Recognition of Prior Learning as a Tool for Enhancing Inclusion

The Austrian Example

Kick-off conference of the Erasmus+ project SIDERAL
Zadar, 2nd July 2019, Barbara Birke

Starting point

- At European level
  - several driving forces behind the recognition and crediting of competences towards degree and certificate programmes: Bologna Process (higher education), the Strategy for Lifelong Learning (LLL), the Copenhagen Process (vocational training), Lisbon Strategy (education sector), Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning…

- At national level
  - 2011: Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy "LLL:2020": *'…acquired skills and competences, regardless of where they were acquired, be recognised and certified, thus placing non-formal and informal education processes on an equal level with formal education processes.'*
  - 2017: National strategy on the social dimension of higher education. Refers to LLL:2020 strategy
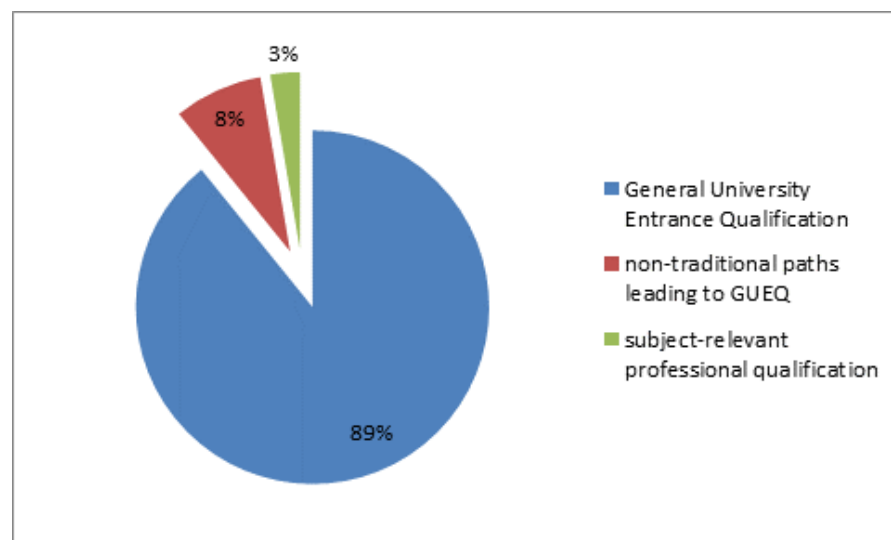
Formal, non-formal & informal learning

- **formal learning:** <u>takes place in an organised and structured environment</u>, <u>specifically dedicated to learning</u>, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually <u>in the form of a certificate or a diploma</u>; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education; Learning is controlled, restricted by a curriculum

- **non-formal learning:** takes place through <u>planned activities</u> (in terms of learning objectives, learning time); <u>some form of learning support is present</u> (e.g. student-teacher relationships); eg in-company training, structured on-line learning, and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members;

- **informal learning:** <u>resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure</u> and is <u>not organised or structured</u> in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be <u>unintentional</u> from the learner's perspective; eg project management skills, ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country

Reality check (1)

- 2011: Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy "LLL:2020":
  '...acquired skills and competences, regardless of where they were acquired, be recognised and certified, thus placing non-formal and informal education processes on an equal level with formal education processes.'

- 2019: Current Austrian legal provisions
  - <u>No</u> RPL of non-formal and informal learning at universities (except for postgraduate programmes)
  - RPL at Universities of Applied Sciences / Fachhochschulen (since 1994)
    - Upon admission to UAS with subject-relevant professional qualification
    - RPL of credits at UAS -> experience from the job has to be considered

Reality check & experience

- RPL at Universities for Applied Sciences / Fachhochschulen
  - Upon admission to UAS with subject-relevant professional qualification
- RPL of credits at UAS -> experience from the job has to be considered
  - No data avalaible
  - Little experience with recognition procedures, little trust in the quality of competences acquired ‚elsewhere'
  - Lack of transparent and quality assured procedures
  - ……

⮱ Information and promotion are required!

Promoting RPL – non-formal & informal competences

- 2 initiatives funded by Ministry -> promotion & support instead of legal prescriptions

- Co-ordinated by AQ Austria

- Carried out together with 11 HEI
  - all HE-sectors are represented
  - reality check, internal view
  - identification with recommendations/project outcomes
  - participation voluntary, no costs/fees

- Outcomes/benefits
  ⇒ Recommendations for RPL procedures
  ⇒ Individual support from experts for implementing procedures ‚at home‘
  ⇒ Increasing awareness

AQ Agentur für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung Austria

Recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences

Recommendations for recognition and crediting procedures

2016

Basic recommendations for recognition & crediting procedures

- Integration into the higher education institution's strategy

- Developing suitable quality-assured procedures

- Curricula have to be competence based

- Ensuring transparency
  - Developing regulations and providing information
  - Defining the responsibilities
  - Defining and meeting criteria
  - Quality assurance of decisions
  - Ensuring documentation and monitoring
  - Transferring information to consultants
  - Providing applicants and students with information

Recommendations for implementation process

- Peer learning and networks
  - National network with HEIs and stakeholders
  - International experts with experience in RPL
- Clear legal provisions
  - RPL mandatory?
  - RPL permitted?
  - Legal provisions fit for RPL?
  - -> HEIs should have a strategy in place
  - Defining the role of external QA
- Guidelines mutually agreed
- Information, promotion, support from Ministry

Current status/outlook

- Increasing awareness mainly as a result of counselling processes at HEI
  - visiting 11 HEIs with external experts (Germany, Finland)
  - Workshops for exchange of experiences
  - Presentations, dissemination, partnerships, national working groups….

- Changes in the law

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