

## The Summarized results of the testing phase of Europass+ from Poland, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Norway and France

What counts also more, a very positive feed-back, sometimes enthusiastic, has been given by the large sample of final users (about 60 Advisers and counsellors, and 150 youngsters, in 8 countries) who tested the intermediate and final versions of the tool. More than in 50% of the cases the tool has been tested by the final users in an individual way. They have been invited to work all alone, in order to achieve important results concerning the pertinence of the tool with respect of one of the expected requirements defined in the designing phase: to create a self consistent helping device, easy to be found and used.

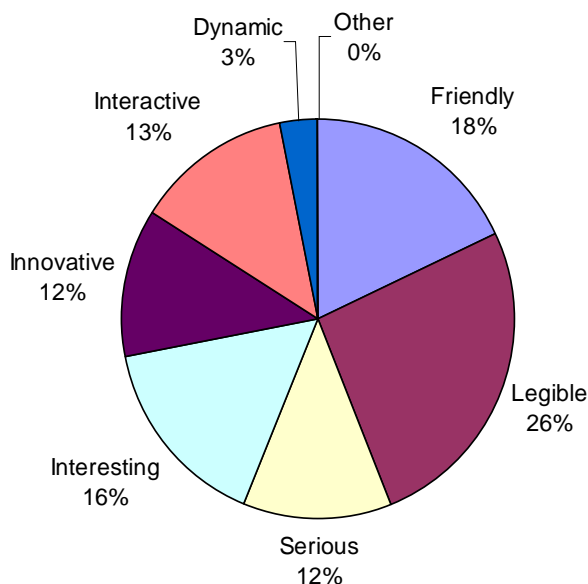
The testing phase went on in two steps (see the Gantt graph of the project). The initial pre-testing, whose positive results has been discussed in Zürich (March, 2008), allowing the improvement of the tool during the following months (the remarks mainly concerned the layout and the usability of some facilities provided by the tool). The final test, developed between June and October, verified the actual version of the tool, under the lens of the following 5 parameters.

Visibility	>>> Ability to be reached by potential users <i>To be well ranked in searching engines !</i>
Perception	>>> Ability to be usable and correctly perceived by users <i>To become a reference in the field</i>
Technical	>>> Ability to correctly function <i>To be interactive</i>
Content	>>> Ability to deliver and provide information of quality <i>To have updated information</i>
Services	>>> Ability to propose or generate the realisation of quality of services <i>To provide additional support or transfer to another network</i>

In general both the youngsters and the advisers, belonging to the final testers sample, find the web site quite easy to manage, and the access to the tool relatively simple and well presented, thanks to the guided tour, and the intuitive navigation system. Icons helps to surf between the different pages and sections, and examples are a very important resources to fill in the CV, evidencing competences and learning acquired in informal way. Some improvements concerning usability should perhaps be realised in the position and visibility of the helping buttons, opening explanations and examples windows.

The tool proved to be appreciated for a very articulated number of reasons, highlighting its flexibility and usefulness for many purposes, according to different needs, status (youngsters or advisers) and experiences of final users, as well as considering tradition and cultures existing in the different countries.

*How could you define the Europass + tool?*

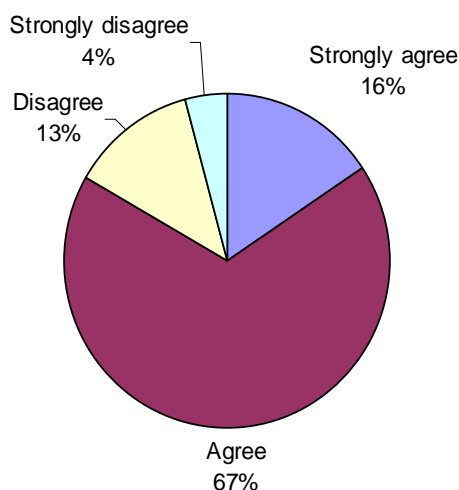


Source: evaluation testing questionnaires elaborated by partners and ECAP

The final users, included in the sample, were asked to define the most important positive features of the tool in their opinion, using a range of available key words. As showed by the graph the answers are concentrated mainly on the aspects related to the *usability*: we are for sure in front of a legible and user friendly tool. Two thirds of the interviewees consider that very limited ICT skills are enough to enter and use the web site, and quite none suggests the idea that the digital divide could hamper the diffusion of the tool. The tool appears to be simple to use, useful to integrate also less qualified youngsters in an active application for a new job or to enter further training. Funny for someone, the tool is evaluated serious by others, in any case it appears to be attractive, complete in its contents, reminding a solid methodological background.

The *examples* provided by the tool, evidencing how a competence should be described and how it might be achieved, are a fundamental asset, strongly appreciated by the final users. Whilst difficulties still remain in managing a correct self-estimation of levels of skills and competences to be described (we should bear in mind that it's not frequent all over Europe the use of taxonomies to define competences, and above all to describe personal and soft skills). From this point of view the opinions of the final users might introduce some constraints widely related to the way in which the EQF in general is expected to work; we should in fact take in account that reasoning in "levels" is a sort of rooted habitude in contexts such as the British one, when it's something absolutely far from the natural approach to competence and qualification in quite all the other European countries!

*Europass+ will help you to self-reflect on your competences and give the current level of your competences?*

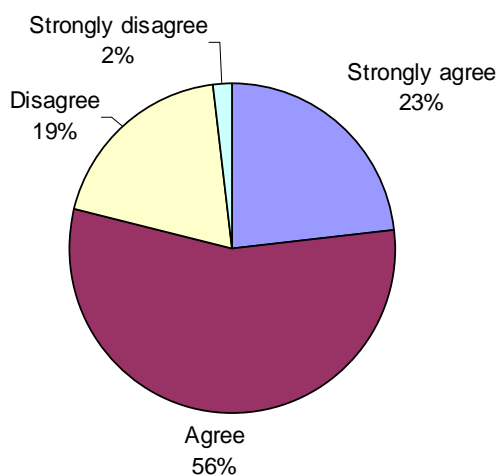


Source: evaluation testing questionnaires elaborated by partners and ECAP

The tool seems to capture the interest of the final users: step by step the path involves them in an interactive journey. It is for sure something new if compared to the existing “severe and boring” Europass promoting web sites, allowing to look at the Europass CV in a different way. The tool stimulates the compilation of an “unclear” chapter of the Europass CV, and more in general it helps the people to better understand the sense and the importance of the Europass dossier. Moreover it helps the people in reflecting on their life and work experiences, to detect how competences should be built and enhanced day by day; the results of the questionnaires show infact a generally positive result in terms of help in describing the real and truthful level of the competences owned, self-reflecting in a way that shouldn’t be possible alone (see the next graph). We infact know that an important issue is exactly the correspondance between the level of competences really owned and “internalized” from everyone and his ability to describe, formalize and be aware of those, both in a positive (too low self-consideration) and in negative (too high self-consideration). In this direction the tool seems to be an useful support.

Considering the results of the testing phase, the final outcomes of the project prove to fit the principle aim of the project: design and put in action a supporting tool really providing the users with an added value in recognising, evidencing and valuing competences and soft skills acquired in most of the cases through informal learning processes.

*Do you think that the Europass+ tool helped you in improving the quality of your CV?*



*Source: evaluation testing questionnaires elaborated by partners and ECAP*

The best demonstration of what we have already said looking more in deep in the results, is provided us by the quick synthetic response summarised by the upper graph. More than 80% of the youngsters admit that the tool helped them in improving their CVs, whilst only 2% found the tool totally out of tune for this purpose.

### a. Summing up: evidences and added value of Europass+

Summing up, we can say that under the lenses of the final test results, the project reached its goals. We are in front of:

- ❑ **a coherent and useful tool:** Europass+ is something new in a crowded web landscape; it fills a gap, laying perfectly in the mainstream of the EU approach to mobility, transparency and transferability of competences; it's ready to be improved according to the EQF descriptors and levels, and in the meanwhile easy to adapt to national frames, cultures and traditions
- ❑ **a simple and flexible tool,** easy enough to be used by the people, at least disposing of basic ICT skills, but also attractive for the advisers, ready to be integrated in guidance and counselling processes
- ❑ **an open tool:** ready to be improved, translated in additional languages, transferred, valorised, also easy to be enhanced thanks to a clever modularised software architecture.

Europass+ assures an added value at different levels:

- ❑ **it let the Europass CV be more known and user friendly;** in this sense it represents also an animation and information tool, complementary to the already existing ones, because potential users of the Europass CV all over Europe (we mean people *and* firms) have to be more informed, socialised, made confident
- ❑ **it promotes awareness of the growing importance of soft skills and recognition processes in career pathways and in making lifelong learning real:** in other words it let firms and youngsters be aware of the role played by informal & non formal learning processes in building up competences
- ❑ **it foster youngsters in adopting self-reflection as a fundamental mean to better learn:** the tool supports reflective approaches, both in the framework of self-evaluation paths and using suggestions and feed-backs provided by the final "spider web" graph of individual skills and attitudes
- ❑ **it helps the people in being aware of the importance of producing evidences in any application for a new job or for further training:** the tool guides the users step by step along a path implying the capability to pick up and produce evidences of the skills, attitudes and behaviours we would like to include in our profile