

## TRANSFINE day

14 May 2003



Notes of group discussions following the presentation of the preliminary proposals for a European architecture of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The question was put:

*“What recommendations, suggestions, comments would you like to make to the project team working on the proposals?”*

### Group 1

- Any framework has to be learner-centred and informed by the practitioners point of view. It has to be a common framework of Europe
- But it has to be a loose framework to allow us to preserve diversity and demonstrate that the individual is valued.
- This means that all knowledge has to be valued because this will empower the individual. We must find ways of recognising non-formal learning even if it cannot be fitted into a credit framework. The Framework must be open-ended with a description of competences (as well as/instead of credit)
- Universities have to accept that there are many routes or pathways through learning. It cannot be based solely on credit because this implies that the academic route is the best route.
- Learning is situated and cannot be ‘shoe-horned’ into one system.
- The Framework is being asked to do two things: 1) give value to what is learned outside the academy, and 2) permit these outcomes to be transferred and replace the outcomes of the academy.
- Any Framework has to: 1) provide guidelines; 2) be more specific on outcomes than inputs; 3) demonstrate that education is more than regular credits; 4) have qualitative as well as quantitative elements
- Outcomes can be dangerous – only what can be assessed will count.
- Beware of over-assessment

### Group 2

- The Framework was envisaged as a tree with the roots being in the national systems and the trunk and branches as the Framework – the process should be anchored by the roots. There is a fear of EU bureaucracy.

- The process needs to be one of making language and communications 'transparent' – not to dictate what must be done. Diversity needs protecting
- Recommendations:
  1. Language work needs to be done within countries to come to a common understanding of terms before a common EU language is agreed
  2. Look at national framework for formal education and consider how this is transferred to non-formal/informal education in order to try and bring convergence to the sector before a cross EU framework is created.
  3. On a national basis, communications between the compulsory education – further education – higher education needs to be improved to support guidance and advice available to the candidate.
- A question about references in the Framework in relation to – who is it for? what do we want it to achieve, what are the levels? Impossible to set levels across all the systems? Levels may need to be described in different ways eg the garden analogy was put forward – latin names mean little to laymen while common names don't offer the foundations for the professional
  4. Consideration of qualifications as separate from the the learning levels – 3 levels of learning may not result in qualifications until a fourth level is added.
  5. The project should aim to create a common language in the process (ie so that 'validation' means the same across Europe etc). If this can be achieved then that would be of great benefit to transparency, ease of movement and further work
  6. Clarification of learning outcomes is important – perhaps the most important – therefore how you get to the outcome is not important – it is the fact that you get there that counts
  7. The Framework, as and when agreed, should remain totally voluntary not just at national level but at institutional/sector level
  8. That tensions are recognised and accepted within actors situation eg tension at employers level as improved qualifications can cost in relation to increased pay.
  9. That a SWOT should be carried out on the Framework during its construction that recognises the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as applied across Europe
  10. Will there be further consultation or is this the last opportunity?
  11. See Norway report – 'we don't want a supernational bureaucratic system/

### **Group 3**

- We must not forget the learners in our reflection – we must think how to include some representatives of learners who can share their experience of the assessment/accreditation process
- Guidance is very important – need to pay special attention to it
- The different tools to consider academic, personal or experiential competences have to be combined
- We insist on global analysis of competences of the applicant as well as the main competences for the diploma
- Usually and mainly APL involves vocational and professional skills to be recognised by the employer and trade union representatives
- Think about international recognition of diplomas (equivalence .....
- We recommend to make no distinction on the document of the diploma about how the qualification has been obtained
- Knowledge outcomes and competence outcomes – we have to promote the consideration of both by the universities
- We must involve professionals and teachers in APL juries
- We must develop similar procedures and processes in different training institutions to assist confidence building
- We must develop quality assurance at European level
- We should develop short seminars for actors of APL in training organisations to promote exchange of good practice in order to get more harmonisation of practices in APEL
- 2 suggestions to be considered:
  - building up a European system accessible to all training organisations - with a European label
  - a handbook of good practice able to inspire validating organisations to build their own system

### **Group 4**

- An architecture must be oriented to the individual – the individual should be able:
  - To find a central information centre
  - To find professionals (advisors, guidance workers, counsellors etc) who will advise and listen
  - To be directed towards the appropriate formal sector – HE, Applied HE Institutions, Vocational School, Youth organisation
- The professionals and the individuals should have access to tools (dossiers, assessment tools – transparent and light) – possibly a European handbook/management book, guidelines for assessment and recognition – containing the best tools.
- The advisors are trained professional – need a training programme – to develop the appropriate competences – should be designed at European level
- Need for exchanges and meetings at European level
- Must inform the public – need to put in place centres, information, training, knowledge and understanding

- Cost: APL reduces the cost of education and training if done professionally so the state should pay
- Our duty is to raise awareness and to inform the politicians, the key actors and stakeholders in education, the social partners etc
- How:
  - Tell the success stories to politicians and policy makers
  - Call the media to witness
  - Organise meetings conferences etc with relevant partners
  - Knowledge cafes
  - Develop relevant documentation to raise awareness
  - Make the European study available, European inventory of everything done so far to inform and raise awareness.

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