

Grundtvig Contact Seminar

MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE: VALORISATION OF ADULT LEARNING IN INFORMAL SETTING

6-10 October, Villasimius

HOTEL PULLMAN TIMI AMA SARDEGNA
Località Notteri - Villasimius (CA)

The aim of the seminar is to foster a fruitful reflection as well as to help create Learning Partnerships and Senior Volunteering Projects between organisations which operate in the field of adult education in different European countries participating in the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The reflection and the resulting projects should be focused on the valorisation of adult learning in an informal setting and of the outcomes of this specific kind of learning. The challenge to be addressed is therefore to make the kind of learning which takes place outside formal education and training institutions - be it non-formal or informal - more visible.

One of the most distinctive features of Grundtvig subprogramme, whose aim is to provide adults with ways to improve their knowledge and skills, is to address the area of informal learning in its broadest sense, well beyond formal schemes. This specificity of Grundtvig programme is for sure accountable for its success and the richness of the initiatives that are taking place within its framework. According to J. Bjørnåvold, *"During the past few years, most Member States of the EU have emphasised the crucial role of learning that takes place outside of and in addition to formal education and training. [...] Both in the public and private realms, the usefulness of such practices is clearly expressed. The huge reservoir of non-formal learning which creates the basis for important parts of the economies needs to be made visible."*¹

Countries around Europe are increasingly emphasising the need to take account of the full range of an individual's knowledge, skills and competences, and recognising all forms of learning is a priority of EU action in education and training. The white paper on education and training adopted by the European Commission in 1995 clearly states that the challenge of adapting to economic and labour market change in the future requires to develop and support a broader knowledge base through the combination of formal and non-formal learning². Such a diversified approach, which combines the qualities of different learning areas, is necessary in order to avoid a one-dimensional and too narrow approach to learning.

But while formal adult learning is well institutionalized and formally recognised through grades, diplomas or certificates, non-formal and informal adult learning is far more difficult to detect and appreciate. Basically, the valorisation of informal learning and its outcomes is also clearly linked to the necessity to increase awareness about it: *"in some cases, people are not even aware of being in possession of a competence. [...] Much of the know-how which we possess was acquired through practice and painful experience. An experienced carpenter knows how to use a tool in ways that escape verbalisation. Normally, we take this know-how so much for granted that we do not appreciate the extent to which it pervades our activities."*³


¹ J. Bjørnåvold, *Making learning visible: Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe*, Cedefop, 2000.

² *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*, European Commission white paper, November 1995.

³ J. Bjørnåvold, *Making learning visible: Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe*, Cedefop, 2000.



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The seminar will be focused mainly on the following aspects of adult informal learning:

Raising awareness about non-formal and informal learning: definition and identification

Studies about informal learning show that more than 90 percent of adults are engaged in hundreds of hours of informal learning⁴. It has also been estimated that the great majority (over 70 percent) of learning in the workplace is informal. An important part of what we include in the term non-formal learning belongs to the area of implicit know-how. New strategies are thus needed to identify these "invisible" learning outcomes.

Diversity of learning processes and contexts makes it difficult to clearly define and identify this kind of learning. The terminology is somehow not very helpful in this respect. Non-formal learning is a negative concept in the sense that it is a negation of something else (formal learning). The concept gives little positive indication of content, profile, or quantity, however, it draws our attention on the rich variety of learning areas and forms available outside formal education and training.

Definitions and understandings of what counts as formal, non-formal and informal learning vary greatly between countries. In some countries, learning outside formal education and training institutions is considered a valid and important pathway to competences, whereas in others non-formal and informal learning is still scarcely developed.

Making competences visible: valorisation of non-formal and informal learning

Leaving aside the thorny issue of assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal skills, as well as the development of methodologies and assessment tools at national and European levels, this seminar aims at addressing concrete means of dissemination and valorisation of the competences acquired outside formal education and training.

The discussion should thus be focused on how to valorise non-formal and informal learning and on which means of valorisation are to be used in order to disseminate and give further visibility to successful informal learning experiences and outcomes.

Beyond dissemination, the attention should also be drawn on how to improve the adaptability of such outcomes to different contexts, as well as the whole quality of learning processes.

Building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning towards lifelong learning

In recent years, the importance of learning in non-formal and informal settings for the realisation of lifelong learning has been greatly emphasised at EU level: *"In the context of the principle of learning throughout life, the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning aim to make visible and to value the full range of knowledge and competences held by an individual, irrespective of where or how these have been acquired."*⁵

Competences have to be made visible if they are to be fully integrated into such a broader strategy (J. Bjørnåvold):

*"To establish a system for learning throughout life implies a stronger focus on the link between different forms of learning in different learning domains at different stages of life. [...] A lifelong learning system has to face the challenge of linking a variety of formal and non-formal learning areas together."*⁶

⁴ S. Merriam, R. Caffarella, L. Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood: A comprehensive guide*, New York, Wiley, 2007.

⁵ *Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*, 9175/04 EDUC 101 SOC 220, 18/05/2004.

⁶ J. Bjørnåvold, *Making learning visible: Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe*, Cedefop, 2000.

It is generally agreed that formal learning accounts for approximately only 25% of global performances, while 75% of competences can be attributed to informal learning. The aim should be to create collaborative learning environments, where the formal and informal learning are seamlessly knit together.

PRACTICAL DETAILS

What is a contact seminar?

A contact seminar is a networking event organised by a National Agency. It aims at bringing together people from organisations which share common interests and would like to develop European cooperation projects/partnerships in the field of education and vocational training. It is a great 'partner-finding' opportunity that will also allow you to:

- receive more information on the Lifelong Learning Programme and the sub-programme you are interested in;
- receive information on good practice examples and meet people from organisations which have already developed European cooperation projects;
- get to know suitable partner organisations;
- take part in workshops where you can draft your future project/partnership;
- receive advice from NA staff and other experts on how to draft a successful grant application;

Location and travel information

The contact seminar will take place from 6th to 10th October 2010 in Villasimius, at Hotel Pullman Timi Ama Sardegna, Località Notteri, Villasimius (CA).

The Seminar venue is located on the south-east coast of Sardinia, in an idyllic bay dominated by an Aragonese tower and surrounded by Mediterranean vegetation, around 60 km from Cagliari international airport (Cagliari Elmas Airport) and 2 km from the small town of Villasimius.

Further information about the seminar venue is available at the following link:

<http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-3040-pullman-timi-ama-sardegna/index.shtml>

Shuttle buses will be arranged from Cagliari airport to the Hotel and back, since it's not really easy to get to the Hotel by public transportation. However, further travel information will be provided at a later stage for the participants who will need to get to the Hotel by bus.

Working language

The whole seminar will be in English. Please note that no interpretation will be provided.

Contact seminar fee

The seminar fee is €750. We can host up to 80 participants.

The seminar fee includes accommodation, meals, documentation, working materials, shuttle bus service from and to Cagliari airport as well as the afternoon/evening cultural visit to Cagliari. Further details about payment modalities and deadline will be provided to the participants once their registration is accepted.

How to get funds?

To attend a contact seminar, your organisation shall apply for a Preparatory visit grant. For detailed information on grant application form, deadlines and any other requirements applicable at national level, please contact the National Agency in your country.

What to prepare?

We encourage all participants to bring some audiovisual or paper materials about their organisations and activities, namely in relation with any aspect of non-formal and informal adult education (posters, brochures, photos...), together with some informative documents about their regions and countries of origin.

To prepare for the working groups and actively contribute to the discussion, all participants are expected to discuss possible partnership ideas on the seminar theme within their institution, as well as to consult the following documents:

- *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*, European Commission white paper, November 1995
- *Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*, 9175/04 EDUC 101 SOC 220, May 2004.

Finally, all participants are kindly invited to bring any specialty from their countries (typical regional food, drinks or tasty desserts) for the European buffet which will be organised on the first evening. Anything good to eat or drink is very welcome!

Who to contact?

For further information, please contact:

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Deadline for NA reservations: 9TH JULY 2010

The Italian Grundtvig Team is looking forward to welcoming you in Villasimius!