



# Informal Competencies and their Validation (ICOVET)

## Train the Trainer Curriculum



## Authors

Randolph Preisinger-Kleine  
Andreas Frahm

## Editor

DJI Deutsches Jugendinstitut  
Nockherstr. 2  
81541 München

© Copyright 2006  
All rights reserved

This material was developed and produced within the framework of the project ICO-VET „Informal Competencies and their Validation in VET“, which has been carried out with the support of the European Community. The content of this material does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Community, nor does it involve any responsibility on the part of the European Community which has been funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme of the European Union.

Project ID 0815/4711 Runtime: 01.10.2004 - 30.09.2006  
Promoter: Deutsches Jugendinstitut, München / Germany

# Train-the-Trainer Curriculum

For the use of the interview guidelines  
with www-support

## Overview

Introduction.....	3
Background information.....	4
Philosophy of the Curriculum.....	6
Objectives one by one .....	8
General objectives .....	8
Specific objectives .....	8
Organisation of the Training .....	11
Contents of the qualification .....	13
Overview of preparation stage .....	14
Realization stage: attendance seminar .....	14
Follow-up-stage .....	15
Role, importance and tasks of the trainers .....	16
General remarks about the presentation.....	16
Analysis of the target group and the role of the interviewer .....	17
Introduction to the validation tool .....	17
How to validate competencies? .....	17
Putting the module into practice .....	18

---

## Introduction

The following Train-the-Trainer module has been developed in the framework of the European project ICOVET. Main objective of the project was to develop methods and instruments in order to make visible competencies of disadvantaged young people acquired outside the formal educational system.

Within organisations in charge of delivering support to disadvantaged target groups there is often a lack of reliable information on the skill level of individuals. For young people the lack of specifically tailored support for their individual skills often results in negative understanding of their abilities and low self-esteem that can influence further learning. Educational institutions on the other hand are not aware enough which young people would ultimately benefit most from their programme i.e. to which it would neither be over nor under challenging.

School leaving certificates in particular at the level of lower education often don't accurately validate the factual skill level of individuals in particular neglecting the level of basic skills and procedural knowledge. Furthermore there often is an extreme difference in achievement within one level of certification as well as high uncertainty whether one's basic skills can be matched to vocational and business requirements. In particular there is a lack of information on skills gained during extra-curricular experiences (e.g. employment, voluntary work, the use of new media).

Although several methods and instruments for the validation of informal competencies have been developed during past years, applications with a particular view to the needs of disadvantaged target groups still are limited and there is no comparable data on their effectivity. Furthermore there is strong evidence, that the bulk of methodologies and instruments do not reflect experiences and competencies of disadvantaged young people in a way to provide teachers, social workers and other practitioners of the support system as well as the young people themselves with reliable information on competency levels and how to put in vocational practice.

As of our analysis of validation methodologies there are three main approaches to the validation of informal competencies: the objective paradigm, which is heavily relying on measuring and observation of „competence in action“, hermeneutic approaches, of which most are based on methodology of „Verstehen“ (interpretation by or meaningfulness of past learning episodes) as well as combinations of both. In real application the effectivity of both approaches is clearly limited in scope. While the objective paradigm aims at making visible competency application (learning outcomes instead of processes) and does not need participation of the client at all, the hermeneutic approach to the opposite builds on highly reflective and discursive capacities of the individual, which significantly disfavours disadvantaged people, who often have not been able to acquire those competencies.

Although the Icovet utilizes elements of both, objective and interpretative paradigm, portfolio methods and semi-biographical interview techniques, it overcomes the above mentioned limitations by explicitly defining validation of competencies as a co-

---

operative and supportive process. As for this main criteria for adequacy to us is the inclusion of young people as „experts of their own affairs“ and therefore main contributors to the process of validation.

## **Background information**

Within the framework of ICOVET validation procedures for making visible key competencies of young people gained outside the framework of institutional education have been developed and tested, with a particular view to their contribution to personal development, social inclusion and learning opportunities.

The target group for this project on the one hand were disadvantaged young people at transition stage between school education and vocational training, i.e. adolescents that have been excluded from regular, vocational qualifications due to unsuitable school education, social disadvantages, or structural discrimination and have not risked to find support matching their particular conditions and requirements. Secondly, the project targeted at experts working in institutions that offer relevant opportunities, and policy makers of the educational sector, social welfare, labour administration on a regional, national and European level responsible for the design of such support programmes. The third target group formed human resource departments of companies, chambers and similar institutions.

Target sectors are institutions that offer specifically support programmes for disadvantaged young people. In Germany these are: polytechnics, youth welfare service, companies; In Greece, Great Britain, Ireland and Romania and Spain equivalent institutions offering vocational qualification programmes to disadvantaged adolescents post school education. Together these institutions share the desire to recondition the support for social disadvantage, to develop and build on social and personal skills, tackle learning deficits and offer opportunities to catch up on missed educational qualifications, helping to find suitable professional perspectives and relevant training, mediation of basic skills necessary for successful learning.

In short term perspective the project delivers methods and instruments for the validation of young people's key competencies. Those methods and instruments shall enable organisations in the area of vocational preparation and training a more effective support practice. In medium term the perspective shall be broadened, including the transfer of ICOVET philosophy to different sectors of the support system and formal accreditation. Finally in long term the ICOVET model shall significantly increase the effectiveness of the support system as a whole by creating successful transitions from school to work (VET) and providing flexible structures in order to enable young disadvantaged people entry into VET.

The project was carried out under the Leonardo da Vinci programme of the European Union and joined by 11 partner organisations:

- Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V. (Germany)
- Nexus Research Cooperative (Ireland)
- INDOR (Spain)
- CRED (Wales)
- Praxis & Wissenschaft Projekt (Germany)
- Ausbildungs- und Kulturzentrum Berlin (Germany)
- Berufsförderungsinstitut Peters (Germany)
- Institute of Educational Sciences (Romania)
- Ergon Kek (Greece)
- Waterford Regional Youth Service (Ireland)

---

## Philosophy of the Curriculum

According to our understanding young people learn not only at school, during vocational training, or in other formal educational institutions, they also evidently acquire competences just as much or doing voluntary work.

Young people tend to acquire a range and variety of skills and competencies through processes of non-formal and informal learning. These skills may be developed when they take on certain responsibilities within their own family, when they meet up with friends, or when they get involved in sport, music-making, through involvement in employment or indeed as a result of voluntary or community work. These skills may be related to being able to work in a team, being able to organise things, being flexible and reliable. Young people are often not even aware of this themselves.

Research on vocational integration of disadvantaged young people has shown, that integration can be successful if the funding and support network is matched to the requirements and background of the young people in question.

One of the obstacles here is the lack of reliable information on the competency level of individuals. School leaving certificates in particular at the level of lower education often don't accurately validate the factual competency level of individuals in particular neglecting the level of key competencies and procedural knowledge. Furthermore there often is an extreme difference in achievement within one level of certification as well as high uncertainty whether one's key competencies can be matched to vocational and business requirements. In particular there is a lack of information on competencies gained during extra-curricular experiences (e.g. employment, voluntary work, the use of new media). According to Deutsches Jugendinstitut these key competencies are significantly relevant for increasing someone's employability.

In this context especially teachers and coaching social education workers hold a key position who are already in contact to / have the confidence of young people in and out of school and who are familiar with their world of living. It is their task to carry out these interviews in a competent and qualified manner on the basis of their knowledge of the life of the young people, of the requirements of the world of employment and of their pedagogical experience.

The approach at issue excels by:

- its explicit definition as a participative process. First of all in the sense that the young people are actively included in all phases of the procedure and are therefore experts of their own interests. They decide for themselves which fields of activity they want to be questioned and validated. Finally the young people are personally responsible for the way how the results and documents are dealt with in the future.

- 
- its implementation of a reconstructive and interpretative process. Contrary to methods of making competencies visible by validating individual skills, abilities and competencies *in actu* the young person in form of the manual is offered reference and orientation for the reflection of informal learning processes and results which were situated in a former time respectively have been achieved. There is a clear advantage to be seen in the fact that competencies this way can also and explicitly be interpreted as learning results. Furthermore it could also be mentioned diagnostic, since allowing assumptions about fitness for training and learning. The ICOVET approach of validation this way corresponds the work definitions underlying the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning. At the same time, however, additional requirements arise regarding to the classification of learning processes and differentiation of learning episodes.
  - Although the interview guide shall serve as an orientation it is not self-explaining. The procedure rather requires an active and supporting role of the facilitator. That is to say when defining relevant areas, specifying activities, reconstructing learning processes and results, classifying of activities according to abilities and finding out key competencies. As the results of the test showed this role can be filled the more active the more the facilitator knows in context about the life situation and the biography of the young person and how he can use this information in the course of the validation process in a supportive way.
  - Undoubtedly, there is central significance in the approach at issue towards the target group specific organization of the interview itself. The contribution of the facilitator consists basically in a “good interview”. As already mentioned, that is not only a matter of methods and techniques but also and explicitly of their embedding into a pedagogical overall concept which supports and promotes the individual process of reflection. Accordingly, the ICOVET approach follows the basic maxims of humanistic psychology, especially the principles of non-directive conversation, however, expands these referring to the special requirements of the target group by the beforehand cited services of orientation rendered by the facilitator.

The interview is defined as “semi-narrative”, which indicates the use of narrative techniques in order to reconstruct learning episodes and its overall contribution to competency development. Nevertheless the ICOVET validation process also offers interfaces to subsequent educational guidance. That is learning pathways identified during validation within counselling processes can be embedded into individual biographies.

- The ICOVET curriculum is describing an overall framework, which allows enough flexibility for a broad range of pedagogic approaches. This way it builds on the rich pedagogic experience and professional background of teachers, trainers and social workers rather than narrowing down diversity by applying one single pedagogy to all of them. Within the framework of the train-the-trainer module therefore particular attention was paid to the process of embedding different pedagogical background and resources of interviewers into the overall validation design.

- Due to the fact that there is significant differences in the definition of key competencies across sectors and countries, as well as in research for the purpose of the curriculum a formal and process-orientated definition of key competencies was introduced. Given this definition key competencies can be validated independent from specificity of competencies and skills. Within the framework of the curriculum key competencies are defined by criteria of “demonstrating transferability” (originated by Bateson et al), rather than purely “aggregating” what has been learned. For example if the person is leader of a music band and has shown leadership competency also in other areas like school etc., this for the interviewer might indicate (social) key competencies.
- Although there are different conceptions of “key competencies” to the authors it seems the most pragmatic approach to the problem of transfer. During peer review with practitioners from school and work it became evident that the transfer of learning outcomes into the working world / training world only can be ensured by indentifying “something transferrable”. For example if the young person in leisure time plays computer games this doesn` t mean that this person also will be able to use a computer according to the expectations of professionals. But there is a big chance for further evidence if the interviewer can show that the person can apply ICT skills in different informal settings and social environments.

## Objectives one by one

### General objectives

The participants of the course are to learn in the facilitator training - based on already existing knowledge, abilities and hands-on skills – basic methods and techniques, with the help of which informal competencies of disadvantaged young people can be made visible. Participants/target group of the course are teachers, social education workers and other members of the *community of practice* who want to support in their job young people during the transition from school to work.

### Specific objectives

On the one hand the specific objectives comprise the imparting of the educational policy background, the pedagogical principals, the pedagogical process and the normative-ethical principles of making competencies visible, as on the other hand of skills and abilities which build the basis of a successful realization of the procedure proposed here to make competences visible. The contents were assigned to specific levels, which on the one hand permit a change and rhythm, so care for the fact that the participants are not uninterruptedly and in all topics preoccupied to the same extent, lay down the relation between self-learning and attendance stage, as well as facilitate the future evaluation of the realization of the course and the results by transparent instructions referring to learning objectives to be achieved.

Level	Know what	Know how	Mastering
1	Participants shall know about ICOVET concept	Participants shall be informed about action-based elements of ICOVET process	Participants shall know about key elements (determinants) of validation situations
2	Participants shall know about ICOVET concept and being able to partially apply	Participants shall know about and train basic patterns of action	Participants shall be able to analyze a broad range of validation situations
3	Participants shall be able to creatively mastering ICOVET concept	Participants intensively train action-based validation skills	Participants shall be able to master different validation situations

The course programme is divided into a preparation stage, attendance stage and a follow-up stage. The stages have always different focuses. So the first phase (of self-study) comprises in the first place of basic and background knowledge referring to the topic of making competencies visible, especially referring to the ICOVET-approach. Stage 2 (attendance stage) contributes to the training in or respectively the acquisition of the skills and abilities which are described in the working material of stage 1. In this case it is to be dealt with key competencies which are to be gone into further in the following stage (follow-up stage). The categorization of levels to stages respectively contents is to be carried out as follows:

Level	Phase	Aim
1	1	Basic understanding pedagogy and theoretical assumptions of ICOVET
2	2	
1	1	Pedagogy process: curriculum, methodology, didactics, settings
2	2	
2	1	Normative and ethical principles
3	2	

Level	Phase	Aim
1	1	Essentials in quality assurance and evaluation
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Self-evaluation of interviewer skills and personal resources, transfer
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Application of interview guide
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Settings: determining core elements
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Fitting curriculum to needs of target group
1	2	
2	3	
1	1	Shared process of validation and conclusion
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Supporting young people at the documentation of competencies
2	2	
3	3	

Level	Phase	Aim
1	1	Transfer into EUROPASS
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Use of ICOVET Online-Tool
2	2	
3	3	
1	1	Evaluation of validation process
1	2	
2	3	

## Organisation of the Training

In developing the module special emphasis was given to aspects of convertibility and user friendliness. In reality we can assume that the actual addressees of this module, especially secondary teachers as well as persons who work as social workers in schools and persons who work with disadvantaged young people, have only limited temporal resources at their disposal.

According to this situation the module comprises three segments. of which only one segment is being offered as attendance event.

**Segment 1**, the preparation stage, serves as a preparation for the participation in the attendance event and is designed as self-study. Therefore selected materials are offered which can be recalled via [www.icovet.de](http://www.icovet.de). There are e.g. introducing texts and references to basic topics available like concepts of competences, models and methods of making competences visible, especially for the validation of informal competences of young persons referring to the ICOVET –approach as well as the categories of competences of the EUROPASS.

**Segment 2**, the attendance stage: this active training phase contents the reflection of the self-learning-phase, the transfer into practice with action-oriented practical exer-

cises and role-plays and organisational directions and hints for the realization in the participants different settings in segment 3

**Segment 3**, the participants of the training prepare the interviews according to the specific efforts of their work-situation and life-situation of their target group (web-support)

**Organizational framework:**

Number of participants: 12 – 20 persons

Total time: 16 hours

Duration of attendance stage: 4 hours

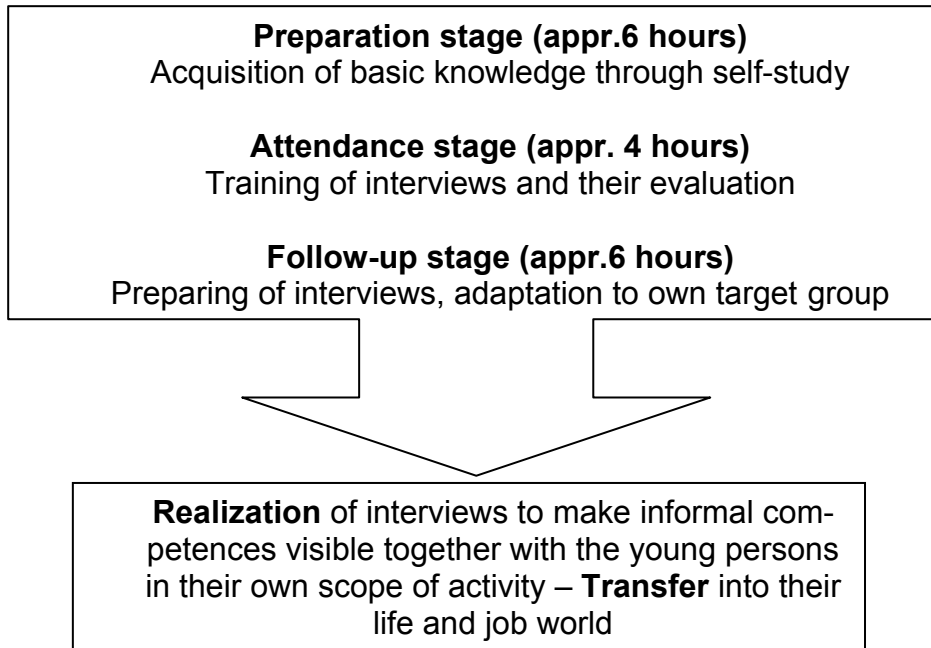
**Who takes part in the qualification?**

Teachers, social workers, social education workers and kindergarten teachers who work with disadvantaged persons in and outside schools and who want to support them in their vocational integration.

**What does the qualification offer?**

Through self-study and attendance stage you learn how to make the informal competencies of your young people visible with the aid of an interview guide and to use the results during school-to-work transition.

## Organization of the qualification



## Contents of the qualification

### Contents of preparation stage

- acquiring of basic knowledge of validating competencies
- getting to know the interview guide and the working materials
- first training

### Contents of attendance stage

- reflection of preparation stage
- vocational work training with the interview guide
- vocational training to utilize results
- indications to modify the working material

### Contents of follow-up stage

- discussion on the web platform
- adaptation of interview guide and working material to individual target group and setting
- preparation of individual interviews

## Overview of preparation stage

Issue	Specific	Materials
Validation of competencies of disadvantaged youth	Competence concepts Assessment models	Günther Schaub Forschungsschwerpunkt "Übergänge in Arbeit" Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V. München/Halle 2005: Der Stellenwert des informellen Lernens - Kompetenzfeststellung Der Stellenwert des informellen Lernens bei der berufsorientierten Kompetenzfeststellung für benachteiligte Jugendliche
EuroPASS	EuroPASS and competence categories	Europass-Form
Information on the project	General information Best-practice guide Manual DVD	Website
Seminar enrolment		Form sheet

## Realization stage: attendance seminar

The participation in the attendance seminar requires the knowledge of this basic concept as well as of the IVOCET –approach and is based on them. The 6 hour event comprises:

- explanation of validation instrument and the way it works,
- furthermore analyzing of detailed steps concerning the methods how to make competences visible and showing of film sequences and examples in practice by way of illustration,
- explanation of how to transfer the competences which have been made visible in the process of validation into the EUROPASS.
- The next step shows which elements constitute a successful interview and which requirements the interviewer has to meet ideally.
- The practice part finally shows how to practice the procedure to make competences visible. It also considers potential problems and their solutions.

## Follow-up-stage

The follow-up stage – after the attendance event – offers the participants the opportunity to discuss questions concerning the institutional, organisational and target group specific implementation of the validation procedure among experts and other participants on the web platform. Above all will Mrs. Ulrike Richter, Deutsches Jugendinstitut, be happy to answer your questions after the project has come to an end.

### Overview of follow-up stage

Issue	Specific	Materials
Feedback on use of instrument	Email to trainer	
Follow up	Discussion of general and specific aspects of validation process	Website <a href="http://www.icovet.eu">www.icovet.eu</a>
Adaption	Adaption to different settings, of materials	Website <a href="http://www.icovet.eu">www.icovet.eu</a>
Coping	Problem analysis and Coping strategies	Information, hints and instructions online
Rendering	Rendering process regarding requirements of different target groups	Target group specific check lists FAQ / Forum <a href="http://www.icovet.eu">www.icovet.eu</a>

---

## Role, importance and tasks of the trainers

- In the module's attendance stage the trainer takes over the training of the interviewers.
- He prepares the training and realizes it with the target group.
- He supports the transfer of knowledge which has been acquired in the preparation stage into the practice by extending information, exercises and role plays.
- He introduces the participants to exercises and tasks which are necessary for the follow-up stage and the implementation together with the young people.
- Therefore he adapts the guidelines and suggestions of the Train – the – trainer – module to different target groups.
- At the end he hands out evaluation sheets and evaluates the training on the basis of reporting back.

### General remarks about the presentation

In all further training courses presentation by the trainer plays an important role. The possibility to directly implement the acquired knowledge into practice found its way into this conception deliberately because a successful interview has to be trained. In the vocational training stage the participants are to draw up an ideal validation profile which already contains many aspects to make competences visible successfully. Beyond the methodical knowledge the following aspects are important:

- The presentation is to encourage the participants at once and at the same time to take part, speak and get active.
- The presentation eagerly expects what the participants produce and develop.
- It takes part in the entire process and gives advice.
- It is open to all of the participants' contributions.
- Individual positive impulses are transferred to the process of mediation.
- Specific transparent questions help the process of mediation.
- The presentation is in charge and observes the course of events, the process and the duration.
- It radiates peace and composure and has the courage to leave well-trodden paths.
- It stays in contact with itself while working and pays attention to its inner voice, its individual thinking and emotions, feels the moods of the participants.
- It is familiar with working methods.

---

## Analysis of the target group and the role of the interviewer

Course and success of the validation procedure vitally depend on the competences and the previous knowledge of the interviewer.

In this context the following questions arise:

- From which experiences and knowledge do the participants start from?
- Which methods and techniques of conversation and interview do the participants have at hand?
- How can the acquired experiences, the knowledge as well as the methods and techniques be put into the process of validation sensibly?
- Which specific interview methods and techniques are necessary beyond that?
- Every assessment of competences depends on the self-image and understanding for the interviewer's individual role. It affects contents, methods and course of the assessment of competences. Therefore it is important to find out about one's own role.

## Introduction to the validation tool

For this see

- manual, pp. 7
- best-practice-guide, section 3
- validation tool, pp. 1

## How to validate competencies?

The interview's objective is to prove that the described activities have actually taken place and the competences made visible actually have been acquired.

Here we have got to be aware that:

- competences are always connected with a learning process. The crucial point while translating activities into abilities therefore is whether and to what extent an actual learning process has depended on the acquiring of competences and to what extent this was necessary to meet the demands of a situation. Undoubtedly, this is not always easy because a prominent characteristic feature of informal learning processes is the fact that they – totally different from learning areas which are structured with the help of a curriculum – often take a non-linear course and can therefore be reconstructed far more difficult.
- furthermore we have to ask if the activities described by the young people while being interviewed rather "aim at the realization of external demands, standards and objectives" or whether they were of a creative nature which was partly or entirely open-oriented concerning target and performance. As far as the activities described by the young person can be assigned to the former type one can first of all speak of skills.

To speak of competences, however, seems only then appropriate when activities aim at situations which demand “self-organized” acting and can not only be coped with by automatic and routine activity patterns.

- key competences after all are defined by the fact that they can be used in order to cope with a wide range of very different but equally important standards of daily life, work or social life. To make key competences visible therefore means to ask if the activity only constitutes an isolated episode or whether the same competence can be proved in different scopes of activities. This is by the way an indication for the fact that these key competences can be applied in different contextual circumstances, i.e. can be transferred between them. So far key competences play a central role concerning the question how abilities which are acquired in an informal context can be used in vocational education.

## **Putting the module into practice**

The second part of the train-the-trainer module includes detailed information how to put the module into practice, followed by a discrete unit aiming at the self-evaluation of competences and the previous knowledge of the interviewer and practical exercises to be implemented during the attendance seminar. Materials to be used during the different phases of the training session are to be found on the ICOVET internet site and will be provided at the attendance seminar.

Before attending the seminar the participants will be given the opportunity to self-assess their knowledge (acquired during preparation phase) according to level structure outlined under chapter “specific objectives”. After finishing the attendance seminar the participants will be asked for self-evaluating the skills acquired during the training according to outlined skills level structure.

After attending the seminar the participants at least shall be able to conduct a full validation session, including preparation, interview and documentation of validation results. During the follow up phase experience gained from implementation will be fed back into discussion, enabling identification and exchange of good practice, coping strategies, adaption to specific settings and rendering of target-specific validation process.