



Conference

FamCompass: Assessing and validating family competences

Brussels, Friday 23 October 2009

### Programme & presentations:

All presentations of the keynote speakers and the list of participants can be downloaded from [www.famcompass.eu](http://www.famcompass.eu).

### *Comments & questions concluding the morning session:*

Jean-Claude Callens (coordinator 'Impulscentrum' KATHO, BE):

Given its complexity, did you consider to develop other tools than the portfolio?

=> Joris Dewispelaere explains it is quite new to use the portfolio methodology with view on entering formal education, even with lower schooled target groups; it can be combined with other methods;

=> Gaby Jennes (Director Director of the Higher Institute for Family Sciences, HUBrussel) adds the portfolio methodology is *not* typical for education systems; to apply it is quite innovative;

=> Radu Szekely (Västra Nylands folkhögskola, FI) claims that guides and coaches can help lower schooled target groups to work with the FamCompass; the portfolio methodology helps to picture a holistic view on skills & competences whereas vocational training programmes usually have a more narrow or focused perspective.

Andrea Reupold (Research Associate at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University - Faculty of Psychology and Pedagogy in Munich, DE):

How will the different target groups get the information?

=> Joris Dewispelaere: The FamCompass portfolio is not a ready, off-the-shelf, tool. The best strategy will be to actively contact institutions as potential users; several partners have plans to do so.

Is there an opening to using the instrument in schools?

=> The Vilnius College for Higher Education and the Higher Institute for Family Studies plan to actually use the FamCompass as part of their intake and/or exemption procedures.

=> Educational centers targeted at the labour market will be invited to use it.

Renilde Reynders (LLP-National Agency Epos vzw, BE):

In your dissemination activities, do you plan to develop a course oriented to adult education? Please note in this regard the new LLP-call for action, due in February 2010, and the constant need for more courses.

### *Afternoon session: debate with experts*

*Moderator Georges Monard introduces the members of the panel and asks them each to explain what benefits they see for the FamCompass.*

Veerle Depauw (Manager of Diversity of VDAB, Flemish Agency for Employment, BE):

Mrs. Depauw sees different possible applications; she stresses that FamCompass can lower the barriers to formal training programmes for lower skilled target groups.

Prof. dr. Emil Paun (professor at the Faculty for Psychology and Pedagogical Sciences and former director of the Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Bucharest, RO):

Prof. Paun explains how employers and schools in his country are very certificate oriented. He thinks it is positive that a tool like this can counter the monopoly schools now have to assess and validate competences, but he fears the formal institutions will be quite reluctant to apply it.

He suggests that the FamCompass can also be promoted as an entry to training programmes and apprenticeships to further develop the assessed competences. He hopes FamCompass can stimulate the exchange of talent on the international job market.

Maybe it can also stimulate parents to reflect on their parental competences and ways to improve these.

Izabela Witczak (EURES (European Employment Services) adviser in the Voivodship Labour Office (Regional Labour Office) in Lodz, PL):

Also Poland is strongly certificate oriented.

She appreciates FamCompass as an empowering tool, stimulating the self confidence of job applicants. An assessment based on this tool can be a strong asset to lower skilled applicants. However, she warns that the instrument in its current form might be too extensive and complicated for some of these clients. She also sees possibilities for FamCompass as a tool for guidance counselors.

Carl Foulon (Adviser for the IPV, advice and training center for the food industry, BE):

In the food industry, one third of the employees maximum hold a diploma of primary school or lower secondary school. The IPV sees possibilities to apply the FamCompass tool to assess less visible competences of specific target groups (for example: women reentering the labour market, employees older than 50, lower skilled persons...). Such an assessment can stimulate their career development.

Mr. Foulon explains how his organization makes a shift from job related 'competence management' to a more person-oriented 'talent policy'; the holistic approach he sees behind FamCompass can further stimulate this.

Mrs. Depauw agrees that focusing on 'competence management', related to the demands of the job market, risks to forget the person behind the profile.

*Mr. Monard puts forward the question:*

*Since many countries in Europe are still very much certificate oriented, what can be done to stimulate the validation of the results of non formal learning?*

Mr. Marc Troch (Expert Methods & Instruments in Competence Centres with the VDAB, Flemish Agency for Employment, BE):

The application of any tool, also this tool of self reflexion and evaluation, takes time and therefor budget; this might discourage possible users.

Mrs. Lutgard Vrints (Attachee of the Research Department of the League of Families, BE):

FamCompass in its current form might be too complicated and difficult for some of the target groups mentioned.

She sees strong possibilities though for women reentering the job market; they are not always low skilled, but have a lower self esteem because care work - especially non payed - is very much underestimated in society.

Mr. Foulon replies:

In our organization we budget a complete assessment at about 2.500 Euro per person. This might seem a lot but positions that remain vacant also cost money to employers and to society.

It is possible that FamCompass will have to be adapted before it can be used by some target groups, but this is planned and possible.

Mrs. Witczak adds:

Not all target groups mentioned are low skilled, although it is correct that FamCompass in its current form, might be too time consuming.

Mrs. Magda Lambert (Consultant, BE) agrees:

Terms as 'unemployed' or 'job seeking' cover a very diverse group of people. FamCompass is oriented to *ambitious* people with capacities and aspirations. To apply it can be a good *start* to make some of their competences more visible.

On the labour market we need sector oriented tools, but there is also need for tools that assess competences - or talents for that matter - on a more general level.

Mrs. Barbara Thiessen (Senior Researcher at Department Family and Family Policy at the German Youth Institute, DE):

As partner in the project I want to bring to your attention that FamCompass was not only conceived as an entrance to the labour market for low skilled applicants, but as a tool to help accredit competences of people in higher education.

'Talent management' is a new word I learned here. Can some of the experts explain this further?

Mr. Foulon:

A talent is less visible and less tangible than a competence; you learn it informally, or better still: you own it and you will develop it spontaneously, given the right context. Even in stressful situations you will know how to apply them.

Competences you have learned in a more formal way, you will more easily 'lose' or 'forget', especially in stressful situations.

Prof. Paun adds:

'Talent management', 'la gestion de talents', must rather be seen as a metaphor. Educational sociologists will agree it is easier and more sufficient to further develop competences people already have (and you can call these talents) rather than teach them new competences.

Mrs. Karine Janssens (APL Expert at the University of Ghent) replies:

Let us not underestimate a person's ability to learn! Furthermore, to cope with stress is a talent in itself, or rather a competence you can learn!

Mrs. Ausra Fokiene (APL expert at the Center of studies quality, Kaunas Magnus University, LT) asks:

Who will be the assessors of 'family competences'? How will a benchmark be set?

Mr. Joris Dewispelaere refers to the manuals for assessors and the booklet in which institutions can find guidelines how to develop indicators that suit the needs of their organization.

Mr. Radu Szekely adds:

The FamCompass was developed to empower individuals, not for employers to find employees.

It is true that it is not off-the-shelf ready; users must adapt it. Different education providers and employers will have different needs and make use of the tool differently.

Mrs. Barbara Thiessen adds:

The starting point of our project was: care work is undervalued and informal learning is undervalued. Still, society needs competent and talented employees in the sectors of social work, care and education. How can we match people's informally acquired competences to the needs of the job market in these areas, and/or to educational programmes that train people to find work in these sectors.

Mrs. Andrea Reupol asks all members in the panel:

Will FamCompass become part of your toolbox?

- Mrs. Witczak says yes, but she needs more practical and juridical information first;
- Mr. Foulon repeats he sees possibilities to apply it for specific target groups;
- Mrs. Depauw also sees possibilities; she plans to check for which jobs the tool will be specifically useful;
- Prof. Paun sees possibilities to use it in the job market, but he fears that the formal education system, especially the universities, will be too reluctant to apply it.

Mr. Monard concludes that the biggest task will be to convince possible users that FamCompass is a valid and reliable tool.