

VIC Newsletter 4

September 2019

Who is VIC?

VIC stands for Validating Integration Competences of refugees and is a two-year European project funded by the Programme Erasmus+ and coordinated by the German partner DVV, Deutscher Volkshochschulverband (German Adult Education Association).






The aim is to develop an approach to measure the effectiveness of the educational offers that have been put in place to ease immigrants' pathways to integration into the labour market and society in general, on the one hand, and to assess their impact on the individual integration competences of the immigrants, on the other hand.

Hence the project is focusing on the validation of integration competences and VIC developed a validation system for this purpose which is based on the LEVEL5 approach.

VIC Experience from Practice

In December 2018 and January 2019 the project partners inaugurated the piloting phase with a national workshop involving trainers, multipliers, and adult educators. Purpose and objectives of the practical phase were, on the one hand, to test the developed e-learning modules and the validation of learning outcomes by means of LEVEL5 in practical work, and to gain more knowledge on the feasibility of implementing the VIC integration concept and approach in different learning settings. On the other hand, the aim was to explore the benefits for and impact on migrants / refugees and trainers. In order to assess and recognise these benefits in terms of personal competence development the validation system LEVEL5 was used. Another aim was to disseminate the approach among local and regional stakeholders that provide integration and language courses for migrants and refugees.

More concretely the objectives of the piloting phase were to:

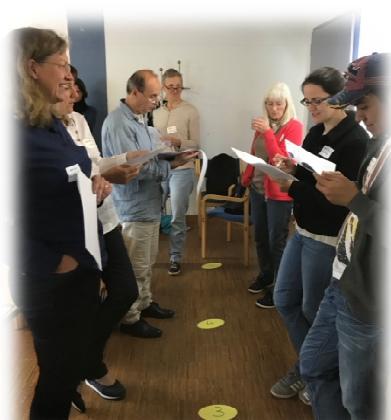
-  establish local partnerships with organisations that are interested in exploring new training methods and tools,
-  provide information on the VIC approach and learning offer in order to involve interested trainers into the piloting phase;
-  provide support in setting up learning projects aimed to apply newly acquired knowledge, concepts and methods in the practice;
-  provide counselling and support to trainers during the learning projects in preparing specific learning activities and in using LEVEL5 as a tool for assessing their own validation competences, and for assessing their learners' integration competences;
-  gather feedback from the involved trainers in terms of usability, clarity and user-friendliness of the provided course, where applicable, and the materials;

The course offer was first developed in English, then translated into the languages of the partnership and piloted with trainers and educators. In every partner country (Austria, France, Greece, Italy, Germany) the blended learning course was held with a range of trainers, multipliers, and edu

cators. Their professional profile is diverse in terms of their professional background, qualification, and professional experience as a trainer in general and in particular in integration programmes, experience with e-learning and validation. The trainers and multipliers applied the VIC approach in a variety of integration and support measures with refugees and migrants. The type of beneficiaries reached and their experiences are documented in the national reports of which a synthesis will be made available on the VIC website.

The piloting phase involved all in all 90 trainers and educators, and 200 learners in the partner countries. Feedback was gathered from all involved people – either in written or orally during the final events carried out with all involved pilottees.

Achievements and successes



LEVEL5 group exercise with trainers



The trainers involved in the learning projects could observe that their learners evolved in terms of reflecting on their competences and in formulating their learning progress. They observed that they have acquired integration competences that also have a value on the job market and in any other societal contexts. They mentioned that the reflection on learning outcomes other than those that the course is supposed to achieve (e.g. linguistic or job related ones) is something that they have not done before. It brings an added value to the training and profiling as it engages learners in a reflection process on competences that are not in the primary focus but that are all the same very important in terms of employability (e.g. intercultural communication, teamwork).

The learners were generally quite open to the assessments. They showed interest in reflecting on the competence development within the course and were pleased to see that they had actually evolved. Many of them had little learning successes in recent years and so they had a sense of achievement – this had a very positive effect on their self-esteem.

The trainers themselves confirmed that they like the concept of integration on which the VIC training is based - learning to live together in a diverse society. They mentioned that, however, this concept is hardly considered in the current integration courses that are rather unilateral – the learners are expected to learn the language, values and culture of the receiving society but the receiving society is hardly ever involved in this process. Also, it was mentioned that the strict curriculum of the obligatory courses do not offer much room for additional activities. They felt that VIC could be integrated all the same quite well as things could simply be done differently instead of adding new things.




Conclusions

Based on the experience of piloting both the learning resources and facilitating the learning projects, we can draw up a number of conclusions for applying the VIC approach. We have summarised the most significant ones hereafter (all conclusions and recommendations are available in the European pilot report):

-  Courses that include elements of profiling, coaching, or reflection on own strengths and potentials can make use of the VIC validation approach as a tool to reflect on competences and to set goals.
-  Validation should be used in a holistic way to strategically plan competence developments, e.g. define which competences are aspired, how they can be developed, validate the learning.

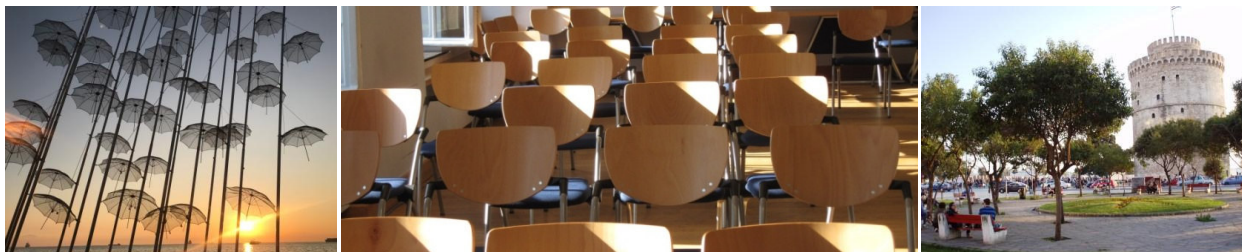
Validating Integration Competences



-  The approach has to fit to the learning setting and should make use of innovative assessment methods that avoid the impression of formal exams.
-  It is important to choose an appropriate method for assessing learners' competence development. For learners with low language skills, interactive methods can be used that do not require intensive conversation but encourage them to express their learning outcomes in a playful way.
-  Reflection on learning outcomes contributes to the positive impact of learning activities by making learning more conscious. But depending on the learners' language level, some creative methods are needed. In any case, it must be properly planned and takes time to be useful.

Final Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece

The VIC consortium is waiting for you in Thessaloniki on 16th of October, 2019.



The VIC consortium invites you to the final conference of the VIC project. The conference will be hosted by our Greek partner Aristotle University on 16th of October, 2019 at 10.00 AM. Apart from presenting the main outcomes and lessons learnt in terms of implementing the VIC approach on enhancing and validating integration competences, we will give space and time for discussions, exchanges, workshops, and networking, so that all participants can be part of the conference processes.

Validating Integration Competences



Project Partners



Coordinator
DVV International
Bonn, Germany
www.dvv-international.de



BUPNET GmbH,
Göttingen, Germany
www.bupnet.de



die Berater
Vienna, Austria
www.dieberater.com



ENAIP NET
Padova, Italy
www.enaip.net



Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
Thessaloniki, Greece
www.auth.gr/en



Eurocircle
Marseille, France
www.ec-network.net



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Website

www.integrationcompetence.eu