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UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI BARI  
ALDO MORO

# APELE

## Intellectual Output 4

### Creating and Presenting a Portfolio

University of Bari

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The APELE reports disseminate the “work in progress” of the project “Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in European Universities” (APELE).

The overall aim of APELE project is to focus on people with fewer opportunities who follow a non- traditional path to university. Besides being relevant for the local population, access to university is extremely important for migrants across Europe, as university offers possibilities for further education and development. The project will record how prior experiential learning is recognized in different European countries, enabling people with fewer opportunities (including migrants) to have access to study in Higher Educational Institutions in Europe.

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APELE reports are available at [www.apele.eu](http://www.apele.eu)



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## Introduction

“Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning in European Universities” (APELE) is an Erasmus+ project focused on people with fewer opportunities who follow a non-traditional path to access Universities.

One of the objectives of the project is to help and encourage the target group to continue their education through university studies reaching a series of specific aims. As main objectives we can underline the following: “improving and promoting the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities (including migrants) in the university community”; “to foster social inclusion through access to university studies” and “to enable stakeholders to identify and gain a deeper understanding of building a personal portfolio”.

Intellectual output 4 was focused on the “Creation and Presentation of a Portfolio”. The portfolio has been identified as a privileged tool for promoting the social inclusion of people with poor economic possibilities, including migrants. The reason should be found in the great consideration that the European Union (EU) expresses for this tool. In fact, EU invested many resources in this tool for a long time, as it is useful for the reconstruction of significant prior learning experiences. They are very important and, in some cases (such as that of migrants without documents about their biographies, studies, work experiences, etc.) indispensable for accessing the European Higher Education System.

In addition, the “Council Recommendations of 20. December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning” provides four basic steps for the reconstruction, clarification, and full enhancement of prior learning experiences:

- *identification* of the learning outcomes acquired by the person through non-formal and informal learning.
- *documentation* of the learning outcomes acquired by the person through non-formal and informal learning.
- *assessment* of the learning outcomes acquired by the person through non-formal and informal learning.
- *certification* of the learning outcomes acquired by the person through non-formal and informal learning in the form of a qualification or credits that contribute to obtaining a qualification or, where appropriate, in another form.

For what concerns the documentation of the learning outcomes acquired by the person through non-formal and informal learning, the crucial importance of a "portfolio" is specified by the "European guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning" (2016): “The documentation generally follows the identification phase and provides for the presentation of evidence of the learning outcomes achieved. This can be done through the compilation of a "portfolio" that includes the evolution of the individual's career, accompanied by documents and / or work activity's witnesses of that certify the results achieved”.

Therefore, the APELE portfolio, was the result of a research itinerary which developed itself along precise steps. The first step was the recognition of the existing status and institutional-legal framework in each country (IO1). The second step was the collection of the perceptions of eminent members of the academic and political world about the inclusion in institutions of European Higher Education of people with poor economic possibilities, including migrants (IO2). The third step was the analysis of the needs of a sample of the population (IO3), interested to the procedure of clarification, recognition, and accreditation of previous learning experiences, with the aim of their formalization useful for the inclusion of target subjects in the European Higher Education System. To this end, the portfolio has been identified by the project as the most suitable tool. That is why the fourth step, the Intellectual Output 4, focuses on “creating and presenting a portfolio”.

There is a misunderstanding about what personal portfolio is, as many people confuse it with the personal Curriculum Vitae (CV). The Curriculum Vitae is one of the most important instruments for a candidate to find a job. It is a presentation of education, knowledge, skills, and work experience. The purpose of the CV presentation is to attract readers' interest and to create a good image of the candidate. On the other hand, a portfolio is something wider. The concept has usually been used to describe a financial procedure and this explains why the term “financial portfolio” is widely known and more used. Other expressions include also the “educational portfolio”, where a set of lessons/courses and educational material is collected by a single person. When developing a personal portfolio, the person is able to collect all personal data describing themselves. These data do not include only the formal information (demographic data, studies, diplomas, occupation, years of work experience, etc.) but also qualifications, knowledge, skills and abilities learned during the years. More specifically, for “knowledge” we intend the outcome of the learning assimilation. Knowledge is the complete sum of a series of positive elements, principles, theories and practices associated with a field of study or work. “Skill” means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to perform tasks and solve problems. Finally, “competence” is characterized as the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social or methodological abilities in working or study circumstances and in a professional and or personal development.

The overall objective of this Intellectual Output (IO) is to give to the APELE's target group the perspective to build a personal portfolio recording their formal and informal qualifications. Elements of innovation for this IO were related to investing time in teaching the target group on how to be creative and innovative with portfolio building supporting candidates also in terms of motivation, quality and results. Expected impact was to deliver a well-organized method and templates where individuals would be able to “record” themselves and their evolution. In addition, we should point out also the IO transferability potential, considering that the

methodology designed will be useful in order to be used also by other target groups. The partnership is supposed to exchange and compare the methodologies and practices by taking advantage of exchanging experience, sharing ideas, analyzing different situations and training programs, developing and sharing common instruments to be used. An expert from each organization was selected and supported participants in all actions.

Regarding the outlined objectives, the description of the target group, the methodology, the tools and the timeline of the output, all respect the guidelines of qualitative empirical research. The design of the portfolio considers and includes demographics and special features of the participants, their educational level, past training, and experiences as target group. Regarding the target group, the portfolio includes participant's demographics, i.e., family-related and socio-economic characteristics of the target population. These include age, gender, family status, number of children and financial situation amongst other factors. The level of education of the target group, both formal education and/ or initial vocational training, is recorded. Portfolio also focuses on features directly related to the problem and the reference framework. Additionally, prior training and experience relevant to the project, such as studies, participation in training programs and professional/ vocational experiences are outlined.

The coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on everyone's daily lives all over the world. Because of the lockdowns, all activities slowed down as closures and restrictions made it hard or even impossible for people to go out. Many could work from home, but others did not have this possibility. Of course, all this unstable situation had an impact on the APELE research project implementation. In each of the four participating countries, this situation created more difficulties in reaching participants which fulfilled the necessary requirements to be part of the target group. Interactions and communications with organizations, institutions and regional education directorates are some examples of avenues / respondents that were, sometimes, hard to get in contact with. For this reason, most of the data were collected via online video calls. The situation differed between the participating countries during the time of the research but, overall, it was a demanding task which took more time and effort than expected.

## Personal data

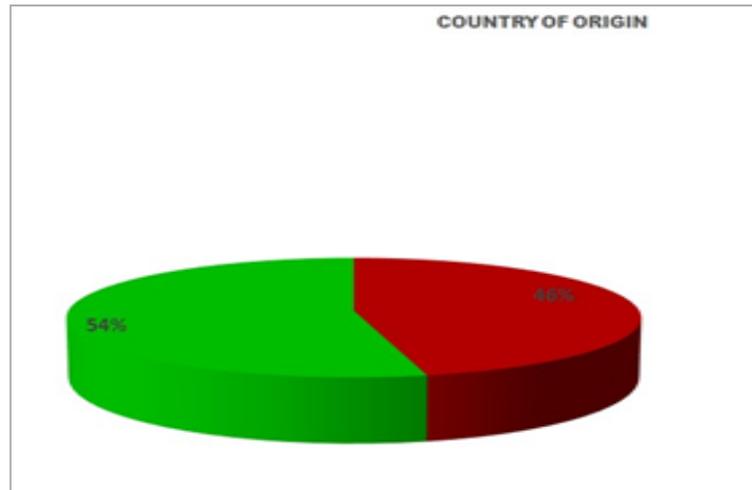
The selection and choice of participants in the APELE project was made according to the following methods. In the case of the Danish partner, the majority of participants in the APELE portfolio workshops had been involved in the previous phase of IO3, for the collection of data relating to the analysis of needs. To complete the target group, with whom to carry out the workshops, the team of experts from the University

of Copenhagen, using the social research methodology known as "Snowballing", invited the participants already selected to recruit other people from their contacts, for a total of 10 participants. In the case of the Greek partner, the University of Patras team recruited the participants in the APELE portfolio workshops among those who had been involved in the phase of IO3, that phase of needs analysis, involving 11 participants. In the case of the Icelandic partner, the team from the University of Akureyri involved the participants contacted in the early stages of the APELE project (IO2 - IO3) to ask them for support in identifying the participants for future workshops dedicated to the portfolio. Contacts with potential participants took place via web (social channels, such as Facebook) and telephone (direct calls or WhatsApp), reaching a total of 10 participants. In the case of the Italian partner, the UNIBA team directed the research of the participants for the workshops on the APELE portfolio by addressing a request to the people already interviewed for the data collection concerning the needs analysis, carried out during the Intellectual Output 3. Three people accepted the invitation and were added to the participant list. In order to identify other people to be involved, the UNIBA team asked support from a local NGO, which works with migrants for cultural integration on a linguistic basis. In the case of the Italian partner "ARMES Progetti", the team involved the same persons previously recruited during IO3, the needs analysis phase. In Italy, overall, the participants were 10 (5 from UNIBA and 5 from ARMES).

### Features of the Target Group

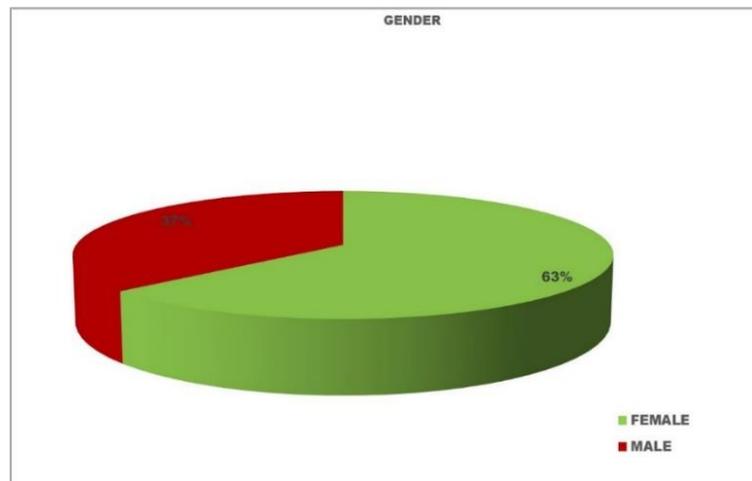
In the target group, considering the IO3 guidelines and the project specifications, relating to the essential characteristics to carry out the field survey, there were present three sub-categories of people characterized by "educational poverty", in particular facing with: geographical barriers, socio-cultural conditions and / or economic disadvantages, migrant status. Just under half of the 41 participants in the workshops fall into the category of migrants, while the remainder are nationals of the partner countries of the APELE project (all participants from Greece, the majority of people involved in Iceland and a minority share of participants from Italy).

Graphic 1



■ Participants from EU Countries  
■ Participants from non-EU Countries

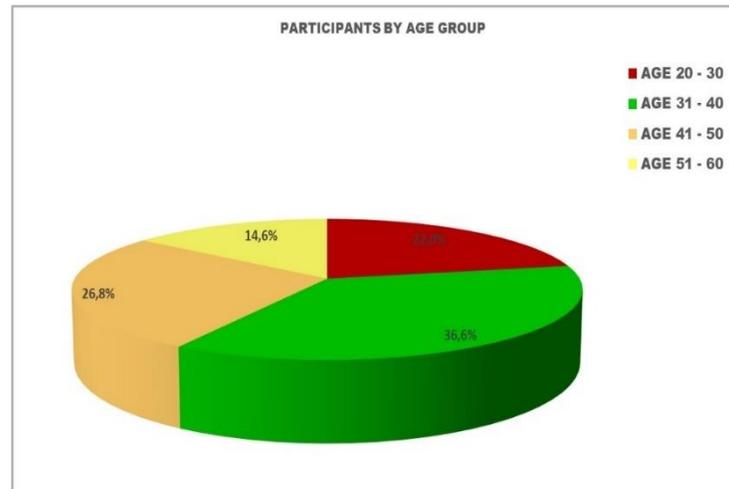
Graphic 2



*In the total number of participants, the majority was represented by women*

The personal data that emerges from the analysis of the entire group of workshop participants highlights a relative predominance of the age group within forty years (20-30 and 31-40), compared to more mature people.

Graphic 3

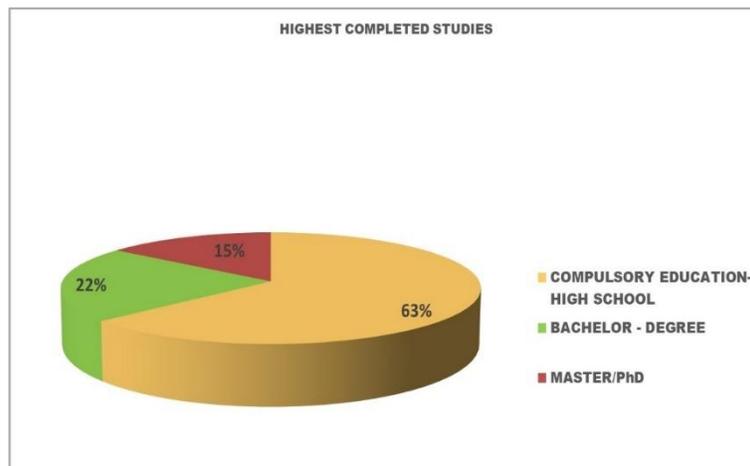


This sub-group is also the one that potentially has the greatest chance of requesting and completing a procedure for the recognition of experiences. On the other hand, people who are a few years older can boast a broader experience and knowledge gained over the course of their lives, both personally and professionally.

This aspect was underlined, in various ways and very clearly, in the “Personal Portfolios” compiled by the participants: as illustrated in the national reports of the project partners, the feedback from the portfolios and the final verification and assessment meetings of the experience relating to the drafting of the document suggest that more experienced (and therefore more adult) participants were able to focus better and reflect upon on all their personal life experiences.

Furthermore, during the reflection and compilation phase, these participants recognized the value of those experiences in the perspective indicated by the APELE project, which identifies in the previous experiences of active learning the basis on which, after a careful analysis, to define a quantification process (and qualification) of this “educational baggage”, for the purposes of certification suitable for receiving training “credits” for the continuation of higher studies (enrollment in university courses). In this regard, it is interesting to observe how the majority of the participants indicated that they had obtained an upper middle school qualification, having not reached beyond the high school diploma level.

Graphic 4



A cross-reading of the data relating to the two previous graphs supports the hypothesis that the ideal candidates to refer to are those who, for various reasons, have interrupted the training cycle, having obtained a diploma. These people, who probably had to give up continuing their higher studies out of necessity, show a greater propensity to seek the personal challenge to start an educational path again.

Conversely, people with degrees and post-graduate specializations belong to the category of migrants: they are instead denied a path of recognition of the qualifications acquired in the countries of origin and, probably, the APELE procedure could help these people to obtain greater attention from part of the Universities, through mechanisms for the recognition of "unconventional" but more flexible qualifications and experiences of high cultural value, based precisely on the recognition of previous experiential skills.

### **APELE portfolio: an orientation model for the studies' choice**

The APELE project is fully part of the European design of Lifelong Learning plans. In fact, in the "knowledge society", knowledge and skills are constantly changing. Therefore, active participation in democratic processes, including access to the context of Higher Education and to the job market, requires lifelong learning skills. Particular attention is paid to adulthood, which brings together both important educational experiences gained at the young age and important instances of existential planning aimed at ensuring serenity and a high-quality life in the third age. In this perspective, every EU national, with particular regard to "people with fewer opportunities, included migrants" (Project, p. 3), should be able to acquire the competence of "learning to learn" throughout life, from childhood to adulthood, to old age. The APELE project,

therefore, aims to offer a contribution to the possibility of lifelong learning through a specific focus on experiential learning.

The main goal of IO4 is to provide target groups' participants (people with fewer educational opportunities) a practical tool, the "portfolio", through which to bring out their "experiential assets": knowledges, skills, abilities, and personal attitudes (awareness, self-control, logical, practical, memory, etc.) that, on the whole, describe and represent, in a unique and specific way the social and personal dimension of each one. The portfolio helps each member of target group to focus on their "experiential asset", including formal, informal, and no-formal context, through which promoting an active inclusion in project of higher educational learning.

Particular attention has been paid to the autobiographical path, internal to the drafting of the portfolio, in order to bring out the subject's prior knowledge and experiences, with the aim of offering a valid tool for orientation towards academic studies.

Indeed, if the concept of portfolio was introduced in the economic and financial area, it was extended, at a later stage, in the context of pedagogical and didactic studies. In particular, it is in this field of study that the portfolio can be understood, both, in a restricted sense, as a collection of evidence that documents the set of training experiences of the subject; and, in a broader sense, as an opportunity to engage the subject in a further training course.

According to this latter meaning, the construction of the portfolio involves the subject in a critical and constructive review of her/his training biography. If meant in this dual capacity - as collector of evidence and stimulus to transform the meaning of one's orientation project - the portfolio that APELE project aims at implementing collected:

- qualifications relating to formal education paths (studies, diplomas, employment, years of work experience, etc.).
- prior learning experiences, resulting from the analysis of the complex and articulated set of non-formal and informal education, including knowledge, skills and abilities that are useful for orientation to academic studies.
- narrative materials produced in diversified forms, self-assessment forms, experience analysis grids, tools for drafting a project.
- the material drafting of a "orientation project" towards academic studies, to be undertaken at the end of the APELE course.

The literature on Lifelong Learning today presents interesting insights into the autobiographical methodology, as telling someone about oneself allows the subject to go back with the memory to past

events, reflect on the choices made, identify problematic knots and turning points, recognize errors and to focus on opportunities for change that could open up new perspectives in life, work and training (Gallelli, 2016). Talking about oneself, indeed, contributes to the "self-orientation" among the various events of life to draw a map, to remind all the protagonists who have been part of it, to search for an underlying plot in personal experience, as well as a coherence and a "red thread" that has guided one's own experience up to then, to then observe one's own experience with more detachment and learn from it (Demetrio, 2008).

The methodology brought together:

- collection, analysis and reflection on educational qualifications and skills acquired in the formal education itinerary.
- analysis and reflection on the skills acquired during work experiences.
- guided self-assessment of transversal skills; guided orientation; autobiographical methodology.

Indeed, narration represents the most suitable methodology to promote processes of introspection and explanation of lived experiences (formal and informal experiences, of life, of training, of work), and to create moments of transformative reflection (Mezirow 2003, Fabbri & Romano, 2017) on one's life and training path. Through the self-narration (Gallelli 2016, 2018b), therefore, each member of the target group was able to:

- focusing attention on specific aspects of one's existential, training and working path.
- reflecting on the meaning attributed to specific aspects during the lifetime and the course of one's educational and professional biography.
- re-attributing significance and value to specific highlights of biographical lifetime.
- building a life project in which to engage oneself in a university course.

Starting from the elaboration of the points listed above, it has been possible for each member of the target group to develop their own portfolio, including the formal and informal contexts, within which to foresee the possibility of a future inclusion in an academic path, encouraged by the universities participating in the APELE project. The intervention consists of a workshop and of two feedback meetings.

Developing a personal portfolio, we are able to collect all data describing ourselves. That does not include only the formal ones (demographic data, studies, diplomas, occupation, years of work experience etc.) but also qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

More specifically, "**knowledge**" means the outcome of the learning assimilation. Knowledge is the body of positive elements, principles, theories, and practices associated with a field of work or study. "**Skill**" means the ability to apply knowledge and utilize know-how to perform tasks and solve problems. Finally,

**"competence"** is characterized as the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social or methodological abilities in working or study circumstances and in professional and / or personal development. The total of a person's knowledge, skills and abilities are the result of perpetual learning through its various forms. Qualifications in the knowledge society are seen as a "quality label".

The overall aim of this Intellectual output has been to give the target group the perspective to build a personal portfolio recording their formal and informal qualifications.

#### **Five main phases took place.**

*Phase 1: Preparation.* A preparation of reviewing the existing resources for distribution with pedagogy consultation at the beginning of the IO gave the opportunity for partners to exchange their knowledge and previous experience. Lead partner guided the team to decide about the common methods and tools.

*Phase 2: Adjustment.* The consortium adjusted the procedure taking into account the results from IO3.

*Phase 3: Implementation (Workshop).* One or more experts per partner organisation were in charge of IO4 in order to teach the participants how to organise their personal portfolio. The most suitable and experienced person from each partner team has been involved. Each partner organization involved at least *10 individuals (due to Covid-19 situation and after common partners' decision)* which participated in a workshop. In this workshop expert taught individuals how to organise their personal portfolio. A presentation of what a portfolio is took place and an in-depth discussion followed. The duration consisted of 4-5 hours, using online tools. Moreover, the contents of the workshop were analysed accurately, after receiving approval by the participants.

*Phase 4: Feedback (Individual meetings).* At the end of the Workshop the target group worked autonomously. Ten days after the workshop, the expert organised individual meetings with each participant in order to advice/ help/ upgrade the recorded material. Of course, extra meetings (individual or team) in general could be organised according to the needs of the target group.

*Phase 5: Evaluation.* A final evaluation of IO 4. Evaluation was based on both quantitative and qualitative data. The results from this evaluation have been taken into account in order to remodel, improve conditions, cure weaknesses and to strengthen the positive outcomes of the process.

## A comparative analysis among the partners. Workshop carrying out methods and feedback meetings

### A) The Workshop

Country	Online meeting	Face to face meeting	Individual meeting	Audio/video recording authorized	Language adopted for workshop/ portfolio fill-in/ feedback
DENMARK	20%	80%	100%	NO	English/others
GREECE	100%		100%	NO	Greek
ICELAND	40%	60%	100%	NO	Icelandic/English
ITALY	100%		100%	NO	Italian

From the national reports, it emerges that the majority of the participants were able to interact with the APELE experts in the national language. Only in Denmark participants preferred to speak in English, so using a language different from the native one of the involved people (22 of the 41 participants were Greek, Icelandic and Italian).

The portfolio was conceived and developed in English and, subsequently, each of the partners adapted it to their national language in order to facilitate those who preferred this option. Migrant people (participating to the target group of Denmark, Iceland and Italy), during the workshops and the subsequent feedback meetings with the APELE experts, expressed their difficulties in clearly understanding some of the key points of the portfolio. In particular, they expressed difficulties in those sections in which participants were asked for a description of their non-work and non-curricular experiences, from which participants felt they had learned something new and different.

These people stated that they would have appreciated a greater simplicity of language in the formulation of the portfolio questions and to have received more sample notes, useful to better define the type of answers that should be provided.

### A) The portfolio as a catalyst of transformative processes

The groups of experts of the four partner countries, coordinated by the team of the University of Bari, helped the participants in reading their portfolios. The experts aimed at enhancing the potential of the experiences of the participants about the experiential learning through a deep reflection (both on professional and on non-professional side) on their life experiences.

The experiential learning is the basis of an appropriately defined and classified evaluation, in order to measure the advantage achieved by each person in new knowledges and new skills. A not-trained person to do a self-assessment, focused on narrative approaches rather than through predetermined

answer tests, finds himself in serious difficulty when he has to, often for the first time, describe and represent his "potential". The APELE experts, through the portfolio, introduced the participants to this new self-assessment method offering them concrete examples, and evaluation criteria.

The portfolio proved to be a valid training exercise for the participants who, through it, were able to discover for the first time some "unknown" aspects of themselves.

Here are some examples. In Denmark some participants stated that, thanks to the workshops dedicated to the portfolio, they were able to have a more precise idea about their goals and plans concerning the possibility of restarting university studies. The participants also added that the help of the experts was essential to understand how much and how their skills and experiential learning can be aligned and matched with job opportunities to which the choice of university degree courses can be linked. In Greece, some participants stated that, thanks to the help of the APELE experts, they were able to understand the difference between the portfolio and curriculum vitae and overcame the initial difficulties and fears of not being up to par. These participants feared that they would not be able to describe themselves and make an assessment of their experiences concerning strengths and skills acquired by life experiences. The workshops and feedback meetings allowed participants to learn to reflect on their own experiential baggage and find greater self-confidence and self-esteem. Some participants underlined how the experts made the relationship and communication informal, even though among the experts there were researchers and professors of the university: they felt at ease and helped to value the positive aspects rather than looking at their own limits of knowledge. Some participants pointed out the fact that, thanks to the workshops, they discovered the meaning and difference between formal (school) and informal and non-formal learning. And they understood, thanks to the portfolio, that informal and non-formal learning can have a relevant meaning for each person's wealth of knowledge and skills, an aspect they previously ignored. In Iceland, some participants underlined how through the portfolio they learned to look at all life experiences with a proactive perspective: "Then, I am able to do this, I have learned new things on my own, I have developed skills that I thought I did not have!". Some participants observed how, thanks to the portfolio and the process of the workshops, new perspectives have opened up for them about the possibility of continuing their studies. For some of them, their reflection, also requested by the experts, was related to the choice of their course of study. In particular, they were requested if they prefer to commit to resume (or begin) their higher studies or if they need to improve their specialist training and, only later, to consider enrolling in university courses.

The workshops with the experts were also useful in order to highlight the various obstacles which sometimes make it more difficult for people to think about resuming their studies. Economic barriers were

noted: the costs of enrolling and staying in studies are not sustainable when the income from full-time work is necessary to support the family. There are also social barriers: for those women who have children, and above all who work, it is difficult to find (residual) time to devote to studies.

There are also organizational / regulatory barriers. The procedures for enrolling in university courses are complex and, in all countries, examined there are no online and flexible training offers. The guidance and support structures for adult education are concentrated in large cities and it is often difficult for those who live in inland areas (especially due to the very difficult environmental and climatic conditions in the winter months) to access these services. Some of the participants underlined that, after following the workshops and compiling the portfolio, they began to think "positive". They outlined the fact that through a path of small steps towards the "dream" of resuming and finishing university studies, barriers were not considered as obstacles more, but as a stimulus to go further rather than the "excuse" to get stuck. In Italy, the participants in the workshop and in the feedback meeting were able, by completing the form independently, to discover the potential hidden in numerous previous learning experiences, mostly about both work or hobby activities and tasks (having significant cultural implications), as well as concrete possibilities for the development in the context of university-level learning paths, precisely during these significant practices, of knowledge, skills and abilities

**B) The feedback meeting**

DENMARK	<p>Participants, following the Workshop and the Feedback meetings showed a positive in approaching the whole procedure. They gained greater confidence in the value of the portfolio, while they made some critical observations about how to improve the organization of the portfolio template.</p> <p>Improvements proposed were related to: 1. defining a measurement of the experiential skills by writing them in a Likert scale (from 1 to 5); 2. better clarifying, using more examples, the meaning of "prior experiential learning", as many participants had no idea what they were before the experts, in individual meetings, provided necessary clarifications.</p> <p>The feedback meetings also highlighted a different attitude of the participants related to their chronological age: over the age of thirty years old, people have less confidence in the possibility of finding time, resources, energy to resume their studies; on the other hand, people in the 20-30 years old range showed more willingness and interest to start a process of enhancing prior learning experiences.</p>
GREECE	<p>Participants appreciated the support offered by the APELE experts, who concentrated their efforts on facilitating the understanding of the portfolio using very informal communication methodologies. The feedback meetings brought out an attitude of increasing positive "curiosity" in the participants: at first a feeling of fear and almost distrust, while then in the individual meetings, little by little the participants became more willing to follow the experts' suggestions in order to be proactive for the future.</p>
ICELAND	<p>The feedback meetings highlighted three different orientations among the participants in relation to the advancement of university studies:</p> <p>1)those who from the beginning of the workshops (and later also in the feedback meetings) had very clear and precise ideas about enrolling in undergraduate degree programs. These participants benefited from the workshop and feedback meetings to strengthen their beliefs on themselves and better plan their future programs.</p> <p>2)those who already wanted the possibility of continuing their higher studies. These participants still took advantage of the opportunity of the meetings to strengthen this attitude.</p> <p>3)those who took the suggestions of the experts as an opportunity to look for further information that would be useful in the process of evaluating if and when to decide on a continuation of studies. One of the participants involved in the workshops had already started a procedure for the recognition of the prior experiential learning and was further motivated to continue his studies, after meeting the APELE experts.</p> <p>In the opinion of all the participants, the workshops and feedback meetings have increased self-esteem and allowed them to have a clearer and more complete picture of their abilities and potential.</p>

ITALY	<p>The confrontation with the APELE experts during the Feedback meeting proved to be decisive, in order to focus not only on the cultural implications of learning experiences, but also their value in terms of orientation to the choice of possible university courses. In this sense, it is possible to conclude that the portfolio, as a "qualitative" data collection tool concerning the life experiences of the participants, was compiled autonomously by each participant. Moreover, only through a "training" dialogue between the Participant and the APELE expert it was possible to allow participants: to rethink their life significant experiences; to focus on their significant knowledge, skills and abilities; to orient themselves towards the continuation of studies in the university field. In the opinion of all the participants, the workshops and feedback meetings have increased self-esteem and allowed them to empower their abilities.</p>
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## Results for the evaluation of portfolio procedure by the participants

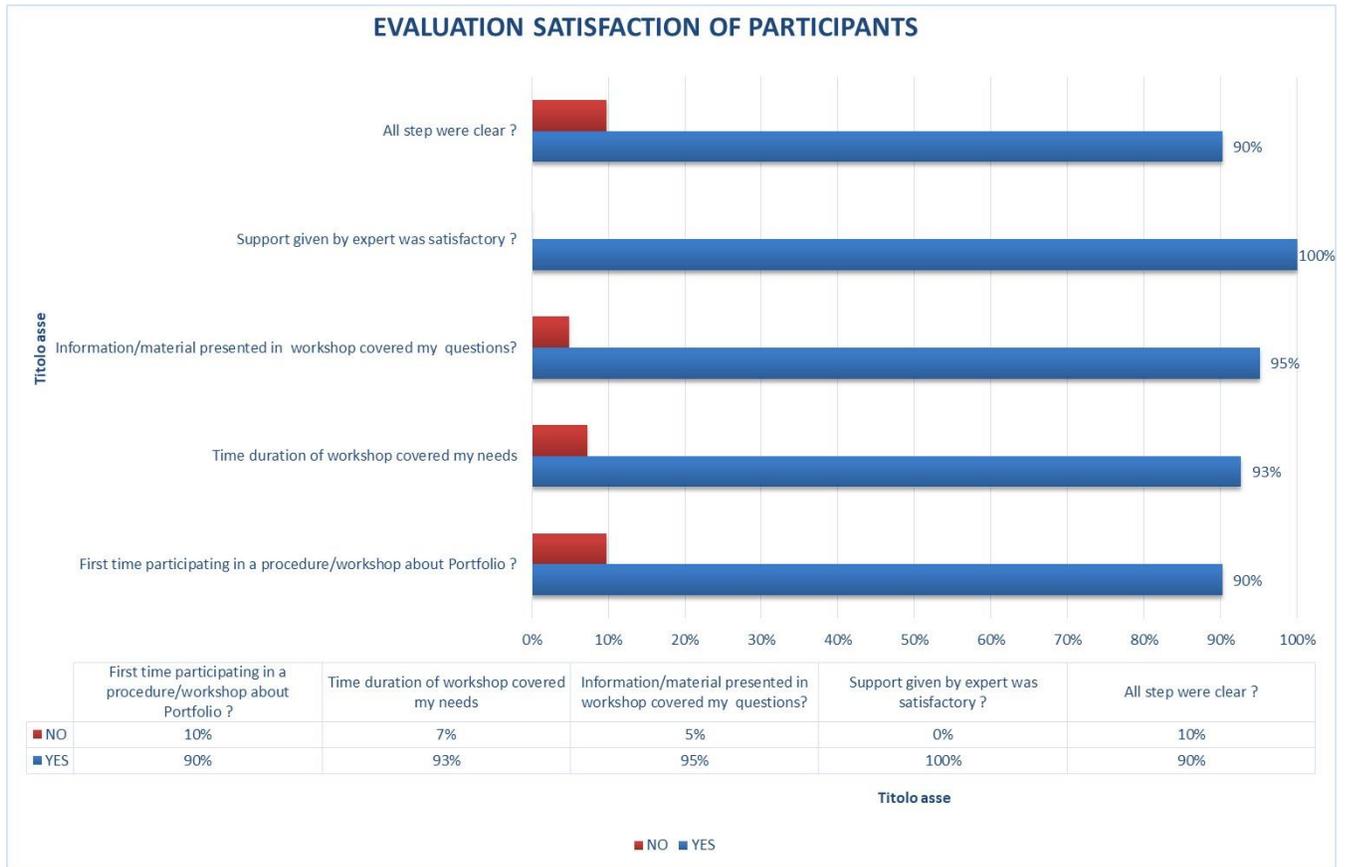
The calibration and validation phase of the portfolio tool, implemented through the carrying out of workshops and subsequent individual feedback meetings, must be considered as the most delicate in the general implementation of the APELE project, mostly for what concerns the aspects related to the interaction with the target group. In fact, the final section of the portfolio has been developed in order to allow participants to provide a "quantitative measurement" of their dialogues with the APELE experts, who helped the participants to understand the various information sections to be filled in. The sections of the portfolio had the aim of orienting the participants to an in-depth self-evaluation of the meaning and the importance of their experiences of life, training, learning and work, relationships.

Participants were asked to express their views and assessments about:

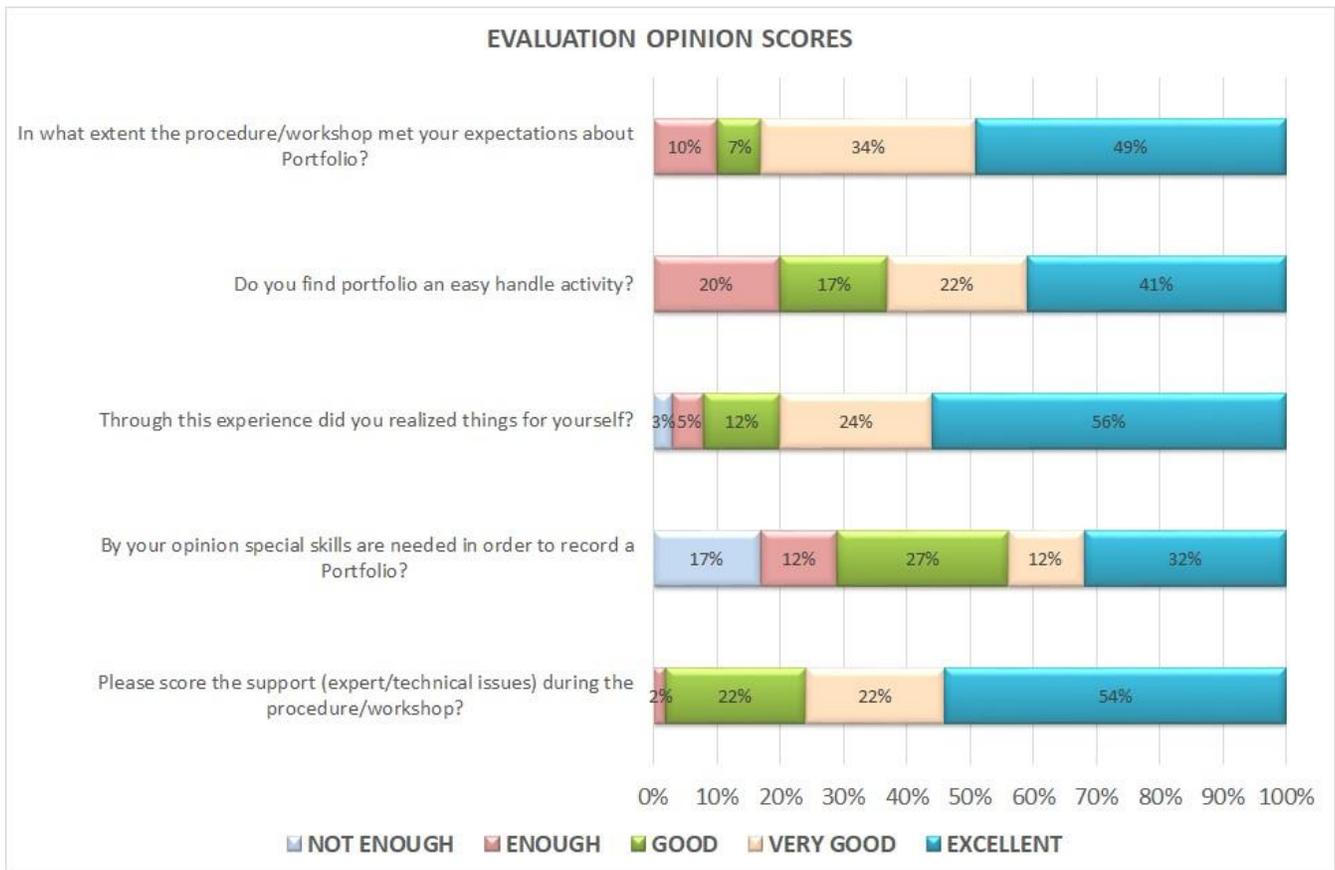
- a) how the methodology of the workshop and meetings had been carried out;
- b) how clear the APELE experts were in their explanations during workshop and the feedback meetings, mostly in their illustration of the main characteristics of the portfolio.

In the last two graphs included in this introduction to the final report, we propose a summary of the feedback from the participants in relation to points a) and b).

Graphic 4



Graphic 5



Finally, from the comparative reading of the four National Reports, we focused on some "highlights" concerning how the portfolio has reached the following targets. 1. It was a tool through which people were able to better understand their own abilities. 2. It was a tool through which focusing and writing the most significant self-life experiences. Moreover, focusing on self-competences, knowledge, skills acquired, recognized, and written, each participant better understood self "potential" concerning the possibility to continue their studies. In such perspective, the portfolio can be considered a "transformative" learning tool.

<b>FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS</b>	
<p>The participants suggested some measures in order make the portfolio more “user-friendly”. Below, we summarized the main items of these suggestions, as collected by each national report</p>	
GREECE	<p>Participants suggested to organize other similar activities or more specific workshops about informal and non-formal learning, adult education, and methods for building a portfolio in future.</p> <p>Participants declared that their involvement in these APELE workshop concerning portfolio procedure was useful to gain a better self-esteem and discover “hidden” things about themselves, such as skill and abilities, that they didn’t recognize before.</p>
DENMARK	<p>APELE experts should better communicate the long-term benefits of the portfolio, mostly concerning employment stability and future work orientation (especially in the case of Denmark). The experts should also be prepared to look out structural barriers and be respectful of the complexity of the life situation and choices of the participants.</p> <p>Some participants found it difficult to rate their knowledges and skills (from less to excellent). The experts should assist the participants with this task and pose questions that help them to make a realistic assessment (How much time have you dedicated to this? What aspects do you know? In what context did you use this? Do you feel passionate working with this?).</p> <p>Additional gender options (for example ‘other’) should be added to the template in the feedback sheets, multiple-choice scores should be complemented with possibilities for explanation.</p>
ICELAND	<p>A good introduction on the workshop, phases, concepts etc. is important; the expert needs to have good communication skills, who actively listens and guides, in a motivating way; different scale might be needed for “knowledge, skills and competence”.</p> <p>The third gender option should be added to the template (for example, mentioning “other”).</p>
ITALY	<p>The portfolio could help participant to better focus on their own prior experiences without any limits (cultural, emotional, psychological) if the expert supports the participants with practical example how an experience can become an experiential skills</p> <p>To make easier understanding of portfolio it would be better to adopt “customized” translation for each participant (if they are non- mother-tongue language of host countries) and, in any case, a translation in English of portfolio can help participants to test their skills with foreign languages.</p> <p>The participants underlined in negative way that in the portfolio template was not mentioned data about years of experience for each job or works prior experience.</p>

## Opinions of the experts about APELE portfolio

<b>FEEDBACK FROM APELE EXPERTS</b>	
<p>The APELE experts pointed out, based on both workshop and feedback meeting, how it should be appropriate to integrate some parts of the portfolio in order to make it more effective.</p>	
GREECE	<p>The expert pointed out that, because there were significant differences among the participants about the background experiences and prior experiential learning. It is necessary to set out an individual preliminary interview to collect specific data for each one of participants.</p> <p>The expert pointed out that portfolio procedure could be particularly interesting and useful for people with fewer opportunities; so, in this regard it should be take into consideration the training of specialist with suitable profile of adult education as facilitator during the workshop meeting.</p>
DENMARK	<p>The expert, to better support participants, could determine in advance for each participant the personal, cultural and knowledge features.</p> <p>In order to make easier the interaction with participants, the expert could adopt an open and encouraging attitude and flexibility regarding to needs that come out from discussion with participants. It can be helpful to ask participants for particular needs before the workshop take place- so it would be possible to ensure an adequate preparation on both sides.</p> <p>Depending on the characteristics of each participant, it may be preferable to reduce the size of the group of the workshops to 3-5 participants because some people may not feel comfortable to share information's on their private life in big groups. Furthermore, the expert will have time enough to focus on individual questions and cater to individual needs.</p>
ICELAND	<p>Though the online workshop were a good option to tackle the restriction about COVID emergency and worked out quite well, the expert underlined that the physical meetings are able to create a more relaxed and friendly "atmosphere".</p> <p>Workshops should not have many participants to get the best results. It would be ideal is to have only one participant at a time. It depends on the persons participating to portfolio.</p>
ITALY	<p>On the basis of workshop and feedback meeting, the expert pointed out the fact that for the next meetings it could be useful to inform people about the practices of Long Life Learning previously and attach to portfolio the guidelines or the glossary. So, participants could be helped to better understand the meaning of the terminology used in the portfolio template.</p> <p>The expert underlined that the whole process inquiry and assessment concerning the portfolio procedure confirmed that it is able to encourage a better awareness of the individual capacities acquired in prior learning experiences. Last (but not least) consideration: portfolio seems to be a valuable tool for adult people to assess their skills and capacities.</p> <p>The expert pointed out that portfolio acted as a "catalyst" for a rethinking of whole biographical path, both on personal and on professional side, and giving participants a chance to look in and take out hidden capabilities and skills.</p>

<b>FEEDBACK ABOUT THE INNOVATIVE PERFORMANCE OF PORTFOLIO</b>	
GREECE	Participants and experts agreed that portfolio is a tool for highlighting the life experiences, values and achievements of a person and can become a useful tool for labor market and for higher education.
DENMARK	The participants who engaged in these activities consider the method of portfolio workshops as a useful tool to record previous learning and strengthen orientation towards the job market.
ICELAND	The participants got a good understanding of what a personal portfolio stands for and how it differs from a CV.
ITALY	The participants declared that portfolio was easy to use; helps participants to focus in a better way on their own abilities and hiddenskills.

<b>FEEDBACK ABOUT THE “RELEVANCE” OF PORTFOLIO</b>	
GREECE	The portfolio is a tool which highlights the life experiences and achievements of a person and can become a useful tool for labor market and for higher education.
DENMARK	Both the expert and participants who engaged in these activities consider the method of portfolio workshops as a useful tool to record prior learning experiences and strengthen orientation towards the job market.
ICELAND	The recorded portfolios were fruitful where participants not only recorded their informal learnings but reflected on themselves in a way that grew their confidence.
ITALY	The participants declared that they were on their own way and own pace to further their education, not all aim for universities but have found their paths elsewhere.

## Conclusion and recommendations.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, all the partners of the APELE project found the APELE portfolio useful as a tool for the analysis, collection, and processing of experiential learning experiences, having a strong cultural value. This tool, however, needs to be explained to the participants of the target group as they are often hearing about it for the first time.

In particular, the Icelandic partner marked the fact that during the process of IO4 they saw that participants got a good understanding of what a personal portfolio is useful for and how it differs from a classic CV. During workshops, participants were able to collect all data describing themselves with the help and the support of the APELE expert. The interactions and collaboration among participants and the experts were effective and the mutual understanding during the process was very good. Some participants noticed that it could be difficult to mark their level of knowledge, skills, and competence just by using a scale based on “1 - as poor, to 5 - as excellent”. The recorded portfolios were fruitful, and participants not only recorded their informal learnings but reflected on themselves and their own path in a way that considerably grew their personal confidence. The feedback and comments were very positive and the support of the expert during the procedure generated excellent feedbacks. It was the opinion of the majority that specific skills are needed to record a portfolio and so is necessary a proper guidance from an expert.

The Greek partner noticed that this was the first time for all participants to be involved in such a procedure and for most of them it was a common feeling that its duration, the qualified experts' support and the presented material covered all their needs. Feedbacks agreed on the fact that if the portfolio is a peculiar autobiographical procedure which differs among the participants. That is why a majority of them have recommended in the near future to organize similar supporting activities and more specific workshops (about informal and non-formal learning, adult education, methods) for teaching how to build a proper portfolio. Such activities will be very interesting and useful especially for people with fewer opportunities, taking into consideration that an expert with a specific profile of adult education will be an essential facilitator for all the process. Through their participation in APELE and in IO4, they discovered new things about themselves such as skill and abilities that they had not realized about themselves. Participants and experts agreed that portfolio is a tool to highlight life experiences, personal values and achievements and it can become a useful tool for labor market purposes and for higher education new steps.

Danish partner remarked that, overall, it can be said that both the experts and the participants who engaged in these activities consider the method of portfolio workshops as a useful tool to record previous learning and strengthen orientation towards the job market in Denmark.

The Italian partner “ARMES Progetti” remarked that, at the end of the process, the preparation of the portfolio seems to be a valuable tool for adult people to assess their skills and capacities; the process enables a better awareness of the individual capacities acquired in prior learning. It is not evident the need of special skills for preparing the portfolio. However, people should be informed about the practices of Lifelong Learning, and it is important to accompany the portfolio with a guideline or a glossary to better understand the meaning of the terminology used in the portfolio template. Some participants found that a great experience is not required in the portfolio and have negatively commented this finding. The Italian partner “Università di Bari” (University

of Bari) remarked the fact that APELE portfolio turned out to be a diagnostic tool with an exquisitely educational imprinting. In fact, in all its main phases (Workshop - individual work of compilation - Feedback meeting - Self-assessment), the participants were able to create their own personal path. The experience of the APELE portfolio was significant in order to allow participants to the target group, as paradigmatic samples of marginalized people, to empower their abilities in the field of their own existential planning. This could be possible by using the tool of APELE portfolio and by dialoguing with the APELE experts during the workshop and the feedback meetings. In fact, for all the participants to the target groups it has been possible to tell their stories, to identify and finally to focus on their skills and abilities, often not known by themselves until then. It has been possible to hypothesize an orientation to the choice of higher education studies by each participant, with the support of the European Academic Institutions. The Italian partner “Università di Bari” (University of Bari) underlines the strategic importance of the section of APELE portfolio called “Experiential skills” in the whole procedure of portfolio. In fact, it has been crucial in order to allow the participants to recognize useful and unexpected skills which could be able to orient them to the choice of a new study itinerary.

In conclusion, as foreseen and indicated by the APELE project, each participant of the target group was able to in the portfolio independently. The context of the encounters (physical of more often on-line encounters, due to the Covid-19 pandemic), both before its fill out (the Workshop) and after it (the Feedback meeting) were always marked by a “training” interaction between the participant and the APELE expert. This peculiar interaction allowed the participant to gain a strong self-awareness and to develop the ability to “build a life project”, which comprehends the possibility of attend university study. Moreover, such interaction allowed the APELE expert to gain a strong awareness about the procedure of recognition and accreditation of previous learning experiences.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that a fruitful interaction between expert and participant which produces the empowerment of the latter.

It would be useful to suggest to the Universities involved in the Project “APELE” to implement a strong cooperation with local institutions and associations engaged in the human promotion and care of the disadvantaged persons. The purpose of the cooperation would be to find such persons, to receipt their need of empowerment and orientation to the future studies and help them through APELE portfolio. The European Universities involved in the Project would provide a specific service devoted to them.

## Recommendations

- The procedure of APELE portfolio should be in English or in the native language of each participant.
- A language program should be available for those that are not familiar to the language of the host country.
- The procedure can be conducted anytime of the year, and if carried out regularly over the year it might increase participation.
- The procedure should preferably be free of cost to ensure equality.
- It would be best if the participants would not have to travel long distances to take part in the procedure. For some it would be very hard or impossible.
- National recognition by a national recognition Authority is preferred. That would increase opportunities regarding entering educational programs and institutions.

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## Annexes

### Model of APELE Portfolio



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI BARI  
ALDO MORO

# APELE PORTFOLIO

**Surname:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## PERSONAL DATA SECTION

### PERSONAL DATA

Name	Surname			
Male	Female			
Nationality				
Phone number	Email address			
Age	20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

<b>Formal studies (with diploma)</b>	
Compulsory education	
High school	
Post-secondary studies	
Higher education studies	
Foreign Languages	
ICT skills	
Other studies (seminars etc.)	

<b>Knowledge's, Skills, Competences (without diploma)</b>	
Foreign Languages (Write the language e.x. English, and the level you personally feel that you are able to read, write and understand      scoring	

yourself, from 1 less to 5 excellent)	
ICT skills (Write the type e.x. excel, word, and the level you personally feel that you are able use it, from 1 less to 5 excellent)	
Other (Record whatever you believe that you can do. Think your daily life or your hobbies e.x. cooking every day for my family, take care of the garden, take care of older people (nursing), taking care of babies (nursery), playing music instrument etc.. and record yourself from 1 less to 5 excellent).	<p><b>1)</b></p> <p><b>2)</b></p> <p><b>3)</b></p>

	4)
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**WORK EXPERIENCE**

Please write the job experience you have until today (even unpaid) and describe in detail the subject of your position as well as the individual responsibilities.	1)
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2)

3)

4)



<p>to be able to negotiate;</p> <p>to be able to emphasize;</p> <p>to be able to adapt yourself to many different situations;</p> <p>to be able to solve effectively the conflicts;</p> <p>to be able to persuade other people;</p> <p>to be able to work in a team.</p> <p><u>Transferable skills.</u></p> <p>You learned experiential skills transferable in other fields of work and study.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>during a work experience in an agricultural context, it is possible to acquire agronomic skills, useful to access to a specific degree course.</p>	<p>3)</p>
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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Record all your knowledge or skill you have learn it by yourself through books, tv, internet, other people etc.. (For example, you read for many years and you are familiar with Greek ancient history or you participate every year in the picking of the grapes and in the process of vinification.)

**1)**

**2)**

	3)
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- **Take your time and write in which from the above (profession, knowledge, skill, competence) you would like to get better following higher education studies.**

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**- EVALUATION SHEET**

**Thank you for your participation in APELE procedure for record portfolio. Your opinion is very valuable for the implementation of APELE project. We would like to give us your feedback by replying the below questions. Take in consider that the procedure in anonymous. Thank you for your contribution.**

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

MALE \_\_\_\_\_ FEMALE \_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check the box you wish by putting a X.**

It's your first time participating in a procedure/workshop about Portfolio?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
The time duration covered your needs?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
The information's and the material presented during the procedure/workshop covered your questions?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
The support given by the expert/organizer during the procedure/workshop was satisfactory?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
All steps were clear?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please score the below questions using the scale 1 to 5.**

(1 = not enough, 2 = enough, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent)

In what extent the procedure/workshop met your expectations about Portfolio?	1	2	3	4	5
Do you find portfolio an easy handle activity?	1	2	3	4	5
Through this experience did you realized things for yourself ?	1	2	3	4	5
By your opinion special skills are needed in order to record a Portfolio?	1	2	3	4	5
Please score the support (expert/technical issues) during the procedure/workshop.	1	2	3	4	5

**Please tell us about possible difficulties you faced during the workshop and record your portfolio.**

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**Please write any comments.**

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I give my **formal consent**:

I \_\_\_\_\_ participant of “Apele” Project, managed  
by \_\_\_\_\_

- APELE Portfolio may be audio or video recorded for the purpose of collecting and maintaining an appropriate registration of the discussion that will be reference for any reports derived from the discussion

The information assembled in APELE Portfolio will be summarized by the staff of (name of institutions that organize APELE Portfolio) and any participant will receive a short summary of discussion

Information derived from APELE Portfolio discussion may be used for the goal of the project (publication online, report research, public speech and meetings).

I only consent anything above written at the condition that my personal data will remain forever anonymous.

I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate voluntarily in this project.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s signature