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Executive summary Ireland

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with the kind support of members of the National Advisory Group

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Executive Summary

This report aims to provide information relating principally to two interventions of the VISKA project in Ireland, networking under the auspices of the National Advisory Group (Intervention 1) and the testing of the EU Skills Profiling Tool as a contribution to the development of a digital tool for the identification of skills in validation (an element of Intervention 2, Deliverable D3.1), notwithstanding work carried out nationally over the duration of the project relating to all interventions, or the original aims of project engagement. It seeks in addition to answering the questions posed by the researchers within the report to additionally set out what VISKA Ireland did, what happened because of this, how- if at all- this influenced policy and how VISKA helped. In as far as is possible sensibly, it treats VISKA in isolation from other national developments in the validation field.

The opening chapter sets out the methodology and context, focused on the testing of the EU Skills Profiling tool (Deliverable D3.1); learning from reflection on the methodology of the conduct of the testing of this tool in Ireland underscored a consensus on the value of an ongoing evidence base supporting arguments for the provision of enhanced and extended validation services, including as reviewed by a diversity of peers.

A discussion on the VISKA Validation process is, of necessity, brief as technically this pertained only to the identification phase of the test of the EU Skills Profiling Tool (Deliverable D3.1); however, discussion was situated within the National Advisory Group representing a lively confluence of validation related activities and networks. Consensus emerged highlighting an optimum condition of coordination and visibility of validation policy, strategy and services that are well signposted. This was derived from the experience, in part in implementing the trial, that there are abundant skills to be made visible and this process of giving visibility is valuable beyond the recognition itself. Additionally, it was felt that measures addressing people who are low skilled or low qualified should be 'validation proofed' so as to provide for appropriate opportunities for identification, documentation, assessment and certification.

The intervention to develop and extend regional and national networks is explored largely through the lens of the National Advisory Group, with associated network/focus groups developed for consultative purposes supporting the project outcomes and research which operated somewhat in parallel with national field trials in Flanders, Iceland and Norway. Key emergent learning supports the development of specific networks for specific target groups, with linked strategic programmes of work and named points of contact within relevant organisations and agencies.

A Chapter on that extension and adaptation of tools (relating to VISKA project Work Package 3) for the validation of prior learning for people with low levels of skills and or qualifications, including

migrants and refugees presents feedback on the testing the EU Skills Profiling Tool (Deliverable D3.1), and not on work conducted nationally on other tools within VSKA. It concludes that guidance services available in FET and including in public employment services, are best positioned to lead the identification of the policy implications of the development of digital tools that facilitate personal as opposed to general progression planning, while education and training providers are best positioned to make recommendations about tools that support validation against programmes and awards. It will be necessary at policy level to facilitate and fund connecting these two, respecting the competences of each, but looking forward to data interoperability and efficiencies for citizens.

Transversal skills (VSKA Deliverable D3.2) when considered within Networks, particularly under the auspices of the National Advisory Group, underscored the value to the individual and appreciation of the model aligning more with HR perspectives than that traditionally of education and training; it was felt that this was more likely to be closer to most people's lived experience. There was also a consensus regarding the desirability of availability of training for staff in facilitating such discussion and evidence gathering, and provision of time for this work. Similarly, a call for a requirement for situated evaluation regarding benefit of assessment of transversal skills, whether formative or summative was made so that an evidence base is there to defend but also nuance emerging practices.

The chapter on Capacity Building for Guidance and other Front-line Staff summarise the outcomes of Network consideration of the training module developed and tested by some partners within VSKA (VSKA Deliverable D3.3). Ultimately it was agreed that the availability of continuous professional development (CPD) for practitioners involved in validation was a high priority; it was felt that CPD needed to be practice oriented and organic, utilising an appropriate balance of technology and face to face delivery. When integrated with reflections from the delivery of the field trial testing the EU Skills Profiling Tool, there was greater interest in a broader need for training in intercultural sensitivity.

The penultimate chapter, treating access and awareness of validation services was treated somewhat tentatively within VSKA Ireland project plans except from the perspective of informing education and training providers and stakeholders, because from the outset it was felt to be premature to advertise or create an expectation of a service that does not yet exist or only partially exists. The objectives principally lay in deepening and informing opportunities within and between policy and services. VSKA was an enabling factor in creating stimuli and opportunities for connecting people, services, policies, tools, practices and ideas- but limited in power.

The final chapter looks to lessons learned from our engagement with VISKA, and on the reflections of experts on which this report is based.

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