



# Recommendations for validating non-formal and informal learning for people with intellectual disabilities

EQUALvet Development of a vocational training program for people  
with intellectual disabilities in three professions:  
cook assistant, gardener assistant and cleaner

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KA3 – Support for Policy Reform – Social inclusion and common values:  
The contribution in the field of Education, Training and Youth

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EQUALvet



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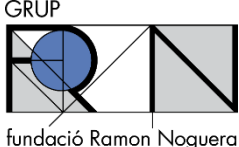




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## Contents

1. CONSORTIUM.....	4
2. INTRODUCTION .....	5
3. KEY CHALLENGES AND MAIN AXES OF INTERVENTION .....	7
4. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	9

# 1. CONSORTIUM

The consortium consists of the following partners:

Organization		Website / Email
	<b>Margarita VTC (Greece)</b>	<a href="http://www.eeamargarita.gr">www.eeamargarita.gr</a> <a href="mailto:research.development@eamargarita.gr">research.development@eamargarita.gr</a>
	<b>Ramon Noguera Foundation</b>	<a href="https://grupfrn.cat/en">https://grupfrn.cat/en</a> <a href="mailto:comunicacio@grupfrn.cat">comunicacio@grupfrn.cat</a>
	<b>Arcil</b>	<a href="http://arcil.org.pt/">arcil.org.pt/</a> <a href="mailto:arcil@arcil.org">arcil@arcil.org</a>
	<b>University of Girona</b>	<a href="http://www.udg.edu/en/">www.udg.edu/en/</a> <a href="mailto:judit.fullana@udg.edu">judit.fullana@udg.edu</a>
	<b>Tüv Hellas (Tüv Nord)</b>	<a href="http://www.tuv-nord.com/gr/el/home/">www.tuv-nord.com/gr/el/home/</a> <a href="mailto:vvoudouris@tuv-nord.com">vvoudouris@tuv-nord.com</a>
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## 2. INTRODUCTION

Non-formal and informal learning enable individuals to acquire skills, competences, and knowledge in a context outside school. These types of learning should be **aimed at every individual since it can improve their access to employment or to educational programmes**. Employment and training are, for instance, **privileged ways for people with disabilities to achieve economic and social independence**. Acquiring relevant skills through education and training will enable them to compete for jobs.

Having one's non-formal or informal **learning outcomes validated** gives an individual legitimacy as regards their acquired knowledge. As a result, the validation of these types of learning represents a major goal for the European Union. To this end, the **Council of the EU** published, on 20 December 2012, a [Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). **Validation does not just play a role in enhancing employability and mobility but also in increasing motivation for lifelong learning.**<sup>[OBJ]<sup>1</sup></sup> that Member States put in place national arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning. In 2020, the [evaluation of this recommendation](#) showed that progress has been made in providing more opportunities for validation, but **access remains limited, and coordination and information are lacking.**<sup>[OBJ]<sup>2</sup></sup> In addition, the evaluation also revealed **barriers for disadvantaged groups**.

The [CEDEFOP European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning](#) were published in 2015, closely following the recommendations of the Council. They emphasised the fact that validation arrangements should benefit all citizens, not only by **helping fight unemployment but also by improving social cohesion**: indeed, the citizens would thus be able to communicate the value of their skills and competences, to potential employers for instance.

**Validation** is presented as having two purposes: to make people's learning visible and to attribute value to their learning. **The main purpose of the validation process is to provide evidence of learning.**

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<sup>1</sup> Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. (2012). *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 398/1. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF> (Accessed: 10/04/2019).

<sup>2</sup> Evaluation of the Council Recommendation of 20 December 12 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. (2020). Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0121&from=LT> (Accessed: 14/09/2022).

Also, when based on non-formal and informal learning, awarding a certificate **requires a set of standards commonly accepted and used across organisations and regions**. Assessment and certification indeed need to be conducted following an agreed and approved standard.

As regards to persons with disabilities, and more specifically **persons with intellectual disabilities**, the Vocational Educational Centres represent a main actor for this target group especially those not provided with any official post-school education, nor training, specifically designed for them: **it is not recognised nor certified**. In that sense, it seems a priority to validate the non-formal and informal learning outcomes they can acquire in different contexts

Tackling these challenges has been a key objective of the EQUALvet project funded by the Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance (KA3) programme (Grant Agreement number; 2018 - 3020 / 001 – 001) and running from February 2019 to January 2023. The project included partners from Greece- Margarita and Tüv Hellas, Spain – Fundació Ramon Noguera and University of Girona, Portugal- ARCIL, and Belgium – EASPD.

The sections below will present findings and analysis from this project on the first key challenges to address and the existing avenues for intervention, and second the policy recommendations the partners wish to address to public authorities with the view of improving the certification of non-formal and informal learning.

### 3. KEY CHALLENGES AND MAIN AXES OF INTERVENTION

Through interviewing service providers and testing the training materials with persons with intellectual disabilities, partners have identified key challenges they face when it comes to Vocational Education and Training for persons with intellectual disabilities.

- One of the main challenges identified is the **lack of accessibility** with regards to all matters related to Vocational Education and Training:
  - The procedure and training materials are **not adapted to the needs of persons with intellectual disabilities**
  - There are few specialised Vocational Education and Training centres which creates an **isolation for persons living in rural areas** as they cannot access these centres
  - The **selection criteria** to benefit from the procedure are strict: has the person received a previous experience or vocational training? What is their educational status? What is their financial capacity?
  - The social sector, and especially the disability sector, lack **knowledge** with regards to vocational education and training: there is little information disseminated and staff members are sometimes not updated
- The project partners have also identified a **lack of recognition, funding, and coordination** when it comes to Vocational Education and Training
  - Service providers for persons with intellectual disabilities providing training **do not receive funding nor recognition** for these trainings, thus making it harder to implement such trainings and make them accessible
  - Certifications are **not recognised from one employer to another**, nor from one country to another, thus limiting the mobility of persons with intellectual disabilities within the open labour market

These challenges thus shine a light on the topics one should intervene on to further develop and improve the Vocational Education and Training for persons with intellectual disabilities.

- Intervention should be focused, first, on **staff training and upskilling:**

- **Training staff on Universal Design for Learning and accessibility** will enable to develop and implement accessible training materials and pedagogical approaches, thus ensuring that persons with intellectual disabilities have an equal access to accessible training, regardless of their different support needs
- Second, the **promotion and communication of Vocational Education and Training for persons with intellectual disabilities** should also be regarded as an important matter to emphasise. This communication should take place:
  - Among the business sector and in the open-labour market
  - Among schools and students
  - Among the community

Such promotion efforts will raise the knowledge about Vocational Education and Training for persons with intellectual disabilities and will trigger education and employment opportunities for them.

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- Finally, setting up a **social dialogue and a cooperation** between the different stakeholders will facilitate the certification:
  - Including the **open labour market actors** in the social dialogue, together with service users and providers, public authorities, accreditation agencies, and training centres so there is a common social dialogue.
  - Triggering **cooperation between these stakeholders** will improve the accreditation of skills of persons with intellectual disabilities as all matters with regards to Vocational Education and Training and certification would be covered and addressed.



## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the findings of EQUALvet over the project lifetime, the partners proposed the following recommendations to public authorities at European, national, and local levels:

- **Reaching specific disadvantaged groups and providing support to individuals:**
  - Improve the **accessibility** of the procedure and the training
  - **Train the staff** on accessibility features and methods
- **Strengthening the cooperation between key stakeholders:**
  - Closer cooperation with all stakeholders to improve **effectiveness** and efficiency
  - Make vocational education and training more **visible**
- **Building a strategic coordination:**
  - Use knowledge sharing and **peer learning** activities at national and European levels to share and scale up promising practices
  - Provide service providers for persons with intellectual disabilities with information on how to be officially **recognised** as training providers
  - **Coordination** is a concept that must prevail during the process: relevant information and advice have to be given. Also, individuals must be informed of both the costs and the benefits of validation. **Stakeholders thus have a role to play in advising, guiding, and providing comprehensive information during the process.**
- **Improving the sustainability and financing of vocational education and training for persons with intellectual disabilities:**
  - To support the objectives and activities listed above, stable and continuous funding will ensure continuous support of persons with intellectual disabilities throughout the vocational education and training process
  - Following the recommendations of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) (EPSR) in terms of equal opportunities and access to the labour market. Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and

lifelong learning in order to maintain and develop skills that enable them to fully participate in society and transition in the labour market.<sup>3</sup> Equal opportunities of under-represented groups such as persons with disabilities, should be encouraged. This is also reinforced by the [European Skills Agenda](#) that emphasises the need to develop national skills strategies covering the specific needs of persons with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

- Being in line with the Union of Equality [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(2021-2030\)](#) that emphasises the need to develop new skills for new jobs.<sup>5</sup> Having the right skills and qualifications is a requirement for accessing and succeeding in the labour market. The strategy affirms that Member States are responsible to adapt education and training policies to the support needs of persons with disabilities in a way that is consistent with the UNCRPD.
- Following the [Council Recommendation](#) on Vocational Education and Training that encourages Member States to design vocational programmes so they are inclusive and accessible for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) in 20 principles.

<sup>4</sup> Commission Communication (COM(2020)274 fin): [European Skills Agenda](#) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *Union of equality : strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030*, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/31633>

<sup>6</sup> Council Recommendation ([2020/C 417/01](#))