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# RECOGNITION AND VISIBILITY OF COMPETENCES IN SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISE OF THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS

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A comparative study of seven countries

in the Asia and Pacific region

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## Structure of my presentation

- 1. Why are informally acquired skills gaining in importance in the context of small and micro enterprises?**
- 2. Why are enterprises increasingly dependent on improving the visibility of competences practiced in informal settings?**
- 3. Why a greater emphasis on ‘competences’?**
- 4. A variety of procedures and methods to assess different competences.**
- 5. Different focuses and objectives competence assessment.**
- 6. Current state of recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning.**



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# 1. Why employees' informal competences form an important part of the company's capital?

- (1) SMEs and micro-enterprise serve niche markets ;
- (2) Employees develop special skills and knowledge during their work activities;
- (3) In Europe the majority of small scale and micro-enterprises between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of a person's vocational knowledge and skills are acquired informally



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# Green Competences that are increasingly important in the context of small scale and micro enterprises include

- Generic skills
  - Intrapersonal skills (Learning to learn);
  - Interpersonal skills (Communication skills, language skills ; Teamwork, team-based learning and teaching; Management and leadership; flexibility)
  - Cognitive skills (Information Processing; Deduction and analytical skills; Decision making skills; strategic thinking.
- Upskilling skills, topping up skills
- Specific skills related to new green occupations



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## **2. Enterprises are dependent on improving visibility and transparency of informally acquired competences**

- Recruitment of personnel;
- Human resource development as it affects productivity and the sustainability of the enterprises;
- Employability of employees ;
- optimizing human capabilities for social and economic development (SME Observatory 2003).



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## **Enterprises are dependent on improving visibility and transparency of informally acquired competences**

- Lifelong learning – training and further training are becoming less differentiated;
- Learning is demonstrated by solving problems;
- Career planning – getting a balance sheet;
- Practical competences need to be described separate from national educational systems;
- Cross-national and transnational comparability of companies is becoming important in a globalised world.



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### **3. Greater emphasis on `Competences` through informal learning that takes place in the work context**

- i. 'Competence' focus is on application of skills;
- ii. Collection of abilities and skills as the proof of vocational capability;
- iii. 'Competences' mark a significant change from diplomas and degrees that can quickly lose meaning due to the quickly changing requirements of new work requirements;
- iv. Competences also comprise formal, non-formal and informal vocational knowledge;
- v. Competences which include (knowledge, skills, abilities and dispositions) can therefore only be measured against appropriate methods of assessment



## Why transparency is necessary?

- The lack of systematic recording and documentation of these competences is a an obstacle and effects the enterprise at all levels;
- The lack oft these competences cannot be taken from or replaced by conventional diplomas and certificates.
- The lack of transparence for competences at work is also a problem for employees, because they are not documented anywhere else – in diplomas and degrees.
- Informal learning results in competences is a mark of evidence.





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## Demonstration of competences and learning through the following testing methods.

- Declarative methods – self-assessment;
- Observation methods – conclusions drawn by third parties;
- Simulations – performance judged according to situations constructed outside the workplace;
- Evidence – proof of competence.



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## The purposes of assessment is decisive for the methodological choices

- **Formative purposes** – instruments and tools are used to guide the learning process of individuals in enterprises - Competence development is focus;
- **Summative role** - tools are used to test non-formal learning for possible inclusion into the setting of formal education and training – competence assessment leading to a certification.



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## An array of instruments used for different purposes

Subjective versus objective assessment?	Self-assessment	Assessment by others
Competence development versus competence assessment	Assessment of competences (Summative) Validation and Certification	Development of Competences (formative) Description and documentation
Who is at the centre of the assessment?	Employer-oriented	Employee-oriented
What are the competences to be measured?	Professional competences	Social and personal competences

Source: Exemplo-Toolkit, 2007



- **Potential areas of conflict**
- How universal or specific should competence assessment tools be?
- Adherence to binding general standards or to company specific-standards?
- Subjective tools, trust/ objective and reliable tools?
- Implement tools with the help of proper professional guidance or without it?



	Dual approach	NVQ	Post-secondary	Informal sector	Nordic approach	Diplomas and certificate
Germany	X					
Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Philippines		X		X		
China Hong Kong (SAR)			X			
Nordic approach					X	
France						X



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## France –

- **Skills record:** Where do workers stand; potential to take stock of competences on a large scale;
- **Validation of experiential learning (VAE):** Recognition of knowledge from experience provides access to formal course of study.

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## UK

- The NVQ system has **levels from 1 to 5** . Each qualification is broken down into Units of Competence which can if required be separately assessed and certified. Many of these units of competence are delivered on the job and not in a class room.
- The acquired units of competences are collected in a portfolio and gradually lead to the acquisition of a full qualification. NVQs confirm that employees meet national standards recognized by business.



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## Nordic approach

- All kinds' skills should have formally validated credits in the education system (Norway).
- The three levels of competence-based skills are all at the upper secondary level and comprise initial, further and specialist levels (Finland).
- Competence based tests have increased rapidly (Finland)





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- Dual approach
- In the last few years Germany has made efforts to introduce validation of informal learning.
- **The qualification modules** make it possible to give credit to part qualifications acquired **during pre-vocational preparation** outside of formal initial training.
- **The external examination** enables workers to verify vocational experience or knowledge from non-formal further training courses and to request for an examination towards a recognized vocational degree without going through formal training programme



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- The external examinations can be taken by persons who have one and half times the training period of the respective occupation.
- **The continuing education pass** records individual s activities of lifelong learning in formal, non-formal and informal training contexts. The work pass is work process related in relation to documentation, reflection, stocktaking and planning.



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- **Competence handbook** defines competences in three areas:  
Professional, methodological and social competence.  
Each competence area comprises 9 to 16 individual skills.

## Competence development and competence assessment.

**Germany** . Recognising informal learning after CVET.

- How are results of CVET transferred into the workplace?
- List of goals to be transferred into the work practice are drawn up.
- How can the documentation tool be employed as a formative certification tool.
- Is the certification tool appropriate to document informal competences?



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## Competence development and competence assessment in the work place

- **Finland.** Implements the seminar in a work context
- The employee continues working on the job.
- Employee decides on which contents of the training are relevant to his work.
- Employee integrates contents in his work tasks.
- The task of non-formal learning is facilitating the development process in the work place; encourages workers to continue their reflection and self-evaluation when pursuing the seminar goals.



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## Competence development and competence assessment in the work place

- **France.**
- Forming a regional network of firms;
- Participants in this club are employees, employers, labour ministry,
- Regional meetings are held for sensitisation and information sharing on the competence strategy.



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## Competence development and competence assessment in the work place

- UK employers and employees can share in the gain of training. Competence development is part of the Trade Union negotiating agenda.
- UK has on the job description of competences
- Collection and reporting
- Self-assessment
- Assessment by others
- Formulation of certification.





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# Implementation of instruments for documentation and assessment of competences

1. Building trust – employees need to be informed of the goals; Employees must be guided and told what the different goals mean, e.g. methodological goals are when... etc. Skills gap analysis
2. Framework conditions: Agreements on the duration, timing, participants, place and use of results ; participation on a voluntary basis, outside performance report.



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# Implementation of instruments for documentation and assessment of competences

3. Coordination within the working environment:  
skills in relation to expected company goals;  
organisational possibilities, training possibilities.

4 Employee support



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- What are the criteria for the selection of tools?
  - \_ to assess level of competence
  - competence development
  - transfer of vocational training into professional practice
  - To certify competences



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Thank you for your attention.

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