



Valuing Prior Learning, Building Qualifications

VALBUK

Guidelines, Handbook & Toolkit



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Valuing Prior Learning, Building Qualifications

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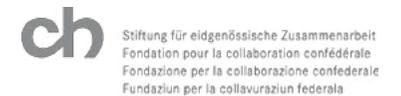
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Guidelines, Handbook & Toolkit - English

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An international partnership for the development of competences in the Cleaning Sector

Coordinator



Partners



Challenges



1. The cleaning sector

The cleaning sector is throughout Europe an emerging professional domain, characterized by a constant growth of business activities and employment. The business structure is composed mainly by small and medium-sized companies (SMEs). The competition on the market between companies is particularly hard, influencing work conditions and salaries: the cleaning industry is in fact a labor-intensive sector where about 75% of the costs are related to salaries and social charges.

Characterized by an impressive and positive occupational performance, both before and during the crisis, the role of the cleaning sector has been nevertheless underestimated in terms of development of new skills and jobs. The sector is actually facing a crucial challenge: how to make human resources not only “marginalized workers to be exploited more and more in order to reduce costs and gain the market competition”, but a real asset for the development of an innovative and sustainable cleaning industry. It’s not only a problem of “image”, but really a challenge faced by the companies, coping with growing difficulties in recruiting and qualifying their staff.



Source: EFCI (2010), The Cleaning Industry in Europe: An EFCI Survey. Edition 2010 (data 2008)

Just before the crisis (2008), the sector reached a turnover of over 62 billion €. Cleaning contractors were over 131.000 (according to the EFCI), and work organizations, including micro-companies or independent workers approx. 190.000 according to the Eurostat. In 2008, more than 3.75 million people were employed in the cleaning industry in the EU countries, as opposed to 3.57 million in 2006 and 1.65 million in 1989. This represents an increase of 5% over two years (2006 – 2008), thus an average growth of 2.5% per year. For comparison, general EU-27 employment growth in these two years (2006 – 2008).



Click to open background information on the cleaning sector



2. Qualification systems

Qualifications in the cleaning sector are generally structured, but not always described in terms of learning outcomes; validation of informal and non-formal learning is still an exception all over Europe, despite the reality of the workplace, and the role actually played by informal learning. Qualification systems show an impressive resistance against modularization and acceptance of flexible learning arrangements, including the accumulation of credits, corresponding to units of learning outcomes, in order to achieve a part or a whole qualification. In less than one third of the countries single learning outcomes can be assessed, recognized and accumulated (in terms of credits) to achieve a qualification. Making qualifications systems more flexible and coherent with needs emerging at the workplace is an open challenge.

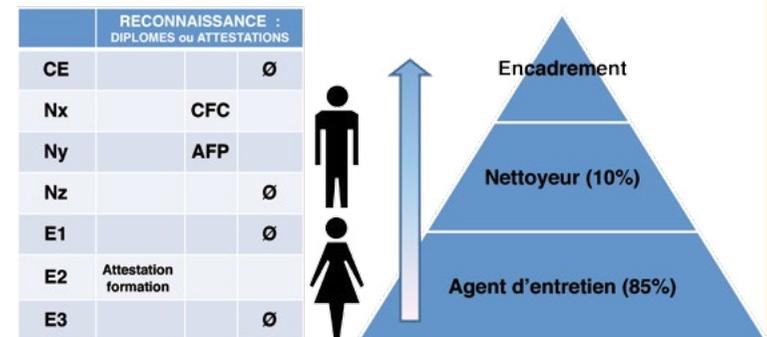
The role of collective bargaining

Despite the presence of formal qualifications in the great majority of the EU countries, a large quota of cleaning workers are low, or unskilled workers. The sector provides good opportunities for “lateral entries”, people not having a specific experience or qualification learn on the job, just beginning from ordinary cleaning activities. Furthermore, competences referred to roles and functions at the workplace - achieved through experience and training, corresponding or not to official qualifications - are considered by contractual agreements, and by the companies, much more relevant than formal entitlements in order to classify the workers. Social partners play in any case a role of the utmost importance in order to establish rules and practices leading to recognition, valuation and effective implementation of qualification systems. The challenge of qualification systems is to integrate informal, non-formal and formal learning embedding qualification pathways in contractual agreements, whose contents – including classification and description of professional profiles, and partial qualifications – are to be negotiated by the social partners.



Structure of categories of cleaning workers according to CCT in Switzerland (French speaking regions)

- N: Nettoyage, split in:
- Nx: having a full IVET qualification.
 - Ny: having only the initial partial qualification (corresponding to a 2 years training).
 - Nz: workers without any recognized qualification. These workers are assigned to specialized tasks, including the mastery of complex machines and extraordinary cleaning and maintenance works. They work in an autonomous way, independently from their formal qualification.
- E: Entretien, related to simple and repetitive tasks, split in:
- E1: including workers using in a constant way specific machines and tools, for accomplishing in a repetitive way relatively complex tasks.
 - E2: having at least a non-formal training, provided by training centers of the sector.
 - E3: generic workers, without any qualification, basically trained on the job



3. Promoting quality and qualifications

The cleaning industry is a dynamic and fast-growing sector, due to several factors, including low barriers to enterprise creation, the continuing outsourcing of cleaning and hygiene services by administrations and companies as well as the specialization and diversification of cleaning activities. These developments have stimulated the emergence of new markets in the field of more global and integrated service delivery, providing highly qualified and encompassing facilities management and support services rather than simple cleaning. However, fierce competition over labor costs within the sector, as well as outsourcing, has frequently increased the number of temporary and vulnerable workers, often without legal contracts of employment. Restructuring and innovating the way in which cleaning activities are managed is therefore a major challenge.

For being more attractive, overcoming difficulties in recruiting people and consolidating its workforce, the cleaning sector needs at any level qualified workers, ready to operate during the opening hours of offices and buildings, capable of integrating in larger staffs, relating in a proper way with occupants and clients.

Valbuk contributes at setting up an innovative approach to the management of Human resources in the cleaning sector. It addresses the condition of immigrant workers, aiming at the same time at upgrading qualification levels of the workforce, fostering the joint commitment of the social partners in making companies sensitive toward the professionalization of their workforce.

Between quality and equality

The workforce in industrial cleaning across Europe comprises high shares of women, low-skilled workers, immigrants and ethnic minorities (...) Cleaning is characterized by a high degree of **gender segregation** in terms of work tasks as well as wages, working conditions and working times. The few men in the sector usually work in specific niches, e.g. window cleaning, and frequently work full time while **women** tend to work part time, have lower wages, have less discretion and are more closely monitored than men. The atypical working hours and part-time work on offer collide with care obligations, creating everyday problems for the groups of single mothers and immigrants without social networks.

The group of **immigrants and ethnic minorities** occupies a special position because of their immigration status and lack of language skills. Furthermore, because of their lack of seniority in the sector combined with a gradual deterioration of employment contracts, they are offered the least attractive working conditions without having the bargaining power to complain.

Abstract from: Forschungs- und Beratungsstelle Arbeitswelt (Working Life Research Centre FORBA) – WALQ-ING Project (7th EU Framework Programme) - Work and Life Quality in New & Growing Jobs. The Cleaning Sector: Office Cleaning - 2012.



Click to open background information on promoting quality and qualifications



Actions



4. Focus on competences: the VQTS Matrix

Qualifications in the cleaning sector have to be rethought. Both to design and to update qualification profiles, the focus should be on competences, based on a rigorous analysis of work processes characterizing the sector. Valbuk draws on the Vocational Qualification Transfer System (VQTS), designing a shared overarching Matrix representing a comprehensive vision of work-related competences in the cleaning sector.

The elaboration and update of the Matrix, according to the VQTS Model, implies the following procedures:

- definition of the scope of the Matrix and identification of similar sector-specific patterns in all partner countries;
- collection of background information, selection of competence areas to be included in the Matrix;
- consultation with experts and identification of steps of competence development, supported by national experts in the cleaning sector;
- open discussion and work in groups, in order to share the overarching structure of the Matrix.

The Shared VQTS Matrix for the cleaning services sector consists of twelve competence areas, which differentiate between various cleaning premises (business premises, sanitary facilities, health care premises, hotels, restaurants, public spaces etc.).

For each competence area there are at least three steps of competence development reflecting basic, intermediate and higher skills levels. Soft skills and competences (such as language knowledge, organizational skills, teamwork capacities, etc.) are integrated within the steps of competence development.

The added value of the Shared Matrix is to represent work-related (and actually existing) competences differentiated according to competence areas and structured into gradual steps of competence development. The Matrix provides the basis for:

- designing and comparing qualification profiles (existing and new ones) mapping competences to be included in a profile, at a specific level of mastery;
- detecting competences according to specific organizational patterns (designing organizational profiles against qualifications)
- identifying competences already achieved by a worker / learner (designing individual competences profiles);
- designing learning and training pathways, according to qualification and organizational profiles, resources and needs of the learners.

These features of the Matrix facilitate the modularisation of learning paths and potentially, the recognition and accreditation of prior learning and the transfer of competences achieved in a context (both formally or informally) to another one.



Click to open background information on VQTS matrix



4. Focus on competences: the VQTS Matrix

Valbuk Matrix for the cleaning sector is an innovative product. It covers competence areas and steps of competence development relevant for the sector in six partner countries. On one hand, the competence areas and particularly, the steps of competence development correspond to the characteristics of the target group i.e. mostly low-skilled employees and also employ-

ees with migration background. On the other hand, the Matrix goes beyond these characteristics as it is an open and dynamic model that can be enlarged with additional competence areas as well as steps of competence development.

Note: for the matrixes in different languages please open Annex 4.



Click to open background information on mapping the VQTS matrix in the different countries

Shared Competence VQTS Matrix for the Cleaning Sector					
Competence area	Steps of competence development				
1 Performing current and regular maintenance cleaning (waste removal, furniture, equipment-surfaces and soils) of business premises (offices, corridors, meeting rooms), collective housing, classrooms and industrial premises	He/She can remove dirt and dust using cleaning materials and simple devices (vacuum cleaner), applying proper and safe working procedures. He/She has minimal notions about the types of materials and sidings and uses and doses products according to supervisor instructions. He/She can work in a team and communicate verbally with his/her superiors and other team members. He/she can preserve keys, access codes, alarms. He/she can refill consumable goods (soap, toilet paper, etc.) and report to supervisor any lack of them. He/She is aware of client's comfort (avoiding noise, disturbance, etc.) and can consider specific clients' requests (special timetables). He/she can report to client/supervisor any dysfunction in the premises.	He/She can select and prepare the appropriate materials and sidings. He/she can use and dose products according to labels and hazard pictograms without supervisor. He/She show to other team members how to perform tasks, communicate with his/her superiors, and people in the premises.	He/She masters intermediate cleaning and can use machines such as burnishing machine, spray cleaning, carpet strip (removal).	He/She is the spokesperson with people in the premises/clients (in case of complaints).	He/She can set appropriate standards and...
	He/She has basic chemistry knowledge, can identify the types of materials and sidings and recognise the types of soils. He/She can select and dose products use simple machines, equipment accessories, and apply proper working procedures. He/she can of the machines and fix simple breakdowns. He/she is integrated into an intervention team, follows supervisor instructions and can communicate verbally with his/her superiors and other team members. He/she is aware of client's comfort (avoiding noise, disturbance, etc.) and can consider specific	He/She can select appropriate machines, equipment and	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.
2 Performing periodic cleaning and treatment of business premises including the use of complex machines or processes (stripping paint, installation of fillers or emulsion, shampoos, injection, extraction, waxing floors, crystallisation)	He/She has basic chemistry knowledge, can identify the types of materials and sidings and recognise the types of soils. He/She can select and dose products use simple machines, equipment accessories, and apply proper working procedures. He/she can of the machines and fix simple breakdowns. He/she is integrated into an intervention team, follows supervisor instructions and can communicate verbally with his/her superiors and other team members. He/she is aware of client's comfort (avoiding noise, disturbance, etc.) and can consider specific	He/She can select appropriate machines, equipment and	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.	He/She has extensive knowledge about products, equipment and makes sure that adequate supplies of all cleaning materials are always available. He/She is responsible for a large team and able to estimate the time required for the services. He/She evaluates (with/without a client) the quality of the work.
	He/She has basic chemistry knowledge, can identify the types of materials and sidings and recognise the types of soils. He/She can select and dose products use simple machines, equipment accessories, and apply proper working procedures. He/she can of the machines and fix simple breakdowns. He/she is integrated into an intervention team, follows supervisor instructions and can communicate verbally with his/her superiors and other team members. He/she is aware of client's comfort (avoiding noise, disturbance, etc.) and can consider specific	He/She can select appropriate machines, equipment and	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.	He/She is able to plan and adapt the suitable machines (single-disc) and cleaning accessories (discs, brushes). He/She is able to plan and adapt his/her work according to the needs.

Organisational profile or qualification (blue area)

Individual profile (orange area)



5. Make qualification paths more flexible: draws on ECVET principles

Beyond the VQTS Model, Valbuk values the ECVET approach, stressing the need of making qualification pathways more flexible and transparent. The basis should be the articulation of qualification profiles in consistent units of learning and assessment. The Matrix creates the basis for the unitization of learning, and the integration of partial qualifications in a comprehensive path. It safeguards the holistic nature of competences, implying the aware mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors in order to realize a work performance. ECVET principles (www.ecvet-projects.eu) can be used for designing units corresponding to competences, and described in learning outcomes.

The Valbuk Model draws mainly on the following principles:

- Learning outcomes are statements of knowledge, skills and competence that can be achieved in a variety of learning contexts.
- Units of learning outcomes are components of qualifications. Units can be assessed, validated and recognized.
- Learning outcomes achieved by the learners at the completion of a learning process, are to be certified after an assessment process, and could be used as credits. Credits can be transferred to other contexts and accumulated to achieve a

qualification on the basis of the qualifications standards and regulations existing in the different countries.

- Mutual trust and partnership among VET stakeholders and organisations are to be expressed in Memoranda of Understanding and Learning Agreements.

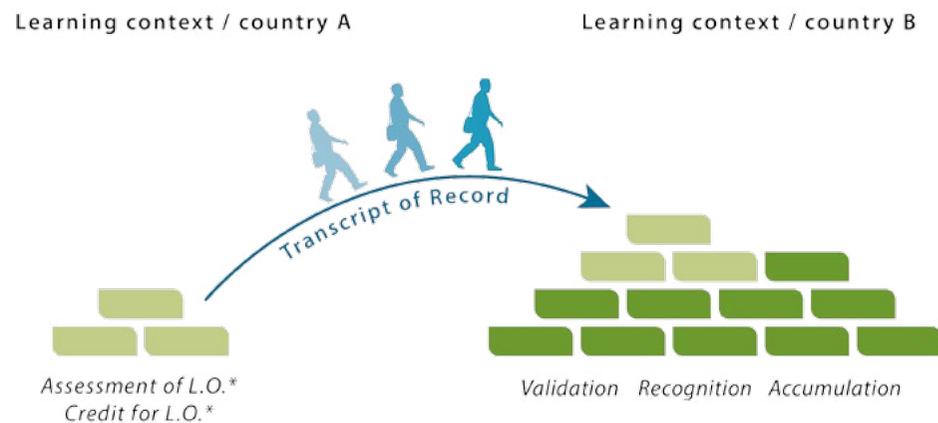
The Valbuk Model aims at making possible the Modularisation of existing training and qualification pathways, according to a comprehensive perspective. Drawing on the Matrix, modules can be designed, articulated in learning pathways, linked to existing qualifications, on a sectorial and cross-sectorial basis. Full and partial qualifications should be described, and could be achieved, according to existing regulations and profiles,



Click to open background information on the modularized training system



Click to open the video clip about Valbuk and ProgreDir project (in French)



*L.O. = Learning Outcomes



5. Make qualification paths more flexible: draws on ECVEET principles

combining modules. Units of learning outcomes should be assessed independently from the learning mode of acquisition, and learning outcomes validated at the completion of a learning process should be taken in account and accumulated, in order to gain a whole qualification.

Valbuk suggests to follow some standards in designing units of learning outcomes and assessment procedures (see also: www.quality-by-units.de):

1. Refer learning outcomes to typical occupational working and business processes

A. units must refer to a comprehensive professional action, and must be put in relation to the level of mastery expected by a skilled worker (levels are defined by the ability to plan, execute and evaluate a work task independently or not)

B. learning outcomes should cover the professional action that will be assessed and may be mapped against agreed (national) occupational standards.

2. Define learning outcomes involving all relevant stakeholders

A. all relevant stakeholders ought to be involved in designing or revising learning outcomes, which especially means that organisations providing training (depending on national contexts e. g. companies, vocational schools, universities or colleges), bodies representing the interests of employers and employees (e. g. social partners), bodies implementing assessment (e. g. chambers), state authorities on different levels and research institutes should be engaged.

B. the process should be a continuous one, in which regularly evaluated recent and future labour market needs are the basis for continuous improvement of curricula. This can be arranged in focus groups or educational boards that consist of the stakeholders above.

3. Ensure learning outcomes are user-friendly for different target groups, and take into account any mode of learning and teaching

A. make sure learning outcomes are clearly understandable, in order to enhance their usability by students, teachers, trainers, schools and companies. At the same time, broad and transparent access to learning outcomes must be ensured (also through information, animation and guidance)

B. ensure that material and guidance is provided to support learning and teaching (how to learn/teach and what to learn/teach).



6. Link informal, non-formal and formal learning

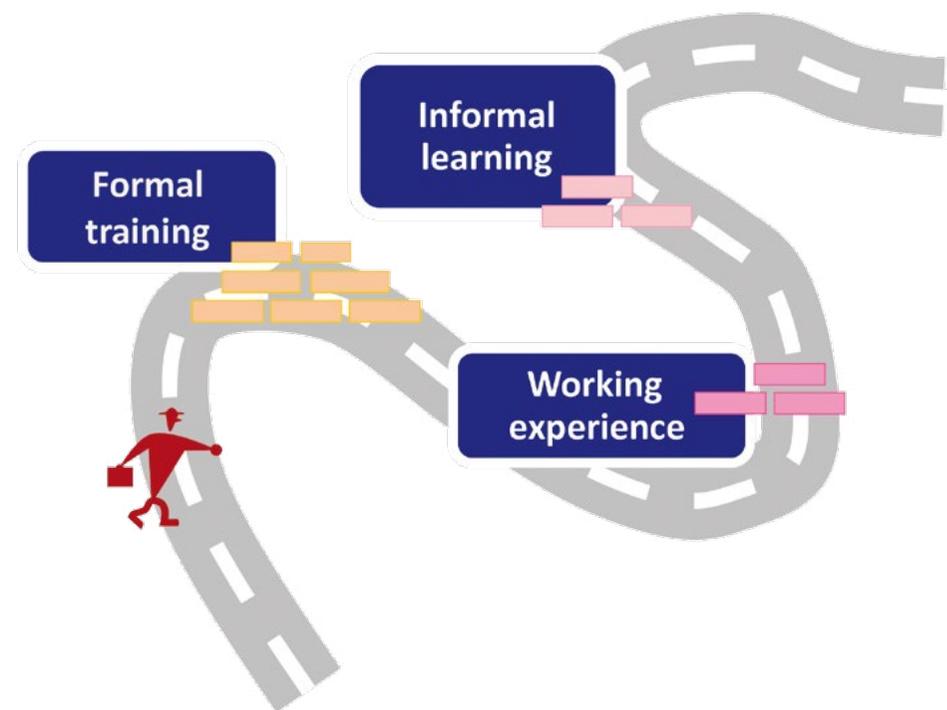
Valbuk recommends the clever application of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) principles, acknowledging that competences (knowledge, skills, attitude, aspirations) are constantly developing, and can be developed only valuing diverse learning spaces and modes. This means recognizing that someone always and everywhere - consciously and unconsciously – learns through:

- *formal learning*, which occurs in an organised and structured context and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support), typically leading to a qualification or a certification
- *non-formal learning*, intentional from the learner's point of view, developed through courses not leading to a certification or embedded in activities not explicitly designated as learning
- *informal learning*, which results from daily work-related, family or leisure activities, not organised or structured as learning, in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective, but absolutely relevant in order to achieve learning outcomes through elicitation and reflection on our experiences.

Valbuk stresses the importance of avoiding a forced confrontation between learning modes and spaces, adopting VPL principles according to a multidimensional and multi-target

perspective, not only as a synonym of an alternative way to reach a certification of one's own competences against a profile, including requirements and standards. VPL is a component of the Valbuk approach, as far as it may take many shapes and destinations, according to three main modes:

1. **Reflective VPL**, taking the whole learning biography of an individual as the focus for building up a portfolio and/or an action plan (autonomy of the individual paving the road to personalized learning)



Click to open the
"Handbook
Validation of Prior
Learning outcomes
in the cleaning
sector"



6. Link informal, non-formal and formal learning

2. **Summative VPL:** building up a portfolio against a pre-set standard, with a one-dimensional goal; looking for a certification, for access to continuous training and to credits / exemptions
3. **Formative VPL:** meeting up with a portfolio to a standard for deciding on what/where/how to learn further, or formulating a career-step with the portfolio as a starting point.

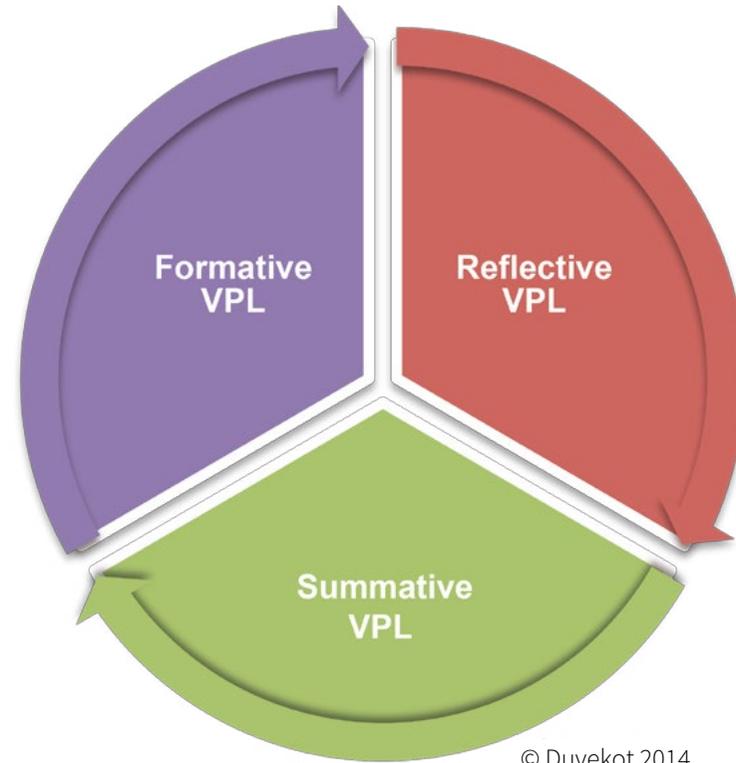
The Valbuk Model aims at implementing VPL according to a 5 steps approach (see www.allinhe.eu):

1. *Commitment and awareness*

Make individuals aware of their own competencies and resources, foster organisations invest in people. This phase includes raising awareness campaigns, ensure information and guidance, through the activation of learning mentors capable of gaining the confidence of the learners.

2. *Recognition*

Help learners identify competences, filling in a portfolio, a CV, an individual dossier; help them collecting evidences (statements of employers, references, etc.). Grids and guided forms can be used for the purpose of facilitating the task.



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3. *Assessment / validation*

It's a crucial part. In Valbuk it takes place in different moments (intake phase and along the process) and for different purposes (formative and summative). Diverse means and tools are exploited: tests facilitating appreciation and self-evaluation of basic skills, observation and verification of practical skills and understanding, both during work or by means of simulations and/or criterion based interview. Prior learning is compared with existing standards.



6. Link informal, non-formal and formal learning

4. Personal qualification or development plan

In Valbuk, assessment of prior learning paves the road to a personalized learning and qualification plan. This plan is about learning activities in formal / non-formal learning environments, as well as in work situations, by offering coaching and an environment in which informal learning is stimulated.

5. Structural implementation of VPL in a lifelong / life-wide learning perspective

The model aims at preparing the structural implementation of VPL as a component of training provisions, personal development strategies and human resource management (HRM) of work organisations.

Valbuk focus on the role of assessment procedures, formulating some recommendations (see also: www.quality-by-units.de):

1. Assessment and assessment results are comparable, independent from place of learning and assessment.

A. real work assignments in the work context (or contexts designed close to the real work situation). The ability to plan, execute and evaluate independently, as well as the ability to perform in unexpected situations should be part of the assessment. This includes that cross-occupational/interdisciplinary questions

about security, ecological and safe behaviors should be part of the assessment.

B. evaluation criteria are defined and assessment results are documented systematically, e.g. in standardized evaluation sheets.

C. assessment should also include documents and papers of the everyday work procedures, helping draw on workplace experience in order to reflect and develop understanding.

2. Assess and appreciate professional, personal and social competences through multiple assessment methods.

A. Personal and social competences should be part of the assessment.

B. Assessment takes place during a learning process (formative) and after learning has been completed (summative).

C. Different assessment methods - in oral and written form - (e.g. discussion, declarative methods, interview, observation, portfolio, presentation, simulation) are combined. Especially interactive assessment methods can be used to gather evidence for observable as well as indications on non-observable outcomes.

3. Ensure the qualification of experts in charge of assessing learning outcomes

A. Assessors - whether they are involved in actual training or not - should have the necessary knowledge, skills and competences in order to assess candidates. More than ever that includes methodological and pedagogical skills.

B. Assessors should be given the opportunity to acquire these competences, e.g. in certified training courses, e-Learning modules or Peer Review. Requirements for the appointment of assessors should be defined.



6. Link informal, non-formal and formal learning

Personalize learning

Valbuk underscores the central role of a competence based approach to learning development and to the definition of learning outcomes. Focusing on competences means taking into account knowledge and skills as well as the personal methods used in mobilizing resources, including attitudes, behaviours, motivations. A competence is an ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes 4 dimensions: cognitive, functional, personal and ethical (www.cedefop.europa.eu). The ‘personal competence’ is particularly relevant, because it gives sense at the generic description of a competence. It is only within this personal context that a competence can be identified, assessed, valued and developed.

Therefore our approach stresses the importance of a personalized learning, based on resources, expectations and ambitions of the learners. Facilitating personalized learning implies the availability of flexible arrangements, the possibility of developing a qualification pathways step by step, the recognition of partial achievements “per se” and in the framework of progressive career paths. Official recognized qualifications have to be complemented, in a continuum, by partial qualifications recognized by collective bargaining, in order to define a flexible

professionalization path, encouraging the workers active in the sector progress in their careers. Different criteria, less related to the mere technical sphere (tasks and machines), should be considered when classifying the workers, including the valuation of personal and social competences.

Hints and recommendations for personalizing learning

1. Take into account available competences in the intake phase, as well as expectations and needs of the learners; an initial assessment plays a role of the utmost importance in enhancing motivations and self-confidence, and preparing a good training plan.
2. Design personalized learning agreements, ensuring exemptions as well as reinforcement of training provision when needed, respecting prior learning and the expectations of the learners.
3. Create the conditions of learning as a developmental process, ensure continuous accompaniment, and the possibility of valuing work and practical experience as a means to developing competences.
4. Integrate experiential and theoretical learning, providing learners with founded knowledge, both considering professional specific issues and basic skills (language, math, etc.).
5. Value formative and summative assessments as a means for consolidating learning and prepare a comprehensive holistic assessment of competences, in a qualification perspective



Tools



7. Valbuk tools



Bilan de compétences
Test: Culture générale



Bilan de compétences
Test: Compétences de base, calcul et logique



Bilan de compétences
Français langue étrangère



Bilan de compétences
Profil professionnel de référence: Agent de Propreté (CFC)



Évaluation de compétences
Connaissances du domaine de la propreté



Test - exercice pratique
Entretien d'un local avec mobilier



Test - exercice pratique
Entretien d'un local sanitaire



Questionnaire de satisfaction
PROGREDIR

Note: all documents are in French. Click the icon to open the attachments.



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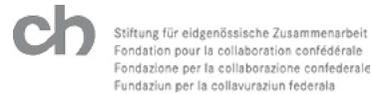
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Project coordinator



Project partners

