



European
Commission

European Validation Festival

14-15 June 2018, Brussels

Festival Flash report



Quick Festival facts:

- ✓ More than 300 participants from all over Europe
- ✓ More than 40 exhibitors
- ✓ Opening speech by Commissioner Thyssen
- ✓ 12 interactive workshops
- ✓ 47 speakers



The 1st European Validation Festival was held in Brussels from 14-15 June 2018 and brought together over 300 stakeholders from employment, education and training, civil society organisations, and social partners. The Festival explored policies and practices on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe and looked towards the future. To see the Festival opening video click [here](#) and for highlights click [here](#).

The first day supported mutual learning from the wealth of innovative and inspiring initiatives and projects on validation in a marketplace setting and in interactive workshops. Over 40 regional, national, sectoral and European practices were presented and provided an informal framework for participants to meet, discuss, exchange and learn with and from each other. Participants also posted questions and comments on the Wall of Questions, providing input to the panel discussions of Day 2.

12 interactive workshops covered a very wide range of topics, including validation of learning for vulnerable groups such as low-skilled adults, migrants and refugees; youth and volunteering experiences; innovative skills assessment approaches; new technologies; involvement of employers; and qualifications frameworks.

The second day provided a forum for a policy debate about the latest developments in validation with various stakeholders. The forum was opened by Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, and followed by 2 spotlight speakers: David Rivoire, President of VAE Les 2 Rives, and Laure Joachim, Head of Group's 'Associate Employability' Unit at Adecco. They highlighted the need for much closer cooperation between education & training providers and employers and to look for a "common language" on validation.

2 panels added their voices: firstly, learners shared their personal experiences of validation. The learner stories demonstrated both the benefits of validation and the challenges encountered, including in recognising prior formal learning (abroad), and the need for support in finding out about and following up validation opportunities. While identification and documentation is more easily available (i.e. through Youthpass), assessment and certification are the more challenging steps in the validation process, as these are often institutionalised and require funding. Experts in the second panel focused on practical ways to achieve a commitment from all stakeholders to deliver on validation. In a diverse learning and working environment, many stakeholders need to bring their expertise to design and deliver validation. Guidance is key in making people aware of validation opportunities, while social partners can bring knowledge as to the skills needs and standards of employers.



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A look to the future: some key messages:

- ✓ **If lifelong and lifewide learning is to become a reality, validation is essential.** Validation must be an integral building block of education and training, employment and social policies. But connecting these diverse worlds is still a challenge. How to design and deliver effective lifelong learning? The following suggestions were discussed: increasing sustainability and scalability of projects; more financial support to move from project level to mainstreamed reality; more integrated projects with multiple stakeholders involved; building a community of practices across Europe; digital technologies complement personal contacts and break down isolation.
- ✓ **A closer involvement of employment** and good bridges between education and work are urgently required. How can this be done? Put the learner's needs and experiences at the centre; facilitate joint work on validation methods and standards; develop professional standards bridging the EQF and validation; commitment of all stakeholders from the beginning of the validation process.
- ✓ **Without guidance no validation:** but how to organise and finance? Validation is linked to individual learning pathways independent of where, when and how learning takes place. Therefore validation should be embedded in the whole learning experience and linked, for example, to assessment and guidance. Guidance professionals should be more familiar with validation, as they are also the first line of support for disadvantaged learners. Support their professional development.
- ✓ **Trust in validation is created through:** commitment and active participation from the start by all stakeholders; integrated systems across countries; networking and cooperation; shared quality assurance; further research on reliability and validity of instruments.
- ✓ Put **validation of transversal skills** on top of the future agenda.
- ✓ Message on the future to policy makers and practitioners: **"Think big, not small"** "

