

Germany: ProfilPASS

Introduction

Title: ProfilPASS

Country: Germany. ProfilPASS is a German tool, however, it has been translated and starts to be widely used also in Greece, France, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia.

Type of tool: The ProfilPASS assists people in finding out what their strengths and competences are. With the help of an advisor they discover their hidden competences and set their goals. Therefore the ProfilPASS tool prevents people from dropping out of training and education.

Target group: Any individual regardless of their socio-economical context. Both assessors and assessees are targeted.

Potential transferability: The ProfilPASS is widespread in Germany with more than 1000 counsellors working with the instrument and partly known in different European countries, thus once translated can be used everywhere and in a wide range of fields as it is based on life-routes and self assessment.

Organisation and description of the tool

The **DIE** (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung – German Institute for Adult Education) is funded by the government and the Federal States. It conducts research in the field of adult teaching and learning, continuing education programmes and institutions, as well as on political and institutional contexts of lifelong learning.

DIE research and development covers several paramount **socially relevant issues**, e.g.: How can continuing education systems enhance participation and competences and reduce social disparities? How can continuing education institutions be organised and managed to be pedagogically efficient? How can continuing education programmes be tailored to meet needs and demands? How does teaching, learning and counselling work in adult and continuing education? How can our scientific services support and facilitate research activities?

The German Institute for Adult Education – Leibnitz Centre for Lifelong Learning:

- conducts application-relevant and fundamental research,
- provides a transfer of knowledge and infrastructure for research,
- develops innovative concepts for practitioners,
- and advises stakeholders of national and international continuing education policy.

The institute's research and its research-based services support the development of both continuing **education science** and **practice** and **politics** in the field of adult education. Hence, the DIE is equally geared to the needs of continuing education research and practice and pursues a periodical research strategy. This systematic cycle includes the identification of essential and current issues in science, politics and practice of continuing education and lifelong learning, the study of these issues and disclosure of the findings as well as the testing and implementation in the field, or provision of permanent infrastructural services.

Organisation and description of the tool

“I came in contact with the method as one of the researchers working on several ProfilPASS-projects. We were using the ProfilPASS for several occasions, to see how the users are working with the instrument and if the concept/method works for all kind of target groups. The method exists since 2006 and has been used more than 200.000 times in Germany”,

says Mona Pielorz, a research associate and ProfilPASS-counsellor for DIE.

The ProfilPASS is an instrument for **all kind of target groups**, therefore there is no need for differentiating “non-traditional” and “traditional” target groups. The only difference that is made is based on age. The ProfilPASS exists in two versions: one for **adults** and one for **young people** (12-x years old). The ProfilPASS for adults focuses on visualising the competences, while the ProfilPASS for young people focuses on skills, abilities and interests (as from our point of view it is difficult to classify competences for young people).

The ProfilPASS-**counsellor** is in charge of making the instrument usable for all different target groups. This means different consulting methods will be involved to help the user to understand the questions, to learn how to reflect on their past and to describe their targets and development objectives. Therefore it is important that the ProfilPASS-counsellors are well trained and qualified. The **qualification** to become a ProfilPASS-counsellor takes between 2-4 days. To start the training it is absolutely necessary to have a lot of prior experiences regarding guidance and that one is familiar with different counselling methods and also able to use them.

The ProfilPASS is following a **biographic-system approach** to visualise all kind of competences. Therefore all kind of skills and competences can be addressed.

The self-assessment is focussing on the **portfolio work**. With the help of the ProfilPASS-counsellors all kind of other counselling methods can be involved. It depends on the needs of the user and the experiences of the counsellor.

For some users the language seems to be a problem (there is a lot to read and write in the portfolio process). Therefore some ProfilPASS-counsellors are using partly the ProfilPASS for young people to support the users who are having difficulties in understanding the different tasks. Another difficulty for some users is the reflection process since they are not used to having an intense confrontation with themselves or might be afraid of the reflecting process connected to a difficult past.

The **strong points** of the ProfilPASS are:

- Open for all target groups;
- Qualified counsellors (more than 1000 in Germany);
- Visualises informally and non-formally acquired abilities and competences in particular;
- Documents individual skills and competences.

As a self-assessment, the ProfilPASS is strongly connected to the **motivation** of its users (this is one of the reasons why the self-assessment and the visit of a ProfilPASS-counsellor has to be voluntary), therefore it may get difficult when the user loses his/her perspectives or objectives why s/he wants to do the self-assessment.

According to Mona P.,

“Cases we hear about once in a while are connected to the reading comprehension and that some users having issues to get to the heart of their competence description”.

Implementation

Implementation

The instrument is mainly used for people in **transition situations** (meaning school-internship, school-vocational training, school-university, vocational training-university and so on). For the users the process is very important to verify their ideas, decisions or find new ways. The ProfilPASS is helping a lot in situations like this and in addition the ProfilPASS-counsellors are playing a very important role in providing information and supporting the user during the process.

“We are constantly working on the instrument and its supporting materials. There are annual exchanges with our counsellors and surveys (questionnaires for users and counsellors) to complement the instrument and delivering examples in what kind of ways the instrument can be used,”

says Mona P.

Description of the target group

When asked which are the most difficult and easier groups to work with using the ProfilPASS Mona Pielorz said:

“This can’t be said. The ProfilPASS is a biographic-systematic instrument, for some people it is more difficult to reflect their past connected to how they act and behaviour than for others. But there is no “easy” or “hard” target group that can be generally named. The methods seem to be very effective for those who want to take part in this biographic-systematic process and are in a transition process.”

The ProfilPASS is an **open instrument**, it can be done whenever the user has time and is motivated, it can be done with counsellor and without. It is a very positive approach, the user learns mainly about his abilities, competences and skills. There is no focus on his weaknesses.

“The accomodation of the assessees is very individual”, Mona P. informs us. “Some users just want to describe their objective and start immediately with the instrument and others need more time to talk and want to figure out what kind of results they can expect. The ProfilPASS-counsellors are offering single counselling, but also group counselling – therefore they can react on the needs of the ProfilPASS-users.”

Policy context

The ProfilPASS was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and research and the European Social Fund.

In Germany there are only **validation processes** that are connected to qualifications (Externenprüfung) or are matching the competences of the candidate with requirements of qualification (ValiKom).

“So far, we are having no validation processes of individual competence sets. And as the ProfilPASS is delivering the bases for a validation process of an individual competence set there are no policies in set that are supporting a widespread use of the instrument, by giving the results of the instrument an official significance,”

says Mona P.

Impact for assesseees

Based on the words of Mona P.,

*“There are several **positive** examples: most of the time the users are very happy to see all their competences listed and developing a strategy how to use them in future life (business life, but also private life). A lot of users are surprised by the amount of skills and competences they have and about some recurring patterns regarding their behaviours in different situations.*

Some users changed their objectives completely after the ProfilPASS-process, saying: “Now I know what I am capable of and what I want do!”.

Sometimes there are partly **negative** reactions regarding the very personal biographic approach and user who don't want to exchange about their experiences. This makes it very difficult for the ProfilPASS-counsellor to support the user. Most of the time those kind of users need a long period of trust building and to feel assured that all shared information (with the counsellor) is confidential.

On the perception of **employers** on ProfilPASS, Mona P. says:

“We already had a project where several companies were working with the ProfilPASS to prepare their performance review, or for the introductory phase of their trainees. We got good feedback, but there is still the difficulty that those situations are not voluntary most of the time.”

As a final comment, Mona P. would want us to know that

*“Mainly we are getting **good feedback** from the users and the counsellors. If you have any further information on the ProfilPASS, the concept, the method or the counsellor please don't hesitate to contact us in DIE”.*

Link

<http://www.profilpass-international.eu>

Personal comments

Although the practice mentioned above is as it is not widely used in Greece yet, we find it crucial to point out that such thing exists in the country.

Interviewee

Mona Pielorz is working as a research associate and also has the qualification to work as a ProfilPASS-counsellor.

She has studied adult education, psychology and business administration with a focus on human resources. Her first job was with a consultancy, where she was involved in the preparation of competences measurement tasks and assessment centres. Her decision to become a ProfilPASS-counsellor was connected to her interests, but also that she became the project leader of several ProfilPASS-projects at the DIE.

ProfilPASS



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