

Name or title of the recognition tool/practice:**My Experience (Moje Izkusnje)****Developed by:**

e-Studentski Servis (ŠS d.o.o.), Slovenia

Short description:

'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' is a digital tool for the validation and recognition of competencies gained through student work, created by the largest employment agency for mediating student work in Slovenia, 'e-Studentski Servis', in cooperation with Institute Nefiks. The tool was awarded a good practice award by the youth section of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and mentioned as good practice in the 'Resolution on Recognition of Non-Formal Education in Slovenia'. In addition to the development of the tool itself, e-Studentski Servis has initiated a national campaign for the better recognition of young people's competencies gained outside formal education, targeting a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. youth NGOs, policy makers, formal education, employers, etc.).

Type of the tool/practice:

Self-assessment tool, Certificate/Attestation, Portfolio, Website/Platform/Blog, Event/Meeting/Seminar

Recognition dimensions addressed by the tool/practices:

Self-recognition, Social recognition, Political recognition

Level of influence of your tool/practice:

National

Target group(s) for the tool/practice:

- Young people: students, pupils, young graduates, first job seekers, unemployed youth
- Employers: companies, NGOs (including youth organizations), public sector
- Political stakeholders responsible for the implementation of recognition policies

Background and the context of development of the tool/practice:

The problem addressed by the programme 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' is the lack of a system for the recognition of competencies gained through student-work in Slovenia. The problem was repeatedly expressed by young people as well as by employers. In Slovenia there is a big mismatch between the skills gained through formal education and those required by the labour market. Therefore, the system of student-work in the time of studies (and secondary education) is very valuable as students can obtain the skills required by the labour market through student work before entering their first regular employment (which comes at the end of the studies). Student-work enables young people to obtain the technical skills required by employers and also to obtain soft skills, which are inadequately learned in schools, high schools and universities. Very often young people are discriminated against when applying for regular employment because of their lack of 'formal work experience'. In Slovenia, they cannot obtain formal work experience because they are still in the education system. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to be equal candidates for regular jobs.

e-Studentski Servis is the biggest employment agency for mediating student work in Slovenia. It aims at connecting employers and student job-seekers through the mediation of student jobs. e-Studentski Servis

has 60 employees who mediate student jobs to young people (from the age of 15 until the end of the studies), and companies. It annually mediates student jobs to half of the youth population in Slovenia (60,000 pupils, students) and works with 18,000 employers. Besides mediating jobs, e-Studentski Servis is a corporate socially responsible company.

Therefore, the process of developing an e-tool (electronic portfolio) began in order to satisfy the needs of all the stakeholders of the company. Through the last years of work the need was expressed, by young people and by the employers, to have a tool that would systematically record young people's non-formal knowledge gained through student work (working experience) in one place.

- The need was expressed by young people as they needed help in planning their career path, writing their CVs, assessing their competences gained from certain types of work and by proving their existing work experience to the (potential) employers in job applications and at job interviews.
- The need was also expressed by employers who wanted a reliable and confirmed review of all the working experience of a young person during their studies. They also wanted to simplify the process of recruitment of young people and to get the best candidates for certain jobs.

Development process:

Therefore, in 2010 we formed a group of professionals in order to develop a new e-tool for validation and recognition of non-formal knowledge - working experience - gained by students when working. We began by assessing the needs of the target groups, mainly young people and employers, and by the evaluation of the existing situation in Slovenia.

The team consisted of 19 professionals, including; CEOs, Human resources experts, psychologists, managers, IT experts, programmers, marketing experts, youth workers, etc. Additionally, the partners on the project were people from Institute Nefiks (Zavod Nefiks – an NGO/institute that works on the project 'Nefiks', which has been promoting the values of volunteering and non-formal education in Slovenia for over 10 years).

The main steps in the development of the tool/practice were:

- Research and recommendations followed:
 - a) Own assessment and research: of the opinions of employers and young people (pupils, students).
 - b) Literature overview from various sources: Researches of Slovenian Student Union, National Youth Council of Slovenia; Academic research by dr. Šušteršič, etc.
 - c) Recommendations: Slovenian Ministry of Labour; EU Council 'Recommendation on the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning'.
- Performing focus groups and surveys to define the components of the project.
- Establishing a complex IT platform for a digital portfolio that is linked to several other databases. Inventing the system for recording the student-work experience through the new electronic platform with IT solutions. The system enables all the data from employers and youth to be collected and gathered in a joint electronic platform, where users only have access to their own personal data, past student-jobs and competencies. The certificate of the performed student-work and competencies (confirmed by the employers) is automatically entered into the system, and can be printed out by the user, saved to PDF or directly sent as a recommendation to the potential employer.
- Development of a new system for recognition of competencies gained through student-work. The system was established with the defining of the competences for hundreds of student-jobs –

creating a whole dataset of competences. A system on such a scale doesn't exist in any other EU country.

Development of the project on the larger scale, besides the tool: giving lectures, organizing big scale events, career counselling, etc.

Objectives:

The overall goal of 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' is the recognition of non-formal knowledge of young people in order to help them in school to work transition.

The objectives of the programme are:

- Creating a digital portfolio where work experience that young people get from student jobs can be gained, recorded and validated. The work experience from young people is confirmed by the employers. Therefore, there is credible data gathered about the young person's previous student jobs, employers, working hours and competencies.
- To help young people aged between 15 and 30 to present their non-formal knowledge, skills and competences gained from student work to employers.
- To smooth the transition from school to the first employment for young people.
- To boost young people's employability and to make them aware of their competencies and skills, also through self-evaluation.
- To help employers recruit best-fitting young employees in their selection processes.
- To show employers the potential of young people through validated experience.
- To stress that soft-skills, work-related skills and useful knowledge, can be gained through student work and to make the young people and the employers aware of this. Also the mismatch of skills between the education system and labour market can be overcome through student work.
- To raise awareness of the competencies of young people amongst young people and the employers.

Description of the tool:

'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' is a tool for validation and recognition of student work made by the biggest employment agency for mediating student work in Slovenia, e-Studentski Servis, in cooperation with Institute Nefiks (institute for the validation of non-formal knowledge).

All students and pupils from Slovenia performing student work through e-Studentski Servis since 2005 have a digital portfolio 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)'. This automatically contains all their previous working experience – name of the company where they worked, number of hours of student work, basic competence and additional competencies gained by student work... for example IT skills, foreign languages, etc. Part of the tool is automatic (it gets information from paid invoices for student work by the employers). However, part of the tool is self-assessment, as young people add additional competences on their own from the list of the suggested competences for certain types of work.

'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' can be saved in PDF format or printed out. Therefore, it is also a certificate that can be formally presented at job interviews and job applications. Young people can show it to the potential employer and with it present their working experience, knowledge, skills and gained competences.

'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' helps young people in transition to the labour market; it validates and recognizes non-formally gained knowledge and skills and boosts young people's employability. On the other hand, it helps the employers to choose the best candidates for work and helps employers to become more competitive. Only employers with the best human resources will be able to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The tool is available on the webpage www.studentski-servis.com for everyone who has ever done any student work via e-Studentski Servis (student work through student referral) – current pupils and students as well as ex-pupils and students (young graduates, young unemployed people), etc.

It is a digital portfolio, available in the 'Osebni Servis' (Personal Service) – which is an internet office web site for mediating student work via e-Studentski Servis. Young people simply log in to 'Osebni Servis' (Personal Service) with their user name and password (it is personalized just like logging into a web personal bank account). It is available here: https://www.studentski-servis.com/ess/osebna_stran.php. Young people can see their 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' in their own personalized 'Osebni Servis' (Personal Service), which only they can access, or they can save the document as a certificate to a PDF file or print it. They click on the icon 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' and all of their performed jobs will be listed there – with the name of the employers, year of work, number of hours, type of work and the competencies gained. The information is confirmed by the employers as it is obtained from the evidence of paid invoices for student work.

The advantages that 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' brings to seekers of student work, regular employment and other types of work:

- It serves as a tool for the planning of career paths, self-evaluation and professional development
- It can be saved to PDF file and attached to an electronic job application
- It can be printed out as a document – a certificate and enclosed with the job application in addition to a CV and motivational letter
- It can be brought to the job interview as a certificate of acquired experiences
- It can be presented to the career counsellor at the Public Employment Service as it helps in preparation of career plans and it provides an overview of a young persons' experiences.

From Tool to a Big Project:

Although the main intention was to develop a new electronic tool – a digital portfolio – the importance of raising-awareness about the skills and competencies of young people has been recognised. As such a whole campaign has been established as part of it. Workshops on the lessons of the importance of non-formal knowledge, soft skills, and active citizenships and activism for youth and their employability are organised. Free career counselling for youth is offered. In addition, large events for matching youth and employers, such as 'Coffee with HR (human resource) Managers' from the best Slovenian companies are also regularly organised. At one event over 200 young people were present along with the HR Managers from Slovenian enterprises such as Krka, Adria Mobil, Vzajemna, etc. there were also representatives from the Ministry of Education and National Employment Service of Slovenia, etc. Expert debates exploring the importance of non-formal knowledge and skills are being organised with policy-makers, academia, experts, NGOs, etc. There was a press conferences on the importance of non-formal knowledge, with guests from the Flemish Ministry of Education, who found the inspiration in 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)'. What was initially seen as simply establishing an IT system has grown and became a whole project and campaign on the raising of awareness of the importance of non-formal knowledge.

Outcomes, results and impact:

Awards:

- 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' has been recognised by the highest authority in the field of employment, the International Labour Organization (ILO). 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' has been awarded the second prize in the call for good practices on decent work for youth, an initiative launched by the Youth Employment Unit (YEP) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2014.
- Recognition of 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' as best practice for recognizing and recording student-work experiences by the Flemish Ministry of Education in 2012/2013.
- Finalist in the call for socially responsible practices among companies organized by the Network for Corporate Social Responsibility Slovenia in 2014.
- Candidate for the European CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Award Scheme in 2013.

Mentions:

- As good practice in the Resolution on National Youth Programmes 2013 -2022, written by the Ministry of Education and passed by the National Assembly.
- As good practice in the 'Resolution on the Recognition of Non-Formal Education in Slovenia'.

Mid-Term Evaluation:

The main purpose of this evaluation was to evaluate the then current results and understand how to make improvements for the on-going project. The main questions the evaluation addressed were quantitative data (the number of users of 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' amongst young people and employers; the number of chosen competencies, etc.) and qualitative data (suggestions for the improvement of the system from employers and young people; and the comments from experts on the method of preparation of competencies, on the competencies for each type of work, etc.). The evaluation was performed by e-Studentski Servis with the support of experts and informatics (the designers of the surveys, etc.). There were several methods used for the evaluation as it was done with the different target audiences:

- a) quantitative method – survey of young people; (sample size: 302 in paper survey; 908 in internet survey)
- b) quantitative method – gathering statistical data on the number of users from the computer system; (sample size: 140,950 young people and companies)
- c) qualitative method – expert meetings (comments on improvements and on the methodology of recording work experiences and competencies, from policy-makers and experts such as Ministries, National employment service, academics, expert organizations, etc.); (sample size: 60)
- d) qualitative method – focus group with young people and employers in the implementation phase (sample size: 10)

It is planned that a detailed evaluation of the qualitative and quantitative data will be done annually. As the project is still on-going, the final evaluation is not yet done.

Results and Outcomes:

Quantitative results and outcomes

- The quantity of users amongst young people: in the 2 years since the implementation, 135,000 young people have a 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' digital portfolio.
- The quantity of users: in the 2 years since the implementation, around 40% of the employers we work with demand a 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' portfolio from young people when they apply for a student job.

Qualitative results and outcomes

- Shifts in the thinking of young people: they more willingly take jobs that bring valuable experiences and are related to their studies or professional career rather than just considering financial rewards.
- More and more employers acknowledge non-formal working experience as relevant.
- Boosting young people's employability and helping them enter the labour market through the certificate of acquired knowledge and skills through student-work 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)'.
- Quantity of jobs: Young people can now prove their non-formal working experience and therefore they can be equal candidates for jobs requiring for example 1 year of formal working experiences. Before 'Moje izkusnje (My experience)' it was very hard to prove that, so those jobs were not accessible for young people without formal experience obtained in regular employment.
- Quality of jobs: Young people can now prove their non-formal working experience with all of the skills, knowledge and competencies (including soft skills, IT skills, knowledge of foreign languages, etc.) written in them. With such a competencies-based portfolio they can obtain better quality jobs than before.
- Compliments on the expertise of the prepared competencies system from experts and academia.
- Helping employers in recruitment processes for young people with the new tool for recording non-formal knowledge, gained through student-work.

Impact on the Recognition of Non-Formal Education / Learning and Youth Work:

- Raising awareness on the importance of non-formal knowledge for young people's employability.
- Connections made in the working group that is meeting on a regular basis between actors in the youth sector: The National Youth Council of Slovenia (MSS), Institute Nefiks (Zavod Nefiks), Slovenian Student Union (ŠOS), National Student Clubs' Association (Zveza ŠKIS), and Univerzum Minerva, etc.
- Organizing several events on the importance of non-formal education and the recognition of non-formal education with the above-mentioned youth sector working group: organizing an International Symposium in the National Assembly of Slovenia, organizing a Conference on, the importance of recording non-formal knowledge, at the Ministry of Education, preparing the Resolution of Non-Formal Education in Slovenia, meetings with important political stakeholders on the topic of recording non-formal education (GZS – Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia; CPI –Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Education, Universities etc.)
- Visibility abroad – awarded and recognized by the ILO and by the Flemish Ministry of Education.
- Raising the employability of young people.