


Project VAB - VALuing experience Beyond the university Programme Leonardo da Vinci



Survey Report of HOU

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Introduction

The European Union has approached the issue of non formal learning since 2001. Specifically, the White Paper *A new impetus for European youth*¹ regarding the European youth, was referring to the need of recognition of non formal and informal learning in the context of fighting against unemployment, promoting knowledge and reassuring the social cohesion.

Cedefop recently presented (on November 2009) the European Guidelines for the certification of non-formal and informal learning². In this report, the current European system of credits for higher education (ECTS) and the emerging European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) were also mentioned. These are two important initiatives that provide direct support to individuals, trying to validate the qualifications obtainable through various kinds of learning and transfer them from institution to institution and from country to country.

The current report includes views of Professors coming from several Higher Education Institutions regarding non-formal and informal skills / competencies, acquired by students beyond University through non-formal/informal learning. A specially designed questionnaire was used in order to collect these data. We have collected a sample of fifty (50) questionnaires from Professors who teach in various HEIs all over Greece; seventeen (17) questionnaires were provided by women and thirty-three (33) questionnaires by men. Then we organized a round table meeting with the participation of some respondents, in order to further analyze and discuss the opinions expressed.

¹ European Commission (2001), White Paper – A new impetus for European Youth, COM(2001) 681 final http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2001/com2001_0681en01.pdf

² http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054_en.pdf

Question 1: Do you consider the skills (personal, social and professional experience acquired by the students through informal or non-formal learning beyond the University) to be important?

Please, justify briefly.

All fifty (50) respondents answered to this question positively. Each Professor's personal experience contributed in forming a more complete picture about the skills acquired by the students through informal or non-formal learning beyond the University.

Different and varying points of view of the professors about informal and non formal learning that students acquire beyond the University have been recorded. It is a fact that the knowledge acquired by educational institutions is not enough by itself and cannot guarantee to the students an effective and productive performance to their career. Each student is a unique personality and should be globally assessed, besides his performance based on a three-hour written examination. It was also reported that any skill³ acquired beyond Higher Education that leads to the acquisition of profound learning through experience is important. The issue that was raised was the students' success in terms of career, for which many and different factors play a major role. More specifically, professors have stated that "*These skills are considered to be a competitive advantage for the students and do enhance their flexibility and can be easily integrated in the labour market*". Most of them have emphasized to the importance of the development of personal, behavioural and social skills acquired beyond Universities.

³ Skills have the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how in order to complete tasks and solve problems. In the European Qualifications Framework, skills are divided into theoretical (use of sense, intuition and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments), according to the document for public consultation of the National Qualifications Framework, 25.02.2010 (Annex 1, Definitions, p. 21).

From the professional perspective, it has been mentioned that these skills are vital in the selection process of personnel and compose a more completed curriculum and one's profile. The professional career demands other skills that are not taught directly and systematically in the context of their studies at University. The team spirit, the punctuality and the responsibility can be indirectly taught. On the contrary, developing interpersonal relationships and supporting issues with social character etc. are not taught in tertiary institutions. It is worth mentioning that the aforementioned skills are considered to be really essential for building a successful career because they help students to create a social network that can be used directly or indirectly in their professional career. These skills often determine the career path of students and sometimes are pre- required for the efficient study or work.

The skills assist the graduates to be smoothly integrated in the labour market and additionally they contribute to professional development. The technical skills such as computer programming, the communication skills and behavioural skills such as emotional intelligence, constitute essential skills in the working environment and lead to a successful professional career. A professor of the postgraduate course "Professional and Academic Skills" in the MBA programme, held in the TEI of Larissa, has found out that, graduates of various undergraduate departments had been characterized by lack of personal and social skills.

Even though certain skills play a significant role in every job, in some occupations such as secretaries, telephone operators, employees, providers in welcoming and hosting services, etc., the employers take into account only certificated skills in order to select the suitable employee. According to the national bibliography (e.g. Goleman), skills, such as cooperation, communication, "learning to learn", creativity, critical thinking, negotiation, initiative, etc, compose the main qualifications that interest many organizations and employers.

Certified skills are even more important, because they are related to more opportunities for success, financial and social benefits and greater assistance to the students regarding their professional integration to the national and European labour market.

Developing techniques and skills, such as self promoting and self awareness, can be helpful in finding a better job and improving people's life as far as their working, personal and social environment is concerned.

The acquisition of informal and non formal skills fulfils the formal education; also, it helps the students to be integrated in the working environment smoothly, work in teams, have a sense of professional responsibility, communicate and share ideas without difficulties. These skills are perhaps the most important key in differentiating the students and the future employees.

Many professors have agreed and pointed out that the knowledge acquired by the University is irreplaceable but needs to be continuously enriched, reinforced and supported by the non formal learning.

These skills help students to exploit, combine and spread effectively the knowledge acquired through formal learning. It is obvious for the professors, that skills (personal, social and professional experience acquired by the students through informal or non-formal learning beyond University) link theory with practice, form the student's character, attitude and personality, develop critical awareness, expand and enhance their training so as to confront difficult issues and situations. Participation in political parties, conferences and practical training as applied in Law Schools are very important for student's socio-economical integration.

The technological developments and changes in the working environment combined with the social changes have led to the formation of the figure "Work - Further education - Work" with successive periods of study (meaning the formal education and the informal training provided by seminars). The informal training has become more important in modern progressive professions. In the administration departments for example, the skills are not only important but necessary for a professional who needs to link them to his/her work experience. Another example comes from the field of graphic arts (printing, publishing and media) in Europe, where there are many important forms of informal learning, regarding the design and production of brochures and the digital media, that concern employees who have vocational - technical and higher education. Although the

same situation prevails in Greece, there are plenty identified needs for lifelong informal learning which is not sufficiently provided for the field of graphic arts.

“Today, the necessary knowledge, attitudes, skills are complex and cannot be developed solely through formal curricula, no matter how many modern techniques are used such as simulation games, case studies etc. The practical experience together with appropriate learning support is an unsurpassed source of knowledge and skills.”

Question 2: Identify the skills that are acquired via informal or non formal learning and the corresponding competences that in your opinion are essential.

Mark with an X the degree of importance with respect to the integration of students on the labour market. At the end of the table you can add additional skills or abilities that are not in the list and you think that they are important.

You are requested to use the following scale:

1 = Not at all, 2 = Little, 3 = Enough, 4 =Very much, 5 = Too much

The answers that were given in this question are shown in the following table.

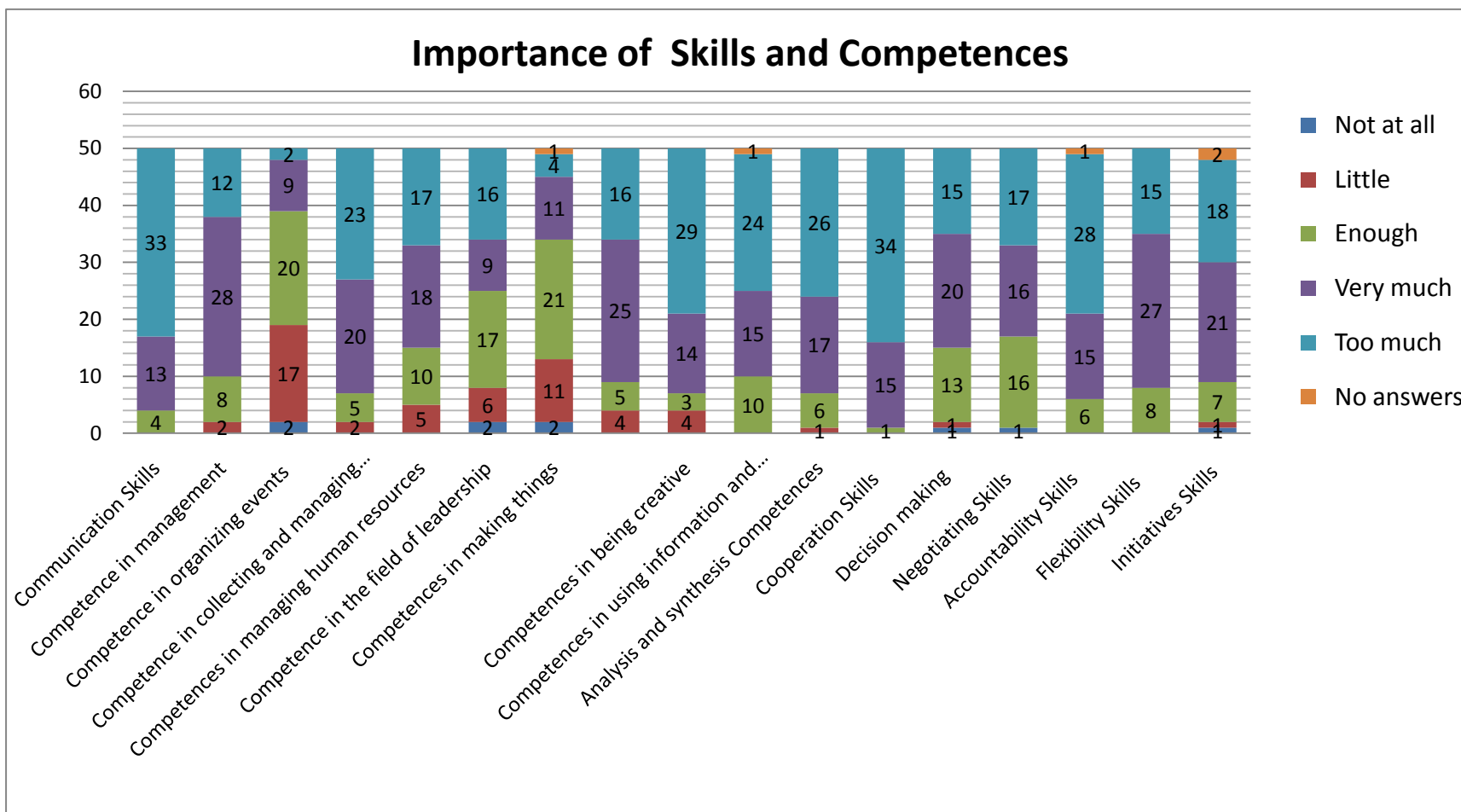
NON FORMAL SKILLS / COMPETENCES	IMPORTANCE				
	Not at all	Little	Enough	Very much	Too much
Communication Skills	0	0	4 answers	13 answers	33 answers
Competence in management	0	2 answers	8 answers	28 answers	12 answers
Competence in organizing events	2 answers	17 answers	20 answers	9 answers	2 answers
Competence in collecting and managing information	0	2 answers	5 answers	20 answers	23 answers
Competence in managing human resources	0	5 answers	10 answers	18 answers	17 answers
Competence in the field of leadership	2 answers	6 answers	17 answers	9 answers	16 answers

Competence in making things	2 answers	11 answers	21 answers	11 answers	4 answers
Competence in the field of knowledge and innovation	0	4 answers	5 answers	25 answers	16 answers
Competence in being creative	0	4 answers	3 answers	14 answers	29 answers
Competence in using information and communication technologies	0	0	10 answers	15 answers	24 answers
Analysis and synthesis Competences	0	1 answer	6 answers	17 answers	26 answers
Cooperation Skills	0	0	1 answers	15 answers	34 answers
Decision making	1 answer	1 answer	13 answers	20 answers	15 answers
Negotiating Skills	1 answer	0	16 answers	16 answers	17 answers
Accountability Skills	0	0	6 answers	15 answers	28 answers
Flexibility Skills	0	0	8 answers	27 answers	15 answers
Initiatives Skills	1 answer	1 answer	7 answers	21 answers	18 answers

Other skills that were mentioned and identified equally important:

Competence in managing crisis	Interdisciplinary collaboration Skills
Competence in taking a risk	Artistic taste
Self learning competences	Competence in learning how to learn
Self-knowledge competences	Competence in managing conflicts
Perseverance	Capability of understanding complex environment
Competence in using everyday devices	"Common sense"
Competence in solving everyday problems	Emotional Intelligence
Competence in performing in parallel "multi-tasking"	Perception of social reality
Intercultural skills	Moderation
Social skills	Capability in generating consensus
Competence in managing time	Continuous learning
Critical thinking	Skills in understanding complex environments
Presentation skills (oral, written, multimedia)	

Moreover, all the answers (even the one that have not been answered) were taken into consideration in the diagram below. The horizontal axis of the graphic depicts all the non formal skills and competences referred to the table of the second question. The vertical axis shows the degree of importance of each competence combined with the number of the answers. The label that appears at the right of the diagram includes the scale the professors were requested to use: Not at all, Little, Enough, Very much, Too much.



Question 3: Do you believe that the skills acquired/developed through informal or non-formal learning should be incorporated into a more global evaluation of the students?

Please, justify briefly.

To this question, thirty four (34) people answered “Yes” and eleven (11) people answered “No” and justified their answers according to their opinions and their perspective regarding informal or non formal learning. Another five (5) of them expressed their doubts concerning the incorporation of the informal or non formal skills into a more global evaluation of the students.

According to the view of the participants, the formal education system has to incorporate procedures in order to nourish these skills, to identify weaknesses in their development and to design strategies for further improvements. These skills can easier link theory and practice and facilitate the application of theoretical knowledge (via exercises, students’ practice and events organized by students). A global evaluation, in addition to theoretical knowledge, should include skills and competences developed in practice. These skills complete students’ profile and help them to become professionally and personally orientated despite the difficulties that arise because of their different personalities.

Non formal learning contributes to a better understanding of an individual’s personality and thus can help a person in selecting the most suitable job. A more global evaluation of the students will incorporate skills and competences ⁴ which are fundamental in promoting mobility and enabling them to respond to labour market developments as well as to the emergence of new economic and social needs.

⁴ A “competence” is the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and / or methodological abilities, at work or university aiming in professional and personal development. At the European Qualifications Framework, competences are described having in mind the responsibility and autonomy,), according to the document for public consultation of the National Qualifications Framework, 25.02.2010 (Annex 1, Definitions, p. 21).

In today's society people have to cooperate into groups, even these are small groups. The competences of analytical and synthetic thinking as well as creativity are very essential in a society of knowledge and excellence. Nowadays, we should not only evaluate knowledge, but also skills and competences, which are necessary in the workplace. Students should assess whether they have or not acquired these skills and to what extent, estimating at the same time the effectiveness of each competence. The assessment should recognize the difficulty of acquiring skills and the student's performance. Non formal skills should be recognized and have an official status with a positive impact not only in personal life but also in each students' career. Also, these skills are already cultivated through formal education, depending on the subject of studies. In some schools of business administration, students are taught about relevant definitions to the non formal skills. Some of them are developed through their studies in certain subject areas. For example creativity is cultivated in schools of Architecture and Arts while the competence of building in engineering schools, decision making and leadership etc, are cultivated in schools of Administration Sciences. In case of employees, these abilities can be further improved if there is a need to improve their performance.

On the contrary, in schools of science, the students are not taught such definitions but can acquire only some of them (eg through cooperation projects). So the answer to that question depends largely on the type of school, the direction and the experience of the student.

The skills acquired during their studies are not always reflected in their final grade. It appears to be a difficult process for the Greek university system. Especially, during their practice, the evaluation and the examination of students' performance is incomplete although it is one of the basic professional experiences.

The global evaluation of the students can be realized through implementation systems, for example the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and not from the educational institutions. The assessment of the acquired skills can be applied from different committees in sectors under a main framework according to which a National Committee is proposed.

The Professors, who had different opinion about the assessment of the non formal skills, have supported that:

“The skills acquired through informal or non-formal learning should not be incorporated into a more global evaluation of the students, because they act collectively on what they have already learned. There is no reliable tool to evaluate these skills, it is quite subjective and can wrongly add or remove 'credits' from a student. Other Professors believe that existing assessment (rating the exercises, monitoring progress, personal communications, etc.) is enough. Such skills can be an added value in the curriculum and the total performance of a student. The University (should) have specific purposes and aims trying to achieve them, without wasting time and energy in something else. Although it is not part of the objectives of a university, however, the University could be involved somehow in the process. In the future, there could be informal educational courses that can also be evaluated.

Some of the Professors said that were not sure whether these skills should be added because they can be easily influenced under the current conditions and it is difficult to be evaluated in an objective way. For others, it is not clear what a “global” assessment may contain. Moreover, this assessment tool and the use of the evaluation procedure’s results create major concerns.

Question 4: Do the courses in your institution take into account the non-formal learning?

If yes, in which way?

It was reported that most of the courses in Professors' institutions do not take into account non formal learning. More specifically, thirty three (33) people answered "No", but sixteen (16) people mentioned several ways of implementing non-formal learning at the courses while one (1) person stated that he is not aware.

The 66% of the respondents who agreed that courses in their institutes do take into account non formal learning provided the following ways that this happens:

- Through a six month student's practice which is mandatory in all Technological Educational Institutes and some Universities. In these cases there exists a certain student evaluation procedure performed by a Supervisor appointed by the Department and a Trainer coming from the hosting organization.
- Through courses that require the active participation of students who cooperate and share new ideas so as to stimulate writing research proposals
- Through teaching methods (case studies, exercises, workgroups and presentations) that aim at developing non formal skills of the students
- Through assignments (with a personal interview) aiming to identify the skills and abilities a student must have to complete a task. The expressive ability, the ability to reproduce knowledge, creativity, innovation, the use of technological

tools, presentation skills, design, analysis and synthesis, research capacity and non-formal methods can be developed through the above assignments.

- During advisory meetings, students can present their non formal skills
- By participating in entrepreneurship workshops, debate workshops and international conferences
- By allowing students to work as laboratory assistants
- Through voluntary participation in summer schools that simulate working conditions, enable professional certifications and give the opportunity to outstanding students to participate in research projects
- Through the establishment and operation of the Lifelong Learning Institutes within Higher Education Institutes.

Question 5: In your own Department, is the student's practice part of the courses?

If no, please answer the next question as well.

The majority (32 people, 64%) of the respondents replied affirmatively, while the remaining sixteen people (36%) answered negatively to this question. Combining the answers to questions 4 and 5, one deduces that most of the Professors do not consider students' practice as a means to achieve informal learning. One respondent suggested that "the student's practice should be offered as an elective course without adding credits. The course should be offered in both semesters (fall and spring) and should be graded as a "success" or "failure», without further quantification.

Question 6: Do you believe that the students' practice should be considered as obligatory and be included in the courses offered by your Department?

Please, justify briefly.

Following the previous question, twenty two (22) Professors agreed to the obligatory character of the students' practice, seven disagreed and twenty one (21) people did not answer this question at all.

According to the respondents, the student's practice is important because:

1. hands-on-experience provides a better integration of acquired knowledge, by connecting the theoretical scientific knowledge acquired from formal education with professional orientation and training of graduates, leading to a more comprehensive and efficient understanding
2. it familiarizes students with the workplace and helps them develop social skills and redefine the way they understand their studies
3. it develops links among students and businesses and enhances the relationship between higher education institutions and productive units
4. it helps students enrich their CV and highlight their skills
5. it smoothes the transition of students from education to the workplace, by helping them find out the requirements for specific skills and competencies by the labour market
6. it contributes to the application of knowledge to everyday problems

Question 7: In your opinion, should the portfolio where all the skills that are acquired via informal or non formal learning are recorded, be complementary to the degree?

Please, justify briefly.

The portfolio that records the skills/competences acquired via informal learning is considered to be so important that thirty (30) people have said that it should be complementary to the degree. On the other hand nineteen (19) have been more reluctant and disagreed with this proposal. One (1) person has proposed that the portfolio should include only specific skills and abilities and not the ones that are more difficult to be valued. It has been also stated that the development of a portfolio which contains the student's skills that are also linked to the students' personality (holistic approach) better satisfies the aims of education, while a "diploma supplement" would standardize and limit the possible options.

The portfolio contains the capabilities and thus can improve the student's progress in his/her educational and professional path. It appears to include very interesting information for potential employers. Any knowledge, skills and abilities of students related to the employment and labour market needs can provide more opportunities and perspectives to the student.

This portfolio - a certified identity of the students - is an important component of the learning package and a powerful tool in searching for a job. It will enhance enormously the value of their degrees in the labour market. At the same time it brings together the projects of the students throughout their studies that do not appear anywhere else.

The e-portfolio is a common practice in many countries, especially in North America and gives a more comprehensive picture of the students' abilities. The value of the diploma will be upgraded in addition to the quantitative data (the degrees) including other qualitative / empirical skills, experience, and characteristics that may not be easily measurable, but in any case are very

important for career and general social performance of students. Finally, the students will realize that it is worth trying, since their efforts are recognized and their qualifications are taken into account.

Some of the Professors appeared to be more skeptical. Although it can be an important business asset, the issue is very complex and can be applicable only under certain conditions (privacy issues, guarantee for using them etc.).

Furthermore, it should not be related to the acquisition of the degree and the evaluation and certification of additional skills should not be part of the formal administrative proceedings of Schools - Departments, but external actors.

The reasoning of the negative responses was focused on certain points. The skills acquired through formal or non formal education vary as they are depended on the environment, time, people etc and are consisted of a broader socio-cultural environment and they should not be evaluated through traditional assessment procedures.

It is mainly associated with the curriculum of the student and shall be certified as independent skills (for instance the competence in using of computers). It might be applied only in certain types of schools (eg business administration). If the portfolio is complementary to the diploma, there is a risk that students may try to acquire skills in futile. For the moment, there is not accurate method of evaluating these skills, (such as flexibility, cooperation, creativity and innovation) which are mostly presented under certain conditions and may not be reproduced in any examination. Firstly, an appropriate framework for assessing the skills has to be defined and institutionalized which is considered to be a difficult procedure.

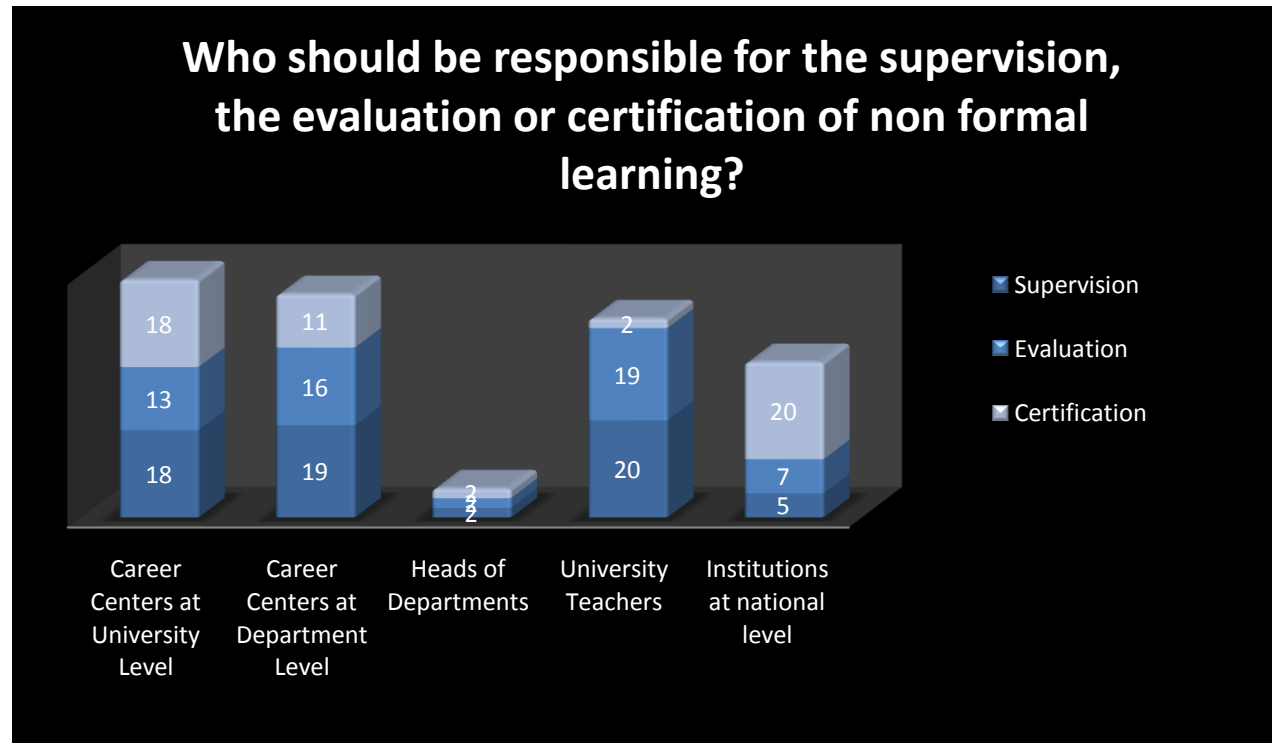
There is a more complex interrelationship between skills, character, and the context in which they are used. What matters is how one can cope with the task of using and combining its own characteristics aptly (whether psychological characteristics of individual character, or skills) with those of his colleagues.

Question 8: In your opinion, who should be responsible for the supervision, the evaluation or certification of non formal learning?

(multiple choices per column)	supervision	evaluation	certification
Career Centers at University Level	18 answers	13 answers	18 answers
Career Centers at Department Level	19 answers	16 answers	11 answers
Heads of Departments	2 answers	2 answers	2 answers
University Professors	20 answers	19 answers	2 answers
Institutions at national level	5 answers	7 answers (1 of them added " <i>Through standardized procedures and tests</i> ")	20 answers (1 of them added " <i>Through standardized procedures and tests</i> " and 1 other added " <i>A few can realize this</i> ")

	supervision	evaluation	certification
Other (describe)	➤ As these skills are directly related to an occupation of the students / graduates, the most appropriate to evaluate them is the employer / company / institution where	➤ As these skills are directly related to an occupation of the students / graduates, the most appropriate to evaluate them is the employer / company / institution where	➤ As these skills are directly related to an occupation of the students / graduates, the most appropriate to evaluate them is the employer / company / institution where

	<p>students / graduates belong to professionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lifelong Learning Institutes ➤ None ➤ Organizations at local level 	<p>students / graduates belong to professionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lifelong Learning Institutes ➤ None ➤ Organizations at local level 	<p>students / graduates belong to professionally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lifelong Learning Institutes
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The above diagram provides us with various and basic information. At a first glance, according to twenty (20) Professors' opinions, University Professors should be responsible for supervising the non formal learning. In addition, nineteen (19) Professors agreed that the evaluation phase should be followed by them. Twenty (20) Professors have recognized the Institutions at national level as the most suitable organizations to certificate the informal learning.

Question 9: Select the reasons why Professors should assess the skills/competences acquired through formal or non formal education.

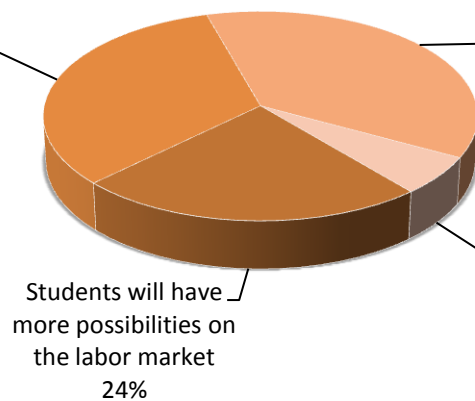
(You can select more than one answers)

- Students will have more possibilities on the labour market: sixteen (16) answers
- Students are encouraged to study, as long as the experiences that have acquired beyond University will be considered as “acceptable”: twenty two (22) answers
- Courses are upgraded when the skills/competences acquired through informal or non-formal learning are taken into account: twenty five (25) answers
- *Other answers:*
“Professors should not be involved at all”, “The closer the Professors come to the students, more interactions and results occur”, “Not all Professors are able to evaluate these skills/competences. In order to proceed to such evaluation processes, Professors should be specialized and belong to a specific category”.

Why Professors should assess the skills/competences acquired through formal or non formal education ?

Students are encouraged to study, as long as the experiences that have acquired beyond University will be considered as "acceptable"
33%

Courses are upgraded when the skills/competences acquired through informal or non-formal learning are taken into account
37%



Other reasons
6%

Students will have more possibilities on the labor market
24%

Question 10: In your opinion, what is the role of the Professors in assessing the results of informal or non formal learning?

(You can select more than one answers)

- Professors should only monitor informal or non-formal learning of the students: thirteen (13) answers
- Professors should define and evaluate skills acquired through informal or non-formal learning (a few can achieve this): nineteen (19) answers
- Professors should certify the informal or non-formal learning of their students (a few can achieve this): three (3) answers
- The evaluation or the monitoring of informal or non-formal learning is not part of the Professors' responsibilities: seven (7) answers
- *Other answers:*
"The evaluation and monitoring informal or non-formal learning are not included in the responsibilities of the Professors in universities. Informal education can (a) motivate (encourage) students to experiment and to develop their skills and competences in and beyond formal education, (b) include evaluation methods that take into account the portfolio of skills and competences. "

Question 11: Who could certify the e-portfolio that will be built by the project VAB?

- University (an authorized department or board): twenty eight (28) answers
- Professors at University: six (6) answers
- Organizations where students receive informal or non-formal learning: fourteen (14) answers

Other answers: "In my opinion, without knowing the contents of the e-portfolio, the research staff of the universities, specialized in using relevant evaluation methods, should be able to certify it at an undergraduate level, or a specialized department in each university.", "a committee consisted of specialized researchers in the fields of management skills and human resources", "an organization at national level such as the National Certification Qualifications Organisation", "an impartial national body", "Business entities", "A certification body", "A qualified National Authority involving the community of the Universities", "I disagree with the "standard" certification of non-formal skills", "It can be done through the Lifelong Learning Institute that operates in the Department".

Question 12: Which are the main obstacles in implementing the evaluation process of the skills/competences acquired through informal or non-formal learning?

The main obstacles in the process that were identified by the professors:

1. Lack of impartiality, objectivity, reliability and validity in quality assessment (framework and tools)
2. Time and costs of the individualized process (which can be reduced by using the technology in a smart way). Professors already have big work-load and many man-hours are required in order to evaluate all the informal skills of a group of students
3. Not enough familiarization of the trainees and trainers regarding informal learning. Reluctant cooperation of students, due to ignorance or lack of time.
4. Lack of flexibility and adaptability of traditional educational institutions and courses
5. Omissions, errors, interventions that may have occurred
6. Difficulty in consolidating proper evaluation from teachers, in achieving collectiveness (cooperation of the Professor with a student), in encouraging individualized approaches
7. Students' attitude towards learning and evaluation of their studies (being active and alternative and taking initiatives)
8. General belief that informal learning is insignificant
9. Non-recognition of a link between non formal skills and labor market,

10. Multiculturalism

11. The uncertainty in the labor market

12. The indefinite nature of the informal skills/ competences and the difficulty of applying them. Some skills are increased with more experience (eg analysis /synthesis competence), others are decreased (eg usage of technology) and others follow a circular curve (eg creativity, innovation)

13. Structured theory but very limited practical training in particular in the field of entrepreneurship

14. Customer networks

15. Lack of institutional framework, not clear guidelines and evaluation criteria, and lack of systematic monitoring of students. Bureaucracy, lack of organization and staff (need for additional overtime work) Lack of infrastructure, skilled personnel, well-established perceptions and attitudes

16. Diversity background and different objectives of the students as well as of the scientific institutions

17. Inadequate staff training

18. The incorrect/lack of information, motivation and activation have as a result the Professors' unwillingness to participate.

19. Not so many involved stakeholders

20. Limited research experience and expertise. The usual types of regulatory tools and evaluation instruments (such as examinations) that are used in the field of education are not sufficient (other should be included such as an evaluation portfolio, interviews etc)

21. The insufficient picture a supervisor has regarding student's practical exercise

Question 13: Express briefly a summary of proposals that in your opinion can contribute to the development of successful activities and initiatives in order to assess the skills/ competences that students have developed through non-formal learning.

The proposals are listed below:

- *Relate the activities that are recorded in students CV's to the diploma so as to gain credits from professional experience, volunteer work, practice exercise, or even from extracurricular activities (eg basketball team leader)*
- *Possible use of psychological personality tests*
- *Self-evaluation ability (interviews or tests)*
- *Enrichment of the Professors' role (Professor as a counselor, Professor as a mentor)*
- *Use technology capabilities (self-assessment, e-learning, distant learning, etc.)*
- *Develop e-portfolios*
- *Strengthen the practice exercise and support it wherever it needs*
- *Establish a system similar to ECTS*
- *Create an organisation which will plan the non-formal or informal skills related to specific workplaces*
- *Implementation of non-formal or informal skills under real working conditions*
- *Inform Professors and integrate actions and ideas in developing initiatives*

- *Close cooperation between the Universities and a network of stakeholders that support students' practices. An individual practice plan with objectives, potential obstacles and evaluation indicators should be designed for each trainee. Students' practice exercise could be correlated with small projects.*
- *Enhancement of voluntary work*
- *Self-organizing and Collaborative learning*
- *The intercorrelation between the informal skills assessment and the real concerns of young people*
- *Openness of the learning process and supportive learning environment*
- *Preparation of various learning activities in a professional manner regardless which party offers this service (professional teachers, volunteers or non-governmental organizations)*
- *Participation of the general public and all interested parties concerning the evaluation results or the preparation of future actions*
- *Utilization and activation of Lifelong Learning Institutes in order to define systematic procedures according to scientific criteria*
- *Introduction of Problem Based Learning methods*
- *Design a qualitative and quantitative methodology*
- *The list of skills should be extended, the skills with the same research variable should be banded together, a working definition for each skill should be defined, reliable ways of measuring/ testing should be identified, to their validity and define levels of acquisition of each skill should be determined.*
- *Interactive semester course at the University which will be followed by filling out questionnaires and realizing personal interviews with students*

- *Creating Standards and Certification Methods, as well as an individual file trainee (student profile)*
- *Selection of several people as evaluators*
- *Proper planning and systematic organization of the evaluation (Use multiple methods and techniques of evaluation)*
- *Publication of evaluation results*
- *Use European Euro pass documents to describe the qualifications and skills by individuals,*
- *On-line questionnaires (as in the case of Rose of Leary where the models of communication between people can be seen)*
- *Informative seminars for stakeholders*
- *Publication of promotional/informative brochure*
- *Marketing of the project usefulness at university*
- *Motivate teachers /students*
- *Organize related events and meetings for the students and faculty involved*
- *Establishment of clear and measurable skills Create a systematic framework for evaluation skills*

Question 14: Are you willing to participate in the evaluation process of students' informal or non formal learning?

31 people answered "Yes"

2 people answered "Yes, provided that I have plenty of time I will participate in the activities of your project "

1 answered "Maybe"

1 answered *"It depends. I disagree with the standardization of such procedures. The realization of self-assessment tools would be useful and I am interested in participating towards this direction"*

1 answered *"Basically No, but if it is a necessity I will try to"*

14 answered *"No"*

Question 15: Do you wish to take part in the pilot phase of the digital portfolio (e-portofolio) and online learning (e-training) application?

34 people answered *"Yes"*

1 answered *"probably Yes"*

2 people answered *"Yes, provided that I have plenty of time I will participate in the activities of your project"*

1 answered *"Maybe"*

12 people answered *"No"*

Conclusion

In conclusion, most of the professors have recognised both the importance of the informal or the non formal skills/competences and the numerous obstacles in assessing them. Professors have proposed that the VAB project should focus on a subset of competences due to the fact that it is very difficult to standardize and certify a great number of skills.

The need in setting overall objectives per knowledge domain such as financial, accounting, etc. was also highlighted so as the skills and competences to be identified and the appropriate context to be created. At EU level there were realized many attempts to define the necessary skills in specific domains, such as engineers and economists.

Lastly, it was claimed that every effort in creating further opportunities for young men and women is a positive step by itself, especially if it is practically applied and has tangible results.