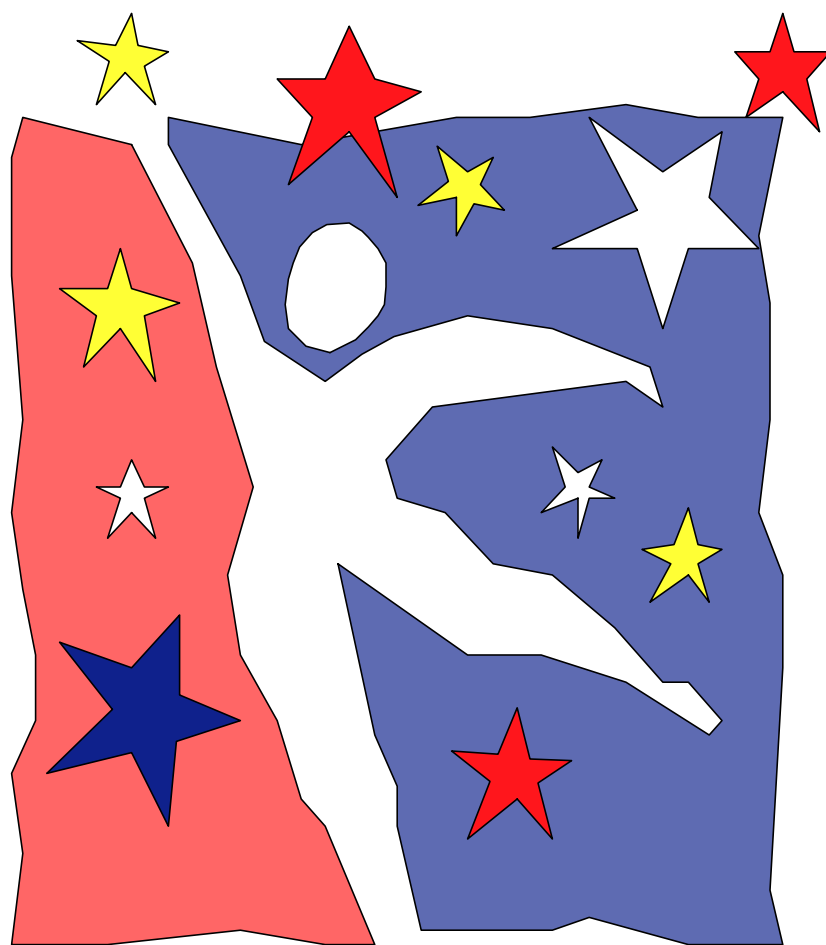


Development of a common model for accreditation and certification of prior learning

Leonardo da Vinci Project



Transnational Report



European Vocational Training Association

January 2001

Summary

	Page
I. Background and objectives of pilot project	2
II. Project Organization	6
1) Countries and Organizations involved	
2) Project Co-ordination	
III. The national “certification” background (present legal and legislative context)	8
IV. Joint model and methods	10
1) Working out of joint model	
2) Implementation of model	
V. On the experimentation	16
1) The public	
2) The partners	
3) The staff involved	
4) The Action Plan	
5) The experimentation	
VI. The experimentation results	26
1) Implementation of joint model	
2) Candidates – results	
3) The experimentation’s strong points	
4) The points to be improved upon	
VII. Conclusions	31
1) Problems and solutions contemplated	
2) Suggestions and prospects	
3) Future developments	

Development of a joint model for the accreditation and/or certification of prior skills

I. **Background and objectives of the pilot project**

« The accreditation of prior skills is a procedure which allows people of any age, background and position to obtain formal accreditation of their skills, learning and experience. The accreditation of prior skills aims at assessing any type of learning, whatever the way it was acquired through an open and transparent evaluation approach ». (SIMOSKO)

The evolution resulting from **the society of knowledge**, characterized by the massive introduction of new technologies has been reflected in labour organizations, and more particularly at the level of « **emerging skills** ». Skills are all the more important since they mainly involve the upkeep or the upgrading of all individual and collective skills.

Alongside this, **economic globalization** has led countries into dynamics of change for a better adjustment to the new operation of markets in the field of competition and of the way they are rooted in economics.

The very **building of Europe** has unveiled the weak and strong points of the Member States as it has compelled them to follow different paces and pathways to end up in highly converging areas and to limit the impact of economic difficulties in terms of unemployment, the lack of job security and social and professional exclusion.

Within such a context, an employment strategy taking competitiveness, development and social cohesion into account has been implemented. It is structured around a set of measures stressing the importance of human resources and the priority of investment so that conditions of access to such skills are available to them both in the field of **digital literacy** and in other fields .

Lifelong learning is no longer only a component part of education and vocational training. It has become a guiding principle of the supply and of participation, of **lifewide** learning, in a continuous way.

Equal opportunities, whilst aiming at adjustment to social and economic changes and active participation, represent a right to which everyone is entitled, and, at the same time, increased responsibility.

However, permanent access to learning must be guaranteed on a vast scale in order to acquire and/or update skills which are necessary in the **society of knowledge**.

In this context, **the systems of accreditation, validation and certification of prior skills - AVS** - gain ground and rank first in the development of all types of learning and , hence, in the development of people. Indeed, AVS devices are a privileged way to an **integration society** which keeps into account the value and the needs of individuals.

From the viewpoint of the self-regulation of the skills required to keep a job, each individual is asked to have all the skills for his/her personal professional project accredited and validated, whether they were acquired within a system of training, working, through education or in situations pertaining to their own social context.

For higher levels to be reached, individual knowledge and skills should match the **changeable requirements** of professional life as far as technologies, organizational models and working conditions are concerned

The formal systems of education, training and professional certification which are developing in terms of **modernity** and of **flexibility** generate adequate, reliable and transferable responses. Such responses should vouch for the validation of prior skills of all and for the taking into account of their **individual needs** to keep their jobs within the labour system.

One of the objectives of AVS is precisely to strengthen the **employability**, the **clarity** of individual qualification and of the **individual management of skills** with a view to optimizing the (re-)integration, advancement and management of professional pathways in the field of interaction between the labour markets and employees at work, with particular respect for people with a low level of education or training, whatever their working situation. The capacity to have or to keep a job is only one aspect of **active citizenship**; besides, it is the only way to improve both competitiveness and individual, national and European prosperity in the “new economy”.

Employability and active citizenship are closely linked with updated skills and knowledge in a continuous cycle which is essential to participation in the economic and social life.

Within the context of a changing labour market, responses to individual needs are met in terms of checking and accrediting skills , **in a continuous process**, both by linking up the various stages and by meeting the companies' specific expectations as far as costs and the adjustment to their organizational and technological reality are concerned.

Another factor gains strategic importance in adopting AVS models within the context of an ageing European population. The replacement system through the integration of young people is not satisfactory in terms of numbers and of experience as it obliges the older workers who often have less qualifications and education to make additional efforts to continuously upgrade their skills.

Through the work carried out in partnership with its members in various fields, the European Association for Vocational Training (EVTA) has noted that existing practices in the sphere of AVS within Member States vary, in spite of joint objectives and thus hinder **transferability and professional and geographical mobility**.

As it is responsible for the interface between various partners and organizations aiming at enhancing the individual, social and professional development of people, EVTA has embarked on the pilot project for the « Development of a joint model for the accreditation and/or certification of prior skills » within the LEONARDO programme for two years .

II. Project organization

1) Countries and organizations involved

The EVTA members who felt the need for **creating** and **developing** an AVS system or **strengthening the existing devices** within the present social and economic context are responsible for implementing this project at the level of partners.

These organizations, acting in the field of employment and training, are fully committed to this approach and want their intervention to take into account the specific assignments they are tasked with nationally, their tools and their references and to rest on the support of the effective skills of their staff.

At a transnational level, the acting partners in this project are as follows :

- FINLAND– *Adulta* (**AIKE**)
- FRANCE – *Association Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes* (**AFPA**);
- GERMANY – *Internationaler Bund* (**IB**);
- IRELAND – *Fóras Aiseanna Saothair* (**FAS**);
- LUXEMBOURG – *Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle et des Sports* (**MENFPS**)
- PORTUGAL – *Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional* (**IEFP**);
- SPAIN–*Instituto Nacional de Empleo* (**INEM**);
- SWEDEN – (**LERNIA**)

Luxembourg is a partner whose implementation of the model was conditioned by a change at a legislative level. If, when the project was started, no legislation contemplated an AVS procedure, the rules on adult learning introduced that eventuality. Hence, the experimentation had to be put off by one year as the rules imply the participation of a vast number of partners, as well as a larger scale experimentation. However, the methods developed within the present project will make up the foundation of the experimentation to come.

Representative national partners in each Member State have also been called on to develop and steer experiments on the field.

2) Project Co-ordination

Within EVTA, various working groups are operating with a view to enhancing specific projects and surveys to reach the Association's objectives. The **Certification Committee** is representative of the interests of the organizations involved in fields such as qualification, certification, transparency and has been responsible for working out this project which is co-ordinated by the following bodies:

- EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL TRAINING ASSOCIATION – *overall responsibility for the transnational plan;*
- STEERING GROUP (Certification Committee and active partners) – *responsible for the technical and financial sections at the level of Member States;*
- GROUPOF EXPERTS (experts representing active partners) responsible for the design, the implementation and the assessment of joint methods, for steering the experiment and for following up and validating the project in the countries involved).
- IEFP (Department of Vocational Certification) were responsible for transnational steering and hence for the group of experts.

Such a co-ordination team as decided on by the steering group reports on the overall situation of the work being carried out to the various partners and to EVTA's Board of Directors in a continuous way.

III. The national “certification” background (present legal and legislative context);

Even today, certification of skills seems to be closely linked with a training system which renders social accreditation of professional experience difficult. In the same way as skills acquired during training, skills acquired through professional experience ought to be formally accredited. Thus, there should be **other pathways for obtaining a qualification, a diploma or a professional certificate**. This procedure should have an impact on the existing validation devices through the definition of new modes of certification and of obtaining qualifications/diplomas, certificates and through the definition of conditions required to create bridges between different certification systems .

An identical stand in the field of the validation of professional skills by opting for a specific, identifiable and complementary procedure related to the other procedures existing in the Member States participating in this project, has not been taken so far because the existing national legislative structures differ.

This is why some national organizations have failed to take part in this project, for lack of time for getting the preliminary engineering work ready and for lack of political guidelines to adjust and develop their national legal and legislative contexts faced with the creation of new ways of certification.

Other organizations in Germany, Spain, Finland, Ireland and Portugal have been able to develop within a legislative context enhancing the emergence of new bridges and/or modes.

Still other organizations in France and Luxembourg have a legislative framework which is developing so as to be in a position to certify professional experience skills.

Finally, Sweden has no formal structure for certifying skills acquired through professional experience but can create accredited certification devices with both sides of industry according to the evolution of the market.

SITUATION OF LEGAL CONTEXT IN EACH COUNTRY

NATIONAL CONTEXT	Germany	Spain	Finland	France	Ireland	Luxembourg	Portugal	Sweden
Existing Act allowing for AVS	•	•	•		•		•	
Bill being prepared or about to be passed				•		•		
No specific structure but AVS possible								•
Certification Authority existing before the project	YES (Varies according to Land)	YES (foreseen by the Act)	YES	NO (to be created)	YES	NO (to be created)	YES (in part)	YES social partners

The details of each national legal and legislative structure can be found in the appended summaries.

- **Joint model and methods**

In the light of the general objective of the project, the method designed aims at taking into account the demands and constraints of each partner Member State to enhance implementation.

1) Working out of joint model

The principles taken into account for the project are as follows :

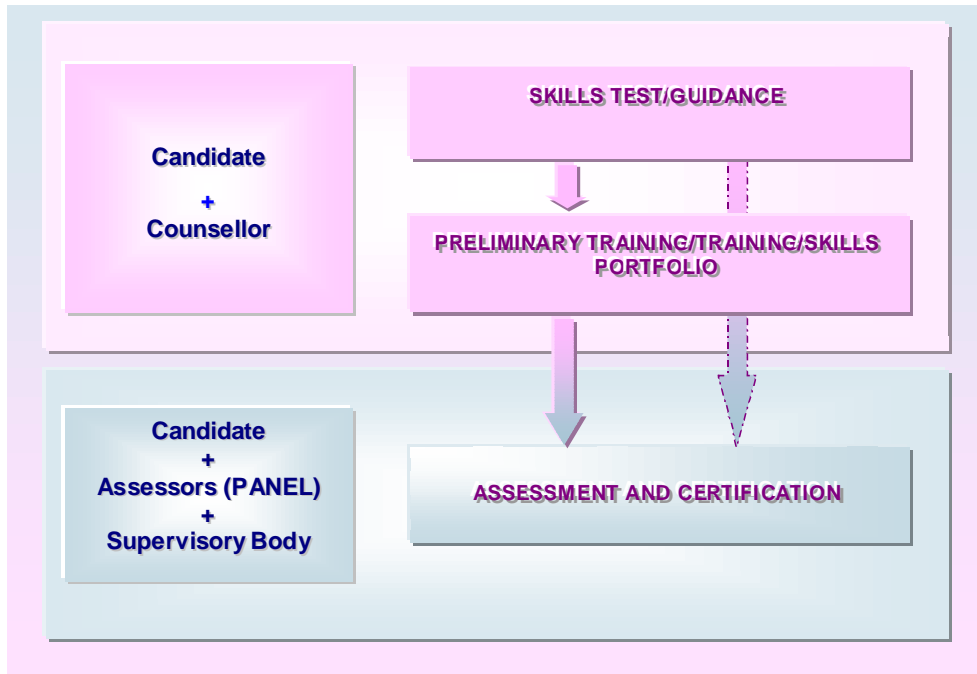
- use of **national employment reference systems** ;
- use of **performance standards** defined for each skill, according to the employment reference system ;
- taking into account of **existing certification devices** at a national level or of a three-party approach to vouch for more relevant information or more consensual legitimacy.

The main political guidelines of the model focus on :

- **individual initiative** based on voluntary participation ;
- procedures resting on **employment reference systems** (and not on training reference systems) ;
- the compliance with **national standards and regulations** structured around procedures dealing with accreditation and certification systems ;
- a sufficiently wide approach integrating **different typical sectors and jobs**;
- the compliance with nationally validated **counsellors' and assessors' profiles**.

Starting from these principles, the model developed is structured around the following stages :

Stages and actors



The **skills test** allows for self-positioning and enhancing of skills in relation to a professional project.

Guidance allows for a comparative analysis of the candidate's profile with one or more typical jobs. At this point, shortcomings in skills in the option decided on can be identified and will eventually lead to the definition of an individual training pathway.

The information garnered during the test and guidance stages will make it possible to work out a **skills portfolio** which will be complemented by a body of evidence on the significant professional experience and the command of the corresponding skills

When drawing up the body of evidence, new needs can be detected which can be met by **continuous training** in order to increase the conditions for passing assessments (pedagogy of success).

The counsellor is responsible, on a permanent basis, for the **process management** up to the assessment stage. This kind of follow-up facilitates the **feedback** both for the candidate who is informed of his progress and his stand in the assessment and for the counsellor who gets the elements he needs for deciding when the candidate should be assessed.

Skills are assessed on the basis of the analysis of the evidence in the portfolio likely to vouch that the degree of command of the skills matches that which is required by the performance standards of the employment reference system concerned. **Additional evidence** can be supplied whenever the portfolio does not provide enough information on the job requirements.

The result of this assessment can lead to the **release of the certificate** in conformity with the procedures implemented by the certification authorities.

2) Implementation of model

- **Choosing trades :**

Without casting any doubt on each country's capacity to conduct various pilot experiments, the steering group have decided to set a limit to the number of professional fields and typical jobs within the project and within each participating organization. Moreover, it has been noted that the number of fields dealt with was not very significant in reaching

the objective aimed at, which remains the design and the use of a joint AVS system.

The **standards for choosing** trades vary according to partners. Hence, they vary considerably and rest on:

- The number of job-seekers identified in that sector of industry ;
- The trades which are traditionally learned “on the job” ;
- The social demand from employers and/or job-seekers and wage-earners ;
- The emerging trades and/or those in technical or technological evolution;
- The typical jobs prevailing in a sector of industry;
- The typical jobs where assessment is the easiest within the experimentation ;
- The field of activity most sought for;

Within this context, the **typical jobs agreed on** are as follows :

- cook
- car mechanic
- head waiter/barman
- electrician
- industrial maintenance technician
- supermarket salesman
- CNC operator
- Other trades in the hotel and catering industries

Distribution of jobs by partner

PARTICIPANTS	COUNTRY	SECTOR	TRADE
ADULTA	Finland	Maintenance	Ind.Maintenance technician.
AFPA	France	Car Catering	Mechanic Cook
LERNIA	Sweden	Industry	Progr/Oper.CNC
CEPRA	Portugal	Car	Mechanic
CEFPSA	Portugal	Catering	Cook
CENTRE DE COIMBRA	Portugal	Electricity	Electrician Installation engineer
FAS	Ireland	Electricity Maintenance	Electrician Ind.Maintenance technician.
IB	Germany	Hotels and catering	6 trades
INEM	Spain	Car Catering	Mechanic Head waiter (Barman)
MENFPS	Luxembourg	Business	Supermarket salesman

As far as implementing pilot experiments is concerned, the partner changed options for operational reasons. Such changes do not affect the subject of the experimentation much.

The initial table of choices can be found in the appended document on Methods.

▪ Training the actors

Special attention has been paid to training the various actors tasked with interventions all along the process. Counsellors and assessors, in conformity with national facts, have a specific profile for they have acquired, through actions aimed at improvement, new skills related to methods with a view to better implementing these new approaches.

(The detailed objectives of the training of counsellors and assessors can be found in the appended document on Methods).

Each partner organization was responsible for these training actions **at a national level** and the group of experts **co-ordinated them at a transnational level**. These training actions, averaging two days, were carried out with the help of a **pedagogic file** preliminarily designed by each organization.

▪ **Project engineering :**

On this point, pondering prior to action has led to **the pooling of principles and concepts** related to this new approach as it can be distinguished from current validation practices and from practices which can vary from country to country. In this context, it turned out to be essential to first clarify the notion itself of **contents of the joint model** and of the modes of applying it at a national level.

In order to do so, the experts group has worked out a methodological framework taking **specific national characteristics** into account whilst meeting the fundamental principles and guidelines. This way of operating has made it possible to gradually create a set of **tools and materials** necessary for implementing the various stages of the experimentation :

- The glossary of technical terms and their definitions;
- The definition of the nature and size of certifiable units based on employment reference systems;
- The assessment tests;
- The pedagogic file for training actors;
- The procedures for informing candidates;
- The portfolio and follow-up documents of candidates;
- The certificates.

IV. On the experimentation:

1) The public

So far as implementing pilot experiments is concerned, all partners have developed **actions for advertizing** the project through a wide range of means including employers' organizations, unions, companies of the sector concerned, employment agencies and training centres.

Different selection and recruitment standards were used. The approach involved candidates of all ages, whatever their employment situation, with one common factor - **the need for formal certification** .

Indeed, there were cases of people who had no formal or socially validated certification, despite the length and the nature of their experience.

Other people, holders of fundamental qualifications and/or training, were involved in a process of **professional mobility**, notably towards new qualifications or jobs enhancing **career progress**. In learning situations closely linked with jobs, the workers' profiles reflect the skills demanded by technological and organizational solutions that have been adopted by each company, often unveiling **lacks in skills profiles** in relation to employment reference systems.

In terms of their employment situations, the two types of candidates were **wage-earners** (72%) and **job-seekers** (28%). The recruitment conditions varied. The **duration of the experiment**, its relation with the application for certification and the **prerequisites** for the trade were the most recurring standards.

The following synoptic table supplies information on various aspects of the candidates who followed the AVS procedure :

Characterization by candidates

Partners		Number of candidates		Employment situation		Average length of professional experience
		Initial	Final	Wage-earners	Job-seekers	
Germany	– 6 trades in hotel and catering industries	—	16	16	—	9 years
Spain	Mechanic	16	12	10	6	>10 years a-2 year experience (at least) were required
	Head waiter/ /Barman	20	17	10	10	
Finland	Maintenance technician	55	55	55	—	—
France	Mechanic	39	39	—	39	—
	Cook	49	49	20	29	
Ireland	Electrician	80 (since 1997)	60	80	—	—
	Maintenance technician	30	30	30	—	
Portugal	Mechanic	12	11	12	—	A 3 to 5-year professional experience (at least) was required
	Cook	37	8	37	—	
	Electrician	23	9	23	—	
Sweden	CNC Operator	30	18	—	30	—

1) The partners

After deciding on trades, each partner set up the **conditions for implementing the model**, taking into account the specific features, in particular, the nature, vocation, sharing and co-operation culture and the existing knowledge of AVS devices of the country.

The organizations involved in each country reflect the trends to concentration of responsibilities with the public bodies, or, the opposite, market-linked liberalization, in both cases vouching for **legitimacy** required for this type of procedure.

The national networks were as follows :

- **Germany** - Internationaler Bund

Industrie und Handelskammer Frankfurt-Main

Hotelfernschule Poppe & Neumann

- **Spain - INEM**

Central Services and National Centres for Occupational
Training in Marbella and Valladolid

Public service for Employment

National and regional Union and Employers
Organizations

Companies in the car industry

- **Finland – Adulta**

Pohto – (Training Institute in Management and
Technology)

Helsinki City Apprenticeship Office

Helsingin Energia, Lda

Fortum Service Oy

- **France – AFPA**

Central Services and training centres in 6 regions

ANPE- National Agency for Employment and ALEs -
local employment agencies

The Army

The Prison Administration

- **Ireland – FAS**

ESB – The Electricity Supply Board of Ireland

The Education Department

6 companies

- **Luxembourg – MENFPS**

Chamber of Commerce

Chamber of the Self-employed

Supermarkets Company

- **Portugal – IEFP**

- National and Regional Services, training and employment centres

- Training Centre in Coimbra

- CEPRA – Training Centre for Car Repair (licensed)

- CEFPSA – Training Centre for Food Sector (licensed)

- Social Partners - Employers' and Unions' Organizations
Companies

- **Sweden – LERNIA**

- Local Employment Services

- Social Partners of the Skövde Region

- Vocational training organizations

- Companies

On the one hand, in terms of the importance of the rôle of some national partners, it should be borne in mind that the supervision of the project was shared between organizations whose services are complementary, thus making it possible to strengthen **institutional networks**.

On the other hand, the commitment of either institutions or companies and their involvement will contribute to future changes in mentality enhancing a **gradual cultural change**, in the light of the results of the new AVS procedure which is really innovative in the field of the management of the professional skills of people, above all, of the less favoured publics.

2) Staff involved

The staff involved all along the process have varied according to the specific features of the systems. The functions of **advice** and **assessment** were carried out in all experiments, and each national system's **demands** were **met**, even though other professionals were tasked with them.

The counsellor can be more or less specialized in the field of **vocational guidance** or, complementarily, be more or less familiar with the structure of companies, the employment reference systems, the systems of validation, "**certification engineering**" and with any response available in the field of validation or vocational training.

The counsellor carried out his assignment within the sphere of the participating organizations and their networks or within participating companies with a view to helping the candidates to prepare the tests, notably, to organize their portfolios. The direct involvement of company counsellors, who had been specifically trained, had a very **positive impact** on the candidates by creating an atmosphere of **trust and tranquillity**, which turned out to be very favourable to assessment.

The assessor's rôle was played by different professionals, according to the demands of each national system. Among the wide range of situations, the task was carried out by :

- Three-party panels ;
- Differently made up panels or committees ;
- Experts from companies or supervision bodies;
- Trainers/teachers ;
- National assessment teams from the professional sector concerned
- Very specific field experts.

Intervention by the **social partners** was tried and carried out in most cases. However, their rôle is not identical as they can intervene at different moments and by giving their advice on normative rather than operational aspects. Thus they can be **representative**:

before, when analysing and validating (employment and validation) reference systems;

- after, when directly participating in assessment actions together with assessment panels or when implementing and monitoring certification or training systems

The importance of the **companies' active participation** turned out to be crucial in the following aspects:

- the recruitment of candidates, of whom 72% are wage-earners;
- the “guidance” function inside companies which contributed to create favourable motivation and success conditions in the AVS procedure, as it allowed for the advertisement of the procedure at the same time ;
- the “assessment” function which involved company experts either individually or as a team (panel...);
- the availability which made real work assessment in a working situation possible;
- making vocational training teams and services available.

Indeed, the companies accepted the AVS procedure as a starting point for internal **professional mobility and career enhancement** , based on the accreditation of any type of learning inside or outside the company.

In a nutshell, the commitment and the involvement of the environment, either institutional (public services) or private (companies) turned out to be essential to the development and success of the project.

3) Action Plan

In the main, the action plan and operational schedule drawn at the beginning of this project were met. The partners carried out the expected actions, in spite of **a few delays** which did not affect the project. The difficulties encountered were of a different nature, but were, above all, related to **the lack of experience** of some partners in such devices and to the technical solutions necessary, whilst taking into account some **cultural obstacles**, or even some opposition in the changing environments.

Owing to the adoption of a model allowing for a different approach to professional certification within its national context, Luxembourg did not succeed in developing all the actions expected from it in the schedule within the time-limit set. Its experimentation will be carried on after the project has ended.

ACTION PLAN

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	1999						2000						2001									
		J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	
Design of a Joint Model	Methods Group	—	—																				
Definition of methods	Methods Group	—	—																				
Approval of Model	Steering Group			—	—																		
National Plan	National Reps.			—	—	—																	
Selection of Counsellor & Assessors	National Reps.					—	—																
Preparation of programmes	National Reps.						—	—															
Training of Counsellors and Assessors	National Reps.								—	—													
Selection of candidates	National Reps.									—	—												
Experimentation	National Reps.										—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(final) National Assessment	National Reps.															—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Transnational Assessment	Steering Group																				—	—	—
Release of Certificates	National Reps.															—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Review of Model	National Reps.															—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Final Report	EVTA + SG																				—	—	—
Further Developments	EVTA																					—	—

4) Experimentation

The experimentation, conducted as it was in specific conditions, was felt in different ways according to the partners involved in this new AVS approach, whose **intrinsic quality of results** does not reflect the more or less conditioned contexts in which it was developed. The restrictions noted are related to a set of reasons affecting the following aspects:

- The adjustments either of the model adopted or of the device (if any) that had to be implemented when facing specific situations ;
- The more or less favourable position of partners to develop a type of **“pedagogy of influence”**, aimed at introducing innovative aspects and have them validated ;
- The different starting points in the field of accreditation and validation of experience skills and the different degrees of acceptance of such procedures in relation to the **“culture of qualifications”** and to **“traditional assessment”** in each country.

The structure and the trimming of the employment and validation reference systems that were prepared to meet different types of **logic of certification** of larger-sized units based on typical jobs were submitted to some engineering work in order to grasp the **certifiable, hard cores**, without affecting the whole set.

Such work resulted in the production of different **validation certification & modes**, related to full professional qualifications or units that can be certified or integrated into accreditation systems in a more participating logic in terms of social dialogue .

The swaying capacity of most partners which had no legal structure or procedures favourable to the experiment resulted in **changes** or in **compromises** creating the conditions for implementing the model and legitimizing the results.

The fact that the evolution of the project towards certification has prevented some Member States from participating in it owing to the short time available for the experiment, thus limiting their rôle to that of observers should not be ignored.

The questions on any innovative action depend on the partner organizations' capacity to introduce new certification prospects into environments whose usual approach is based on **vocational training qualifications**. This the case of some partners who found it difficult to introduce new assessment & certification tools and types of logic, notably **based on skills** related to the **contents of the job**, starting from the analysis of the proof in the **portfolio** or experienced on the actual job.

Despite the more or less relevant restrictions of each partner, the results achieved show **the application of the model has worked**.

V. The experimentation results

1) Implementation of joint model

First, it should be stressed that the **principles** and **general guidelines** of the proposed model **have been met** and that the organizations involved in this new approach have tried to use new types of logic in skills certification.

However, it can be noted that the **modes** of implementing the model were **slightly different** from country to country, without affecting the pertinence of the procedure. Without embarking on too detailed an analysis of the various situations encountered, we can list the various crucial elements shedding particular light on the **reasons for the adjustments** that were observed during national experiments. Overall, such situations focus on the following themes, to various degrees depending on the context of each:

- The capacity to implement local, regional, national partnerships to set up networks and links with the publics and the unions' and employers' organizations.
- The level of the social demand for this type of service which offers new opportunities or emerging jobs, for which sets of just identified skills should be completed, to some types of public.
- The capacity to integrate this new approach into the supervision bodies (or certification authorities) and to validate its legitimacy.
- Getting the publics involved, which differs according to professional sectors, the status of candidates (job-seekers, wage-earners...), information devices, local links and agreement on this type of procedure..
- The innovative capacity of organizations and partners involved in the search for new solutions in a different cultural approach from the certification of skills whatever the way they were acquired..
- The possibility to rapidly organize :

- the certification process starting from the employment reference systems thus vouching for a better operation of certifiable units and adding sense to this employment-related approach
- assessment tests specific to units (or packages of skills), whether dealing with actual or simulated job situations
- the actors' professionalization and mobilization capacity in new assessment and certification logic as well as the level of their involvement.

2) Candidates – Results

Through the structuring of various **variables** related to the public, the typical job and the professional the context-sensitive professional exercise from a technological viewpoint, the results show that the factor of length of professional experience does not apply to AVS procedures, except for operational reasons. On the one hand, **working contexts** rather condition learning from a qualitative and quantitative viewpoint, and, on the other hand, the **person's** motivation, wish to learn and to move ahead also play their part.

Such types of learning based on experience have one more common feature

- more command of **know-hows**, despite more theoretical knowledge.

According to the partners who worked on both types of candidates at the same time, wage-earners, in the main, showed they had more command of their skills than job-seekers. However, it should be stressed that this observation varies and depends on such two-element factors as the degree of versatility & specialization, steady-job & evolving job in more traditional & more technological jobs.

The following table shows a more detailed analysis of the results of the AVS procedure :

Partners		Candidates				
		Number	Certificates released		Initial number	
			Full profile	Units/ /credits	Complements (credits + VT)	Whole course
Germany	6 trades in catering and hotel industries	16	16			
Spain	Mechanic	12		11	11	1
	Head waiter /Barman	17	10	5	5	2
Finland	Maintenance technician	55	Exams June 2001		45	10
France	Mechanic	39		41CPS		
	Cook	49		71 CPS		
Ireland	Electrician	60	60			
	Maintenance technician	30	10			
Portugal	Mechanic	11	2		9	
	Cook	8	7			1
	Electrician	9		72 credits	9	
Sweden	CNC Operator	18	4		5	9

Whenever the candidates did not show they had the whole set of skills of the typical job analysed, one of the following two solutions was resorted to:

- the release of specific national certificate of accreditation (unit certificate or registration credit books) ;
- direct **vocational training** to make up for the lacks identified prior to any certification, in contexts as close as possible to training systems.

Some candidates whose skills were only partly validated were directed to individualized training pathways, either because their employability level was too low or because their professional project required having a qualification, diploma or certificate. In any case, it is important to bear in mind the objective of this experimentation aimed at identifying and validating a joint methodological context enhancing a transparent approach of professional skills acquired through experience (in whatever way), whether or not this procedure leads to partial (units/credits) or full (qualification, diploma, certificate) certification.

3) The experimentation's strong points

The design of a sufficiently open model in which the sponsoring institutions can easily be involved at a national level has made up the viability platform of this experimentation.

At the end of this procedure, the following strong points should be borne in mind :

- The alternative procedure for experience accreditation: enrichment of the existing devices through the implementation of new services for positioning, identification, and skills validation, whilst making capitalization easier ;
- Making social partners responsible and involved
- Getting actors to work and motivating them since they sometimes felt the process was a means of renovation and progress ;
- Working out methods that can be transferred to other sectors ;
- The rapidity of response, mainly in the case of emerging jobs. ;

- The response to social demand still weakly expressed and identified for the time being ;
- The adequacy of the publics' characteristics to the conditions of assessment (realistic aspect), the possibility to obtain qualification by taking experience into consideration ;
- The flexibility and resilience of the system, namely through the combination of various certificates;
- The rooting of certificates to the working system and their restructuring resilience in relation to professional developments, which contribute to better accreditation on the employment market;
- The working situation as a assessing tool ;
- Financial efficiency in terms of qualification and life-long learning costs.

4) Points to be improved on

A design-action approach is based on a principle of perfectibility, hence the importance to point out to the less performing points that should be improved on. These are:

- The capacity to sway the existing systems to lead them to contemplate new certification & assessment practices that are better adjusted to an adult public, with skills acquired in an informal context (real value to be given to portfolios);
- Possibility of using the model according to the publics and their level of autonomy when materializing certain stages ;
- The time required to carry out all actions in the best conditions, namely allowing for training during the experimentation ;
- A more representative sample, above all when starting AVS procedures;
- The size of groups making an approach to small groups or individuals possible ;

- The professional character of actors, in particular, of panels and assessors for a more adequate intervention;
- The creation of models of proof for professional experience to facilitate statements from companies and make them more reliable.

VI. Conclusions:

In relation to the initial objectives of this project, **the AVS model has adjusted to the realities of partner organizations**, as it rests on a set of principles and guidelines which are sufficiently broad to allow for **specific situations to be complied with**.

Despite the various certification contexts, the **success** of this new approach to accreditation, validation and certification of skills rests on **results** whose quality does reflect the **intrinsic value of methods**. The experimentation of the model has really led to the **release of certificates** or to **the accreditation of skills** acquired by the candidates.

At the end of this project, it is interesting to observe that:

- This procedure appears to be an **AVS alternative**, as it enhances the enrichment of already existing devices and the creation of new devices where they were not to be found;
- Thanks to the implementation of new services of **positioning and validation of prior skills**, the certification systems can now certify skills **completely or partially** in relation to an employment reference system whilst meeting national provisions;
- these methods **can be transferred** to other sectors and to other typical jobs and supply a rapid response, namely in the case of **emerging jobs**;
- AVS procedures can bear on **employability** and **active citizenship** thanks to the **clarity** of individual skills, the identification of training needs, including **lifelong and lifewide training**. Indeed, ACV appears to be a privileged way to an **integration society**.

- This AVS approach will eventually lead not only to technical efficiency but to **financial returns** in relation to assessment costs.

Briefly, it should be stressed that the advantages of the implementation of such methods apply within the **context of national certification** (with a view to mobility inside and outside companies) and of **European mobility** (through the transparency of certification) by enhancing, at the same time, the access of people with few qualifications to a job (employability) or to a qualifying training course

1) Problems and solutions contemplated

The problems arising today differ from partner to partner and the type of solutions is to be found at various intervention levels.

In situations where there is no legal foundation to legitimize the certification of prior experience in packages of skills, the work with competent partners in such fields is expected to go on. The guidelines of the work, which have already been identified, will make it possible to contemplate future stages so that certification in this field can be accredited and open access to qualifications.

In cases where basic regulations are insufficient to implement AVS procedures, experimental actions will follow each other in order to better test tools and methods, and, at the same time, to define bridges and interaction with other systems, in particular with training and working systems. Information and consciousness-raising sessions are to be started to stress the need to mobilize the responsible bodies with a view to developing and completing the legislative framework.

Carrying on with the experimentation is also aimed at honing and stabilizing the model, the tools and the expected products by partners involved in AVS for the first time.

2) Suggestions and prospects

The partners' suggestions mainly lie in the specific operational aspects of the experimentation, which raise most issues. They are as follows :

- The procedure will have to rest on team work and to involve technical experts from the testing stage:
- The enhancement of information and professionalization actions for those intervening into the procedure , in particular, assessors, panels and counsellors ;
- In-depth analysis of the device engineering, notably the continuous improvement and adjustment of the tools used all along the various stages ;
- The development of a permanent system of assessment involving any type of proof that professionals would be responsible for ;
- Individualized handling should be vouched for as specific support for the less favoured publics ;
- Carrying on with the work in the sectors and trades which have priority in national plans ;
- Enhancing a training offer which is flexible enough to meet individual needs and is complementary to AVS systems.

The **development prospects** of this model are very **positive** in most experimenting countries and organizations as long as they remain resilient, open, available, easily available whilst vouching for individual responses and, above all, **legitimate**. For the moment, there is a number of cultural, legislative or operational constraints of various size and nature in national contexts. The organizations involved, mainly in a good position at the level of each country, will have to excel themselves to set up all the **conditions for implementing** the new devices or for improving the existing ones.

3) Future developments .

Situations showing various degrees of familiarity with these alternative accreditation procedures can be found among the partners.

However, the **development** and the **strengthening** of procedures and tools turn out to be necessary at a national level, especially in countries dealing with such problems for the first time.

In national plans, specific measures related to the needs felt, notably the setting up of **infrastructures** to store **information** and **resources** facilitating the implementation of the model, in other sectors and trades, as well as the **diffusion** of **best practices** and the results reached, have to be taken.

In order to vouch for the quality of devices, it is also necessary to enhance the **professionalization of interveners**, particularly of assessors and panels.

At a transnational level, it would also be interesting to create a **databank**, making the model, the tools, the products & results, in a word, all the device engineering available to the EVTA network (countries & organizations) for access by any person concerned.

Briefly, EVTA could contemplate carrying on with the **in-depth analysis** and **dissemination** work first within the Association and, possibly, aimed at **bilateral or multilateral agreements**.

The analysis of the results of this project by the **Commission** could lead to the development of such procedures, which is wished for, within the **broader context of the Member States**, so as to create **an AVS model for Europe**, in the near future.

4) Dissemination

When taking into account the positive results of the application of the model, one of the concerns is to **keep the added value of this project or to make it develop**, whilst maintaining contacts for discussing or improving the type of engineering adopted.

Thus, besides conveying this model to those who do not know it, contact and thinking with those who are already working on it should be strengthened.

As far as the former are concerned, diffusion will first take place by issuing a CD-ROM with the model and the results of the experimentation and by making such data available on EVTA's web site -**<http://www.evta.net>** -.

Later on, a **transnational seminar** is expected to be held in Lisbon in September or October in which the Commission, Cedefop, EVTA's members, the Certification Authorities and, above all, the heads of AVS devices and of the countries applying for Membership to the Union will take part.

For the experts to keep up with the developments at the level of their country, EVTA has set a **platform** of access which integrates the participants and the thematic groups. This platform will be equipped with a file with the names of the experts who specialized in the fields of AVS and certification and who are available to help any country interested with **the engineering of AVS devices**, through actions such as **information** on the model, **training** to implement the model and **coaching** while implementing it.