

AFTER MOBILITY

METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE VALIDATION OF LEARNING

Lecture 1

How to recognize competences

After the mobility, what we have to do, as «Method experts for the transparency and validation of learning deriving from mobility in WBL», is to accompany and support people in the process of validation of competences gained through WBL mobility experiences.

**But do we really know what a competence is?
How can we recognize it?**

According to CEDEFOP (2014), i.e. Europe Center for the Development of Vocational Training, a competence is:

«ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development)

or

ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development»

The concept of competence has emerged since the 1970s in two spheres of society:

a) Work

b) Education and Training

It has been applied to three scientific fields:

- 1. Sciences of Work, Organisation and Management**
- 2. Sciences of Education and Learning**
- 3. Sciences of Linguistics**

Competence or Competencies?

- Competence, in the **singular form**, has the meaning of knowledge or professional role
 - paradigmatic shift from the primacy of knowledge and the transmissive dimension of teaching to the centrality of the sphere of practical know-how in situation
- Competencies, in the **plural form**, identifies a set of characteristics and objects to be learnt and that refer to professional performance standards
 - set of resources that should enable the individual to successfully cope with life and work contexts characterised by flexibility

How are competencies built?

An extensive debate has been undertaken since the 20th century, but between the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the plurality of visions on competence building processes was consolidated in two macro approaches:

- **MANAGERIAL APPROACH: competence as individual capital**
 - this approach investigates competence as a codifiable, analysable and measurable resource
- **SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH: competence as relational resources**
 - looks at the generative and activation dimension of competence from social practices

Managerial approach

- Competence is configured as a **parameter**, a standard for measuring the development and positioning of people in organisations: it's a tool functional to the management of workers, especially at medium-high levels
- The birth of the managerial approach dates back to the 1973 article *Testing for Competence Rather than for "Intelligence"* written by the American psychologist David McClelland: here McClelland suggested replacing traditional intelligence tests (considered poor predictors of subsequent professional performance) with new forms of candidate assessment, targeted on the characteristics of an individual in causal correlation with effective task performance
- Link between **competence** and **performance**

"If you want to know how well a person can drive a car (the criterion), sample his ability to do so by giving him a driver's test. Do not give him a paper-and-pencil test for following directions, a general intelligence test, etc." (McClelland, 1973)

According to managerial approach, competence is seen as a set of motivational factors, knowledge and practical skills that generates an output, i.e. observable, assessable and sometimes measurable performance: this is substantially a **behaviourist** approach.

In European policies instead the concept of competence identifies the resources capable of equipping workers and citizens to meet the challenges of the increasingly technologically complex professional worlds and work: it represents an evolutionary step for the concept of competence, moving closer to **cognitivist** and Piagetian paradigms.

Behaviourist and Cognitivist approaches: commonalities

- Downgrading of the predictive value of schools and academic credentials in the field of work
- Idea of the multifactor nature of competences
- Centrality of action, which leads to defining competence as knowledge in action

Behaviourist and Cognitivist approaches: differences

Behaviourist approach

- Focus on **performance** (output)
- **Atomistic view** of competence (each competence collects other competencies)
- From this approach derive taxonomies and **repertoires of competences**

Cognitivist approach

- Focus on potentialities and **processes** (input)
- **Holistic view** of competence (action schemes can progressively integrate an individual disposition that makes them enduring and transportable)
- Competence as **mobilisation** of resources (knowledge, skills)

A third idealtype

From the vision of competence as performance and that of competence as the sum of inputs determining a performance, we move to a third conceptualization, describing a process which leads to a **generative competence**, through the dynamic of **mobilization of resources** in a concrete situation.

To what extent is a competence transferable?

- The issue of employability, human capital mobility and active labour policies postulate the presence of workers with easily transferable skills
- **Not all competencies are transferable in the same way**, but they may lie along a continuum: at the highest pole of transferability we find personal resources such as personality traits or basic knowledge; at the lowest pole the particular skills and tacit knowledge generated in individual work contexts

Mobilisation as a meta-competence

- Mobilisation of knowledge and skills can be configured as a **meta-competence**, i.e. a second-level competence, aimed at the effective use of personal resources in a process of de-contextualization and then re-contextualisation
- This meta-competence is articulated in:
 - Capacity
 - Action

Recommended readings

- **Benadusi L., Molina S.**, eds. (2018), *Le competenze. Una mappa per orientarsi*, Il Mulino, Bologna.
- **CEDEFOP** (2014), *Terminology of European education and training policy*, Luxembourg.
- **Le Boterf G.** (2011), *Ingénierie et évaluation des compétences*, Editions d'Organisation, Paris.
- **McLelland D. C.** (1973), *Testing for Competence Rather Than for «Intelligence»*, American Psychologist, 28(1), 1-14.

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METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE VALIDATION OF LEARNING

Lecture 2

The skill of identifying learning

In order to validate and certify a competence, there needs to be a standard to refer to.

Council of EU Recommendation (2012) on validation of non-formal and informal learning asks Member States to assure that “*qualifications or, where applicable, parts of qualifications obtained by means of the validation of non-formal and informal learning experiences comply with agreed standards*” (Council of EU, 2012).

Identification of learning related to standardised profiles

- **Standardisation** defines the level required to exercise a profession and indicates all the **operational competences that a qualified person must possess to perform that profession**, at a conventionally defined level of competence
- A standardised competence profile has **two main aims**:
 - ✓ It helps the **individual** to assess his or her position in relation to the requirements identified by the standard
 - ✓ It acts as an orientation compass for the **assessors** who verify the achievement of the required level

How to recognise competencies with reference to standards

- The systematic study of the tasks that are performed in a given profession assumes a central role in the construction and updating of professional standards in repertoires → anyway, it does not allow for the transparency of transferable and certifiable learning, because these are the result of a **reflective practice**
- The competence identification process is aimed at **generating transformative learning**: past and recent experiences are reinterpreted from a new set of expectations, thus assuming a new meaning and a new perspective
- Transparency process for validation versus certification should activate in the candidate the **ability to highlight the transfer of competencies** (meta-competence)

Transactional techniques

- In order to activate the process of learning identification we need to develop:
 - ❑ **The ability to conduct individual interviews**
 - ❑ **The knowledge of transactional techniques of learning transparency**
- Transactional techniques are aimed at **favouring the progressive reconstruction and representation of experiences**, with reference to formal, non-formal and informal learning
- **Core** of transactional knowledge → **relationship established between 'doing' and 'reflecting on doing'**, between acting and observing the effects of action, which underlines the “transaction”

Reflective practice

- The practitioner must stimulate the candidate reflection on his/her life experiences in training and working fields
- **Reflective practice** allows the subject to express evaluations based on previous experiences and knowledge that have generated learning
- Two types of reflective action can be distinguished:
 - «**reflection in action**»
 - «**reflection on action**»
- The practitioner, through a dialectical process aimed at reconstructing the user's cognitive biography, stimulates above all reflection on action

Activating candidate «meta-competence»

The role of the practitioner for identification of competencies will also be that of activating meta-competence, since it has a generative value for the construction of Self by:

- **adopting other points of view**
- **modifying one's own perspectives**
- **using keys to interpret the complexity we live**
- **transforming meanings of learning acquired in training and working fields**

Recommended readings

- **CEDEFOP** (2014), *Terminology of European education and training policy*, Luxembourg.
- **COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION** (2012), *COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning* (2012/C 398/01).

AFTER MOBILITY

METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE VALIDATION OF LEARNING

Lecture 3

Tips for Optimising the Identification and Assessment of learning

Validation: a definition

VALIDATION: «a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard»

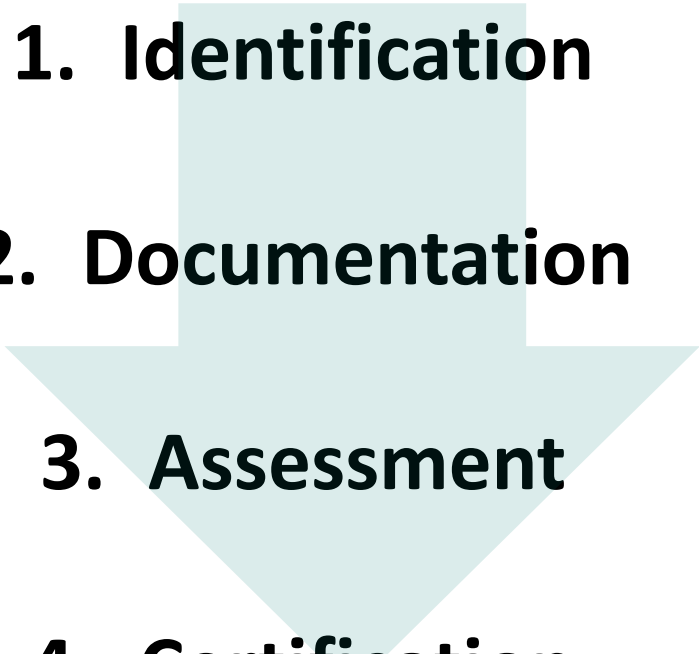
(EU Council, 2012)

Validation Purposes

Two elements have to be taken into account when designing validation arrangements:

- **VISIBILITY** → it makes visible the diverse and rich learning of individuals
- **VALUE** → it attributes value to the learning of the individuals, irrespective of the context in which this learning took place

4 phases of validation process

- 
- 1. Identification**
 - 2. Documentation**
 - 3. Assessment**
 - 4. Certification**

Reconstucting and assessing competencies

- The identification and assessment service is aimed at recognising the competences acquired by the person, through a reconstruction and evaluation of non-formal or informal learning
- The fluidity of the overall identification process depends very much on the quality with which the first steps are carried out:
 1. Identification of the experiences contained in the CV
 2. Representation of skills into identification documents

Identification session

- Generally, an identification session consists of an **interview** between the individual and the recognition practitioner, based on the former's narration of his/her biography
- The interview focuses on the experiences in order to codify the different activities (through the descriptors of the National Qualification Framework) and the different competencies acquired (according to the descriptors of the local Repertoire)
- The aim is to **"put in order" the individual's experiences** by giving them a sense related to the desired qualification
- It is important to devote one or more work sessions to the individual, aimed at improving the quality of the biographical narrative and its transposition into identification documents

Identification objectives:

- to identify and choose educational, professional and non-professional experiences on the basis of what is indicated in the standard profile and CV;
- to help the individual to be aware of the potential value of his/her own learning, so as to be able to personally support the subsequent evaluative acts;
- to find an appropriate language to give an effective and concise representation to third parties.

Assessment phase

- Assessment phase consists of the examination of the Evidence Dossier and of the document containing the experiences identified
- It is carried out using a judgement based on the ascertainment and evaluation of certain competencies on the basis of the experiences made by the applicant
- It **evaluates the matching of the set of experiences/evidences collected** in terms of:
 - ☐ **coverage of the main activities** (primarily from non-formal and informal learning), with reference to a sufficiently wide range of application contexts
 - ☐ **coverage of a significant part of the knowledge required by the standard**

Evaluation model

In order to carry out the assessment phase by using a codified and shared methodology, we tested a model structured on the basis of 2 variables:

- **Relevance**
- **Value**

Assessment Indicators

Relevance

- Knowledge Coverage
- Skill Coverage
- Experience Coverage
- Role (played in terms of autonomy and responsibility)
- Application range (variety of contexts)

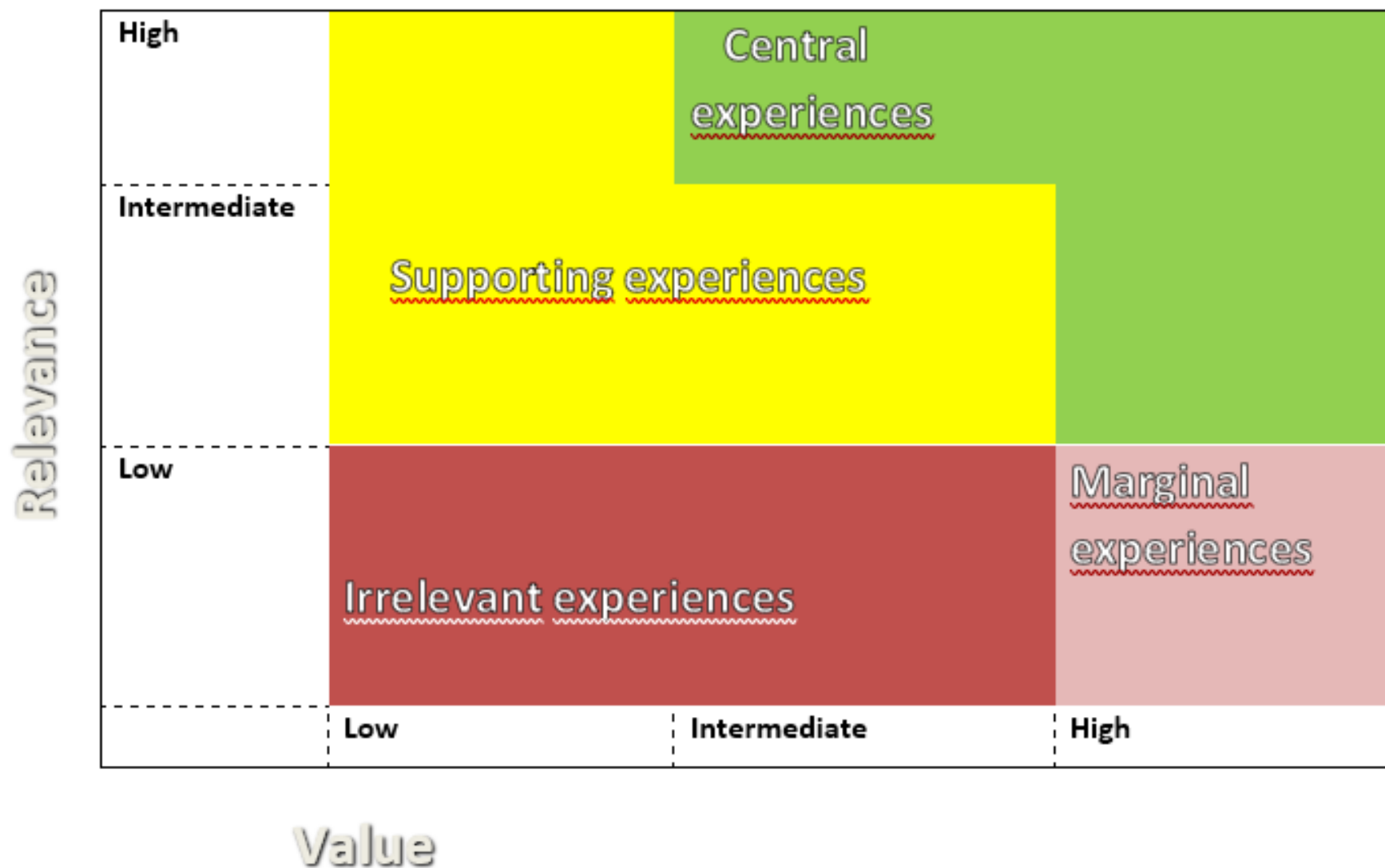
Value

- First part evidences
- Second part evidences
- Third part evidences

Relevance indicators

	Level 1 - Low	Level 2 - Intermediate	Level 3 - High
Knowledge Coverage			
Skill Coverage			
Experience Coverage			
Role (<u>autonomy</u> and <u>responsibility</u>)			
Range (<u>variety</u> of contexts)			

Typology of experiences/evidences



Recommended readings

- **CEDEFOP** (2014), *Terminology of European education and training policy*, Luxembourg.
- **CEDEFOP** (2015), *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*, Luxembourg.

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Lecture 4 How to «value» evidence

Job of the assessor: «to seek, review and check evidence of an individual's learning and judge what meets specific standards»

(CEDEFOP, 2015)

Assessing individual evidence is fundamental to make “visible” individual learning and to attribute “value” to the candidate learning experience

Key Knowledge and skills of assessors

- Be familiar with the validation process (validity and reliability).
- Have experience in the specific field of work.
- Have no personal interest in the validation outcome (to guarantee impartiality and avoid conflicts of interest).
- Be familiar with different assessment methodologies.
- Be able to inspire trust and to create a proper psychological setting for the candidates.
- Be committed to provide feedback on the match between learning outcomes and validation standards/references (via support systems).
- Be trained in assessment and validation processes and knowledgeable about quality assurance mechanisms.
- Operate according to a code of conduct.

Source: CEDEFOP (2015)

Different types of Evidence

Evidence of acquired learning can be represented by different types of evidence. There are mainly three types of evidence:

- **FIRST-PARTY EVIDENCE:** whose validity is given by the person's self-declaration
- **SECOND-PARTY EVIDENCE:** issued by those implementing the service, training attestation, validation documents
- **THIRD-PARTY EVIDENCE:** issued by the holder institution of certification service.

FIRST-PARTY EVIDENCE

- It has a social recognition based on trust in the declarant
- The evidence must meet the requirements:
 - ☐ **Validity** (reliability of resource)
 - ☐ **Consistence** (direct correlation with the reference)
 - ☐ **Completeness** (presence of all information and data necessary to testify to the exercise and/or possession of the competence)

SECOND-PARTY EVIDENCE

Examples:

- Statement of an employer where the person has worked, making explicit the role held and the activities carried out
- Videos and photo books
- Semi-finished and finished products
- Certificates of attendance at training courses

THIRD-PARTY EVIDENCE

- These attestations are always documentary
- Examples: educational and training certification, certificates relating to language and computer skills, diplomas and degrees awarded on completion of training and education

Nature of evidence

- While third-party attestations are always documentary in nature, second- and first-party attestations may be documentary in nature, but also evidence of output or evidence in action.
- We can distinguish:
 - **Documentary evidences**
 - **Output evidences**
 - **«Action» evidences**

Documentary evidence

Formal documents that constitute evidence of learning acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. For example:

- certificates, titles, certificates, licences, which refer to the person's training experiences
- employer's declarations, clients' declarations, pay slips, employment, collaboration, internship/internship contracts
- declarations from voluntary associations/organisations, letters of reference, self-declarations

Output evidence

Semi-finished or finished products, tangible or intangible, realised by the person, or photographs thereof, which required the exercise of the competence and testify the possession and development of specific technical-professional skill.

«Action» evidence

Evidence from which it is possible to infer that the person has expressed, in certain situations, a certain type of behaviour, whose manifestation testifies the possession of certain competencies.

For example:

- Testimonies of clients
- Audio or video recordings

What evidence?

The mobility action operator supports the person in the pathway of «emerging» of his/her competencies, selecting and organising the relative evidence



The **best evidence** is that which has the highest relevance and value, representing the competencies acquired and developed and the degree to which the person is aware of them

Recommended readings

- **CEDEFOP** (2014), *Terminology of European education and training policy*, Luxembourg: Publication Office.
- **CEDEFOP** (2015), *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*, Luxembourg: Publication Office.

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METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS FOR THE VALIDATION OF LEARNING

Lecture 5 Technical Glossary

After the mobility, what we have to do, as «Method experts for the transparency and validation of learning deriving from mobility in WBL», is to accompany and support people in the process of validation of competences gained through WBL mobility experiences.

But what is the most appropriate vocabulary for the learning validation process?

What follows is a **basic technical vocabulary** - ordered according to logical and propaedeutic criteria - to navigate through the concepts that populate the world of learning validation

«Learning»

Process by which an individual assimilates information, ideas and values and thus acquires knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences



Learning occurs through personal reflection, reconstruction and social interaction



It may take place in **formal, non-formal** or **informal settings**

«Formal learning»

Learning that occurs **in an organised and structured environment** (such as in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources).

Formal learning is **intentional** from the learner's point of view.

It **typically leads to certification**.

«Non-formal learning»

Learning embedded in **planned activities not explicitly designated as learning** (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support).

Non-formal learning is **intentional** from the learner's point of view

Non-formal learning outcomes may be validated and may lead to certification

«Informal learning»

Learning **resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure**. It is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is **in most cases unintentional** from the learner's perspective.

Informal learning outcomes may be validated and certified

«WBL»

Work-based Learning



acquisition of knowledge and skills through carrying out – and reflecting on – tasks in a vocational context, either at the workplace (such as alternance training) or in a VeT institution.

«Learning outcomes»

Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has
learning attainments acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal



Statements regarding what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy

«Recognition of learning outcomes»

formal recognition: process of granting official status to learning outcomes knowledge, skills and competences either through:

- validation of non-formal and informal learning;
- grant of equivalence, credit units or waivers;
- award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles).

and/or

social recognition: acknowledgement of value of knowledge, skills and/or competences by economic and social stakeholders

«Competence»

ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development)

or

ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development

«Validation of learning outcomes»

Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes
learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences)
acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal
or informal setting
assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with
the requirements of a validation standard.
Validation **typically leads to certification.**

«Validation phases»

1. **Identification** through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual
2. **Documentation** to make visible and evaluable the individual's experiences
3. **Formal assessment** of individual learning
4. **Certification** of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification

«Value of evidence»

distinction between first, second and third party attestations

«Relevance of evidence»

consistency of the evidence of the individual's learning experiences with respect to the content (knowledge, skills) of the standardised profiles

Recommended readings

- **CEDEFOP** (2014), *Terminology of European education and training policy*, Luxembourg: Publications Office.
- **CEDEFOP** (2015), *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*, Luxembourg: Publications Office.
- **COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION** (2017), *Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* (2017/C 189/03).