

# Abstract for MAPEC 2006

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## Informal learning in social fields

### Starting point

Everybody learns everytime and everywhere: at home, at the kindergarten, at school, at the workplace. Informal learning is the core of lifelong learning; it is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective and it typically does not lead to certification. So far, there is not much research or work on how to use and manage informal learning in enterprises. One area, where informal learning plays a great role in everyday work and comprises complex situations and complex tasks, is the services for disabled people.

The project "Lifelong competences – informal learning in social fields" ([www.informal-learning.org](http://www.informal-learning.org)), supported by the European commission within the initiative Leonardo Da Vinci, aims to make informal learning at such workplaces visible and assessable. To achieve these aims, people working in the social service organisations of the project consortium build a virtual community of practice and get access to otherwise not communicated experiences and competences.

### Project information

The project lasts 3 years and is coordinated by Mosaik, an Austrian care facility for disabled people. The 9 European project partners are institutions who offer training for employees in the services of disabled people and FH JOANNEUM is participating as the technical partner. The target group of the project is employees of the project partners. They work in different professional fields, such as special pedagogy, special trained teacher, kindergarten teacher, social worker, physiotherapist, speech therapist, ergo therapist, etc. Qualified employees as well as semi skilled employees have a large demand for informal learning and best practice. Therefore, the projects' support of informal learning and the facilitation of access to the informal knowledge will increase the quality of support for disabled people.

More specifically the project aims to:

- develop an assessment method set to make informal learning understandable and comprehensible
- make the results of informal learning, such as know how and competences, visible in order to assess them
- develop a training for skill resource managers, who use the instruments developed in the project to investigate competences
- develop a virtual community of practice for professional groups, who support people with disabilities (see [www.informal-learning.org](http://www.informal-learning.org)), that offers tools for communication and collaboration (weblogs, wiki, etc.)

The speech will focus on the assessment results of informal learning, will present the platform developed with the open source software PLONE. An innovative approach is used for the community: most of the content is structured dynamically by using so called Smart folders. This highly customisable solution allows organizing or reorganizing the content with a minimum effort and without the necessity of moving a huge number of items manually. Central workbench for each user is his/her personal folders where s/he can draft, create and assemble contributions, which then are published dynamically in the structure of the publicly accessible area.