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Introduction

The 4th key message in the “Memorandum on Lifelong Learning”, the Communication from the “Making European Area Lifelong Learning” a Reality and the Copenhagen Declaration indicate the necessity to improve the understanding and appreciation of participation in and outcomes of learning, particularly those from the non-formal and informal area, and to promote innovative forms of certification of these types of learning.

Furthermore, the Communication “Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn” Commission (2006) issued by the Commission in 2006 foregrounded the importance of recognising and validating learning outcomes –the 3rd key message refers to the validation of non-formal and informal learning as “a cornerstone in the lifelong learning strategy”. In order to implement this key message, the Action Plan on Adult Learning - “It is always a good time to learn” , encourages specific actions in the area of speeding up the process of assessment of skills and social competences and having them validated and recognised in terms of learning outcomes. The second key message in the Commission’s 2006 Communication - “Ensuring the quality of adult learning” also underlines the issue of quality of staff.

As the profession of adult educator is not recognised unless the training is formal and within formally recognised career structures, the involvement of social partners in the recognition of competences of adult learning acquired in an informal, non-formal or formal manner becomes a priority.

The fact that often job relevant competences are not covered by traditional qualification documents is an opinion shared among practitioners, researchers and decision-makers involved in adult education; as these competences have been acquired in less traditional and official learning contexts and through a variety of working experiences, they become difficult to standardised and validated, especially as in different countries there are different contexts. However, the attempt to validate or accreditate prior learning is common: the validation of experiential learning (APEL), the French „Bilan de compétence” – not limited to a specific profession, the Swiss Qualificationsbook „CH-Q”, the German „ProfilPass” or the German „skills analysis”. Generally speaking the validation of competences can be described as a process of competence identification, competence measurement and competence assessment that can be done using different methods and instruments.

A lot of competences that are job relevant have been developed in informal and non-formal learning contexts. This also applies to the competences defining *the adult educator* that frequently go unrecognised. A lot of adult educators interact with adults in a didactical way without an explicit qualification for their activity. Most of them have acquired their specific psycho-pedagogical competencies for dealing with adults on the job, through working experiences, during trainings, voluntary work etc.

According to the above mentioned social and economic new developments and challenges in Europe, „Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Psycho-Pedagogical Competencies of Adult Educators” (VINEPAC) project responds to the European needs by initiating and developing specific measures, instruments, strategies for recognition, validation and certification of the competencies acquired in non-formal and informal settings and contexts – especially for adult educators.

What is Validpack?

The main aim of the VINEPAC project was to create a set of instruments for the validation of real competences of adult educators. Adult educators here are defined as trainers. The VINEPAC project team focused on trainer’s competency profile as this is the main and more frequent role performed by adult educators in general. A trainer is defined as a person designing and running/ performing teaching activities.

The validation of competences of adult educators on European level makes a contribution to professionalisation of adult educators in Europe and to quality management in the field of Adult Education in Europe.

Validpack, a package of validation instruments, creates a framework for the documentation and the evaluation of competences of adult educators, no matter whether they have been acquired in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts.

For this reason Validpack aims to:

- a. assess important adult educators competences
- b. give space for the documentation of experiences
- c. build a base for certification upon the validation results
- d. be wide enough to be used on European level
- e. document a minimum standard of competences of adult educators
- 2 put adult educators in the position to get across the frontier within Europe
- g. be applicable for different contexts.

Validpack consists of the validation instruments designed within the VINEPAC project: mind map, reflection on biography, reflection on competences, “attachment”, observation checklist, interview grid, validation sheet.

In addition to these validation instruments, the present handbook for the use of Validpack contains some useful guidelines and indications for adult educators on how they should approach this validation process. This handbook shows adult educators how to use *Validpack* as a validation instrument to get validated as an adult educator.

Who might use *Validpack*?

Validpack is directed to all educators defined as trainers. That means, if you are an adult educator who has trainer experiences for more than one year / 150 h of working with adults you are entitled to use the *Validpack* and to get your adult educators’ competencies be validated.

How to use *Validpack*?

Validpack is organised around three main validation steps: (i) self evaluation, (ii) external evaluation and (iii) consolidation, which are described more detailed further down. The validation is complete only after all the three steps have been taken. You as an adult educator have to prove the indicated competences that define/are specific for an adult educator. This can either happen through self evaluation or through external evaluation. Some of the most important competences needed in adult education are not directly observable, but can be proved through self evaluation. On the other hand, some competences can not be easily self assessed, but they need to be observed by an external evaluator. Both steps are provided for in the validation handbook with additional consolidation to increase objectiveness. The handbook will guide you through all validation steps.

What is the target audience of this handbook?

If you are an adult educator who wants to validate your competences, this handbook is for you. You will find guidance through all relevant validation steps within *Validpack*. The handbook will lead you through the self evaluation and will explain the external evaluation and the consolidation.

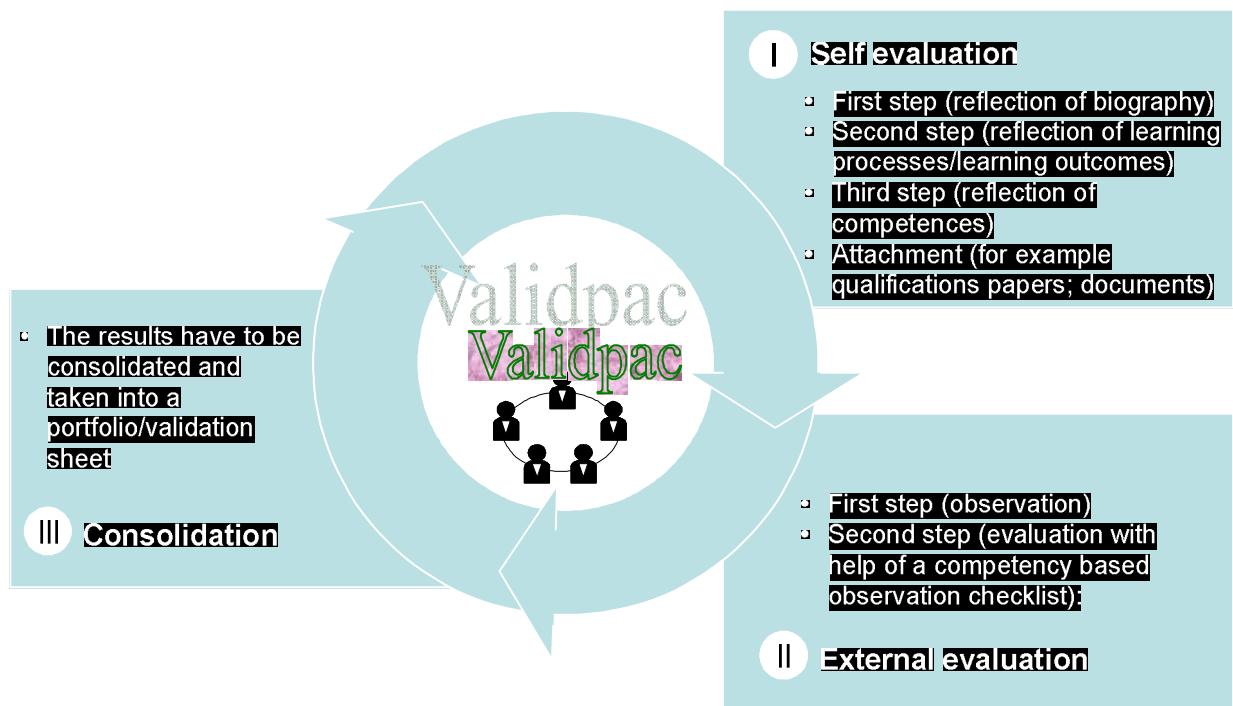
Which validation steps have to be carried out?

Following steps are compulsory within the validation process:

Step I *Self evaluation of competences*

Step II *External evaluation*

Step III *Consolidation of results*



Step I *Self evaluation of competences*

The **self evaluation step (self assessment)** – is a section offering you the opportunity to reflect upon the real competences that you achieved outside the formal learning settings. This reflection is structured as **reflection on learning biography** and **reflection on competences** and it is also constructed to help you attach all the relevant documents that give an indication of the specific competences or qualifications you have. The *Validpack* - handbook contains an extra chapter framing the attachment of relevant documents.

In a context lacking a regulated professional development pathway in the majority of European countries, trainers have to take the responsibility of managing their own professional and personal development which in many cases takes place in non-formal and informal learning settings.

This section encourages you to draw a clear picture of the quality and the range the competences related to your performance as an adult educator. This reflective and evaluative process helps you in your career and development, for example when you enrol in a new study programme or apply for a new job.

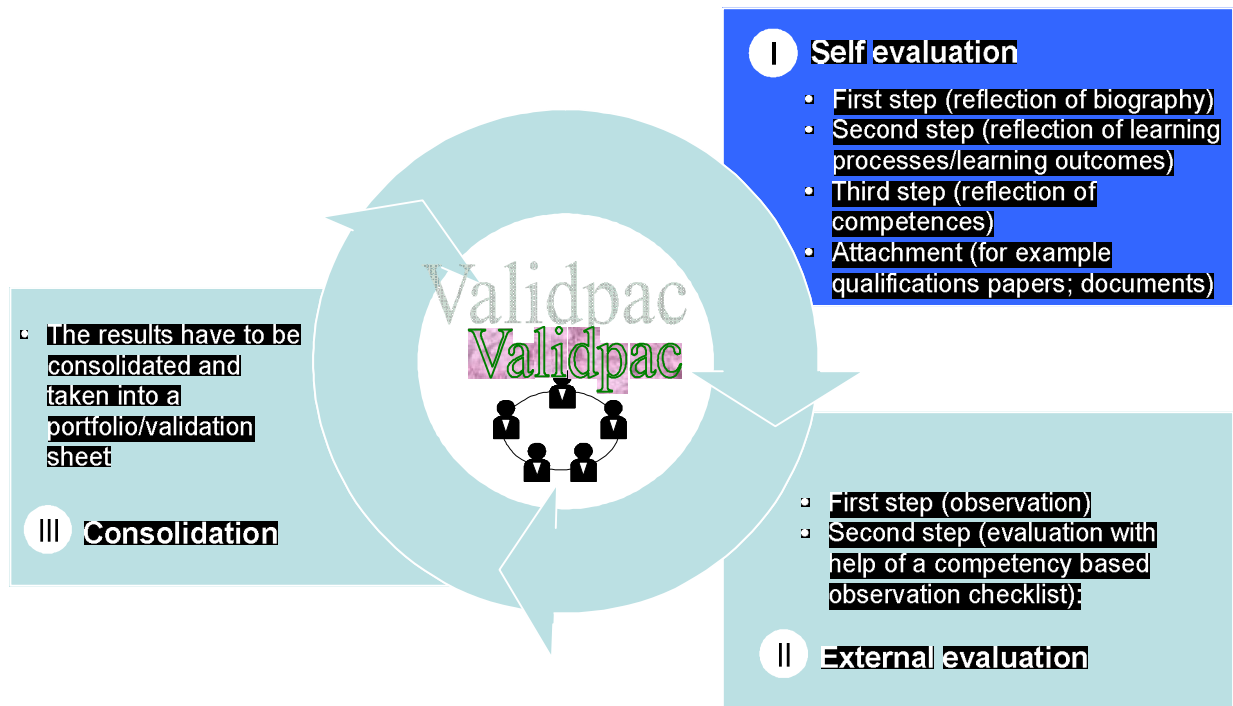
The self-evaluation step covers:

- the reflection on your biography: learning contexts and learning outcomes
- the reflection on your competences
- drawing of your personal mind-map
- attaching of relevant documents (for example qualifications papers; certificates)

Step II *External evaluation*

The **external evaluation step (external assessment)** – is an additional step in the validation process contained in *Validpack*, meant to increase the objectivity of the validation results. In this section the instruments are an observation checklist and an interview grid, both to be used by an experienced professional to assess you. The procedure regulates that an external expert observes two 1.5 hr training sessions and assesses your competences using the *Validpack* observation checklist and the *Validpack* interview grid.

STEP I: Self evaluation



In this chapter you will get a frame for:

- the reflection on your biography: learning contexts and learning outcomes
- the reflection on your competences
- drawing of your personal mind-map
- attaching of relevant documents (for example qualifications papers; certificates)

Reflection on your biography: learning contexts and learning outcomes - is the section of *Validpack* that allows you to reflect on and record all your previous experiences that are linked one way or another with adult education; in this section you are invited to speak about your learning experiences that occurred in different contexts and about the competences that, in your opinion, have emerged from them.

Please take your time to remember the different contexts in which you acquired or learned things related to your teaching (training) activity. It does not matter if the acquisition or learning took place in formal, non-formal or informal contexts. All learning is relevant if it led to competences you mention as relevant for your adult education (trainer) activity. Please also describe the competences, abilities, skills or knowledge that you would attribute to the specific learning process.

Try to remember and describe the previous experiences that you acknowledge as meaningful for your performance as a trainer; the questions below are just some examples that can guide your reflection. You can feel free to add, delete or modify these questions in order to make them relevant for your experience.

- *What are your previous experiences related to your role/position as a trainer in adult education?*
- *Have you been involved in adult education activities without having an explicit adult education job (consultant, counsellor, coordinator of study groups etc.)? If yes, please mention them.*
- *What opportunities for initial and further professional development have you taken as a trainer (courses, peer tutoring, mentoring, study visits, internships etc.)*
- *What other contexts you find as offering relevant/possible opportunities for the achievement of competences defining the performance as a trainer?*
- *Which concrete abilities/skills can you associate with a concrete learning context? What competencies have you acquired in this context?*
- *Can you name concrete activities where you learned/acquired competences/things you now use in your adult education work?*
- *What are the learning outcomes of the profession / home / leisure time / work etc.?*

You can also reflect on your learning biography by using a mind map.

Draw your own personal mind map. Write down all the tasks and activities that have been important for your development as trainer.

What is a mind map?

A mind map is an illustrative reminder, a graphic representation of your thoughts, ideas and reflections. The particular advantage of this method is that your ideas can “bubble” to the surface more easily than is the case if you have to formulate everything in one or more sentences. It induces more creativity!

How do you start?

First of all, decide on which learning events and activities have been significant for acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to perform trainer’s role.

Draw the central thought (the most important fields of learning and experiencing in training area) in the middle of the page. Then reflect on which learning activities were most significant for your development as trainer. Sketch these areas of learning and experience around the central thought in the middle and connect them with a line/arrow to the centre. Afterwards draw the specific learning experience made by you that relates to each of the individual areas of experience. Then connect the individual learning experiences with a line/arrow drawn to the corresponding field of experience.

See the example on the following page.

You can use colours and symbols (circles, outlines, lines etc.) in order to highlight things of importance. Do not limit your imagination!

You can find below an example of how to draw a personal mind map!

Analysis discussion after each training session

Before developing the holistic appraisal of the observed training sessions you have ran, the evaluator will ensure reflection and justification opportunities for you.

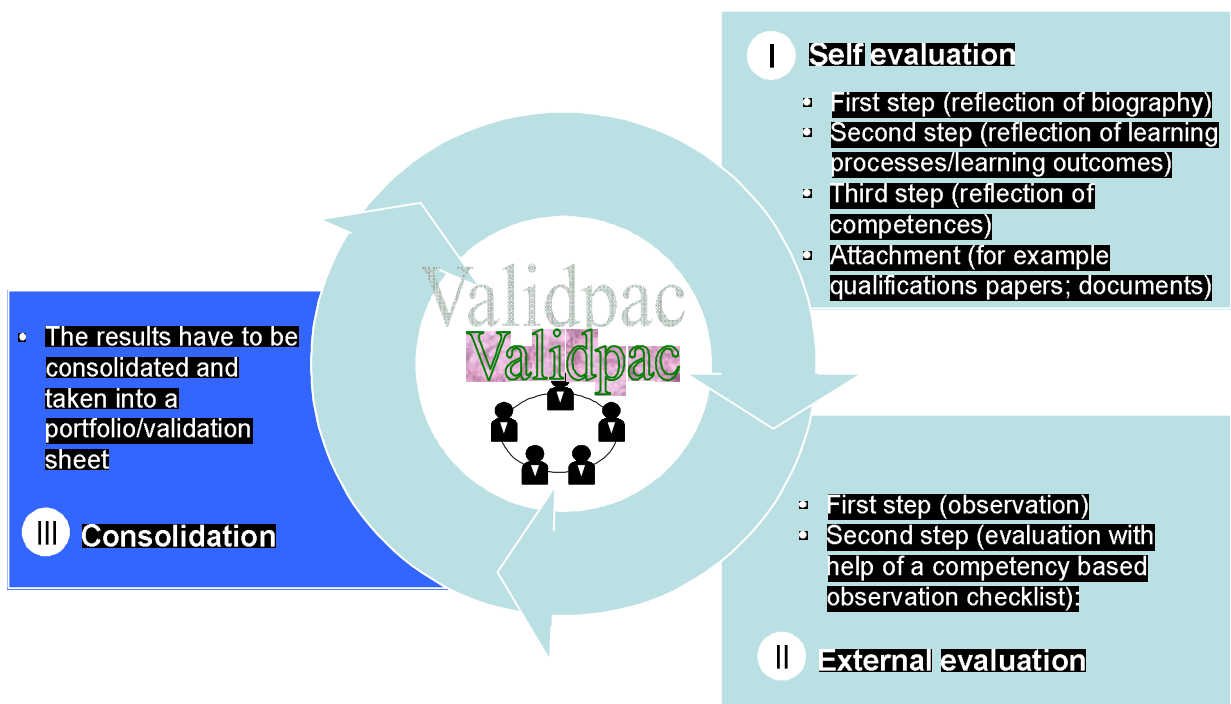
After each training session you have performed, a discussion between you and the evaluator will take place in order to reflect together and to bring arguments in favour of your didactical choices!

This discussion is intended to look critically to the psycho-pedagogical skills you've demonstrated during the didactical interaction observed by the assessor and to offer you the chance to argue your choices. Analysis may be structured as follows:

- Training concept analysis: the way you've planned the training session;
- Analysis of didactical behaviour: the way you have facilitated learning and interacted with trainees (participants/ learners);
- Aims versus achievements analysis: what you have planned versus what you have accomplished in this training session;

The discussion will conclude with a moment of self-reflection and self-appraisal facilitated by the evaluator. It will outline your strengths in teaching and facilitating learning for adults but it will also regard your competences which need improvement.

STEP III: Consolidation



The last step within the validation process is the consolidation of the results of step I and step II.

You, as the beneficiary of the validation process, together with the external evaluator should look at the results of the self evaluation and the results of the external evaluation. Afterwards both results have to be balanced within a common agreement. In order to get there, please follow, together with the evaluator, the next phases:

Reflection

Think about the issues raised by the questions below!

- *Do the results of the self-evaluation and the ones of the external evaluation match?*
- *Are there any gaps between the self-evaluation results and the results of the external evaluation?*
- *What caused these differences?*

Negotiation

This second phase within the consolidation step is dedicated to a free discussion between you and the external evaluator that aims to clarify any discordance regarding the level of your competences. Depending on the answers to the questions above, you and the external evaluator are entitled to bring arguments in favour of the choices made or to emphasize the proofs you and the evaluator based upon when rating a competence. The focus will be on the results of the self-evaluation and external evaluation that do not match; to clarify these aspects, the assessor can ask for additional proofs.

Final decision

After the negotiation phase, a common agreement regarding the level of all competences should be reached. The final result of the validation process will be recorded within the validation sheet which consists of the table used already (in self-evaluation step and external evaluation step) for competence assessment and rating. This validation sheet represents the summary of the self-assessment and the external evaluation and should be filled in by the external evaluator together with you, as beneficiary.

Validation sheet

Trainer _____

Evaluator _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Place _____

Consolidation

	<p>3.4. Structures and facilitates ways for learners and peers to evaluate and give feedback on their learning and performance, through reflection and self assessment</p> <p>3.5. Guides learners in the development and ongoing review of their educational plans</p> <p>3.6. Use qualitative methods to valorise the learners progress</p>	<p>interested</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - directs learners to specific training sessions according to their level of knowledge and/or understanding (if possible) (goes to C) OR pays attention to the level of knowledge and understanding of each learner when talk to him - adjusts pedagogical strategy if the continuous evaluation process highlights unfavourable learning conditions (fall of attention, lack of understanding, tiredness...) - regularly reminds learned elements (above all when finish a step) - leans on already learned elements to get ahead with the learning process - congratulates the progress of the learners - regularly enlarge types of situations to help personal/professional development - encourages learners to take risks (when considers learners ready to manage given situation) - asks learners to answer their own questions when considers they have necessary elements of response - offers to the learners the possibility to access resources and invites them to review them - exchanges resources with colleagues - valorises the resources brought by 																
	<p>4.1. Shares information with learners and colleagues about additional learning resources, educational opportunities, and options for accessing support</p>	<p>... valorises learners' acquired knowledge</p> <p>... shares information and resources</p>																