Background and Procedure

The validation of non- or informally acquired social, personal and organisational competences is carried out along a standardised procedure developed by a community of evaluators specialised in informal and non-formal learning ("REVEAL").

1.   REVEAL and LEVEL5

REVEAL is a transnational network of European experts from grass-root projects, adult education providers and universities working for more than four years on the question how the impacts of non-formal and informal learning can be measured and visualised.

In the framework of three European funded projects, the community developed **LEVEL5**, a formative *validation system* which enables stakeholders in European projects to assess and to display the impact of collaborative project work in transnational teams.
The effects (or the impact) of non-formal and informal learning can be displayed through the development of learners' competences (e.g. specific theme centred knowledge, improvement of "soft" skills like collaboration and intercultural communication, attitudes towards other groups etc.).

The **LEVEL5** evaluation procedure is on one hand standardised but at the same time enables users to establish individualised reference systems for assessing and evidencing relevant competences of their target groups in a process-orientated way.
With the help of **LEVEL5** one can measure, display and evidence individual competence developments and give proof of the range of effects resulting from cooperation in European projects.
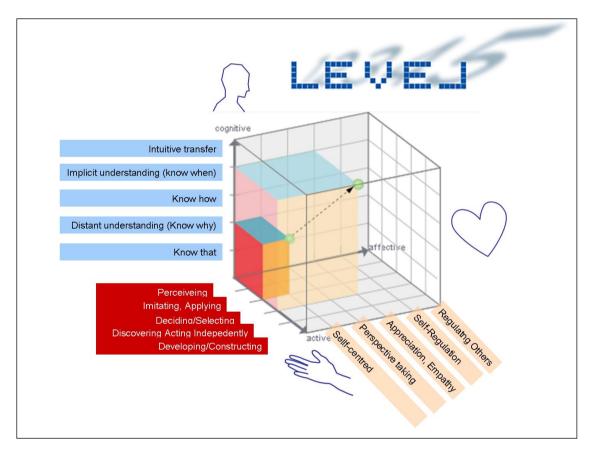
2.   Principles of LEVEL5

Initially the **LEVEL5** evaluation system has been developed and piloted in more than 60 informal and non-formal learning projects since 2006 in order to assess
- cognitive,
- activity related and
- affective

learning outcomes to evidence and visualise competence developments of learners in informal and non-formal learning projects.

The basic principle
Individual or group competences can be evaluated in a process orientated way, visualised in a 3-dimensional cube model and fully documented in a specific software system.

Fig. 1: The LEVEL5-cube

Based on this model LEVEL5 is grounded on the basic competence definition of the EU[1] that a competence is the ability to apply a synthesis of
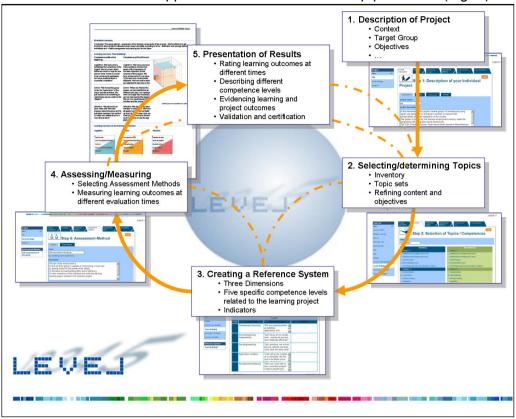- Knowledge,
- Skills and
- Attitudes

in a particular situation and in a particular quality.

LEVEL5 is especially suitable to assess personal, social and organisational competences, hence exactly those, that are acquired in informal learning settings such as learning in a prison context.

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[1] The *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework* is an annex of a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006

Approach and methodology

The LEVEL5 evaluation approach is based on a five step procedure (Fig. 2):

Fig. 2: LEVEL5 procedural approach

1. **Learning Project Description**
   - Describing the properties of the learning project in a preformatted pattern and the profile of the group and the learners
2. **Selecting topics**
   - Selecting relevant competences to be assessed from an inventory specifically designed for learning actions in prison settings and option to further refinement of the wording according to project's purposes
3. **Establishing an individualised reference system**
   - Adapting the reference system from the general inventory to the specifics of project and target group on the basis of a 3-dimensional (cognitive, affective, activity related) rating system with five individualised stages/levels
4. **Assessment**
   - Describing the evaluation procedure and its timing as well as the respective methods of data collection.
   - In the VALMOPRIS pilot-projects a broad range of assessment methods can be applied and combined, e.g. questionnaires and interviews to group discussions, assessment exercises, project work and observation by training staff. Besides the named there is a wide variety of further methods to apply for assessing data on competence development (see annex).
5. **Rating/Documenting/Visualisation**
   - Inserting the ratings of a group or individual participants at the given time into the individualised reference system to later on be displayed in a 3-dimensional evidencing system (**CUBE**)
   - The ratings are substantiated and documented in the software
   - Results may be recorded internally and/or connected with learners' certificates
   - Option of automatic generation of learners' certificates.

3.   Reasons to apply LEVEL5

Specific benefits for VALMOPRIS at a glance:

- Not only validating learning outcomes but competence developments
- Contextualised validation possible (fit to purpose and learning environment and learners)
- Development of an extendable but still specific inventory for competences acquired in prison settings
- Reference systems designed in accordance to project's objectives and aspired learning outcomes, focused on cognitive, activity related and affective competence developments
- Preformatted reference systems for social, personal and organisational competences
- Evidencing, documentation and visualisation of the competence developments
- Certification: Competence developments of the learners can be evidenced and documented
    o in the web-based 3-dimensional visualisation and documentation system
    o in personal certificates either printed or as PDF.
- Accreditation: VALMOPRIS projects and learning activities may be accredited with the European LEVEL5 label after an external evaluation carried out by an accredited REVEAL evaluator.
- Possibility to evidencing the impact and learning progress of non-formal and informal learning activities and projects
- Possible integration of results in QM systems in HRM.

4. Examples of previous LEVEL5 applications in EU projects

The LEVEL5 assessment system has been applied to several different contexts and target groups in more than 60 European projects in the past ten years. Here a few examples:

- *Educckate - Education Cultural & Creative Knowledge Alliance for Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs (*www.educckate.eu*).* The project aims to develop an innovative training and mentored internship scheme for the support of Higher Education Institutions and businesses, the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindset of students and graduates and the promotion of entrepreneurship. EDUCCKATE provides the students and graduates of Cultural and Creative majors with access to businesses in the sector as well as opportunities to develop business projects & discover new professional routes.

- *VITA* - (www.vita-eu.org). VITA is about to utilise a unique and innovative validation system (LEVEL5) for personal, social and organisational competences (SPOC) to provide evidence of human potentials for learners, educational professionals and employers. This relates for instance to customer orientation, team work, cooperation, intercultural communication, flexibility but also entrepreneurial skills and planning competences.

- *VILMA - Validation of Informal Learning in Mobility Actions* (www.vilma-eu.org). The aim of the 24 months VILMA project is to assess and evidence the development of competences by participating in transnational mobility actions.

- *RIVER - Recognition of intergenerational Volunteering Experiences and Results* (www.river-project.eu). The project aims to develop reliable and convincing methodologies for the assessment and validation of the impact and outcomes of senior volunteering.

- *SuperMAN - Supermarkets meet accessibility needs* (www.supermanproject.eu). In order to foster the concept of accessibility, within the framework of the SuperMAN project, the staff of some Italian and German supermarkets took part in a formative training which allowed them to offer an adequate welcome, support and assistance to people with mental disabilities.