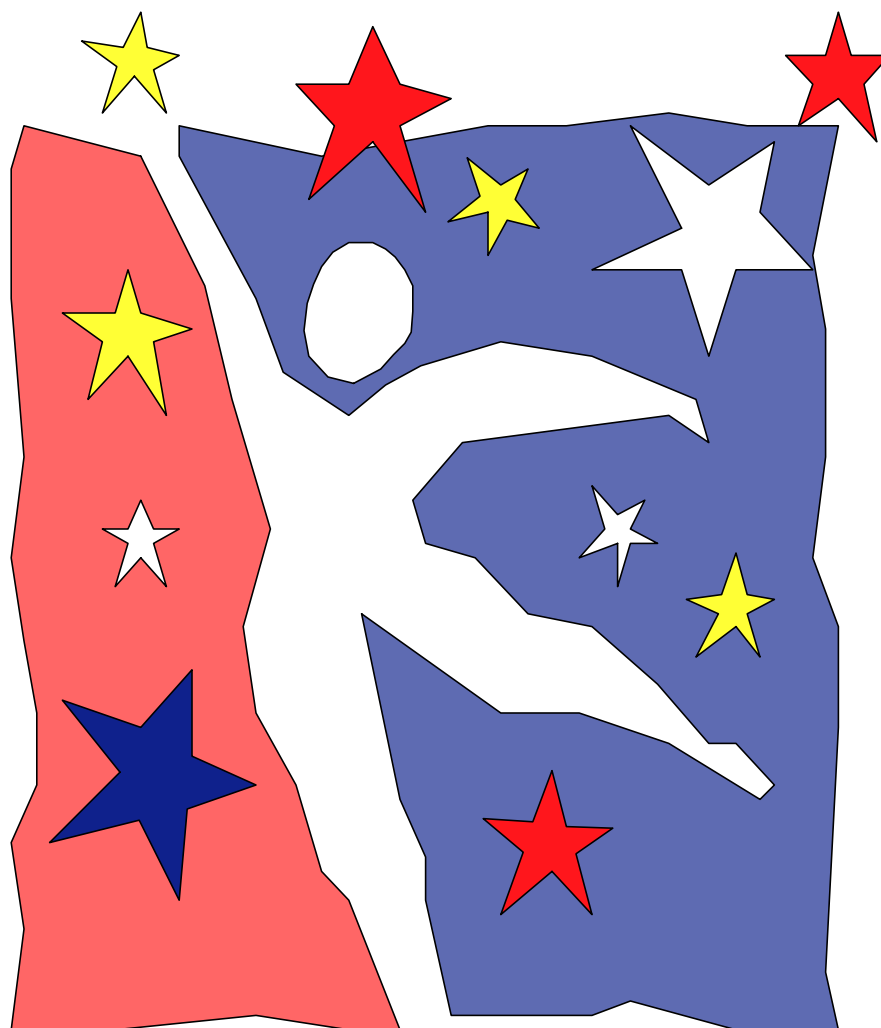
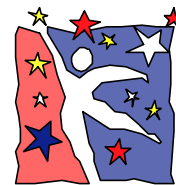


# Development of a joint model for the accreditation and/or certification of prior learning

## Model and Methods



Proposal from the « Methods » Group

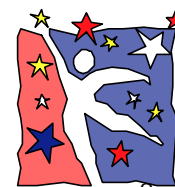


# Model and Methods

## Poposal from the « Methods » Group

### Summary

I – INTRODUCTION .....	4
II – METHODS.....	6
1. TESTS .....	6
1.1 Analysis of the procedure/advising/project.....	6
1.2 Comparative analysis .....	7
1.3 Defining the procedure .....	7



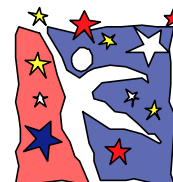
2. PREPARATION, TRAINING, SKILLS PORTFOLIO .....	8
2.1 Organizing the skills portfolio .....	8
2.2 Identifying training needs .....	9
2.3 Managing the procedure .....	9
3. ASSESSMENT/ ACCREDITATION/ VALIDATION .....	9
3.1 Assessing documents/proof .....	10
3.2 Additional assessments .....	10
3.3 Results .....	10
III - EXPERIMENTATION .....	11
1. TRAINING OF ADVISERS AND ASSESSORS.....	12
1.1 The actors .....	12
1.2 Training - Objectives.....	12
1.3 Duration of training .....	14
1.4 Groups.....	14
2. SECTORS / TRADES.....	14
2.1. The pilot experiments .....	15
2.2 The publics.....	16
2.3. Supporting documents .....	17
2.4 Publicity of Project .....	19
2.5 Experimentators'schedule .....	20
IV – MONITORING AND PROJECT REVIEW.....	21
1. NATIONAL LEVEL: Monitoring and proect review .....	21
2. TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL: Monitoring , project review and transfer .....	22

## **I – INTRODUCTION**

The subject of the present work is to devise a methodological model of assessment, accreditation, and/or certification of prior learning in conformity with the Leonardo project « ***Development of a joint model for the accreditation of prior learning*** », which was put forward by the European Vocational Training Association.

This project aims at working out a joint method with a view to furthering the accreditation of prior learning through experience and transparency of professional skills, through the conception and experimentation of a joint model for the accreditation and certification of prior learning at a national level and at the level of the Member States that are partners in the project. It will make it possible to enhance life-long training, by fostering the permanent adjustment of workers to companies' needs and to create the conditions of admission of unqualified adults to continuous training, through the accreditation of prior learning outside the formal educational and training systems.

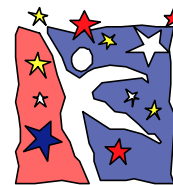
The methodological approach must rest on principles which, related to national procedures, will make it possible to take into account the assessment of prior learning through experience in national accreditation or certification systems. This project aims at unifying these procedures



and their clarity from one Member State to another. It aims, in the long term, at facilitating professional and geographic mobility inside the European Union..

The model must consider the statutory problems in the field of informal apprenticeship, by developing a strict and shared methodological framework allowing for the inclusion of the national procedures of the partner countries so that attempts at legitimacy can materialize in the value of accreditation or certification granted by each of them..

In the rather near future, clarity of accreditation in partner Member States , seen as the result of the implementation of a joint procedure, will have to be added to this value.



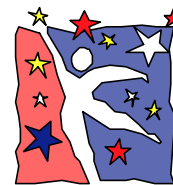
For this procedure to foster the mobility of credits and certificates issued, the project is working on the design of sufficiently broadened methods so as to meet what is essential in each national procedure.

Amongst the basic conditions considered , allowing for their practical implementation, the stress will be put on :

- The adoption of national employment reference systems;
- Applying performance standards used for each skill integrating the employment reference systems;
- The respect of the supervision authorities;
- The adoption of a profile for advisors and assessors validated at a national level.

Methods focus on three stages:

1. Appraisal,
2. Preparation;
3. Assessment/certification.



## **II – METHODS**

The conception of these methods rests on various principles:

- To apply to all the project partner states without conflicting with the existing national systems ;
- To apply to various sectors/trades;
- The approach to accreditation/validation must be independent from any training action;
- The accreditation of prior learning (APL) is an individual procedure which foresees the guidance of the candidate by an advisor up to the assessment;
- The skills portfolio is a possible back-up allowing for the description and/or proof of prior learning;
- Assessment resorts to tests, on-site observation and to other ways of assessment which meet national practices, in front of an assessor or a panel.

The model integrates three stages as shown on following plan :

### **1. Interim sessions**

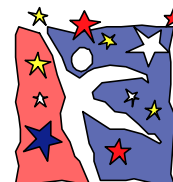
The assessments involve three stages:

#### **1.1 Analysis of application/advising/project**

All information on the APL procedure is given at the beginning of this stage, including the prerequisites of application.

This stage will enable each individual to get to know him/herself better, to identify and to enhance the value of his skills in relation to a professional project..

His steps will be guided by an ADVISOR.



## **1.2 Comparative analysis**

At this stage the advisor assists the candidate in analysing his skills profile in relation to one or more typical jobs. Once the reference system has been chosen, it makes it possible to aim at a form of accreditation or certification and to identify the missing skills.

## **1.3 Defining the procedure**

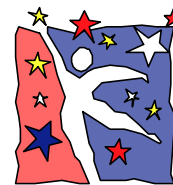
After identifying the missing skills, these can be expressed as training needs and the advisor assists the candidate in organizing:

- the ways of acquiring the missing skills or knowledge,
- an additional training plan, where necessary.

He also assists the candidate in enhancing and clarifying his/her acquired skills. If necessary, he will assist him/her in gathering or piecing together proof.

To this end, he can use the procedure of skills portfolio. He then assists him/her in working out :

- a first draft skills portfolio (*key-points*)
- and in planning the assessments that will take place according to the application.



## 2. PREPARATION OF EVIDENCE TRAINING, SKILLS PORTFOLIO

Depending on the type of preparation in each case, the advisor will assist the candidate in carrying out the following tasks.

### 2.1 Organizing the skills portfolio

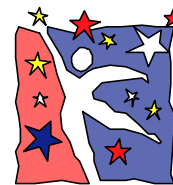
All the information gathered in the APL procedure must be included. This is the basis of the candidate's assessment.

This tool must include the details of the profession and the targeted professional standards and proof required for assessment. The name, address and the details of the interviews with the advisor will also be recorded.

Proof can include:

- ◆ certificates and diplomas of training courses or prior education;
- ◆ results/certificates of official and unofficial tests (in an on-the-job situation or not);
- ◆ assessments – *results and certificates*;
- ◆ tests practical – *results and certificates*;
- ◆ contents of training courses;
- ◆ confirmation by the employer by endorsement of the declarations on standards;
- ◆ employers' references;
- ◆ job descriptions;
- ◆ clients'/suppliers' recommendations;
- ◆ samples of work done;
- ◆ photographs of work done;
- ◆ etc.

This is the proof to demonstrate that the candidate actually has the skills identified at stage 1.2.



## **2.2 Identifying training needs**

When organizing the skills portfolio, other training needs might be identified, either with a view to upgrading skills or to enhancing other skills.

## **2.3 Managing the procedure**

Organizing the skills portfolio as a list of proof for each particular aspect of skills for which the candidate applies for APL, can turn out to be a slow , though efficient, procedure.

The needs for continuous training can require various actions prior to the assessment.

Managing the candidate's pathway up to when he/she will present his/her process to the assessor must be monitored by the advisor.

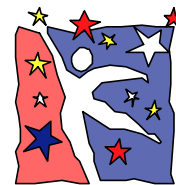
This type of guidance will allow for the feed back:

to the candidate: by fostering the awareness of his/her progress and by assisting him/her to position him/herself in relation to the stage of the assessment

to the advisor: by enabling him to monitor the candidate's pathway to decide on the time when he should move on to the assessment stage.

## **3. ASSESSMENT/ ACCREDITATION / VALIDATION**

This procedure makes it possible to check the candidates' skills, in which assessors use a certain type of assessment for the occupation and hand over the results to the



organizations concerned with the release of either a diploma or certificate of accreditation..

This assessment rests on performance standards related to a given employment or certification reference system. Thus, the conditions, standards and ways of assessing (*including the background in which the assessment will take place*) should be defined for each occupation, activity or skill according to what has been accepted at the level of each partner Member State.

### **3.1 Assessment of documents/proof**

This is the evaluation of the proof presented in the skills portfolio and the analysis of whether they are likely to vouch that the acquired skills meet the requirements of the standards of a given employment reference system..

If skill tests are made in the preparation phase, results will be considered at this stage and will be attached to the other proof in the skills portfolio.

### **3.2 Additional assessments**

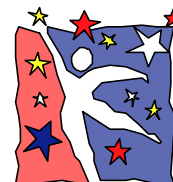
Should the assessment of the skills portfolio turn out not to be clear in terms of authenticity and the quality of proof related to the specific requirements of the case, other types of proof have to be put together to validate the candidate's skills.

At this stage, a decision can be taken on the basis of practical proof (*on-the-job or in a simulated environment*), written tests, interviews, etc.

### **3.3 Results**

This is the indicator of success or failure in the APL/Validation of prior skills procedure.

First, this is an APL measure at the national level, which will be developed, later, thanks to the implications of the organizations responsible for validation/certification.



When dealing with a « **validation** » procedure, the responsible organizations will release a corresponding certificate. In case of partial success, a « **credits** » model could be contemplated.

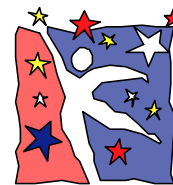
### **III - EXPERIMENTATION**

Experimentation of the joint model for the accreditation of skills will allow each partner to broaden his APL procedures by enhancing them and by setting up , possibly, a stronger methodological infrastructure.

In cases where there is no APL procedure, this experimentation could motivate the establishment of such a mechanism.

At a transnational level, the interest resides in the transparency that this joint methodological approach can supply as well as its contribution for the spreading of its use.

APL systems are still in development at a transnational level and this experimentation represents a contribution , which could gradually bring about the conditions for the accreditation of skills in the future. So far as experimentation is concerned, each partner will draw up a national plan for field testing.



## 1. Training of advisors and assessors

### 1.1 The actors

The advisor is the person who guides the candidate. He assists him/her in the procedure for the establishment of « **proof** » to present his skills portfolio at the time of assessment.

The assessor is the expert responsible for checking if the candidates have the skills mentioned in the reference system of a typical occupation, taking into account the standards of skills which are associated with it.

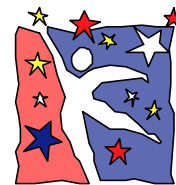
Both these professionals have specific profiles, to which must be added a set of competences related to methods in order to help implementation under the best conditions.

The advisor may be recruited from training or vocational counselling advisors. The assessor can be recruited from trainers or company experts.

In an accreditation or validation procedure, the prerequisites required from those persons should be met at the level of each Member State concerned, for instance, in terms of expertise, certificates or diplomas they should put forward and the number of years of professional experience required.

### 1.2 Training - Objectives

These professionals should attend training courses on methods, their rôles and responsibilities, to be developed for 2 days, with a set of joint and specific objectives for each of them.



### **Joint objectives:**

- defining the APL concept;
- identifying the three blocks of methods and contents;
- identifying the advantages of APL for the organization, the employers and individuals ;
- identifying the various types of « proof » ;
- determining how, where and when the process will take place..

### **Objectives - Advisor**

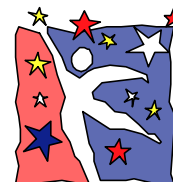
- defining the rôle and functions
- starting the process by fostering the selection of candidates ;
- guiding the candidate during the first two blocks (*from the analysis of the application/advising/project/, related to the profile of the typical job, the setting up of a training plan up to the programme of final assessment*),
- assist the candidate in understanding the reference systems and standards , in showing how to organize the skills portfolio and apply for APL ;
- assist the candidate in identifying either the training needs or other solutions to make up his/her skills profile and in defining the action plan ;
- explaining the assessment process to the candidate;
- setting up a system for monitoring the candidate (*application management tool*) and registering it.

### **Objectives - Assessor**

- defining the rôle and functions
- listing the « **proof** » the application is based on;
- defining the key-factors best underlining the evidence;
- complying with administrative requirements of procedure.

### **1.3 Duration of training**

The duration of training will be two days for each contributor so that he or she can fully grasp the technical aspects and objectives the procedure is based on. If this work is to be done at the national level, the joint part can be developed together provided the group is



not made up of too many participants. So, it helps to improve the operation of the team. The number of participants is crucial in making up the groups.

#### **1.4 Development and coordination of training**

The training to be offered to the already identified players will be assured at a national level. However, the partner organizations with no experience of such similar methodological procedures will, at any moment, be in a position to call on the cooperation of other partner organizations with expertise in the field. This means that each organization which will have identified the need will take the initiative of calling on the others' expertise to help to set up all or part of the joint model.

It will be possible to express these needs in the working out of the national experimentation plans. These needs will be expressed during the meetings of the Methods Group (a group to be broadened with methods proper to each country) so as to ensure transfer within countries. In practice, when working out national plans, the organizations will be in a position to show their interest in specific support to the training of their own team to the Methods Group which will provide the adequate answer, bearing in mind linguistic aspects.

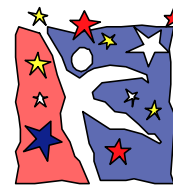
## **2. Sectors / Trades**

A debate on sectors/trades took place during the first meeting of the Steering Group. The professional fields on which work is to be done as well as the decision to start methods on at least two profiles remain open. The « Methods » Group has pondered on the advantages of testing the mechanism in a limited number of fields and in a limited number of profiles at the level of each country.

Without questioning the capability of each partner to start several pilot-experiments, the project results will not convey that effort..

Within this framework, the «Methods » Group has proposed that experimentation should focus on fewer sectors so as to be able to set up a stricter monitoring system through sectoral coordination taken care of by one of the partners.

Once agreed on, such coordination will make it possible to relate to the whole of the work by professional sector/trade, which will allow for a better cross-disciplinary viewpoint. It is



suggested that a co-ordinator be appointed and trained at the same time as the advisors and assessors.

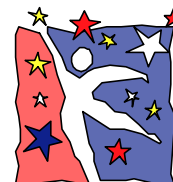
## 2.1 The pilot experiments

The drawing up of national plans for putting the model into practice will supply important data on the project management.

In the meantime, some indicators are needed to start on methods and to confirm the plans of each partner concerned with the sectors/trades/number of candidates to integrate.

The following table makes for immediate reading of the scope of the experiment :

PARTICIPANTS	COUNTRY	SECTOR	TRADE	N°.	OBS.
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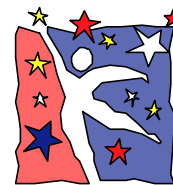
				<b>CAND.</b>	
ADULTA	Finland	Electricity Catering	Electrician Cook	15 15	
AFPA	France	Car Catering	Mechanic Cook		
AMU + YFIND	Sweden	Industry	CNC prog/ Oper. Mechanic	10 10	
CEPRA	Portugal	Car	Mechanic	12-15	(in cooperation with IEFPP)
CEPSA	Portugal	Food industry	Cook	12-15	(in cooperation with IEFPP)
FP-CENTRE- COIMBRA FAS	Portugal Ireland	Electricity Electricity	Electrician engineer Electrician	12-15 16	
IB	Germany	Office automation Catering	Cook		(in cooperation with the Chambers of commerce, electricity and building)
INEM	Spain	Car Catering	Mechanic Cook	20 2	
MENFP	Luxembourg	Car	Garage hand	8-10	
OAED	Greece	Car Catering	Mechanic Cook		

(\*) EVTA have already asked the partners for the missing data

## 2.2 The target group

The target group, whether wage-earning or job-seeking, wishing to carry on with their occupation or to change occupation, provided they show they have professional experience related to the pilot experiments, according to the conditions of admission of accreditation, validation, will be admitted.

Analysis of the professional experience will determine whether the candidate has all or part of the professional skills identified according to the job reference system and the level of expertise concerned.



The professional activities may have been carried out continuously, intermittently, full-time or part-time.

The type of working contract is that agreed in each country and this also applies to the duration of experience required by the procedure.

## 2.4 Back-up documents

2.5 The back-up documents necessary for the experiment are as follows:

### **Validation reference systems**

Within the context of APL methods, the objective of this reference work is to define what is being validated, according to which standards at the level of each Member State.

The validation reference system can be schematically broken down into two parts : the first could be called ar "**job reference system**" and the second which would include the « **performance standards**" associated with the job reference system.

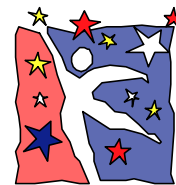
### **The job reference system defines:**

- The typical job by positioning it into the national qualification system,
- The typical activities related to practising this job ;
- The professional skills required to carry out each of these activiles and take on the job.

This reference system is translated into desciptive forms which define the three levels and the relations between them.

As to the **performance standards**, it is necessary to determine the conditions, standards and modes of assessments for each level as defined in the job reference system (*typical job, typical activities and professional skills*).

If this is useful for the first two levels, it is crucial for the third (*professional skills*).



In terms of professional skills, it is crucial to define the context in which validation will take place :

- Actual on-the-job situation;
- In a simulated professional situation (*training centre...*);
- other.

Associated performance standards, based on time:

- duration;
- pace;
- autonomy;
- etc.

Associated performance standards based on quality:

- aspect (*if useful*);
- soundness;
- respect of norms, rules and size;
- etc.

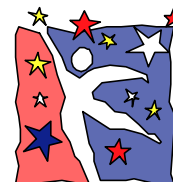
The validation reference system to be used is that adopted at the level of each Member State for each trade/activity/skill.

### **Skills portfolio**

The skills portfolio, as a back-up gathering all the documents that can be used to prove the authenticity of skills, must be presented as an open support to integrate anybody's proof, regardless of its nature.

This file is the result of the active participation of the advisor and of the candidate. It lists all information enhancing the professional characteristics of the candidate as well as his/her training needs, as were identified during the procedure. Thus, this document will include a part intended for training, in particular, for the individual training plan, according to the professional project contemplated. This document is the basis of assessment.

### **Monitoring documents of candidates**



A candidate's file will be drawn up , a kind of table, similar to a management tool, which will enable the candidate and the advisor to be aware, at any one time , of his/her progress.

As to monitoring, interviews at regular intervals will have to be planned to update the “**table**”, by integrating and registering all new elements, decisions, official correspondence, assessment documents, adjustments of training plan, etc.

### **Information on the APL system to the candidate**

A small document with all pertinent information on the APL procedure should be made available to the candidate.

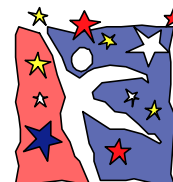
### **File on training material**

A pedagogic file will have to be made containing the elements necessary to the training of advisors and assessors . This file will be available to the members of the Methods Group.

## **2.4 Publicity of project**

In each country, appropriate ways of publicizing the project and the national experimentation plan should be found to achieve various objectives :

- involving the supervision authorities;
- informing potential users of the APL procedure;
- heightening the awareness of the teams of assessors, in particular, the direct contributors – advisors and assessors.



## 2.5 Schedule for experimentators

### 1999

**October – November** - Presentation of national plans

**November** - Selection of advisors and assessors

**December** - Preparation of Training Programmes

### 2000

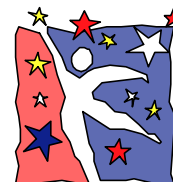
**January** - Preparation of Training Programmes

**February** - Training of advisors and assessors

**February - March** - Preparation at national level (*selection of applicants*)

**March – November** - Experimentation

**Décember** - National assessment (*final*)



## **IV – MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

The monitoring and assessment of the project will be taken place of at two levels – the national and transnational level. Actors vary according to the elements to assess as will tools and indicators.

### **1. National level: monitoring and assessment**

As to monitoring and assessment, the « **Methods** » Group thought about **which points** monitoring should focus on, **who** would be in charge, **when** and **where** it should be done.

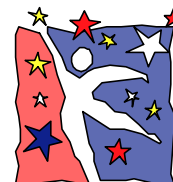
#### **Key-points identified :**

- National plan of experimentation ;
- Implementation – methods, documents used, training of advisor and assessor;
- Results – candidates, certificates released

We wondered **who** would be the right person in charge of the implementation stage. On the one hand, the Steering Group (SG) has languages on its side and is close to the field ; on the other hand, the « Methods » Group (MG), which will contribute to the assessment implementation, will have a broader approach to review methods provided it is in charge of monitoring too. However, it seemed to us that the National Project Head was the person most qualified to conduct the monitoring and reviewing of the project at a national level since he is responsible for the monitoring file, the national report and the national summing-up report in order to make transfer easier. The following table was put forward :

<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>MONITORING</b>	<b>PROJECT REVIEW</b>
Plan of experimentation	National Project Head	(monitoring file) National Project Head
Implementation: - Methods - Documents used - Training	National Project Head	National Project Head
Results - Candidates - Certificates	SG and MG Sg and MG	SG and MG SG and MG

The type of indicators and of means necessary to approach the assessment support for data gathering (of the matrixes to be designed by the MG).



By the same token, each country should make up a monitoring file (*case study*) to sum up the history of the project, the problems faced, the solutions found and the results.

As a sum-up, methods and knowledge could be analysed and “**produced**” from monitoring.

All these monitoring and assessment procedures will lead, in each country , to a national conference for closing the spreading of results which will rally in particular the supervision organizations, the social partners and the associated organizations..

From the viewpoint of validation, the responsible organizations and social partners should be involved as soon as pilot experiments are started. Internal validation will be the starting point for all action to be developed by EVTA at a transnational level.

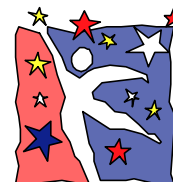
Eventually, each country will submit a national report in the form of a grid to be supplied, based on the indicators previously defined and dealt with at specific times during assessment on a support given.

## **2. Transnational level: monitoring , project review and transfer**

At a transnational level, monitoring and project review should focus on methods, training and joint documents, the results, the final report and further developments.

The following table illustrates the contributors’ proposal for each key-point :

<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>MONITORING AND SUM-UP</b>	<b>VALIDATION</b>
Methods	MG	SG
Training	MG	SG
Joint documents	SG + MG	SG
Results	MG	SG
Final Report	MG	SG + EVTA
Further Developments		EVTA



From the results of national reports, based on standardized assessment back-ups, used by all partners, EVTA will draw up a final transnational report.

EVTA, too, will inform all partners, national supervision authorities (*accreditation / validation*) the Commission, CEDEFOP and EURES, of the results and of the debates as well as of possible agreements with these organizations.

These actions aim at putting into practice the APL model, at a national level to create the conditions for carrying on with a mutual accreditation procedure by the partners with application and acceptance of APL at a European level in mind for the future.