

France: DAVA Lyon

“ Validation of Acquired Experience – A Course for Migrants, An Asset for Work”

Type of provider

Men and women of immigrant background and living in priority districts/ neighbourhoods (quartier prioritaire) often find it difficult to find employment in France, or are forced to work in low-skilled jobs, paid under the SMIC (minimum wage). A priority district is a feature of French city policy focused on intervention in socially disadvantaged districts.

These migrants live in precarious conditions, despite professional or volunteer experience and in some cases substantial foreign professional certifications.

Three partners work together to respond to the challenge of assisting migrants to access work:

- Temps d'Agir (Time to act), a company that works at district level, with competencies in accompanying people in validating their experiences.
- The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Certifiers Platform- simplifying the process of approaching certifiers for the choice of diploma.
- The Academic Device for the Acquisition of Validation (DAVA) of Lyon, which brings its expertise in the field of validation support (over 1,000 candidates per year).

DAVA pilots the project in connection with Temps d'Agir. It participates at all stages to mobilise certifiers and partners in vocational training.

Objective

Purposes include:

- Promoting professional insertion through the validation of acquired experience of migrants in prioritised districts in Lyon.
- Enhancing the professional experience of migrants developed abroad and contextualising it in the world of French work, with its own regulations and professional language. Experimenting with French validation schemes to facilitate the integration of groups.

The project aims to:

- improve the conditions of work access and professional training (via certification) for migrants, capitalising on their experience in their countries of origin.
- downplay the perception of validation pathways as long and complex. The project helps people to gain experience professionally in order to then move forward with a recognised level of certification.
- recognise the contributions of an intercultural experience in the field of professional competences.
- help candidates contextualise their experiences abroad within the expected French professional situation.

Assessment approaches

Series of Steps:

a) Mobilisation and selection of migrants candidates (2 months). Led by the DAVA and Time to act with partners: Employment Centres (Pole d'Emploi) & local associations

Assessment approaches (rest)

- Mobilisation of candidates with information meetings at Pole d'Emploi for jobseekers and within local associations for employees
- Define the criteria needed for entry (job search, French language level ...)
- Develop a contract of engagement
- Bring together the group of 25 successful candidates and launching the project collectively. Providing information on the continuation of courses with questions and answers.

There are also individual interviews regarding the assistance process with DAVA

b) Choice of the certification, titles or diploma according to the suggestions of certifiers: assistance to the candidates (3 months)

- Mobilisation of the certifiers to study the feasibility of the documents
- Collective and personalised assistance regarding the candidates' procedures: monthly meeting and interviews with the candidates. This is facilitated by DAVA and Temps d'Agir along with the providers - the Certifiers Platform. Helping the candidates in the choice of qualification (according to their project). Providing assistance in writing and bringing the proofs requested in booklet 1, which are then sent to certifiers to decide on admissibility
- Assistance in choosing the type of funding, identifying possible funders
- Recognition process by the ENIC-NARIC Center of diplomas obtained abroad. ENIC-NARIC is the French information centre for the academic and professional recognition of qualifications. It issues comparability statement for foreign qualifications.

c) Collective assistance to candidates (6 months)

- Guide the candidates to exchange and help each other
- Methodological input and support for the writing of the certification booklet
- Collective and personalised assistance regarding candidates' approaches to: Organise, plan their work, participate in certification support, carried out by the Certifier, intervene with partners and service providers when needed, helping create ownership and removing barriers to help motivate candidates throughout the process. An option is proposed to work within a sub-group of migrant women to overcome possible specific obstacles related to gender.

Target group

Migrants who have obtained a regularisation of their situation. Examples include displaced refugees, economic migrants, family-reunited migrants. No criteria regarding age, level or professional sector.

Other criteria:

- residing in a 'priority' district (East of the Lyon Metropolis)
- goal of employment: wishing to engage in a search for professional recognition in order to seek a job and secure their career (for employees)
- justifying at least one year of professional experience in the desired domain.
- mastery of basic French, in connection with the targeted certification
- fair balance of men/women

Potential transferability/ scalability

Experiences of validation pathways for migrants already exist; this adaptation of courses was seen as both essential and possible, especially in the context of the law on vocational training of 6 March 2014 supplemented by the Labour Act of 8 August 2016 which simplifies and eases the course and funding of VAE. As DAVA is implemented in the context of each regional academy across France, it is highly possible to transfer this project across the country.

Summaries or Basic elements of analysis

The project aims to encourage public VAE schemes to take full ownership of the additional resources provided by the legislative reform of 2016. It wants to optimise the existing resources by mobilising all public and private stakeholders involved, through open coordination. To inform public institutions about the «backstage» of atypical and remote candidates' pathways, to enable them to adapt their interventions and better meet existing needs, using all the resources provided for them by Law.

Challenges:

- Insufficient French understanding and expression, particularly for several women candidates
- Dependence on a relative (spouse, older daughters) for some candidates: need for interpretation, and/or intercultural mediation, transportation
- Lack of orientation toward the future, due to several factors: a French professional context that is hard to «decode», such as:
 - opportunities within existing professions
 - how employers hire
 - positioning their skills according to qualification levels.

They typically experience a socio-professional downgrade between their original qualification and jobs offered in France.

Often ambition remains low for their professional project: awareness of language difficulties, intercultural gaps, search for a compromise between earning a living and avoiding the least qualified jobs. They underestimate their potential and being cautious due to hardships experienced in migration and cultural origins: believing that to be a woman is to accept what you are offered rather than to aim for a level of responsibility, to accept fate, to limit risks... Also health-related problems: depression for candidates who escaped war, domestic violence, stress, unemployment, caring for young children and having reduced mobility to learn French. Many have precarious financial situations.

Potential:

Candidates adapt well, are courageous and have endurance if they understand what they can do once they can 'decode' things around them. Some are willing to find solutions, speaking about and asking for help regarding domestic violence. They want to set an example for their children and are curious about the possibility for emancipation through French integration. Accepting to work in a spirit of collective assistance (mixed groups), and apply values of mutual aid and solidarity. These first steps are essential for successful participation in the VAE process and subsequent employment.