



# Community-University Collaborations: Exploring Models, Sharing Good Practice

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Workshop – Valuing experience beyond the university



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**Sources** : VAB project – <http://vab-univ.eu/> A Leonardo da Vinci project initiated by the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) together with the University of Evry Val d'Essonne (Uev) in five countries : Austria (die Berater, Vienna), France (Ueve, Evry Val d'Essonne leader and Iriv, coordinator, Paris), Greece (Hellenic Open University, Patras), Ireland (University of Limerick, Limerick) and Slovenia (University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana).

## **Introduction**

Community - University collaborations : exploring models, sharing good practice. The lifelong learning perspective – the VAB project

University is not a world apart. Students are more and more involved in community activities for enriching their personal, social or professional experience. This is also the mission dedicated to University teachers to enhance the relation between University and Community, University and Society to improve the integration of their students when they have finished their studies.

Many European countries are faced to huge rates of unemployment among youngsters. Universities around the European Union have tried to bridge the gap between the knowledge they deliver and the demands of the labour market. In this perspective, they have decided to express their diplomas in terms of skills and competences.

This is one key point of the recent European reform LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorate) to propose a common framework to European universities to enhance transparency and mutual recognition of the diplomas and as a result the validation of their students' skills. The Bologna process initiated on a European level is precisely meant to propose a European qualification framework (EQF) with the aim to link countries' qualifications systems together acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe.

The VAB project, initiated by two French organisations, the University of Evry Val d'Essonne together with the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv), in five countries (Austria, France, Greece, Ireland and Slovenia) should propose a pedagogical tool to University teachers together with an e-training to allow them to integrate non-formal/formal learning of their students/trainees in their global evaluation: personal, social and professional experience acquired outside the university.

The VAB project is based upon the results of a previous Leonardo da Vinci project: Assessing voluntary experience in a professional perspective (AVE project, [www.europeassociations.net](http://www.europeassociations.net)). This previous Leonardo da Vinci project had youngsters for main target. Volunteering was considered as a unique experience to acquire or develop skills and competences through non formal and informal learning.

Our presentation will be focussed on 5 main points :

- 1 The general presentation of the VAB project -
- 2 The special context of the Leonardo da Vinci programme-
- 3 From assessing voluntary experience to valuing experience beyond University
- 4 The benefits for the University , teachers and students
- 5 How far the VAB project could be seen as an example of good practice to enhance Community-University collaborations.

We will try to see the mutual benefits for students, University teachers and the Community to assess and value any experience acquired beyond the University.

## **1) Valuing the experience of students gained beyond the University**

The VAB project has been proposed in a special context, the high unemployment rate among youngsters. It should achieve precise concrete results.

### **1.1 a key issue for University : enhancing professional integration of their students**

Unemployment among youngsters is a crucial problem in Europe: the employment rate of the 15-24 years of age is only 39% compared to the 80% for the 25-54 years according to the Eurostat<sup>1</sup>. University teachers are key actors to prepare their students for the labour market and to enhance their chances for professional integration. The main issue of the VAB project should be to bridge the gap between University and the labour market by proposing a pass between theoretical/practical learning and professional skills and competences required by the labour market through a pedagogical tool proposed to University teachers.

Two students with the same diploma will be differentiated on the labour market thanks to this non-formal and informal learning. University teachers are more and more sensitive to this dimension: taking into account the skills and competences required by the labour market. The problem is that they don't often have neither the appropriate tool nor the method to prepare their students according to the labour market demands. The main reproach made by the students to their teachers is the gap between the knowledge and skills acquired at the University and the requirements expressed by the potential employers.

Thanks to the reform of the Universities all around Europe, the same common framework has been organized: Licence, Master, Doctorate (LMD). Thanks to the reform, diplomas should be more comparable from one country to another especially for the employers. This is a key issue to enhance mobility in Europe. Moreover, each of the countries has made an effort to express the content of the diplomas/certificates with regards to the skills and competences acquired and their link with the labour market (types of employment to be proposed).

Apart from this common institutional basis, University teachers would require a complementary evaluation of their students taking into account the skills and competences they acquire and develop outside the educational system through their personal, social or professional experiences.

University teachers know how to assess traditional knowledge of their students using a grid of evaluation based on the content of their course. They don't have any methodology nor pedagogical tool to assess non-formal and informal learning of their students. So they are missing a lot of valuable information on the skills, competences and qualifications that would be most appropriate on the labour market.

The VAB project will propose a pedagogical tool together with an e-training for teachers and trainers to make them be able to identify, assess and value the non-formal and informal learning of their students both in their global evaluation (education and training approach) and in the professional biography of their students(work experience approach).

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<sup>1</sup> and 46% for the 55-64 years - EU27 data, 3rd Quarterly EuroStat, January 2009

## **1.2 An e-portfolio together with an e-training for University teachers to support and enrich the competences of their students in a professional perspective**

The main aims and objectives of the VAB project are :

- to build a pedagogical tool, a portfolio, for teachers/trainers working at the University or in a third level training organization to identify, assess and integrate in their global evaluation the skills and competences developed by students apart from their formal learning (informal and informal learning developed beyond the University );
- to propose a digital development of this portfolio, an e-portfolio together with a virtual tutoring for University teachers/trainers (thanks to a smart assistant);
- to propose a training course for the teachers/trainers in order to use the e-portfolio to be filled by their students/trainees;
- to experiment the e-portfolio and e-training among selected University teachers/trainers in the 5 countries to make it clear, usable and understandable;
- to build networks of University teachers/trainers, Higher education institutions, experts in lifelong learning, professionals with different professional backgrounds;
- to exchange innovative practices in the field of trainings for teachers and trainers working in the University in the 5 European countries.

The main tangible results proposed by the VAB project are :

- a pedagogical tool including an e-portfolio to be filled by the students,
- an e-training including a virtual tutor,
- a portal including a social and orientation area networks of teachers/trainers, students/trainees, councillors in professional orientation.

The main intangible results are:

- developing University teachers/trainers' skills and competences in the field of human resources (valuing skills and competences of their students/trainees),
- enhancing Community-University collaboration , and especially the link between University and the labour market, in order to better prepare students for their professional integration.

The expected impact is a better information and preparation of University teachers and trainers according to the demands of the labour market. They will integrate in the global evaluation of their students and trainees the same references used by employers, will speak about skills and competences and consequently will bridge the gap between theoretical /formal learning and practical, non-formal and informal learning

## **2) the Lifelong Learning perspective -Enhancing access to the Labour market on the basis of informal and informal learning**

The VAB project is supported by the Leonardo da Vinci programme which is integrating the Copenhagen process

### **2.1 the Lifelong learning perspective<sup>2</sup>**

Education and training are essential to the development and success of today's knowledge society and economy. The European Union's strategy emphasises countries working together and learning from each other.

EU education and training policy has been given added impetus since the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, the EU's overarching programme focusing on growth and jobs. Knowledge, and the innovation it sparks, are the EU's most valuable assets, particularly as global competition becomes more intense in all sectors.

While national governments are responsible for education and training some challenges are common to all Member States: ageing societies, skills deficits of the workforce and global competition need joint responses and countries learning from each other.

High quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and vocational education and training are the fundament for Europe's success. Lifelong learning has become a reality across Europe. It is a key to growth and jobs, as well as to allow everyone the chance to participate fully in society. The link with Community is quite strong in the lifelong learning perspective.

EU member states and the European Commission have therefore strengthened their political cooperation. The new strategic framework identifies four long term strategic objectives:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

The programme enables individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe. There are four sub-programmes focusing on different stages of education and training and continuing previous programmes: Comenius for schools ; Erasmus for higher education ; Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training ; Grundtvig for adult education

The Leonardo da Vinci programme links policy to practice in the field of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Projects range from those giving individuals the chance to improve their competences, knowledge and skills through a period abroad, to Europe-wide co-operation between training organisations. Innovative projects have always been at the core of the Leonardo da Vinci programme. They aim to improve the quality of training systems

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission - <http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/>

through the development and transfer of innovative policies, contents, methods and procedures within vocational education and training.

## **2.2 the Copenhagen process**

The Leonardo da Vinci projects are focussed on the labour market. It is integrating the Copenhagen process meant to validate non-formal and informal learning <sup>3</sup>. It must be considered as an element of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) apart from the Bologna process.

The VAB project is integrating two approaches for validating non formal and informal learning : formative and summative assessment. Indeed, University teachers will be able to integrate in the global evaluation of their students the learning outcomes they would have assessed (or not) thanks to the Vab portfolio .

The assessment process that leads to validation can have two main forms :

- the formative approach to assessment (1) is important as it draws attention to the identification of knowledge, skills and wider competences, a crucial part of lifelong learning ;
- the summative validation (2) needs to have a clearly defined and unambiguous link to the standards used in the national qualifications system (or framework).

These two approaches for assessing non formal and informal learning don't lead to a certification.

Formative approaches (1) to assessment do not aim for formal certification of learning outcomes, but provide feedback to the learning process or learning career, indicating strengths and weaknesses and providing a basis for personal or organizational improvement. This approach fulfils an important role in numerous settings ranging from guidance and counselling to human resource management in enterprise.

Summative approaches to assessment and validation (2) aim explicitly at the formalization and certification of learning outcomes and are linked to, and integrated into, institutions and bodies authorized to, award qualifications. The process of summative assessment needs to consider national standards.

As far as the Vab project is concerned, it is highly focused on Higher Education. University teachers will be able to integrate in their global evaluation the learning outcomes of their students thanks to the portfolio meant to assess non formal and informal learning. As a result, they will consider either the summative approach in assessing the learning outcomes of their students through ECTS or the formative approach (in taking into account these special learning outcomes only in their qualitative evaluation)

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<sup>3</sup> Cedefop, *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*, Office for Official Publications of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2009.

### **3) From assessing voluntary experience to valuing experience beyond University**

The VAB project is based upon a previous project mainly focussed in volunteering and voluntary experience.

#### **3.1 the basis of the VAB : the AVE project focussed on volunteering<sup>4</sup>**

The VAB project is based on the results of a former Leonardo da Vinci project "Assesing Voluntary Experience in a professional perspective - AVE project - " gathering 7 countries, developed between 2003-2006. It was awarded in Helsinki in 2006 for excellent practice in addressing the priorities of the Copenhagen process and promoting an enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.

The AVE project was focused on volunteers: mainly youngsters, women and long-term unemployed people. It mainly used self evaluation of skills and competences, by volunteers themselves thanks to a portfolio. It was a first attempt to propose a tool and method to assess and value a voluntary experience in a professional perspective. The innovative approach was to propose to value non-formal and informal learning, on the basis of voluntary experience, to value skills and competences neglected by the labour market however it has become crucial for the employability to meet the moving needs of the employers.

As far as youth volunteering is concerned, the postulate of the AVE was that volunteering might be a fundamental step for all young people to prepare their future social and professional life. A voluntary involvement might be decisive for their future : feeling useful for the community, meeting people they wouldn't have had the chance to meet in their life.

Volunteering offers opportunities to take on stimulating work, to develop skills, to explore different careers and to get work experience. If instrumental motivations are not new, they appear to be increasing rapidly among youngsters.

In times where studies are longer and entering the labour market is more difficult (with the huge unemployment rates in the younger population), young people should involve in voluntary experiments that will enrich their experience, apart from their previous education or background. Sometimes a voluntary involvement might be a first step for a future job.

Regional studies made by the Institute for Research and Information on volunteering (Iriv, 1998-2000) in three French regions have given the following results: 44,2% of the interviewed youngsters have been volunteers in Ile de France ; the proportion was 53% in Champagne-Ardenne and 65,4% in Midi-Pyrénées. The question asked to youngsters was open: have you ever been a volunteer (not just in the past year) in order to estimate the potential of volunteering among them.

The motivations of youngsters for volunteering are more pragmatic , more professionally oriented : being useful (2 thirds of the answers) ; meeting other people ( half of the answers); learning skills (half of the answers) ; defending a cause (one third in Ile de France , one fourth in Champagne Ardenne and Midi-Pyrénées) ; spending usefully my free time (one

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<sup>4</sup> Iriv and alii, *Assessing a Voluntary Experience in a professional perspective*, Leonardo da Vinci project, 2003-2006, [www.eEuropeassociations.net](http://www.eEuropeassociations.net)

fourth of the answers in Ile de France and Champagne Ardenne ; one sixth in Midi Pyrénées). Valuing a voluntary experience seemed to be quite relevant for youngsters<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.2 the holistic approach proposed by the VAB project

The new pedagogical tool proposed by the VAB to University teachers will integrate : personal , social (volunteering) and professional experience of their students. The process proposed under the Vab project allows students to identify activities fulfilled in complement to their University cursus . These experiences should have developed competences, and so, enrich their experience. It is a holistic approach to value non formal and informal learning.

Four types of activities may be taken into account with the portfolio proposed by the VAB:

- 1) **Sport, culture and art activities** : having practised a sport and achieved a high level , having practiced an art or any other cultural activity (music, painting, theatre) in an intensive way to reach concrete and valuable results are both activities that deserve to be valued as main contributions in the students' experience ; having attended championship or any competition in these activities are also relevant experiences ;
- 2) **Involvement in association and active citizenship** : any activity, function or elective mandate that might have been fulfilled by the students ; it might be delegate or tutor at school or at the University , executive manager in an association, a student trade-union or political party ; the learning outcomes they might have developed should be expressed in terms of competences and to be valued on the labour market ;
- 3) **Professional activities** : students often refer to training periods made during their University cursus as first representative experience ; but even the “students job” may be taken into account as first professional experience as they are a way to discover a socio-professional background, develop managerial skills, sometimes a spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship most appreciated by employers ; high schools (engineering and business) have imposed such “working training period” for their students in order for them to be aware of the reality of the work ;
- 4) **Transnational /mobility activities**: students may have spent some years abroad, being born or having followed a training period or having studied in a foreign country ; it may be individual convention or in the framework of exchange programs mainly in Europe such as the European Voluntary service (since 1996 for a mission in an association) or Erasmus (for students following part of their Licence in another European University ), Leonardo mobility (training period abroad...)

Another European device, the Europass<sup>6</sup>, has been a first attempt in this holistic approach , defining itself as a single transparency framework for qualifications and competences. Thanks to the Europass, skills and competences are key points in the CV with linguistic skills being highlighted and social skills being mentioned. The weak-point of the Europass is, there is no dynamic perspective as there is no obvious pathway between « work experience », «

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<sup>5</sup> Iriv and alii, *Volunteering : an opportunity for youngsters in Europe*, Paris, 2001

<sup>6</sup> established by the Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 December 2004



education and training » and « personal skills and competences » and the students get confused in filling the different rubrics.

#### **4) the benefits for the University of the VAB project**

The benefits of the VAB project should be seen both on the perspectives of the University teachers and the ones of the students.

##### **4.1 for the University teachers**

Thanks to the VAB project, University teachers will develop this transversal skill and competence: being able to integrate the knowledge and experience acquired outside the University, for the Community, in the global evaluation of their students

The VAB project supports University teachers working in the higher education in training and further training activities in the acquisition and use of knowledge, skills and qualifications to facilitate personal development as it proposes a pedagogical tool and training course aiming at identifying and valuing non-formal and informal learning of the students/trainees to integrate these unique skills and qualifications in their final evaluation.

The VAB project will support improvements in quality and innovation in vocational education and training systems, institutions and practices as there are not any continuous trainings proposed so far to University teachers allowing them to integrate non-formal/formal learning of their students/trainees.

University teachers deliver a course much linked to their professional activity or original field of research and their students are assessed on the basis of this formal content. The experience acquired by the students outside the University can not be taken into account in their final evaluation. The VAB project will improve the quality and increase the volume of cooperation between institutions and organizations providing learning opportunities focused on a new strategy and pedagogy.

The main goal of the VAB project is to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning thanks to the e-portfolio and e-training.

The VAB project should improve the transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning. It is focused on developing the skills and competences of VET teachers, trainers and tutors.

The VAB project should enhance collaborative and interactive work among trainers and trainees and will also integrate the final users (the students) who will benefit in the end from the skills and competences acquired by their teachers.

University is meant to prepare students for their professional life. University teachers are mediators for the students between the University and the labour market. They will be able to play efficiently this role given the opportunity to benefit from an appropriate tool and method focused on a new approach promoted by the Copenhagen process which enlightens non-formal and informal learning.

## 4.2 for the students

The VAB project should allow the students to better understand that their personal, professional or social life is not separate from their University life. This should build a bridge between University and the Community.

Times were life was linear: beginning with studies then entering the working life is over. You have different pathways: studies, working life, training or education periods, social involvements, other personal projects. Even in the middle of life anyone might imagine a “sabbatical period” to involve in a humanitarian project or any other social project.

Youngsters in general, and students in particular, should integrate this mobility perspective in preparing their professional life. They are more anxious about their future as they are more affected by unemployment than the older population. In taking into account other experiences, apart from their studies and diplomas, they might be more self-confident in their chances to enter the labour market.

In enhancing a holistic approach of life, where any experience might be relevant and valued (not only the diploma or the professional experience), perspectives are changing. Youngsters would be better prepared to life. As far as their professional life is concerned youngsters and students should be used to integrating the different experiences acquired beyond the University in complement to their University cursus.

The portfolio (and its digital development, an e-portfolio) proposed by the VAB project is a dynamic way to do so : A portfolio is a process, both a tool and method, to identify and gather the activities/experiences fulfilled by students outside the University, and help them reveal the corresponding competences acquired in order to assess them. It takes the form of a “diary” which takes into account the individual path. It is describing activities and competences, in the case of students, respectively fulfilled and developed in complement of the University course.

A portfolio is based upon an anglo-saxon tradition. It takes the form of a « file of personal and professional experiences realised with the aim to save the proof of acquired training and experiences to produce them in any circumstance of life where these evidence may be expected and considered as a way for a better professional, social or personal recognition »<sup>7</sup>.

It is fulfilling five main functions: an « active memory », an «evolutive tool for identifying and knowing competences », a « collective and conservative » tool, a « self-evaluation », a «personal data base », a «value given to informal competences ».

Being used to this process at the University, with the support of University teachers, on the basis of an appropriate tool and method, should enhance the opportunities for students. It should also bridge the gap between University and the Community. We are learning anywhere, not just at school, but we need teachers to be aware of this learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Bernard Lietard, chaire de formation des adultes du Cnam, « Canevas d’un portfolio des expériences bénévoles », Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports, Paris, 2004 ; référence à Aubret (J) (2001), « Le portefeuille de compétences », Paris, EAP.

## **5) How far could the VAB project be seen as an example of good practice to enhance Community-University collaborations ?**

The VAB project could be set as an example of good practice to enhance Community-University collaboration in three ways.

### **5.1 The VAB project is proposing to change the perspective.**

University is not the only place where knowledge, skills and competences may be acquired. Thanks to a personal experience (in art, sport, culture), a professional experience (training period or student job), an experience abroad (expatriation), or a social involvement (volunteering), anyone can develop skills and competences, in complement to the diploma or certifications delivered by University. These skills and competences could be valued in a professional perspective and even be integrated in a University cursus thanks to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

This official recognition of non formal and informal learning is a step forward to bridge the gap between University and the Community. People from the civil society might even be associated to this official recognition through jury meant to assess the learning outcomes of such various experiences (personal, professional social).

Even though the University remains the place to deliver diplomas and to propose a reference framework of qualifications, the door is now open to any kind of learning to be assessed. The collaboration between the University and the Community is most important in this perspective.

### **5.2 The VAB project is proposing a holistic approach.**

The VAB project is very much “labour market oriented”, focussed on the link between the University and Community through the professional approach, identifying and valuing skills and competences developed by the students through personal, social or professional experience, beyond the University. The link with the Community doesn't seem so obvious apart from the social experience (volunteering) . Nevertheless, as the holistic approach proposed by the VAB project states it, we can't really separate the different spheres of a human being:

- a professional experience may have a personal impact (most of the married people have met their wife/husband at work),
- a social involvement may have a professional impact (many volunteers have become paid staff of their association when their involvement required a permanent work),
- a personal experience may lead to a social involvement (most of the volunteers are directly concerned by the cause they are defending).

Thanks to the portfolio (and e-portfolio) process, these different activities (personal, social, professional) are linked and valued. They are expressed as skills and competences. The only condition for the students is to bring the “evidence” of work and to prove that relevant skills and competences have been developed thanks to these experiences. Once more the collaboration between University and Community is most important to find this evidence of

work. The skills and competences valued are important for a project of life, not only for a professional career.

### **5.3 The VAB project is enhancing experience, and especially the social experience.**

Faced to huge unemployment rates and with the problems of social and professional integration linked to them, the VAB project is valuing experience. It is stating that whatever the diploma followed and even the grades received, an experience could be valued, in complement to the University cursus. There are various kinds of experience. There is neither hierarchy nor value assigned to these experiences. The only point is to prove that they have lead to learning outcomes.

If we consider the social experience, clearly Community oriented, youngsters and students may find a way to enrich their “social capital”. This concept defined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu<sup>8</sup>, as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” has been enhanced by the American sociologist Robert Putnam.

According to Putnam<sup>9</sup> the social capital "refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other". Social capital is presented as a key component to build and maintain democracy. People involved in voluntary organisations would have a higher level of trust in government and a better level of civic participation. Social capital can be measured by the amount of trust and "reciprocity" in a community or between individuals

The concept is quite controversial as some voluntary groups also lead to exclusion and the communitarian process (closed on itself), especially when the groups are too much homogeneous (same religion, same social background, same gender, same age, same profile). Nevertheless, it is very true that for “main street associations” where diversity is respected (different profiles, ages, genders, origins of members), a voluntary involvement is clearly an asset for social integration and civic awareness for youngsters.

The benefits for the Community are clear : youngsters are motivated by the common purpose, their main motivations are altruistic. They deserve time and energy for a collective purpose. At the same time, they are building their social experience, sometime a very first experience.

Valuing this special experience in terms of skills and competences, or integrating it in a University cursus, is a way for the University to enhance and promote this social involvement for the Community.

The University is not only a place to deliver diplomas or certifications or to prepare for the professional life. It is also a place to become a citizen: being able to understand the choices proposed by candidates at the election; being aware of the main social, political and economical issues of the country; being also able to join any action to defend a cause or rights. This active citizenship is most necessary for both economy and society.

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<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu (Pierre), *The forms of capital*, Paris, 1986

<sup>9</sup> Putnam (Robert), "Bowling alone : America's declining social capital", in *Journal of Democracy*, 1995

In this sense, the VAB project is also meant to enhance and promote active citizenship in recognising and valuing these social competences of the students, acquired beyond the University, for the Community.

## **Conclusion**

Promoting collaboration between University and Community is a key issue for preparing students to their future life. Social and economic integration of youngsters is a challenging issue for most of our European societies where unemployment rates among youngsters is high.

A life is made of many aspects: personal, social, professional areas. Experience is quite complex and various. The skills and competences developed by youngsters are also multiple. The main goal of the VAB project is to propose a tool and method to University teachers to improve the global evaluation of their students by taking into account the experience they have acquired beyond University to enhance their chances for professional integration.

By identifying, valuing or even validating knowledge, skills and competences developed or gained through an informal and non formal learning by their students, University teachers should improve the transition between the University and the labour market, but also between the University and the Community.

The VAB approach is a holistic one: each experience might enrich another, whatever its nature (personal, social or professional). For students, being aware of the skills and competences they have developed thanks to these various experiences, is a way to enhance their self-confidence and so their chance to succeed in life.

In our European societies where unemployment is high, even for students graduate from the University, it shouldn't be too demanding to offer a future to our youngsters. The Vab project should bridge the gap between University and Community thanks to a mutual recognition of the support they bring to the building and developing of the personalities of youngsters, their students, who are future workers but also active citizens.

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Putnam (Robert), "*Bowling alone : America's declining social capital*", in *Journal of Democracy*, 1995

## **Website**

European Commission - <http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/>

Project website : VAB- Valuing experience beyond University - <http://vab-univ.eu/>

Project website : AVE- Assessing Voluntary Experience in a professional experience – <http://www.eEuropeassociations.net>

Europass - <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>