

## **Parallel session D**

# **Exploring complementary routes to certification**

## **Certification - The fourth and final stage of validation**

The Council Recommendation of 2012 refers to “certification” as the fourth stage in validation, after identification, documentation and assessment. Through certification individuals obtain proof from an authorized body that they have achieved learning outcomes to a given standard. The certification stage provides value (currency) to the learning which has been identified, documented and assessed and makes it possible for individuals to exchange their prior learning into further education and training, learning or employment.

The changing landscape of qualifications and the emergence of alternative credentials (such as micro-credentials) is affecting the certification phase of validation. Content and structure of qualifications are evolving. Partial qualifications or parts of qualifications might be available to be obtained through validation. Short training courses and learning experiences are developing rapidly across Europe by a wide variety of public and private stakeholders, in response to the need for more flexible, learner-centred forms of education and training. These shorter forms of learning can be formal but will mostly be non-formal and often labour-market related. The potential role of and the interest in credentials that certify the outcomes of short learning experiences or parts of a programme is thus increasing.

In a fully implemented lifelong learning approach, a certification obtained at one point in time through a shorter course with labour market orientation could later be integrated into a more formalized, full qualification. In this way individuals will be able to build their credentials during their entire life, drawing from different learning contexts.

Validation should, therefore, not be seen as something happening once, but rather as something that can happen at different stages of an education and employment career path.

## **Objectives of the parallel session**

This parallel session explores in what way the changing landscape of qualifications, as well as the increasing digitization of credentials can affect and influence validation of non-formal and informal learning. The purpose of the discussion is to gather input to ensure the update of the Guidelines in line with the changing certification context.

The following focus workshops are planned:

1. D.1: Opening up qualifications
2. D.2: Learning outcomes
3. D.3: Technical format – digitalisation of certificates

## **Orienting questions**

- What key aspects are needed to build a comprehensive system of certification that includes

formal, non-formal and informal learning?

- How can existing, formal/full qualifications be further opened up to non-formal and informal learning?
- Is the increasing diversity of qualifications and emerging certificates open to non-formal and informal learning?
- How can the European guidelines capture the challenges and necessary choices for validation certification?

## **Reading:**

Note EQF AG 56-5: Exploring complementary routes to certification