The practice of Skills Audits in 16 EU Member States

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Overview

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2. The main types of skills audits identified
3. How common are skills audits, what is assessed and to whom are they offered?
4. Links to tailored training (UP step 2) and validation (UP step 3)
5. Quality and effectiveness of skills audits: Strengths and Challenges
Part 1

Study objectives & methodology
Main aim:
Improve knowledge base about skills audits, their process, relationships with validation as well as effectiveness

- Map skills audits in selected countries*
- Develop a typology of skills audits
- Analyse who provides skills audits to whom (target groups)
- Analyse methods for skills audits delivery
- Review the use of standards in skills audits
- Identify linkages with validation pathways and UP steps
- Assess effectiveness of skills audits

* 16 countries: Austria, Belgium (Belgium-nl, Belgium-fr), Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the UK

Research design:
Focus of the analysis are skills audit initiatives rather than a country. Primarily qualitative research combining perspectives of various stakeholders

- 89 expert interviews
- 22 beneficiary interviews
- 90 skills audits covered in a survey of providers
- 41 skills audits presented in fiches
- 10 skills audits covered by case studies
- Over 700 organisations providing some form of skills audit identified
Terminology issue: ‘Skills audit’ is not an established expression

Of 41 initiatives reviewed - none is called ‘skills audit’ or equivalent

When the term skills audit is used – it can mean something else than the EU definition → large scale survey of skills supply in a country or an organisation

Lack of shared vocabulary means:
• Blurred borders - difficulty to find agreement regarding what is and what is not a skills audit
• Very heterogeneous group of practices
• Stakeholders do not immediately understand what skills audits are (and are not)
The main types of skills audits identified
Typology of skills audits – according to purpose

- **Type 1** Self-development
- **Type 2** Education advancement
- **Type 3** Labour market integration
- **Type 4** Talent management

Closed links to the model envisaged by UP and VNFIL
Type 1 – Self-development

**Main purpose**
- Understand one's strengths and weaknesses
  - Build self-awareness
  - Better present oneself in the context of job search
  - Choose education/ training pathway or career orientation
  - Results in a personal portfolio documenting skills and experiences

**Typical providers**
- Information and guidance centres
  - Public, private or civil society
  - In the context of education/ training, job-search or on one's own initiative
  - Includes online self-assessment tools

**Standards and methods**
- Open process, interviews, self-assessment (guided)
  - Standards used as reference → not necessarily as main pillar
  - Typical methods include biographical and behavioural interviews
  - The methodology is defined by broad types of questions/ areas
  - Possible use of personality tests or psychometric tools

Low skilled adults are not a main target group – no links to training and validation
Type 1 example – Self-development

Profil Pass (DE)

The information for this portfolio is extracted through a broad range of methods embedded in the counselling process: biographical interview, discussions, tests, self-assessment, etc. The outcomes are documented in an individual manner – by the user and the counsellor together, and are for the use of the individual. The ProfilPass is offered to low-skilled adults, but they are not the main groups of users.

The portfolio contains the 4 main sections:
- My life (past experience)
- My fields of activity (what a person is good at)
- My competences (list specialised KSC)
- My goals (planning for next steps)

Profil Pass has an empowering effect on individuals and helps them to gain greater clarity about their skills and strengths. This results in greater confidence to take the next professional steps.
## Type 2 – Educational advancement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main purpose</th>
<th>(Re)integrate education/ training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify KSC already possessed as well as gaps</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Take up training and shorten and individualise education/ training pathway</td>
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<td>Results in certification on completion of training</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Typical providers</th>
<th>Education and training providers</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All types of education/ training providers</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Standards and methods</th>
<th>Qualification standards (or in some case training standards)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews and guided self-assessment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Demonstrations or tests</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Low skilled adults are one of the target groups – strong link to training and validation.
Type 2 example – Educational advancement

Validation of prior learning to re-integrate IVET (DK)

Required process to re-enter IVET for all learners above 25 – hence low skilled workers are included.

The methodology chosen is the choice of the provider → no prescription. In practice: mostly interviews, self-assessment and feedback on past experience.

The basis for assessment are qualification or training standards. Actually assessment methods is one of the issues mostly discussed, also in evaluations – e.g. there is a large difference between assessing products and services

Required output: individualised learning plan, tailored training (e.g. shortened training pathway)
Type 3 – Labour market integration

Main purpose: Find and secure a position
- Matching candidates to jobs or job requirements
- Provide employers evidence of past achievements

Typical providers: Public employment services
- Public but also private ones
- Possibly sub-contracted to other providers
- For some target groups – such as refugees – strong involvement of civil society organisations

Standards and methods: Occupational standards or qualification standards
- Interviews and self-assessment
- Demonstrations or tests
- May include practical experience in a traineeship

Low skilled adults are one of the target groups – yet only when they are unemployed. Possibly link to training (ALMP) and validation.
Type 3 example – Labour market integration

Competence checks by PES for asylum seekers and refugees (AT)
One hour of one-on-one biographical interviewing each week with a counsellor and 10 hours of workshops. If needed, practical skills or work experiences are verified in field trials by professionals.
A ‘Results Report’ (past experiences, current competencies) and a development plan (for the next 1.5 years) regarding integration into the labour market are elaborated.
If needed candidates are referred to formal recognition of qualifications, expert opinions and/or tests on competencies.

Another example at EU level is the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals
Type 4 – Talent management

Manage workforce
- Provide persons in employment with professional development opportunities
- Ensure competitiveness
- Support restructuring

Private companies
- Possibly in cooperation with training providers or PES

Occupational standards or job-specific standards (in-house)
- Self-assessment
- Past performance feedback
- 360 degrees feedback
- Observations

Low skilled adults are one of the target groups – e.g. for validation in companies. Possibly also link to in-company training
Example 4 – Talent management

Validation in companies (BE-fr)

This initiative is part of the skills validation scheme which is in place since 2003 in the Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET) sector. Skills validation (validation des compétences) aims at recognising the professional knowledge and know-how acquired outside of typical training channels. Validation is carried out by continuous vocational training centres under the remit of a Consortium and leads to the issuing of a Skills Certificate, and is

- designed as an approach contributing to companies’ human resource management,
- ideally part of a company or sectoral project (with pre-defined objectives) in relation to the forecasting of skills and jobs,
- based on needs assessment (e.g. in relation to staff profiles),
- participation of employees is voluntary.

The quality assurance standards developed by the Consortium will apply to collective validation.
How common are skills audits, what is assessed and to whom are they offered?
How common are skills audits?

- Skills audits seem to be quite common: all 16 countries had a variety of offers in place
- Mushrooming of skills audits in the past decade
- There is no shortage of skills audits practices however their size/scale varies as well as their geographical coverage
- However in many of the countries analysed large scale and well established practices have been found (AT, BE, DK, DE, DK, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, PL, UK) next to more small scale provision.

Examples of large scale national/regional practices:

- DE – ProfilPass – approx. 18,000 persons per year across Germany
- FR – Bilan de competences – approx. 70,000 persons per year across France
- IT – Libretto Formativo del Cittadino – more than 60,000
- PL - Małopolskie Region – intended to cover 43,500 persons out of the regional labour force by 2023
Who are the main target groups

Offered to a broad variety of target groups of people in transition (jobseekers, young people, high-skilled, low-skilled. Some target groups have better access to skills audits:

- Because of rights/entitlements
- Because of the difficulty to reach certain target groups
- Low-skilled adults **in employment** are not very well covered

**Target groups most often covered by skills audits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unemployed in general</th>
<th>Youth – students, NEETs</th>
<th>Low skilled/low qualified (also those in employment)</th>
<th>Refugees/asylum seekers/migrants</th>
<th>No specific target group – open</th>
<th>Specialised staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ ✓ ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills audit fiches</td>
<td>✓ ✓</td>
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</table>

✓ a few practices covered by the study, ✓ ✓ around five practices covered in the study, ✓ ✓ ✓ around 10 practices covered in the study
What types of skills are assessed

- Mostly transversal and personal skills
- Driving skills
- Literacy, numeracy and digital skills are in the mix

Survey data, N=90
What methods are used

Broad variety of methods:
- Online-self assessment tools (number increasing and quality improving)
- Other types of self-assessment
- Tests and examinations (theoretical as well as work-based)
- Demonstration/observation
- Interviews and narratives (individual and in groups)

There is often a mix of methods:
- Self-assessment and interviews as part of a coaching process
- PES profiling tools based on interviews and tests
- Assessment of skills and skills gaps in view of a specific training
- Interviews coupled with work trials and assessment in simulated work environments
Part 4

Links to tailored training (UP step 2) and validation and recognition (UP step 3)
- **VNFIL/UP Recommendation definition:**
  
  **VNFIL**
  - Identify and analyse KSC
  - For career orientation and training
  - Leading to assessment and certification

  **UP**
  - Identify skills and skills gaps
  - In view of a tailored training
  - Leading to validation and recognition

- **In practice: the relationship is less clear cut**
  
  Skills audits can cover two UP steps or even all three
  
  Hence the purpose of skills audits can go beyond identifying KSC and skills
  
  Yet some skills audits have no link to training and validation.
Validation is an umbrella term for a 4-step process: the validation process

*Preparation (Career IAG)*

1. Identification
2. Documentation
3. Assessment
4. Certification

*Follow-up (Action Plan, Referral etc.)*

Is restricted to learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning

UP Recommendation: Validation is one step in the process

- Step 1: Skills Assessment
- Step 2: A tailored and flexible learning offer
- Step 3: Validation and recognition

Includes learning outcomes from formal learning as well as non-formal and informal
Skills audits and validation: steps covered in the process

N=41 examples of skills audit initiatives
Many of the examples analysed work better for people who already have a good level of skills as they are based on the assumption that the underpinning need of individuals (and their employers) is to make skills and competences visible, not necessarily to certify them. For many individuals and many situations of job search, such visibility is sufficient.

Yet, for low-skilled adults this is not the case and there is a need for a more formalised process of validation and certification.
Quality and effectiveness of skills audits: Strengths and Challenges
Quality and effectiveness of skills audits

Strengths (n=70 initiatives)

- Skills Audits seem to be effective in identifying skills as well as skills gaps
- The quality of methods used is overall good, and the level of support through trained counsellors is overall a given
- The methods are to a large extent based on the individual and their self-assessment and career interests (self-driven – this may not be suitable for low skilled)
- A few evaluations support the validity of the process – beneficiaries rate themselves in the same manner or slightly below than what assessors/ counsellors would rate them
- Evaluations show a highly positive outcomes in terms of empowering the individual: self-awareness, clarity of next steps and motivation
- All skills audits lead to an output that states the level of the individual’s skills
- A large group leads to a discussion of next steps and/or an Action plan
Quality and effectiveness of skills audits

Challenges (n=70 initiatives)

- Low skilled are a target group, but mainly when they are unemployed
- Clear articulation with educational advancement is only given in a specific type
- The combination low-skilled and educational advancement is rare, most initiatives for low-skilled belong to type 3
- Articulation with validation and certification of NFIL is in many cases inexistent
- Referral processes and collaboration between institutions is not always well-established
- The use of standards is not common
- The level of trust among stakeholders varies
- In a few evaluations the labour market transition was pointed out as being low – especially compared to the costs and intensity of the process
Thank you

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