistance. One respondent very interestingly mentioned that even if people are not familiar with the concept, they already practice validation in everyday life or work. She regretted that the focus of many employers, when recruiting new staff, is on the formal qualifications more than the practical competences.

External expertise and support related to validation

Two of the respondents said that, at the moment, they did not require any assistance due to the character of their work. But if they needed, they said they would be interested in trainings for continuing professional development that would encompass the informal learning and the subsequent validation. One respondent said that a training or workshop can be very informative or a mentor in the work place can help with developing the competences further. She was interested in support necessary for certification and in support for understanding the continuing professional development better. She also highlighted that these skills are often desired by the employer or the industry, but are for some reason difficult to obtain i.e. costly courses, unfunded internships etc. There is the expectation that one would learn through experience and that she would be interested in support programmes that would help giving people access to these competences. The fourth respondent said that he is interested to get support in order to improve his understanding of new ways of validation. He also said that from his experience he knew how important it is to gain the skills and competences one needs to further his/her career.



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What was clear from the interviews is that the need for learning the key competences is acknowledged, but the difficulties with implementing it were also highlighted quite clearly. All were in favour of integrating the assessment/validation in the learning processes. But the validation methods/tools need to be refined further and explained better in order to make them more acceptable. Two respondents with LEVEL5 experience both said they encountered difficulties in using it in previous projects. Three respondents explicitly supported European dimension to the process; they wanted to share experiences with mainland Europe and learn from them where necessary.

Conclusion interviews UK

The opinions of the interviewees were very much dictated by their experiences in the areas of informal learning and validation. The notes were taken during all four interviews and more detailed feedback could be provided if necessary. All 4 respondents could be contacted for further discussions and all would be kept informed regarding the developments of PROMOTE.

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Three respondents explicitly supported European dimension to the process; they wanted to share experiences with mainland Europe and learn from them where necessary.





4.10 Other European cases

Additionally, four experts working in higher education on questions of lifelong learning and the validation of key competences from different European countries (The Netherlands, Denmark, France and Portugal) were interviewed.

European concept of key competences in life long learning

All the interviewees possess a certain familiarity with the three competences. All of them could provide a definition. Two of the interviewees have worked for many years in lifelong learning, where these competences are core concepts and subjects. One of the interviewees mentioned that these competences (especially entrepreneurship) are part of his company's values and are regularly used to inspire people to go for lifelong learning. One of the interviewees heard about these competences from the media, with regard to the present economic and social situation, especially the high unemployment rate of young people and adults, but also heard about them on the occasion of professional conferences or in relation with university access degree.

Entrepreneurship and sense of initiative are seen as the ability of developing new ideas and actions, they are linked to innovation, creativity, risk-taking, autonomy and self-confidence. Entrepreneurship is, among the three competences, the one which the respondents have more direct experience and familiarity with.

Civic competences are perceived as those competences needed to behave and take responsibility as a full member of society. They refer to the participation in society and to the possession of knowledge about society, policy and culture, as well as to the ethical and moral behaviour sphere. Learning to learn is seen as the ability to learn and organise one's own learning – individually, in groups and in all types of relations relevant for learning. It is also defined as the ability to take responsibility for learning in contexts. The Dutch interviewee declared that his company is presently working on the learning to learn competence, because they have a lot of people who are stuck in one position and cannot go further in education, so they are going to start a programme in January to engage them and make them aware of the importance of learning with the company, not to be left behind.

The three competences are considered relevant for several reasons. They are seen as important in a globalised world where lifelong learning is more and more a reality and a need for individuals, groups and society. They are seen as important in a societal perspective, including citizenship aspects and social integration issues. They are key to gather reactivity, high adaptation capacity and curiosity. In general, all the interviewees agree in considering the three competences important for all the aspects suggested: personal development, success in formal education, career development, job opportunities and continuing professional development.

All the respondents consider the three competences important in formal learning environments, in the

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different domain of school education, vocational education and higher education. Validation of prior learning was indicated as a way to promote the competences in formal learning environments.

The three competences are unanimously considered important in informal learning environments, in all the sub-domains suggested in the question. The interviewee from the Netherlands explained that every person who is in adult education and also youth education must realize the importance of learning to learn. If we look at voluntary work, two important components and skills to carry out effective voluntary work are civic and social competences and entrepreneurship. Looking at internships and traineeships, it is also very important that interns and trainees have social and civic competences, but also learning to learn and entrepreneurship.

Learning programmes and activities that promote the acquisition of the PROMOTE competences

The respondents agreed on the need of promoting these competences both in formal and informal learning environments. As for formal learning environments, the interviewee from Portugal said this could be done through flexibility and experimentation (school education), through training of tutors to provide the desired outcomes (vocational education), through problem-based and team work (higher education). As for how to promote these competences in rather informal learning environments, this could be done through social interaction (adult education), through cultural immersion and intellectual challenges (mobility), and through learning contracts and specific trainers (at the workplace, internships and traineeships).

Validation of competences and learning outcomes

All the four interviewees possess a certain familiarity with validation, two of them stating they mainly have familiarity with validation for formal purposes. For the respondent from Danish, validation is the core subject in her work as researcher and responsible for development activities in the area. The respondent from the Netherlands is also very familiar with validation since he also works as an assessor, assessing people's civic and entrepreneurship competences, and giving feedback on how to acquire more competences. The respondent from France stated that her University's lifelong learning service manage around 100 trainees/a year in recognition of prior learning process that end with a validation/diploma which has a real value on the job market.

Validation is very relevant in the professional field of the Danish respondent, and has been on the agenda at policy level in Denmark since 2000, both at national and regional level, in the educational field and in the third sector. In some institutions, validation is very developed and organised, while in others is still emerging or under development. In France, according to a recent law on vocational training, diplomas have to be declined in competences. There are already seventy diplomas declined in competences. The respondent from Portugal declared that in his professional domain (higher





education), validation is presently relevant for research purposes only.

Three of the interviewees highlighted the existence of a strong connection between validation and formal and informal learning. The respondent from the Netherlands still sees them as two different concepts, explaining that in the company he works for it is still too early to see them as closely connected, although in the future they might be. He does not see how validation and learning arrangements could be linked, at the moment. Right now, the company proceeds like this: they do learning arrangements and then afterwards do the validation of them for the learning outcomes. The respondent from Portugal declared that validation and learning arrangements can be connected if learning arrangements are clearly specified and accredited.

As for the existence or familiarity with open (web-aided) learning systems (e.g. LMS, e-portfolios etc.) that connect with validation (assessment and evidencing), the respondent from France mentioned a master degree (called SIFA, *Stratégie et Ingénierie en Formation des Adultes*), in which students or trainees have a e-portfolio, Mahara system, which is a link between trainees, the enterprise and the university, and which can be considered like a part of the assessment. The respondent from the Netherlands explained that his company has a learning management system (LMS), although they do not use e-portfolio, but only paper portfolios. They do a lot of e-learning, but with no link to validation. The introduction of learning tools that connect with validation are considered by the Dutch respondent as potentially helpful in his professional practice, although maybe in the next future. Finally, the respondent from Portugal mentioned the knowledge and use of Moodle with badges and considers the use of this type of learning system essential in his professional practice.

External expertise and support related to validation

The interviewee from France, expressed interest in service in the field of external assessment of competence development, consultancy, training and workshops. Support was welcome in the subjects of human resource development, integrating the validation in the learning processes, IT-tools supporting assessments and support to certification.

The respondent from the Netherlands stated that he would be interested in receiving external expertise, but that he thinks they already have some available in his company. He also said he thinks that, for the future, there could be some external help for the development of those competences and for translating them into education (by training or others). He expressed this priority order: human resources development, continuing professional development and/or career development, learning technologies,

IT-tools supporting assessments and learners' competence management.

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Finally, the interviewee from Portugal said he would be interested in getting assistance in terms of external assessment of competence development, consultancy, and training/workshops. As for the field of expertise/support he would be interested in support to assessment of participants, support to certification, human resources development, continuing professional development and/or career development and integrating the validation in the learning processes.



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4.11 Conclusion interviews

To substantiate the results from the questionnaire in-depth expert interviews were carried out within the framework of the PROMOTE project. Each partner country of the PROMOTE project interviewed a minimum of three (maximum of 10) stakeholders, which resulted in interviewed experts from 12 European member states.

Throughout Europe there seems to be a basic, generalized knowledge of the three key competences: entrepreneurship, learning-to-learn and civil competences. What, however, was found to be lacking was the ability to accurately expand upon and define these competences.

The interviews revealed that, within Europe, there are different understandings and connotations of central terms like “competence”, “entrepreneurship” or the concept of key competences. Here, also differences among professions became obvious. For example, there seems to be a divide between interviewees who define entrepreneurship in a more narrow way, mainly associating it with business practices, and those who take a broader view, interpreting it more strongly in terms of taking initiative and innovating.

All PROMOTE key competences are considered as crucial for the development of individuals, from personal to professional development. Learning to learn competences were valued most important in general, while entrepreneurship is considered essential for professional development and active Citizenship is most important for private life.

There seems to be no consensus on which areas of development are promoted by which key competences. This is an indicator that knowledge on competences needs to be systematized from the fragmented state it is in now.

The need for validation is almost universally recognized by interviewees. Support is welcomed by most interviewees. Ways, and particularly tools, to validate key competences are not well-known. There is a strong demand for the diffusion of knowledge on these issues across Europe. And thus a clear need for a project such as PROMOTE.





5 Conclusion needs analysis

In the framework of the PROMOTE project a comprehensive needs analysis was carried out. The PROMOTE project aims at promoting and validating social, personal and organisational key competences such as entrepreneurship, civic competences and learning to learn with the help of an innovative, self-directed learning approach at the interface of higher education and business.

The survey focused on the level of knowledge and awareness of the main PROMOTE competences, the European Lifelong Learning:

- Learning to learn
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship
- Active citizenship.

The needs analysis consisted of a quantitative part and a qualitative part. The quantitative results were based on a large scale online questionnaire. The qualitative part was conducted through in-depth interviews.

The questionnaire reached 477 European stakeholders working in the field of education and decision makers. Most respondents were educational professionals (<70%), which has an influence on the results of the questionnaire. The three competences – entrepreneurship, civic competences and learning to learn – are well-known among the respondents. Furthermore, these key competences are considered to be important in most professional and life contexts. However tools for validating these key competences are not well known. The questionnaire allows us to expand on which sub-competences are regarded as most important for certain key-competences. For entrepreneurship the most important sub-competences are communication, leadership, creativity, teamwork and networking; for civic competences these are communication, intercultural communication, critical thinking, teamwork, conflict management; and for learning-to-learn the most important sub-competences are critical thinking, autonomy, reflection, knowledge management and problem solving.

From the questionnaire we can conclude that the validation of informal and non-formal learning is still in an initial stage in most European member states even though a development of awareness and knowledge on the approaches for VINFL can be identified.

To substantiate the results from the questionnaire, expert interviews were carried out. Each partner country of the PROMOTE project interviewed a minimum of three (maximum of 10) stakeholders, which resulted in interviewed experts from 12 European member states. The interviews revealed that (despite the results of the online questionnaire) there are different understandings and connotations of central terms like “competence”, “entrepreneurship” or the concept of key competences. All

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PROMOTE key competences are considered as crucial for the development of individuals, from personal to professional development. The need for validation is almost universally recognized by interviewees. Support is welcomed by most interviewees. Ways, and particularly tools, to validate key competences are not well-known.

Formal education is interestingly preferred as a site for learning key competences in the questionnaire, something which is contradicted in the interview section and which could be ascribed to the predominance of educational experts in the questionnaire sample. From the needs analysis we can conclude that there is a strong demand for the diffusion of knowledge on the validation of informal and non-formal learning across Europe. This is exactly where PROMOTE stands for: promoting and validating key competences in mobility and traineeships in Europe.

