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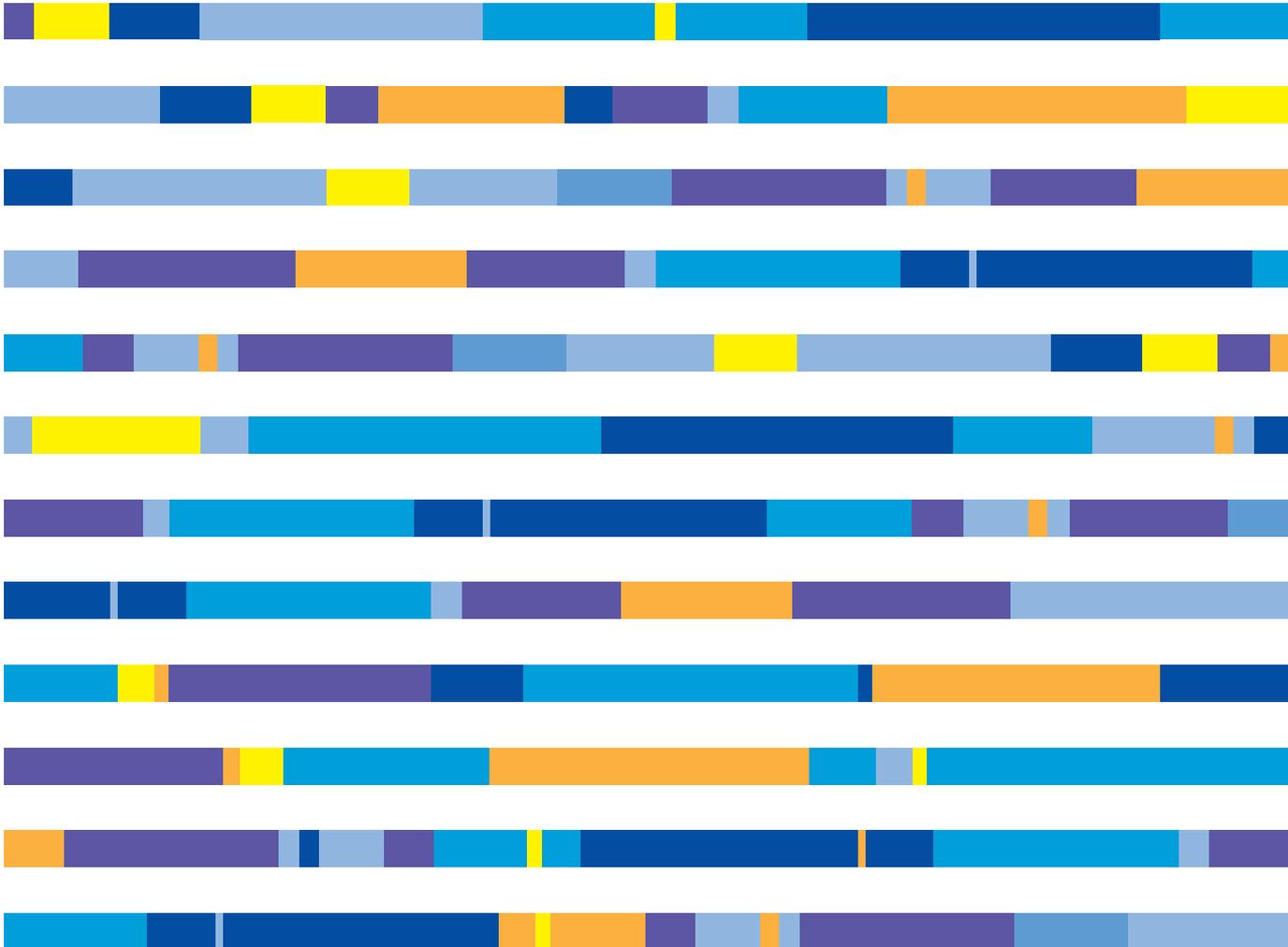
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update

COUNTRY REPORT: **AUSTRIA**

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Acknowledgements

This country update was produced by Karin Luomi-Messerer, as part of the 2018 update to the European Inventory on validation, a project managed by ICF (lead consultants: Manuel Souto-Otero, Ilona Murphy, Gabor Endrodi, David Scott and Andreea Hrimiuc) under the supervision of a steering committee formed by the European Commission (Koen Nomden, Godelieve Van-Den Brande; Martina Ni Cheallaigh and Corinna Liersch), Cedefop (Ernesto Villalba and Jens Bjornavold), and the ETF (Michael Graham and Kersti Raudsepp).

The report has benefitted from feedback from the European qualifications framework advisory group (EQF AG) members for Austria as well as other national-level quality assurance (QA) contacts with expertise in validation.

Work was carried out under DG EMPL Implementing Framework Contract EAC/47/2014-3: VC 2017/0692

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The publication has neither been edited nor proof-read by Cedefop's editing service.

Please cite this publication as:

Luomi Messerer, K. (2019). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Austria*.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Austria.pdf

1 Introduction

Developments towards a national strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning started in 2013 and are strongly linked to both the Austrian Lifelong Learning Strategy as well as to the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Council Recommendation on validation and (partly) the implementation of the European Credit System in Vocational Education and Training also play an important role in this process.

Since the 2016 Inventory, important developments have taken place, particularly in relation to the national validation strategy and the implementation of the NQF; these developments also represent the main progress made towards the 2012 Council Recommendation:

- The national validation strategy was developed in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders in Austria and was published by the end of 2017. It promotes formative as well as summative validation approaches, provides the basis for the implementation of validation in all sectors and areas and clearly refers to the principles in the Council Recommendation. Three thematic working groups have already been established (related to 'quality', 'communication' and 'system synergies') and their first results have been available since May 2018: the catalogue of quality criteria for validation initiatives in VET and adult education (which will be piloted throughout 2018). Also in higher education, several steps have been taken to support and enhance quality of validation arrangements.
- The legal basis for the Austrian NQF, that came into force in May 2016, paved the way for further developments and first qualifications were included into the NQF in 2017. A procedure for mapping non-formal qualifications is currently being developed.

The national validation strategy intends to raise awareness about the value of competences gained in non-formal and informal settings, to provide a platform and framework for the (further) development and coordination of existing and new initiatives and to provide potential users with an overview of relevant available measures.

A main strength of the Austrian approach is that many validation initiatives and arrangements were already available before the development of the validation strategy. They are often linked to the sector of adult education (in many cases in the context of second chance education) and some measures can also be identified in other fields (such as the labour market and the third sector). These initiatives were mainly developed from bottom-up processes with the involvement of relevant stakeholders (such as social partners).

A weakness of the current system is that there is no uniform legal framework to regulate validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning and also no general individual right for individuals to access validation initiatives. This has not been changed with the national validation strategy. Furthermore, the fragmented structures and responsibilities for validation in Austria might not facilitate the implementation of the strategy despite the structures established (steering and working groups across sectors). There are also concerns that the strategy will raise many expectations that may not be met, in particular because financial issues remain unresolved. This could therefore be an obstacle to the implementation of the strategy or delay its implementation.

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

National strategy for validation

In recent years, policy discussions have covered measures to validate non-formal and informal learning, particularly in connection with the strategy for lifelong learning and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

In July 2011, four federal ministries (Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture; Ministry for Science and Research; Ministry for Economy, Family and Youth; Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs) supported by the social partners and all key stakeholders, agreed on a joint strategy - Lifelong Learning 2020 (Republik Österreich, 2011). This was based on a set of guiding principles, benchmarks for 2020, and ten action strands, including concrete operational measures for LLL implementation. The development of a coherent approach towards validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a central element of this strategy. Agreed measures include the establishment of a national validation strategy (in order to overcome the fragmented validation landscape), the development and implementation of 'competence record' (*Kompetenzbilanz*) schemes, the provision of training programmes to enhancing know-how regarding assessment of learning outcomes gained in non-formal and informal learning contexts, as well as the development of a cross-sectoral quality assurance system for assessment procedures (Republik Österreich, 2011, 46).

The implementation of the strategy is coordinated in the framework of the 'national platform 20:20' which is composed of representatives of different ministries, social partner organisations, federal states, the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS) as well as higher education and adult education. The national government appointed a specific task force with representatives from the four ministries who had developed the strategy to strategically steer the implementation processes.

The development and implementation of the national validation strategy is the task of a working group (linked to action line 10 and measure 10.3 of the LLL: 2020 strategy) which was established in 2013. It is comprised of representatives of various ministries and stakeholder organisations and its work is backed up by scientific support. The members include representatives of:

- relevant federal ministries (currently: Education, Science and Research; Digital and Economic Affairs; Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection; Defence; Federal Chancellery: Families and Youth),
- social partner organisations (Chamber of Labour, Chamber of Commerce),
- youth organisations (Austrian Youth Association),
- adult education (Austrian Conference of Adult Education),
- Universities Austria,
- Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences.

In the first stage, in-depth analysis of existing validation arrangements in three areas were carried out: low-qualified people (Rath, 2014), VET (Luomi-Messerer, 2014a), and higher education (AQ Austria, 2014). The results were brought together in the second quarter of 2014 and a consultation document for developing the national validation strategy and the definition of relevant measures was subsequently prepared. In 2015, a consultation process was carried out and the strategy was refined based on the review and analysis of results of the consultation process (Pfeffer & Skrivanek, 2016) and on further discussions within the working group.

The national validation strategy was finally published on the BMBWF website on 6.12.2017 (BMB & BMWF, 2017). It includes the following strategic key objectives (BMB & BMWF, 2017, pp. 10-12):

- Increasing the value of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts;
- Making validation arrangements better accessible by providing low-threshold, central information and advisory services;
- Improving opportunities for education and work (e.g. by facilitating the obtainment of qualifications by adults as 'second-chance education');
- Improving permeability at the central interfaces of the Austrian education and training system (thus, improving flexibility and efficiency);
- Strengthening validation as an integral part of the Austrian education and training system;
- Promoting the learning outcomes orientation and quality assurance.

Based on these objectives, the Austrian validation strategy assigns validation measures to one of two independent but corresponding pillars (BMB & BMWF, 2017, pp. 13-15):

Box 2.1 Two pillars of the Austrian validation strategy

- Pillar 1: **Approaches to formative validation** include a process of reflection on a person's competences with the primary goal of increasing their motivation to engage in learning. The focus is on *identifying* and *documenting* competences to empower individuals. The identification and visualization of acquired competencies takes place independently of the place and context of competence acquisition and independent of defined standards of the qualification system. These approaches do not lead to certification but can possibly lead to further steps in this direction.
- Pillar 2: **Summative validation approaches** are based on requirements and standards of the qualifications system. They include in particular, steps to *assess* and *certify* acquired competences on the basis of the standards defined for a formal or non-formal qualification (in line with the existing regulations and responsibilities for obtaining the respective qualification). These approaches aim at the acquisition of a qualification or a part of a qualification. In most cases, they also integrate formative process steps or individuals are using formative approaches before engaging in summative validation measures.

The national strategy provides the basis for the implementation of validation in all sectors and areas. It also introduces four thematic working groups for the first implementation phase from 2017 to 2019 that focus on the following topics (BMB & BMWF, 2017, pp. 18-21):

- **Quality:** to promote transparency, quality and recognition of validation procedures and to draw up a catalogue of quality criteria that considers characteristics of different validation measures;
- **Professionalization:** focussing on the further development of competences and job profiles of validation practitioners by drawing up competence profiles for consultants and developing training offers, if applicable¹;
- **Communication:** to increase awareness and accessibility of validation offers, an online portal for transparent presentation of validation and accompanying services will be developed, as well as a target group-oriented communication concept;
- **System synergies:** to coordinate and further develop existing validation initiatives as well as identify needs for possible new target areas, areas of development and priorities.

¹ This working group is not yet implemented (May 2018).

According to the strategy document, the results of these first four thematic working groups are to be available by 2018 and will be implemented in a second implementation period starting in 2019. Subsequently, new thematic priorities and target areas will be defined and, if necessary, new thematic working groups will be set up from 2019.

As of May 2018, the following activities and results can be reported.

- The thematic working group on 'quality' developed a catalogue of quality criteria for validation initiatives in VET and adult education (BMBWF, 2018a) that was first publicly presented at a conference in May 2018 and is currently being piloted in selected initiatives (see Chapter 8).²
- The thematic working group on 'communication' has started with the outline of an online portal with information about validation initiatives (see Section 6.2).
- The thematic working group on 'system synergies': This group started with an analysis of the options for a nationwide rolling out of the '*Du kannst was!*' ('You have skills/competences!') initiative and will as a next step focus on exams for external candidates in school-based education (*ExternistInnenprüfungen*) (see Section 2.2).

Some challenges for the future implementation of the strategy have already been identified:

- The two-pillar approach for clustering of validation assignments is an attempt to provide a conceptual structure for the different validation arrangements that currently exist in Austria. However, it seems to be necessary to further clarify the concept of validation. Furthermore, the fragmented structures and responsibilities for validation in Austria might not facilitate the implementation of the strategy and leave financial issues unresolved (Schlögl, 2017).
- The need for the development of a legal basis for validation, to enhance fairness, equality and quality of procedures, is also currently in discussion. Such a law could include the right to recognition of professional experience as well as to access validation and guidance procedures and could specify steps, procedures and financial regulations for validation (Eichbauer, 2017, p. 95).
- Furthermore, there is a danger that the very comprehensive strategy will raise many expectations that that may not be met. For example, although it is clearly stated that existing responsibilities remain and no new rights arise, the strategy could still be interpreted in this direction. It is also sometimes criticised that currently, the focus is still on summative validation measures that lead to a formal qualification and that formative validation initiatives are valued to a lesser extent (although both approaches are equally promoted in the national strategy).³
- Another issue is that some fear that the promotion of (summative) validation measures could lead to a down-grading of traditional or formal education and training pathways, although it is clearly stated in the strategy document that validation does not replace traditional pathways. In budget negotiations, however, a point of discussion may be which approach should be given greater importance.⁴

Currently no legal basis for validation

In Austria, there is no uniform legal framework to regulate validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The development and implementation of an explicit national strategy on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

² For ongoing activities in the higher education sector see Chapter 2.2!

³ This concern is repeatedly mentioned at events and meetings.

⁴ This concern is repeatedly mentioned at events and meetings.

including all educational sectors commenced only recently and it does not have a legal basis. There is also no general individual right for individuals to access validation initiatives. The access requirements are defined for each initiative separately and this will not be changed with the implementation of the strategy.

Nevertheless, there are some legal regulations built into the formal system allowing for some recognition possibilities and validation initiatives in different sectors which have developed their own understanding of validation. One source states: 'Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Austria is legally regulated primarily by means of admission to examinations and entry requirements. The legal frameworks ensure that there are binding regulations for entitlement to access (formal type of recognition according to Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004) to examinations in the formal education system' (Mayerl & Schlögl, 2015, 13).

In Austria, almost all formal qualifications (from the school system and dual system, but not university degrees) may be obtained by taking external exams based on legally binding procedures. Usually, these exams are taken at the responsible institution within the formal sector of education and training by using the same standards and methods as in the formal programmes. Sometimes, these providers or adult education providers also offer preparatory courses but attendance is not mandatory.

There are also legal regulations for gaining access to formal education and training programmes (including those offered at higher education institutions) based on validation. In higher education, these procedures are delegated to the higher education institution, which decides on the specific methods and procedures. In CVET/adult education, there are legally regulated as well as non-legally regulated qualifications offered; thus, some validation arrangements are legally binding and others are not, and the procedures used differ between providers.

Validation initiatives with rather loose links to the formal system or without any links at all are usually not based on legal regulations, except for those providing access to the labour market by virtue of trade or other professional authorisation.

Validation and the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation

The Austrian validation strategy does not restrict validation to specific target groups, but it is assumed that low qualified people will be one of the main target groups. In particular for socio-economically disadvantaged people or people with low formal qualifications, validation measures can provide a second chance for access to general and vocational education and training and lifelong learning and consequently lead to increased employability, and motivation for education (BMB & BMWFW, 2017, p. 11).

There is no specific policy or strategy for implementing the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation but there are clearly links to existing re-skilling or up-skilling measures and also to arrangements for the validation of professional competences previously acquired through non-formal or informal learning. Examples of such measures (further described in Section 2.2) include:

- the completion of compulsory schooling for adults (2nd chance) within the Austrian Initiative for Adult Education (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*)⁵ which is offered free of charge and for a core target group that is of low income and at risk of poverty;
- Exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination (*Außerordentlicher Zugang zur Lehrabschlussprüfung*; dual VET – the apprenticeship diploma is linked to NQF/EQF level 4) including specific support measures free of charge;

⁵ www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at

- General Higher Education Entrance Examination for graduates of apprenticeship training and of VET schools (*Berufsreifeprüfung, BRP*; special VET diploma) which constitutes the most significant 'non-traditional' pathway towards higher education or the initiative '*Lehre mit Matura*' (apprenticeship with special VET diploma/*BRP*).

2.2 Validation in education and training

Introduction

The role of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Austria until now (in comparison to other EU Member States) may be explained by: a traditionally strong orientation of education and economic culture towards the initial vocational education and training (IVET) sector; the dual system, which already incorporates a large amount of informal workplace learning (and, thus, there is no need for additional procedures to recognise this form of learning); and the focus of the Austrian system towards occupational profiles and activity descriptions and on formally acquired qualifications as proof of abilities and competences. Additionally, there is a relatively well-developed provision of second-chance education (Prokopp & Luomi-Messerer, 2010, 2).

In the formal education and training system, different Acts and Regulations include mechanisms and arrangements that enable education and training institutions to recognise learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings. Various ministries and institutions have developed measures and initiatives for identifying and formally recognising competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts. Thus, validation exists in many contexts but lacks coherence. The Austrian validation strategy is expected to enhance coordination and coherence; however, it does not aim at developing a national system for validation. It provides a common, cross-sectoral reference for the various initiatives and approaches. It does not compete with existing initiatives and does not interfere with their responsibilities or competences. It is aimed at improved steering, coordination and quality assurance of current and future validation measures whilst these current measures retain existing responsibilities. Existing validation initiatives will gain better visibility, comparability and accessibility through the national strategy. Their coordination, quality assurance and further development will be specifically promoted and a platform for better networking, coordination and cooperation is made available to them (BMB & BMWF, 2017, p. 16).

The four stages of validation

Currently Austrian validation arrangements and initiatives do not always clearly address the four stages or phases of validation (identification, documentation, assessment, and certification). Depending on the initiative and in particular on the purpose of validation, certain phases are emphasised – for example:

- acquisition of qualifications/certificates/entitlements that are part of the formal education and training system - the focus is on assessment and certification;
- acquisition of certificates without a corresponding qualification in the formal system - depending on the sector, all four stages or only some are used;
- access to certain exams or higher education programmes (such as continuing higher education courses at universities) requires proof of relevant professional work experience - the focus might be on identification and documentation;
- exemption from courses at higher education level (mainly Bachelor study programmes at universities of applied sciences) - the focus might be on identification, documentation and certification;

- guidance, supporting the process of self-reflection, recording individual development processes etc. (in the third sector) - the focus is more on identification and documentation.

As mentioned above, the Austrian validation strategy distinguishes between summative and formative validation measures, whereby approaches to formative validation focus more strongly on identification and documentation and summative validation approaches emphasise assessment and certification.

Some examples of validation arrangements in the education and training context are listed below.

Examples from general education and school-based VET (legally binding procedures)

- Acquisition of the compulsory school leaving certificate (*Pflichtschulabschluss*) by young people and adults⁶:

The Austrian Initiative for Adult Education (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*)⁷ aims to enable young people and adults who lack basic skills or who do not have a compulsory school leaving certificate to continue and finish their education. All courses provided within this framework include a clearing-period at the beginning for the identification of competences and the design of an individual development plan for those who finished compulsory schooling without a lower secondary qualification. Operating since 2012, these courses are free of charge and subject to consistent and nationwide quality guidelines. Courses are tailored to individual needs and continuous learning support is provided (e.g. through coaching, socio-educational support, etc.) as well as counselling and support at the transition phase. The courses offered cover the following fields of competence: a) German - communication and society, b) English - globality and transculturality, c) Mathematics, (d) vocational guidance, (e) at least two of the following elective modules: creativity and design, health and social affairs, another language, nature and technology. The exam has to be taken as an external exam at a 'new secondary school' in front of an examination committee (usually composed of the headmaster and teachers). It can be taken on one examination date or in partial examinations on various examination dates, according to the candidate's choice.

- Exams for external candidates in school-based education (*ExternistInnenprüfungen*):

External candidates can sit exams covering single subjects or whole grades in general education as well as in VET schools and colleges. The number of users of this opportunity is not recorded centrally but is considered to be very low.

- Upper secondary school leaving exam for external candidates (*ExternistInnenreifprüfung*):

External candidates can sit for the *Reifprüfung* exam (upper secondary school leaving exam providing direct access to higher education) or the *Reifprüfung* and Diploma examination (VET college qualification). Entry to the exams normally requires records of a specific number of completed years of school, or a graduation from a school. Applications for admission to this exam have to be submitted to the regional boards of education, such as the Vienna school board. The examinations take place at the corresponding schools (upper-secondary academic schools or VET colleges) or at specially set-up examination centres. Examination preparation occurs independently and course attendance is not mandatory. Adult-education institutions

⁶ https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2012_I_72/BGBLA_2012_I_72.pdf

⁷ www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at

or private schools offer preparation courses. The candidates can select the date and order of the individual examination modules. The number of users is very low: According to Statistik Austria, in the study year 2015/2016, approximately 0.5% of all newly enrolled students (at public universities as well as at universities of applied sciences) gained access to higher education with this particular examination experience (Statistik Austria, 2017).

Examples from dual VET (legally binding procedure)

- Exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination (*Außerordentlicher Zugang zur Lehrabschlussprüfung*; dual VET):

In addition to those who have completed an entire apprenticeship, people without formal training can take the final apprenticeship examination. The only requirement is that they are over 18 years old and have evidence of having acquired the corresponding vocational skills and knowledge in another form; for example, in practice (work experience) or in courses. The applicants must bring the appropriate application to the respective Apprenticeship Centre of the Chamber of Commerce and sit for the written and oral apprenticeship examination. The regulations are the same as for those who have completed an entire apprenticeship: the examination has to take place in front of a board of examiners (examination committee), which, in addition to the chairperson, is made up of legally established stakeholders (social partners: employer and employee representatives). They have to be professional experts in the respective apprenticeship occupations and at least the chairperson has to be an authorised apprenticeship trainer. Adult education institutions offer preparation courses for candidates without formal training. In 2016, 18% of those who passed apprenticeship exams were admitted based on the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination (Dornmayer & Nowak, 2017, 93).

The revised Vocational Training Act of 2011⁸ offers the possibility to grant exemption of parts of the practical part of the final apprenticeship examination for candidates in second-chance education who can provide evidence of relevant professional experience. This is of particular relevance for the initiative 'Du kannst was!' ('Yes, you can!' or 'You can do it!' or 'You have skills!'), which is considered a 'flagship project' in Austria:

Box 2.2 'Du kannst was'⁹

The initiative 'Du kannst was!' is a project initiated by the Austrian social partners, which validates competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning contexts. It leads to the award of an apprenticeship certificate / diploma, the certificate of successful completion of the final apprenticeship examination, in a two-step examination process.

After an initial counselling session¹⁰, beneficiaries participate in three workshops, during which - guided by qualified trainers - they create competence portfolios with evidence files. In a first 'Competence Check'¹¹ the existing competences are evaluated, and the missing competences can be further acquired in internships or specialised courses. After that, a second and final 'Competence Check' takes place, which constitutes the second part of the final apprenticeship examination, which focusses mainly on the competences which were lacking during the first 'check'. Both examinations are taken at the Apprenticeship Office of the Economic Chamber, the awarding body for apprenticeship diplomas in Austria.

⁸ BGBl. I - Ausgegeben am 29. Dezember 2011 - Nr. 148

⁹ <http://www.dukannstwas.at/>; Eichbauer, 2016 & 2017.

¹⁰ Recently, a new element was introduced for technical professions following the compulsory counselling session: a screening activity is carried out and a language test (up to 1 day) (Eichbauer, 2018).

¹¹ Other terms used include 'performance assessment', 'performance check' or 'quality check'.

The initiative was first implemented in 2012 and was transferred from the successful pilot project in Upper Austria to other regional provinces in Austria (Burgenland, Lower Austria, Salzburg; currently also to Vorarlberg). There are ongoing discussions to roll out the initiative on a federal level in the course of the Austrian strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In each province, different apprenticeship profiles are offered in the 'Du kannst was!'-scheme, depending on the specific needs in the region and in some cases, candidates have to wait for quite some time until there are enough participants to organise this scheme for a specific profile. It is currently not possible to take part in this scheme outside the province of residence. There are discussions, however, to change this regulation and to enhance flexibility in this regard.

Several other national or regional initiatives are also closely linked to supporting the acquisition of the apprenticeship diploma by making use of validation of non-formal and informal learning:

- '*Kompetenz mit System*' ('Competence with System')¹²: This initiative (offered by PES all over Austria) enables jobseekers to acquire basic knowledge and skills of the professional profile of apprenticeship graduates during the period of unemployment within the framework of several progressive training modules. Each module ends with a competence check that also validates non-formal and informal learning.
- *Wiener Anerkennungssystem 'Meine Chance - Ich kann das'* (Viennese recognition system 'My chance – I can do it')¹³: This initiative makes it possible to complete the final apprenticeship examination in a shorter time. The Viennese vocational schools assess the knowledge required to complete the apprenticeship. If there is sufficient prior knowledge, a competence assessment procedure is carried out at a vocational school in Vienna. In the event of knowledge gaps, courses will be taken at accredited educational institutions. The theoretical part of the apprenticeship examination is waived for successful candidates. The PES Vienna and the waff (Vienna Employment Promotion Fund) offer information and support in this regard.
- *JUST INTEGRATION Implacementstiftung* (placement foundation) for unemployed persons in Austria entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection ¹⁴ (see Section 9.4.3.).

Example from the healthcare and nursing professions

The 2016 reform in the professional field of health care and nursing provides for the first time qualifications for three occupational groups: the diploma for health care and nursing (*gehobener Dienst für Gesundheits- und Krankenpflege*; academic degree), nursing assistance level 2 (Pflegefachassistenz) and nursing assistance level 1 (Pflegeassistenz). The competencies of former nursing helps / carers (now nursing assistance level 1) were expanded and the requirements' profile for nursing assistance level 2 was newly developed (two-year training). In future, persons who have already completed training as nursing helpers / carers (one-year training) and have worked in the profession for many years should be able to obtain the next higher qualification as nursing assistants level 2 by crediting skills already acquired. The validation of non-formal and informal learning through work experience can play an

¹² Mayerl & Schlögel, 2015; Weber et al., 2011; <http://www.ams.at/service-arbeitsuchende/angebote-frauen/kompetenz-system>

¹³ ZIB-Training, 2016.

¹⁴ AMS, 2016a.

important role here. Currently, validation procedures are being developed that should be in line with the Recommendation on validation.¹⁵

Examples from CVET and adult education¹⁶

- Recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts in VET Schools for Adults (legally binding procedure)

Individuals who have already entered the labour market or have completed a course of technical or vocational education have the opportunity to attend evening courses in order to obtain a higher-level VET qualification (same as from Colleges of Higher Vocational Education). Since 2010, the school subjects are implemented in a modular format. This facilitates the recognition of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts. Candidates have the right to apply for the assessment of modules instead of attending courses.¹⁷

- Access to CVET courses offered by higher education institutions without *Reifeprüfung*¹⁸:

Access can be granted to people who have relevant vocational training and long-term practice based on the regulation of each individual course. The respective institution decides the evidence that must be provided (e.g. Hahn, 2018).

- Recognising professional experiences in CVET courses offered by higher education institutions for shortening programmes:

Several courses offer opportunities for the recognition of professional experiences. The concrete procedures are usually decided by the head of the individual course and relevant information is usually available on the websites of the higher education institutions. However, there is no overview or further detailed information available. Some examples include:

- QUALI-QIBB¹⁹: Based on the concepts and competence profiles developed in the EU project VET-CERT²⁰, the Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in VET (ARQA-VET) offers in cooperation with university colleges for teacher education two courses: 1) in cooperation with the University College of Teacher Education Upper Austria: 'Certified Quality Process Manager for QIBB' (12 ECTS, 2 semesters); 2) in cooperation with the University College of Teacher Education Tirol the 'Quality Management for Managers in QIBB' (6 ECTS, 1 semester). The training programmes are based on validation of prior learning (formal, non-formal and informal); recognition and exemption can be granted by the head of the training programme.

¹⁵ Verordnung über Ausbildung und Qualifikationsprofile der Pflegeassistentenberufe (Pflegeassistentenberufe-Ausbildungsverordnung – Ordinance on Education and Training for Nursing Assistance Professions), Federal Law Gazette II No. 301/2016, §13

¹⁶ In Austria, there is no clear distinction between qualifications acquired in adult education and other educational sectors. Several preparatory courses are offered in adult education institutions ('Second Chance Education') for the purpose of obtaining formal qualifications e.g. for completion of compulsory schooling or for completion of the Higher Education Entrance Examination in an alternative way. Non-formal qualifications that could be considered as part of CVET are also offered by adult education institutions. Furthermore, there are various validation processes offered in this area that do not lead to a qualification at all (as defined by the NQF).

¹⁷ §23a des SchUG-B - Schulunterrichtsgesetz für Berufstätige –
[https://www.jusline.at/Schulunterrichtsgesetz_fuer_Berufstaetige_\(SchUG-B\).html](https://www.jusline.at/Schulunterrichtsgesetz_fuer_Berufstaetige_(SchUG-B).html)

¹⁸ This arrangement could also be presented in the section on higher education.

¹⁹ <https://arqa-vet.at/de/qualifizierung-beratung/quali-qibb/>; QIBB is the Austrian quality initiative in VET.

²⁰ <https://vet-cert.arqa-vet.at/index.php.html>

- Postgraduate university course, *Bildungs- und Berufsberatung*²¹ (educational and vocational guidance) offered at the Danube University Krems: the course, offered since 2011, aims to certify the competence level of people with professional experience in educational and vocational guidance but without formally recognised qualifications. Additionally, further training modules are offered to enhance competences and receive an academic degree. Awards are issued on two levels, an Academic Expert (60 ECTS; includes the award of the 'European Career Guidance Certificate') and a Master of Arts (90 ECTS). The assessment methods include an online-test (for assessing competences related to the professional field - 15 ECTS) and an assessment centre (assessing counselling and guidance competences as well as social and self-competences - 30 ECTS) and are developed to assess formally as well as informally acquired knowledge, skills, and competences.

■ Academy of Continuing Education (*Weiterbildungsakademie, wba*²²):

The wba in the sector of adult education is considered a best-practice approach for recognising formal, non-formal and informal learning of adult educators in Austria and has been presented in more detail in previous Inventory reports.

**Box 2.3 Academy of Continuing Education
(*Weiterbildungsakademie, wba*)**

The wba certifies and issues degrees to adult educators according to defined standards. A framework curriculum has been developed and people active in adult education can have credits awarded for their acquired competences, skills, and practice periods. The acquired competences are documented in an e-portfolio and missing competences can be acquired at different educational establishments for adults.

Certificates are offered on two levels: wba-certificate - certified adult educator (rated at 60 ECTS²³) and wba-diploma - graduate adult educator (rated at 60 ECTS, with specialisation in one of four fields of adult education: teachers/trainers, education managers, counsellors, and librarians).

The wba aims to facilitate links between the adult learning sector, CVET, and higher education and to enhance the professionalisation of adult learning (cf. Steiner, 2010; Heilinger, 2012; Bosche et al., 2015; Gruber, 2017).

As of January 2015, a new learning outcome-oriented wba-curricula, now called 'qualification-profiles' was introduced. They provide detailed insights on required competences for adult educators and put particular emphasis on vocation specific competences. The revision of the curricula also aims at making the wba-certificates suitable for inclusion in the NQF in the future (Reisinger & Wagner, 2011; Reisinger & Steiner, 2014)²⁴. Currently, the wba is working on updating its qualification profile with regard to media competence.²⁵

As of March 2018, more than 1 100 wba-certified adult educators have benefited from this initiative.²⁶

²¹ <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/bbb>

²² www.wba.or.at; more details are provided in the 2014 Inventory.

²³ Until 2013: 30 ECTS.

²⁴ The wba certificates can be considered as non-formal qualifications; the procedure for including non-formal qualifications into the NQF is currently being developed.

²⁵ <https://wba.or.at/de/aktuelles/news/116-erwachsenenbildung-trifft-digitalisierung.php>

²⁶ <https://wba.or.at/de/ueber-uns/daten-und-fakten.php>

Examples linked to the higher education context

In Austria, recognition of non-formal and informal learning cannot lead to a complete award of a higher education qualification. However, some higher education institutions or programmes are open to admission on the basis of recognition of prior learning. There are also some arrangements for the validation and recognition of prior learning as a basis for the allocation of credits towards a qualification and/or exemption from some programme requirements; in practice, they are used only to a very limited extent.

In 2015, the Austrian Higher Education Conference (*Österreichische Hochschulkonferenz*)²⁷ recommended the development of framework conditions for supporting access to higher education programmes for 'non-traditional' students based on quality assured procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Österreichische Hochschulkonferenz, 2015).

In the context of the development of the Austrian validation strategy, the Ministry of Science, Research and Economy²⁸ had commissioned a study to explore existing arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education as well as their legal basis (AQ Austria, 2014). Additionally, AQ Austria²⁹ carried out a project to further explore these validation opportunities and to develop recommendations for the design of recognition and crediting procedures (AQ Austria, 2016):

Box 2.4 Recommendations for the design of recognition and crediting procedures in higher education³⁰

The report emphasises that validation, recognition and crediting of non-formal and informal learning must be quality-assured in order to strengthen confidence in the procedures.

The recommendations addressed to policy-makers relate in particular to the following aspects: the promotion of such procedures should be supported by means of incentives, in particular in the form of project funding; the legal basis for the recognition and crediting of competences acquired non-formally and informally must be established which give students the right for the verification of the equivalence of their competences; to ensure the verification of the equivalence of competences free of charge; an external financing and the corresponding personnel resources need to be ensured.

Higher education institutions are recommended to establish transparent (e.g. in relation to regulations, criteria, responsibilities, documentation, monitoring, advice and information) and quality-assured systems and procedures for the recognition and crediting of competences acquired outside higher education, which also take into account non-formally and informally acquired competences; these procedures should be integrated into the higher education strategy; duplication of credits for both access and academic achievements should be avoided; agreement should be reached across sectors on the maximum extent of creditable achievements.

In order to be able to prove their competences, applicants and students should reflect more strongly on their existing competences and make them as visible as possible since recognition and crediting involve opportunities and obligations; applicants and students are obliged to provide transparent and verifiable proof of their existing competences.

²⁷ http://www.hochschulplan.at/?page_id=6#dokumente

²⁸ Since end 2017, the higher education resort is part of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

²⁹ AQ Austria is the agency for quality assurance and accreditation for Austrian higher education institutions.

³⁰ AQ Austria, 2016

Starting from these recommendations and previous results, a current AQ Austria project supports higher education institutions in implementing procedures and instruments for the recognition and crediting of non-formally and informally acquired competences. For this purpose, individual advice is provided for the higher education institutions on site. In addition to the advice provided by external experts, higher education institutions should exchange their own experiences with regard to implementation. Based on the experiences and feedback of the higher education institutions with the implementation process and on the basis of the consultations, AQ Austria is preparing a summary document with recommendations, which will be published and will thus be available to all higher education institutions from spring 2019.³¹

Furthermore, a project was commissioned by the competent ministry to investigate the 'research literacy' of students with alternative higher education access. The aim is to find out which type of support these students would need in order to successfully master the requirements, especially with regard to scientific work.

Due to the legal framework conditions in Austria, most experience of the implementation of validation at higher education is currently in CVET (see above) and in the recognition of access to higher education, especially to study programmes offered at universities of applied sciences. Universities are autonomous institutions but they take part in the development of validation procedures as laid down, for example, in 'performance agreements'³² concluded between universities and the federal government (BMUKK & BMWF, 2011, 86). The competent ministry concludes a 'performance agreement' with all 22 public universities for a period of three years. For the coming period (2019-2022) it is planned that some universities will propose concrete projects on the subject of validation. It will not be mandatory for everyone, but it is expected that 10-12 universities will take action in this regard. Furthermore, the new Austrian University Development Plan (GUEP) 2019-2024³³ includes the following activities: the creation of binding and transparent validation procedures for informal and non-formal learning, equivalence assessment and recognition procedures for admission and crediting to a curriculum, the further development of corresponding standards. In the sector of universities of applied sciences (FH), the 'FH Development Plan' is the appropriate steering instrument. The current 'FH Development Plan' (BMWFW, 2013) refers, for example, to the promotion of non-traditional access to FH degree programmes (see below).

Some examples of existing arrangements include:

- Non-traditional access to higher education programmes (without completion of the school-based upper secondary certificate):

Traditionally, access to higher education in Austria is granted based on the completion of the school-based upper secondary certificate called 'Matura' or 'Reifeprüfung' (school-leaving certificates of Secondary Technical and Vocational Colleges or Secondary Academic Schools). Non-traditional access is granted based on specific exams as described below.

- Limited Higher Education Entrance Examination (*Studienberechtigungsprüfung (SBP)*): This exam provides restricted access to

³¹ Information on past and current AQ Austria projects is available here: https://www.aq.ac.at/de/anerkennung/aq_austria_projekte.php

³² 'Performance agreements' are agreements between government and individual higher education institutions, which set out specific quantitative or qualitative goals that institutions will seek to achieve in a given time period and which may be (but are not necessarily) linked to institutional funding.

³³ The Austrian University Development Plan (GUEP) 2019-2024 is a strategic planning document that prioritises the goals that will shape the further development of universities (BMWFW, 2017a).

post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions. It enables those who have not taken the *Reifeprüfung* exam to study specific subjects or subject areas at these institutions. Admission to the *SBP* requires applicants, among other things, to furnish proof of previous knowledge acquired through job-specific programmes in relation to their desired study course. Should they not be able to prove such previous knowledge, they can take additional exams. The *SBP* consists of specialist exams taken individually and includes four compulsory and optional subjects. The study course selected will determine the compulsory subjects to be taken by the exam candidate. Adult-learning institutions and universities offer non-compulsory bridge courses for the preparation of the exam. Approximately 0.12% of all first-registered ordinary students at public universities in the winter semester 2015/16 gained access based on the *SBP* compared to 1.3% at universities of applied science (Statistik Austria, 2017).

- General Higher Education Entrance Examination for leavers of the apprenticeship training and VET schools (*Berufsreifeprüfung, BRP*; special VET diploma): this exam provides general access to higher education and grants the right to study in all disciplines at post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions without the *Reifeprüfung* exam. In principle, this exam can be taken without prior attendance at upper secondary schools. Thus, the *BRP* is an instrument for recognising previously acquired competences, but admission is also linked to formal qualifications (e.g. apprenticeship diploma). One of the four exams refers to the candidate's occupational field and links to previous occupational knowledge. Exams can be taken at the school at which the application for admission to the *BRP* was submitted without taking part in a course. Adult learning institutions offer specific preparation courses which are accredited by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research. Examinations at adult education centres can only be taken after attending preparatory courses. Credits for the *BRP* can be obtained from examinations completed in a different context such as the master craftsperson examination (*Meisterprüfung*), for individual areas or certain language certificates. In an initiative called '*Lehre mit Matura*' (apprenticeship with special VET diploma/*BRP*), during their apprenticeship, apprentices can attend preparation courses for the *BRP* (for free) and can take three of the four parts of the exam. Thus, they can finish both the apprenticeship and the *BRP* at nearly the same time when they have reached the age of 19. Approximately 3% of all first-registered ordinary students at public universities in the winter semester 2015/16 gained access based on the *BRP* compared to 7.1% at universities of applied sciences (Statistik Austria, 2017).
- Admission to universities of applied sciences without *Reifeprüfung* or specific higher education entrance exam

Universities of applied sciences can admit applicants who have not taken the *Reifeprüfung* examination or any of the specific exams mentioned above but have a subject-relevant professional qualification. Several universities of applied sciences offer preparation courses for apprentices or persons in supervisor courses specifically designed for access to study programmes in these institutions.

- Crediting of non-formal and informal learning for shortening of study period

Based on the recognition of prior learning, study periods can also be shortened or exemptions from individual courses can be granted. The respective institution decides the amounts of courses or semesters to be accredited and the evidence that must be provided. At universities, crediting of non-formal and informal learning is made possible by the provision in the University Act (§ 78 Abs 3 UG) that scientific activities

in enterprises or non-university research institutions can be recognised and examinations recognised in this form can lead to a reduction in the length of study. At universities of applied sciences, this opportunity is even wider since the respective Act (§ 12 Abs 1 FHStG) grants the possibility of recognising and crediting prior learning and providing exemptions from courses based on 'equivalency'.

No sector-specific priorities

The majority of the validation initiatives and arrangements are probably linked to the adult education sector or to 'second chance' initiatives. However, relevant arrangements can also be identified in initial VET, higher education or in other fields (such as the labour market and the third sector).

The national validation strategy does not prioritise any policy area or sector but provides a platform for analysing potentials and needs for possible new target areas and for setting priorities. The strategy document stresses the importance of reacting to emerging problems during the entire development and implementation process (such as related to migrants and refugees) and that validation measures might need to be developed from a demand-led perspective and often very quickly within this framework.

Validation of learning acquired through open educational resources (OER)

Although there seems to be no clear strategy in relation to validation of learning undertaken by means of OER, some initiatives have been launched during recent years, in higher education and also more recently in adult education:

Some Austrian higher education institutions have introduced Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) initiatives some years ago. For example, in 2013, as a common project, the University of Graz³⁴ and the Graz University of Technology³⁵ established the first Austrian MOOC-platform iMooX.³⁶ For example, the MOOC 'Social Aspects of Information Technology', offered at this platform, "is a requirement for students in an Information and Computer Engineering programme. Registered students earn 2.5 ECTS for successful completion of an online multiple-choice test and an additional essential practical task" (Witthaus et al., 2016, p. 37). "The most consistent integration into a higher education programme with full recognition of MOOC-based learning for progression was found at the University of Salzburg, Austria. Students of the Computer Science programme could opt for MOOCs offered on the Udacity, Coursera and edX platforms (Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz, 2014) as alternatives to attending face-to-face lectures. Local lecturers selected and examined the respective set of MOOCs for their suitability. Feedback on assignments and the final examinations was provided by the local teachers" (Witthaus et al., 2016, p. 39).

In 2014, Universities Austria has published criteria and principles for MOOCs (Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz, 2014). In June 2016, the Federal Ministry of Science and Research launched the 'Open Education Austria' initiative that runs until December 2018³⁷. It is a project of Austrian universities for the joint development of a national infrastructure for open educational resources (OER).

In 2017, the first massive open online course (MOOC) was created by adult educators for adult educators in Austria:

³⁴ www.uni-graz.at

³⁵ www.tugraz.at

³⁶ www.imoox.at

³⁷ www.openeducation.at

Box 2.5 'EBmooc'³⁸

The 'EBmooc' is an online course for adult educators, where participants learn via short videos, written instructions and self-test quizzes that aim at developing digital competences. In this six-week course (total duration: 18 hours) teachers and trainers, consultants and education managers can acquire important basics and tools for digital adult education. After its first implementation in 2017, the MOOC was slightly adapted and relaunched as 'EBmooc 18' in Spring 2018.

If participants complete the course positively, they will receive a digital learning badge for each module or for the entire course. If they have completed all quizzes and completed the final survey, they can download a certificate of participation issued by Graz University of Technology.

The completion of the entire EBmooc is credited and recognised by the wba with 1 ECTS in the competence area 'Information Management' and by the Adult Education Initiative as proof of the fulfilment of the continuing education obligation for basic educators.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

Introduction

Several types of validation arrangements offered in Austria are closely linked to the labour market (some of them are also closely linked to CVET).³⁹ Only a few of these arrangements have a legal basis. Some of these arrangements aim at obtaining a non-formal qualification, certificates, or titles, whereas others are linked to various other aims (such as defining salary structures or supporting personnel development in companies). They are usually bottom-up and demand driven initiatives and are organised in a decentralised way. The following list presents examples of different types of validation arrangements before they are described in more detail below:

- proof of relevant occupational experience as part of entry requirements for regulated occupations - certificate of competence (trade) and master's certificate (craft),
- award of the engineer qualification (*Ingenieur*),
- proof of relevant occupational experience as part of collective agreements,
- certification of competences of individuals (personal certification),
- supporting company personnel development,
- supporting low-qualified people who are in the process of obtaining a qualification outside of the formal system,
- initiative focusing on identification and documentation as part of career guidance services (see Section 2.3.1 'Skills Audits').

Proof of relevant occupational experience as part of entry requirements for regulated occupation

Proof of relevant occupational experience is part of the entry requirements for a number of regulated occupations in Austria. In order to be admitted into a regulated trade⁴⁰, a relevant certificate of competence must be produced, which can be achieved through two routes, usually including opportunities for validation and recognition of competences gained through non-formal and informal learning:

³⁸ <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/ebmooc/>

³⁹ Based on Mayerl & Schlögel, 2015; and Luomi-Messerer, 2014a.

⁴⁰ These trades are regulated through the Gewerbeordnung¹⁵ (The Trade, Commerce and Industry Regulation Act) - www.gewerbeordnung.at

- Each of the regulated occupations has its own regulations governing the certificate of competence (trade) or the master's certificate (craft). The certificate of competence can normally be achieved by completing relevant vocational training, relevant practical training, as well as, if necessary, individual additional training or through a qualifying examination. The only admission criterion for the qualifying examination is that the candidate must be over 18 years of age. The examinations are conducted by the examination offices of the Chamber of Commerce. Since 2004, the examination for the certificate of competence and the master's certificate consists, with few exceptions, of five modules. The modular training system offers many opportunities for accreditation.
- Through an individual certificate of competence: In this case there is the possibility, using relevant evidence, to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and experiences required to carry out the trade. Assessment takes place by applying to the district administrative authorities. As a rule, the relevant evidence required takes the form of a portfolio (e.g. school reports, certificates, testimonials). If there is only evidence for part of the required skills, the authorities can restrict the performance of the relevant occupation to certain activities' (Mayerl & Schlögl, 2015, pp. 19-20).

For example, to be able to take the civil engineering examination (*Ziviltechnikerprüfung*)⁴¹, which is laid down in the Austrian Civil Engineers' Act (*Ziviltechnikergesetz*), candidates need to prove that they have a degree from a relevant study programme at a university or university of applied sciences plus three years' professional experience. To be able to take the specialist exam for certified financial accountants (*Bilanzbuchhalterprüfung*), which is outlined in the Austrian Financial Accounting Act (*Bilanzbuchhaltungsgesetz*), individuals need to prove at least three years of specialist activity in the field of accounting. Credits can be obtained for previous qualifications.

Award of the engineer qualification (*Ingenieur*)⁴²

The new Engineering Act (IngG 2017) came into force on 1 May 2017. Graduates of VET colleges of engineering (*HTL*) or of VET colleges in the agricultural and forestry/environmental sector (*HBLA*) who have a minimum of three years of professional experience - in activities typically carried out by such VET college graduates - can now apply for certification according to IngG 2017 in order to obtain the formal qualification 'Ingenieur' that is allocated to NQF/EQF level 6. The applicant is required to submit an application with the necessary documents to the competent certification body. The certification body examines the documents and submits them for a positive assessment to two experts. The certification body then organises an expert discussion of up to 45 minutes duration, during which the applicant has to specify the additional knowledge, skills and competences acquired in practice. The experts assess whether this meets the criteria of the engineer qualification standard.⁴³

Collective Agreements

Some collective agreements include regulations for the recognition of informally gained competences, e.g. by defining salary structures based on the recognition of an individual's competence gained through professional experience (e.g. the collective agreement for workers in the non-university-based research sector). Although this form of recognition does not lead to any kind of certification, it does

⁴¹ Civil engineers carry out the planning, consultancy and preparation of expert opinions for specific specialist areas (such as construction and surveying, geology, etc.).

⁴² <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/Ingenieurwesen/Seiten/default.aspx>;
<https://www.bmnt.gv.at/land/land-bbf/bildung-agrar-schulen/ingenieurtitel.html>

⁴³ <https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/public/qualification/43>

mean that for employers, legally binding regulations on the basis of concrete work profiles can be created in respect of better remuneration. However, it is conceivable that in the future it will be possible to make greater use of the collective agreement grading as 'evidence of competence' for possible recognition through portfolio procedures (Mayerl & Schlögl, 2015, 21).

Certification of competences of individuals (personal certification)

In most cases, these certificates are valid for a limited period and must therefore be regularly renewed through re-certification. A distinction can be made between certifications with and without a legal base (Mayerl & Schlögl, 2015, p. 26):

- With legal base: Standardised certificates are in many cases issued based on the standard ÖNORM EN ISO/IEC 17024. This standard describes the general requirements for certifying organisations which have to be accredited by 'Akkreditierung Austria'⁴⁴ in order to have the right to issue personal certificates. Competences of individuals are certified based on examinations and for the admission to exams, candidates need to provide evidence of relevant competences (acquired in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts). Personal certification is offered in various fields and plays a particularly important role for welders and quality management personnel.
- Without legal base: There is also a range of additional market-based certification, particularly in the areas of information technology (e.g. CISCO, Microsoft), languages (e.g. TOIFL certificates) and project management (IPMA). An example from the sector of general education is presented in the box below.

Box 2.6 'EBIS-certified school development consultant'⁴⁵

'SQA - School Quality in General Education' ('SQA – Schulqualität Allgemeinbildung') is the system of the Federal Ministry of Education for pedagogical quality development and quality assurance in general education. The broad range of support measures for the implementation of SQA at each individual school also includes the 'EBIS - Development consulting in schools' initiative ('EBIS - Entwicklungsberatung in Schulen'). The aim of EBIS is to ensure and further develop the quality of external support and advice for schools in their development processes. Those who want to be involved in EBIS need to be included in the database of EBIS-certified school development consultants. Twice a year, qualified consultants for school and teaching development can apply for inclusion in this database. The requirements for inclusion include completed professional training and at least 3 years of professional experience, proof of the required competences according to the EBIS-Competency Profile⁴⁶ and proof of relevant consulting experience during the past three years. The certification procedure comprises the following steps:

- Step A: Applicants submit the application for admission to the ministry (providing evidence in a kind of portfolio);
- Step B: The EBIS-team in the ministry formally checks the application (for completeness of the documents);
- Step C: A committee meets twice a year, makes recommendations for admission;
- Step D: Ministry officials declare acceptance (possibly with conditions);
- Step E: Accreditation by the ministry and inclusion in the database of EBIS-certified school development consultants.

The certification is valid for four years and application for re-certification is possible.

⁴⁴ <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/TechnikUndVermessung/Akkreditierung/Seiten/AkkreditierungsstellePIZ.aspx>

⁴⁵ <http://www.sqa.at/course/index.php?categoryid=27>

⁴⁶ <http://www.sqa.at/pluginfile.php/976/course/section/446/EBIS.pdf>

Supporting company personnel development

In Austria, some companies have procedures in place for identifying and documenting competences of their employees as part of personnel development and planning. In some cases, certificates are also issued. For example, Xerox and REWE use internal databases for documenting further education and training courses attended by their staff members. Additionally, Xerox has created a database that can be used by their employees themselves for documenting their competences. REWE issues certificates for successful participation in in-company training offers. To achieve a certificate, competences acquired in other contexts (non-formal or informal) can be recognised.⁴⁷

Supporting low-qualified people in obtaining a qualification from outside the formal system

There are some initiatives that aim to support low-qualified people to obtain a qualification which is not part of the formal system but can be achieved based on validation. An example is presented in the box below.

Box 2.7 'Expanding competences based on competence identification' (KOMKOM⁴⁸)

The target group of this initiative includes formally low-skilled and therefore educationally disadvantaged adults employed in PES-supported, temporary jobs in social enterprises.

The development of a competence assessment procedure for recording non-formally and informally acquired competences for transit workers in social enterprises and the development of proposals for linking the procedure to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) at the two lower levels was financed by the Ministry of Education, and co-financed by the University of Klagenfurt (2012-2015).⁴⁹

In the first phase, a set of learning outcomes and assessment indicators were defined for an 'initial technical qualification' (*Technisch-handwerkliche Grundqualifikation*)⁵⁰. These learning outcomes are related to professional and methodical competences, social and communicative competences and personal competences.

In the second phase, the instrument was tested and learning outcomes for an 'initial technical qualification' were defined related to NQF level 2 with a particular focus on compatibility and connectivity with training programmes belonging to the formal system. Furthermore, specific software was developed for facilitating a structured identification and recording of competences. A tool for self-evaluation (in 'easy language') that can be used with tablets was also developed.

KOMKOM received the VITA AWARD 2015 for its innovative approach for the validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences⁵¹ and since February 2017, KOMKOM is used by a social integration enterprise (*soziales Integrationsunternehmen*) in the province of Lower Austria.

⁴⁷ Luomi-Messerer, 2014a.

⁴⁸ *Kompetenzerweiterung durch Kompetenzerfassung*; cf. <http://www.bmkz.org/komkom/index.html>; Bock, 2013; Kastner & Bock, 2014; Kastner, 2016; 2018.

⁴⁹ This national project built on the experiences gained in the EU-funded project 'NQF Inclusive - Accreditation and Certification of basic vocational education for disadvantaged people through NQF' - <http://www.nqfinclusive.org/>.

⁵⁰ Cf. http://www.komkom.at/download/Technisch-handwerkliche_Grundqualifikation-levelneutral_NUR-LL_v5_ohneScores.pdf

⁵¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/content/la-vita-e-bella>

2.3.2 Skills audits

In Austria, the term 'skills audit' is not systematically used. However, there are several initiatives that can be linked to skills audits as defined in the 2012 Council Recommendation on Validation of informal and non-formal learning. The terms used include, for example: competence balance, formative validation approach, competence profiling, competence audit, competence check, potential analysis.

'Formative validation' approaches, as defined by the national validation strategy, conceptually also include skills audits (however, they are not specifically mentioned in the strategy – the term 'competence balance' is used). They result in competence descriptions (e.g. in the form of a portfolio). The potential benefits for participants include the opportunity to proceed in the validation process and to access summative validation measures, to use the documentation on the labour market (for career re-orientation, in job applications, to gain employment or for further professional development) or for further education and training (e.g. for planning further training, to gain access to further education and training offers - including professional/in-company training).

Due to the current fragmented landscape in this area in Austria, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive picture of 'skills audit' initiatives.

The main types of beneficiaries of skills audits in Austria include low-qualified people, people in the process of changing their careers or who want to gain a clearer picture about their competences to plan further education and training, (young) people in transition to the labour market, migrants and people admitted as asylum seekers.

There are also some initiatives specifically targeted towards migrants and refugees. In particular the high number of refugees that came to Austria in 2015 brought about an urgent need to understand their qualifications and competences in order to support their integration into the labour market as well as into society. To this end, the Austrian Public Employment Service (PES) Vienna, for example, carried out a pilot project for people admitted as asylum seekers between August and December 2015, called 'competence checks' which included elements of validation of informally acquired competences (see Section 9.4.3 for more information about this initiative and other initiatives specifically targeted to migrants and refugees).

The key objectives and purposes of skills audits are raising awareness about one's own competences to support personal development / empowerment and career decisions, supporting job applications, motivating people to participate in further education and training and identifying fitting pathways, providing access to validation measures for obtaining qualifications (up-skilling). Thus, they are in some cases (but not in all) part of a three-step process (i.e. Step 1, skills assessment / audit; Step 2, learning offer; Step 3, validation and recognition), as described in the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation.

Skills audits seem to be most prevalent in measures offered by PES, in the context of career planning/guidance, in adult education and services offered to migrants and people admitted as asylum seekers. Furthermore, in many cases initiatives are offered in cooperation between partners (e.g. coordinated or financed by PES but implemented by adult education centres or further education and training providers - private organisations or training providers of the social partners). Skills audits are not offered systematically and individuals might have to pay for these procedures (however, in some cases funding is available).

Skills audits are often carried out in guided sessions, sometimes organised as workshops. They often include self-assessment as well as assessment by a counsellor/assessment by a third person. Some of the procedures developed in the

Austrian Adult Education sector build on established methods, such as the Swiss Qualifications Handbook (CH-Q) System of Managing Competencies'; others have developed their own methods. Depending on the specific initiative, different types of skills can be covered and different methodologies are used (e.g. portfolio development, conversations and demonstrations). There are no common standards across sectors and also the format of documenting the outcomes of skills audit differs across initiatives. In several cases, portfolios or competence profiles are developed.

The outcomes of skills audits are not linked to any entitlements. In most cases they are used for providing orientation on future career or learning pathways; in some cases, the documentation can be used in job applications.

Some examples of relevant initiatives are presented below.

Initiatives offered by PES:

- PES Austria offers the '*Berufskompass zur Neuorientierung*'⁵² ('career compass for re-orientation'), an online self-assessment tool to support people who are interested in changing their career pathway. It is accessible for free and takes about 30 minutes. The compass combines the profile drawn up on the basis of the interests, training and professional experience of the person with the requirement profiles of occupations and draws up a list of proposals for professional change on this basis.
- Competence checks as part of career guidance ('*Kompetenzfeststellung im Rahmen der Berufsorientierung*') are offered to clients of PES also as part of courses (organised by partners of PES) aiming at supporting career orientation and preparing for up-skilling.⁵³
- Together with partners, PES offer an opportunity to obtain an apprentice qualification based on training modules organised as building blocks as preparation for the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship exam (see Section 2.2). The initiative 'Competence with System' ('*Kompetenz mit System*')⁵⁴ starts with a clearing phase which can be considered close to a skills audit.

Initiatives offered by the '*waff - Beratungszentrum für Beruf und Weiterbildung*' ('Vienna Employment Promotion Fund - counselling centre for jobs and further education')⁵⁵

In Vienna, the *waff* offers several initiatives related to skills audits, often in cooperation with PES or other partners. The main clients of the *waff* are people in employment. Examples include:

- *Waff-competence balance/audits* ('*waff-Kompetenzbilanz*'⁵⁶): A competence audit is understood as a resource-oriented coaching process for identifying and systematically documenting learning outcomes gained in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. It is offered to people with low qualifications as well as for individuals who are not able to benefit from their qualifications in Vienna because they have been obtained outside of Austria. This skills audit initiative is

⁵² <http://berufskompass.at/neuorientierung/>

⁵³ http://www.ams.at/docs/900_ams_wien_kurskatalog.pdf

⁵⁴ Hausegger, 2014; Weber et al, 2011; <http://www.ams.at/service-arbeitsuchende/angebote-frauen/kompetenz-system>

⁵⁵ <https://www.waff.at/beruf-weiterbildung/>

⁵⁶ waff, n.d.

based on the competence model developed by John Erpenbeck and Lutz von Rosenstiel and is part of a coaching process.

- 'Qualification Passport Vienna' ('*Qualifikationspass Wien*'): This initiative is offered in cooperation with the PES and is linked to alternative pathways for obtaining apprenticeship qualifications (as part of the 'Vienna Qualification Plan' which is a comprehensive, joint strategy for reducing the percentage of people with a low formal education in Vienna and which was extended until 2030 in March 2018⁵⁷):

Box 2.8 Qualification Passport Vienna⁵⁸

The Qualification Passport facilitates the systematic identification of qualifications and competences and the documentation of education and training completed, courses attended or certificates received as well as competences obtained through learning in non-formal as well as informal contexts. It supports and accompanies Viennese people who have only completed compulsory schooling step by step until they have obtained a qualification, such as an apprenticeship diploma.

It is a voluntary offer and is created as a personal document for unemployed persons by the vocational information centres of the PES Vienna and for employed persons by the waff counselling centre for jobs and further education. The document, which is supported by a special database, records which competences the person concerned already has, what the specific training objective is, which qualification steps have already been taken in this direction and which are still open. In the event of a job loss, the PES will continue to support employees in all outstanding training steps.

Since its introduction in November 2015, waff and PES Vienna have already issued around 5 000 'Qualification Passports Vienna'. In 2016, a 'Qualification Passport Vienna' was created for 1 294 people (90% have migration background). Since the beginning of 2017, the adult education centres as well as the further education training providers of the social partners (BFI and wifl) can also offer the creation of a qualification passport to their clients.

The Qualification Passport Vienna is considered as an example of good practice of inter-institutional cooperation (waff, 2016).

Initiatives offered by Adult Education Centres⁵⁹

Various skills audit initiatives are offered by adult education centres, often in cooperation with PES or other partners. Examples include:

- *Kompetenzanerkennungszentrum (KOMPAZ) der Volkshochschule-Stadtbibliothek Linz / Kompetenzprofil - Volkshochschule Linz* (competence profile offered at the Adult Education Centre Linz)

Box 2.9 Competence profile - KOMPAZ⁶⁰

The centre for the recognition of competences at the Adult Education Centre Linz (*Volkshochschule Linz*) was founded in 2004 (funding organisations are the city of Linz and the Chamber of Labour Upper Austria). The centre offers workshops for identifying non-formally and informally acquired competences (from all areas of life and work). The Swiss Qualifications Handbook (CH-Q) System of Managing Competencies is used for methodological orientation (Bisovsky, 2017a). The results of competence identification are

⁵⁷ <https://www.wien.gv.at/arbeit-wirtschaft/qualifikationsplan.html>

⁵⁸ <https://www.wien.gv.at/arbeit/waff/qualifikationspass.html>; AMS & waff, 2018.

⁵⁹ Austrian adult education centers are largely self-financing (60%) and only partly publicly funded.

⁶⁰ <http://www.kompetenzprofil.at/>

compiled using a competence profile created through the portfolio method (cf. Schildberger, 2010; Reumann, 2012).

The competence profile contains information about an individual's core competencies. This is achieved by means of three workshops guided by two trained coaches, an individual's work at home inbetween these workshops and a concluding discussion to address any unresolved issues and open questions. In these three steps, a portfolio is created that contains information on the following issues:

- Career progression - this shows all of the steps taken in the formal education and training system as well as the steps that have led to the acquisition of skills and competencies through non-formal and informal learning.
- Analysis of potential - this is an analysis of individual tasks and activities that an individual has carried out in different roles and stages of their life in view of the skills and competencies used, or gained, to complete them. Individuals also carry out a self-assessment of their competencies.
- Personal profile - the abilities highlighted in the stages above are reduced to core competencies. The individual chooses which competencies to select.

Once the portfolio is complete, coaches are responsible for highlighting the individual's core competencies and for assessing the extent to which the indicators that have been set to define social and communication competencies can be found in an individual's competence portfolio.

The portfolio method is complemented with an assessment centre where a group of people who have completed the work on the competence portfolio undergo a number of tests, including psychometric tests, mock job interviews, group discussions, role-plays, case studies, and other tasks. Several observers assess the behaviour of the participants against six dimensions of social competence, which are ability to work with others, teamwork, ability to reflect, ability to resolve conflicts, self-awareness, and communication skills.

Since 2007, the CH-Q model for competence management is also offered by the Adult Education Centre of Burgenland (VHS Burgenland). This initiative is called '*Wissen, was ich kann – 'Knowing what I am capable of'*⁶¹.

- *Validation of non-formal and informal learning by the Frauenstiftung Steyr* (Women's Foundation Steyr)⁶²: This institution offers counselling and training courses for women in the Steyr region that links the wishes and abilities of women with the regional labour market. To this end, informally and non-formally acquired competences of women are identified and documented with a validation procedure (including the development of an individual competence profile based on competence balancing methods using ProfilPASS⁶³ and potential analysis). To ensure the quality of the validation procedure, *Frauenstiftung Steyr* implemented a transnational peer review procedure in 2017⁶⁴ in addition to Ö-Cert (a quality label that is attuned to adult education providers and is developed and recognised nationwide in Austria)⁶⁵, *Frauenstiftung Steyr* was awarded the Austrian State Prize for Adult Education 2017 in the category 'quality development'.⁶⁶

⁶¹ <http://www.vhs-burgenland.at/home/Kompetenzfeststellung.html>

⁶² <http://www.frauenstiftung.at/de/beratung/fbz---frauenberufszentrum.php>; fbz FrauenBerufsZentrum, n.d.

⁶³ <http://www.profilpass.de/>

⁶⁴ Within the framework of the EU project 'Transnational Peer Review in Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) Extended' (2016-2018): <http://www.peer-review-network.eu/pages/peer-review-vnfil-extended.php>

⁶⁵ <https://oe-cert.at/>

⁶⁶ https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten_details.php?nid=11852

- ‘*KombO* - the competence portrait for professional orientation’ (‘*Kompetenzportrait für die berufliche Orientierung*’): *KombO* was developed by the bfi (CVET provider) in Upper Austria and the Johannes Kepler University Linz as a method for the qualitative representation of competences. It is based on information collected, analysed and qualitatively-descriptively evaluated in the context of a biographical-narrative conversation. An essential goal of this method is the recording of existing informally acquired competences. Due to the low-threshold access, *KombO* can be used both for disadvantaged people as well as for high potentials (Bfi OÖ, n.d.)
- ‘*WIK:I (Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen)* - What I can do based on informal learning) offered by the Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke (platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations)⁶⁷ (youth initiative, see Section 2.4);
- ‘*STARTwien das jugendcollege*’ (‘StartVienna – youth college’) (initiative for refugees) offered at the Adult Education Centre Vienna: The programme starts with a clearing phase, where existing skills and competences are recognised and the level of education is determined. Based on this information, an individual ‘educational plan’ is developed.⁶⁸
- ‘*Du kannst was!*’ (‘You can do it!’ or ‘You have skills!’): This initiative offered by the *Firmenausbildungsverbund OÖ* (corporate training alliance in Upper Austria) and the project partner *VHS Linz* (Adult Education Centre Linz)⁶⁹ (see Section 2.2) includes workshops for guided self-evaluation, identification and assessment of competences as well as the development of a training plan.
- The initiative ‘*Kompetenz+Beratung*’ (Competence+Counselling) was developed by the Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke (platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations) and this format is offered all over Austria⁷⁰:

Box 2.10 ‘Kompetenz+Beratung’⁷¹

The initiative was developed in the context of the project network ‘*Bildungsberatung Österreich*’ (educational counselling/guidance Austria) (financed by the ESF and the Ministry of Education). It is offered nationwide by different organisations since 2012 (for free).

‘*Kompetenz+Beratung*’ includes the identification and documentation of competences in a workshop and face-to-face counselling. It comprises the following four phases: (1) information meeting, (2) workshop, (3) individual work and (4) final individual consultation. It is about identifying biographically important learning fields and activities, exploring the competences acquired and planning steps for the further development of competences (from activities to competences and to future activities). The final result is a competence protocol and an action plan.

The Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke offers ongoing training courses for educational and vocational counsellors and since 2012, more than 100 guidance practitioners have been qualified in so called ‘KB courses’.⁷² Guidelines for providing this type of guidance were published in 2014 (Brandstetter & Kellner, 2014).

⁶⁷ <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/15/kompetenzportfolio-fuer-jugendliche-wiki>

⁶⁸ <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/ankommen/start-wien-fluechtlinge/jugendcollege.html>

⁶⁹ <http://www.dukannstwas.at/>

⁷⁰ <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/14/bildungsberatung-kompetenzberatung>; Gugitscher et al., 2018.

⁷¹ <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/14/bildungsberatung-kompetenzberatung>; Gugitscher et al., 2018.

⁷² <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/14/bildungsberatung-kompetenzberatung>

Initiatives offered by higher education institutions

Some higher education institutions offer skills audits or competence portfolio approaches to support transition to the labour market. Examples include:

- *'Kompetenzportfolio der Akademie für Neue Medien und Wissenstransfer der Universität Graz'* (Competence portfolio of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer at the University of Graz)⁷³: this competence portfolio enables the systematic recording of one's own competences. The participants reflect intensively on their personal biography and record and analyse (formally and/or informally) acquired competences. These are recorded and documented in a portfolio. The completed portfolio serves as support for self-reflection and can be used as presentation material for job applications, for example.
- *'Potentialfindung und Kompetenzanalyse'* (potential identification and competence analyses) - UNIPORT, Karriereservice der Universität Wien (career service at the University of Vienna)⁷⁴: The service offers a joint reflection and exercises to gain an overview of one's own technical and interdisciplinary competences, strengths and talents.

Initiatives offered in the private sector

Skills audits (such as analysis of one's potential) are sometimes offered by freelance guidance practitioners or coaches but the main players are further education and training institutions, including those run by the social partner organisations. As mentioned above, they often cooperate with PES or adult education centres. Some measures are offered for specific target groups, such as migrants or people with disabilities (as presented in Section 9.4.3). Another example is presented below:

- *'Potenzialanalyse'* (Potential analysis) offered at *Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut, WIFI* (Economic Promotion Institute of the Economic Chambers)⁷⁵: 'Potential analysis' is offered in the framework of the initiative 'Counselling and guidance for career and enterprises'. The three steps of the analysis include:
 - an initial consultation meeting (45 to 60 minutes) analyses the actual life situation and personal circumstances, and interests, experiences as well as professional success and plans are addressed;
 - a testing procedure (four to five hours) aims to identify strengths and areas for development;
 - a subsequent appraisal session (60 to 90 minutes) is dedicated to a process of reflection, taking account of results, as well as identifying concrete training measures.

2.4 Validation and the third sector

Introduction

The third sector is actively involved in developing and implementing the national validation strategy as well as the strategy for including qualifications obtained in non-formal or informal learning contexts into the future NQF. There are some validation initiatives in this area (e.g. youth and volunteering) and also some initiatives for developing a more coherent approach. In most cases these validation initiatives are not connected to the formal system and there are only very few opportunities for recognising competences gained in this sector in formal education programmes (e.g. in some cases, youth work or volunteering activities might be considered as

⁷³ <http://portfolio.uni-graz.at/doku.php>

⁷⁴ <https://www.uniport.at/site/karriereberatunginfo/karriereberatung/article/7.html>

⁷⁵ <http://www.wifiwien.at/Default.aspx/Kurse/@/menuid/2152/>

equivalent to required practical periods or internships). There is also no clear evidence to what extent validation results are valued within the labour market.

Youth sector

In the youth sector, some activities regarding formalisation of competences gained and developing a link to the (formal) qualifications system can be observed. The Austrian Youth Strategy (BMWfJ 2013, pp. 53-55) suggests the implementation of a competence balance procedure for the documentation and recognition of informally acquired basic skills and key competences of young people. This approach should facilitate self-evaluation regarding knowledge and competences, personal development, and planning of education and training. Developments started in autumn 2012 and the role-out of the initiative called *WIK:I*⁷⁶ started in 2015.

Box 2.11 'What I can do through informal learning' - *WIK:I*⁷⁷

In the youth sector (initiated by the ministry responsible for youth), a new approach was developed in 2012/2013 for documenting and recognising informally gained competences of young people. It was piloted in the second half of 2013 and is offered nationwide since 2015: the *WIK:I* ('*Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen*') competence portfolio. It is a personal document that is developed in a guided process by collecting and analysing personally significant activities (activities from daily life, such as family life or hobbies, voluntary activities or extra-curricular activities – 'what I do') and by identifying and describing competences gained in these activities ('what I can do'). The description of skills is always linked to specific activities ('I can do this because ...'). The *WIK:I* competence portfolio is usually developed in two half-day workshops with eight to twelve participants and two workshop leaders or portfolio tutors. The *WIK:I* method is a guided self-assessment tool for young people. The *WIK:I* competence portfolio for young people is a portfolio with various documents and material (such as checklists, questionnaires, posters etc.) developed in workshops and in self-directed work. The three main results include:

- the competence profile (documentation of competences identified);
- the action plan or list of measures to be taken (documentation of next steps, resources and support needed, time schedule);
- the competence certificate that can be used for job applications.

Based on the competence portfolio, an individual *WIK:I* competence certificate can be issued. The competence certificate is developed together with (and also signed by) a portfolio tutor and is a shortened version of the competence portfolio that can be used for specific job applications. The main aim of this initiative is to support the self-reflection process of young people, to enhance their ability to describe their competences and to explain how they have acquired them.

Another initiative targeted on young people and aiming at making their technical and general knowledge visible is supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research: the PLAYMIT initiative focuses on 'education for practice'.⁷⁸ PLAYMIT.com is a learning and quiz platform with high-quality practical content coordinated with the economy. Young people are motivated to deal with practice-oriented contents. Users, especially pupils and job seekers (e.g. those looking for apprenticeship places, graduates looking for jobs) can develop a PLAYMIT certificate by answering approx. 1,000 educational questions and attach it to their application. Several enterprises

⁷⁶ BMWfJ & Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke 2013.

⁷⁷ <https://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/beschaefigung-bildung/wiki.html>

⁷⁸ www.playmit.com; <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/schule40/playmit.html>

consider this as a sign of their commitment and support this initiative. PLAYMIT is free of charge and also available as a free mobile phone version.

The initiative *aufZAQ*⁷⁹ is a quality assurance initiative for training provision in the youth area in Austria and South Tyrol. Since 2003, it provides certification for training courses in the area of youth work (non-formal learning). A certification process for individuals who are active in youth work is also under discussion and a competence framework for youth workers was issued in 2018.⁸⁰ This competence framework describes competence areas of youth workers and leaders in a coherent way. It is considered to be compatible with the Austrian NQF and should enhance the visibility and comparability of the competences gained as well as of the respective qualifications. In general, the competence framework and all its content can be used as a resource for new and further development of courses and other educational offerings. In addition, the content can be adapted and used for the creation of job descriptions, job profiles, job advertisements, tools for self-assessment of one's own competencies and evaluation tools in application procedures.

Some youth organisations (such as the 'Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Austria' / *PPÖ*, the 'Catholic Youth Organisation Austria' (KJ, 2017), or the 'Austrian Alpine Club's youth organization') have already developed competence-based descriptions of their courses. In the future, it might be possible to use these competence descriptions in validation processes. The *PPÖ*'s new training programmes, for example, are competence-oriented and modular and prior learning is recognised, i.e. if one already has acquired competences within the scope of training, in the job or also with the scouts, these will be credited to them.⁸¹

In some cases, the competences gained in youth work or in non-formal training courses offered in this context are validated and recognised in other education and training programmes. However, this is currently only done to a limited extent and only on individual basis.

There are some initiatives that aim at enhancing visibility of young volunteers:

- Since 2010, the Provincial Youth Department in Styria has issued the certificate *EHREN.WERT.VOLL* (Worth. To be. Cherished)⁸² for making competences visible that have been acquired in voluntary activities in children and youth work. This certificate shows the competences acquired in child and youth work and is particularly suitable for submission to potential employers. Prerequisites for receiving this certificate include: 150 hours of volunteer work and 30 hours of training related to volunteering. These must be confirmed by the organisation. The certificate is issued by the Province of Styria and personally signed by the responsible Youth Council.
- *aha plus*⁸³ is a project of the aha-Youth Information Centre Vorarlberg on behalf of the Office for Future Affairs in cooperation with the Youth & Family Department of the Vorarlberg State Government (co-financed by Erasmus+). *aha plus* is a recognition system for young people who are engaged in volunteering activities. 12 to 24-year-olds who contribute beyond their normal membership in an

⁷⁹ The office of *aufZAQ* is based in the office of the Austrian National Youth Council. Cf. www.aufzaq.at. The initiative is provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Families and Youth, the Youth Departments of the Federal States of Austria and the Youth Work Department of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano – South Tyrol.

⁸⁰ <http://www.kompetenzrahmen.at>

⁸¹ <https://ppoe.at/ausbildung/jugendleiterinnenausbildung/gesamtueberblick/>

⁸² <http://www.jugendreferat.steiermark.at/cms/beitrag/12026354/108648752/>

⁸³ <https://www.aha.or.at/plus>

association, organisation, initiative or community can collect '*aha plus* points' for their commitment, which in turn can be redeemed for 'rewards'. Such 'rewards' include, for example, specific experiences (e.g. job shadowing in a company, training with sports professionals) or useful products (e.g. event tickets). In addition, their voluntary commitment and the experience they have gained with *aha plus* are documented.⁸⁴

- The 'proof of voluntary activities' ('*Nachweis über freiwillige Tätigkeiten*') offered by the Ministry of Social Affairs (see description further below) is also used in this area. Several persons from children and youth organisations were trained to support the use of this document.

Furthermore, participants of projects funded by Erasmus+ Youth in Action and Youth in Action programmes can use the *Youthpass*.⁸⁵ The Youthpass is a European recognition tool for non-formal and informal learning in youth work. Participants of these projects can describe what they have done and show what they have learnt. The certificate is based on the eight European key competences for lifelong learning. The Youthpass can only be issued to participants in projects within this EU programme and it is only used to a very limited extent to support validation initiatives (cf. Tanzer, 2011). However, the report on the interim evaluation of the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme in Austria (BMB, 2017) suggests that the Youthpass has an important role in the area of recognition of non-formal and informal learning: 73% of the project leaders state that in their project Youthpass was used. Of these, 76% stated that Youthpass was largely integrated into the project and 85% that the participants received a Youthpass. According to information of the participants who received a Youthpass within the project, 61% took part in a reflection or self-assessment session, 70% of which states that this has helped to raise awareness of their learning (BMB, 2017, p. 33). The report recommends to extend the use of the Youthpass and to communicate its benefits more strongly. Furthermore, it is recommended that a study on the longer-term effects of the Youthpass on the labour market should be conducted as well as an evaluation of employers' interest in the Youthpass (BMB, 2017, p. 13).

Volunteering

There is some interest in describing learning outcomes for selected courses in the context of volunteering (emergency rescue service and fire brigade) (Löffler, 2012) in order to make them compatible with the Austrian NQF (see Section 3). The expert group on lifelong learning (ExpertInnengruppe Lebenslanges Lernen, 2015, p. 39) confirmed that the focus should be on the following aims:

- to make visible the engagement in volunteering activities as part of lifelong learning and as an area of adult learning and out-of-school youth education;
- to ensure comparability of education and training programmes offered in the area of volunteering with the NQF;
- to ensure and enhance opportunities for validating competences gained in voluntary work in accordance with the Austrian validation strategy;
- to integrate competence development as a core concept into guidance, coordination, and management of volunteers

Some third sector institutions have also developed approaches for validating competences gained in *voluntary* activities. Some examples that are considered good practice in Austria include:

⁸⁴ A similar approach is taken by bre!ak ('Bregenz aktiv!') - <http://break.bregenz.at>.

⁸⁵ www.jugendinaktion.at/youthpass

- 'Proof of voluntary activities' ('*Nachweis über freiwillige Tätigkeiten*'): This document was introduced in 2005 by the Ministry of Social Affairs as a certification of competences and qualifications obtained through volunteering. It documents the personal development process and can be used as a supplementary document in job applications. It was further developed in recent years and is now based on the 'Kompetenz+Beratung' concept (see Section 2.3).⁸⁶
- 'Competence portfolio for volunteers of a platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations' ('*Kompetenzportfolio für Freiwillige des Rings Österreichischer Bildungswerke*') to systematically document skills and competences acquired by volunteers.⁸⁷
- 'Life experience seeks opportunities for engagement' ('*Lebenserfahrung sucht Engagement*') – workshop for elderly people:

Box 2.12 'Life experience seeks opportunities for engagement'⁸⁸

The format of the workshops was developed in an EU project⁸⁹. The focus of the workshops is on matching competences of elderly people (50+) with concrete possibilities for volunteering activities. The main parts of the two-day interactive workshop are:

- To create an individual skills profile from past experience and learning (based on a review of participants' employment, life experiences, interests and qualification): the skills profile is considered a useful tool to raise self-esteem and a good starting point for volunteering. It helps participants to get to know their own strengths and recognise their value.
- To create a personal action plan based on identifying and giving priority to areas of new interest: participants get acquainted with different areas and organisations offering opportunities for engagement. They are supported to select activities for volunteering work that best fit their individual skills profile and interests. This will be documented in the personal action plan.

The platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations, which was involved in developing the concept, offers courses for conducting such workshops for experienced volunteers or full-time volunteers.

Other areas where validation procedures are offered

In October 2013, a new regulation for civilian service⁹⁰ was put into force. According to this regulation, a 'standardised competence balance' has to be issued at the end of a completed civilian service.⁹¹ This is supported by the development of a common document and guidelines for completing it.⁹² This document is composed of three sections for recording any training programmes attended during the civilian service, practical activities carried out and knowledge, skills and competences gained. This standardised documentation should facilitate the recognition of competences gained during civilian service and the crediting within the scope of further training.

⁸⁶ <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/de/freiwilliges-engagement/freiwilligennachweis;>
https://www.sozialministerium.at/site/Service_Medien/News_Veranstaltungen/News/Neuer_Nachweis_ueber_freiwillige_Taetigkeiten

⁸⁷ www.kompetenz-portfolio.at; Kellner, 2009; ExpertInnengruppe Lebenslanges Lernen, 2015; Löffler, 2015, p. 108.

⁸⁸ <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/13/kompetenz-workshop-fuer-aeltere-menschen-slic>

⁸⁹ <https://slic-project.eu/>

⁹⁰ In Austria, male Austrian citizens are subject to compulsory military service. Civil service is a military alternative service and lasts 9 months.

⁹¹ Zivildienst-Kompetenzbilanz-Verordnung 2013.

⁹² The document and the guidelines are available here:

http://www.zivildienst.gv.at/403/files/KompetenzbilanzAnlage_2013_10_01_Ausfuellhilfe.pdf

3 Links to national qualification systems

The Austrian national qualifications framework (NQF)

The Austrian NQF is structured in eight reference levels, like the EQF. A mapping to a level of the NQF corresponds to a reference to the equivalent EQF level. The description and allocation of qualifications to the eight NQF qualification levels is based on learning outcomes.

The development of the NQF started in 2007 and in 2012, it was referenced to the EQF (BMUKK & BMWF, 2011). However, only so called 'reference qualifications' and 'Bologna qualifications' were included in the framework and linked to the EQF. In early 2016, a highly important milestone had been reached: a legal base for the NQF was adopted by the Austrian parliament⁹³ and the NQF Act came into force in March 2016.⁹⁴ The legal basis paved the way for further developments (e.g. for the inclusion of qualifications into the NQF). Allocating qualifications to NQF levels (this process is called 'mapping of qualifications' in the Austrian NQF context) is not compulsory; it is done on voluntary basis.

The Austrian NQF primarily seeks to map all national qualifications and present them in relation to each other. In the long term, the NQF should encompass all forms of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) and all sectors of education (including general education, higher education, adult education, further education, and VET). The main objectives include supporting lifelong learning and enabling stronger links between the adult learning sector and the formal education and training system as well as recognising a broader range of learning forms (including non-formal and informal learning). As of May 2018, only a few qualifications are included in the NQF (these are VET qualifications at EQF/NQF levels 4, 5 and 6).⁹⁵

The Austrian NQF distinguishes between formal qualifications (which have a legal basis) and non-formal qualifications (without a legal basis). The levelling of formal qualifications started in 2017⁹⁶. A procedure for mapping non-formal qualifications is currently being developed.⁹⁷ NQF service centres will be established to support and advise providers of non-formal qualifications in submitting requests for allocation. The NQF service centres operate on the initiative of qualification providers and in the non-formal field, only they can submit a request for allocation (provided that they are based on learning outcomes which are assessed and validated by a competent authority). According to current plans, NQF service centres will be selected and authorised by the Ministry of Education based on a transparent procedure (NKS, 2016, p. 17) in 2018.

In the long term, it should be possible to acquire all qualifications mapped to the NQF through validation of non-formal and informal learning. The basic prerequisite for this is learning outcome-based quality assurance and the further development of validation methods and procedures. Thus, the NQF and the Austrian validation strategy are closely linked and based on common objectives.

Tangible outcomes that can be achieved through the validation of non-formal and informal learning

⁹³ https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/II_00999/index.shtml

⁹⁴ https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2016/PK0148/

⁹⁵ See: <https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/public/extendedSearch>

⁹⁶ According to the NQF Act, qualifications / qualification types included in the NQF are to be published in the NQF Register (*NQR Register*): <https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/public/NQR-Zuordnungen#>

⁹⁷ Throughout 2013, criteria and procedures for allocating qualifications from the non-formal learning context (adult education) to the Austrian NQF have already been tested and simulated (Löffler & Lachmayr, 2014).

See Section 2.2.

Credit arrangements

Austria currently does not have an explicit national credit transfer system. However, there are credit arrangements in the form of regulations governing the crediting of learning outcomes if learners change between training institutions and/or training levels. Most of these regulations refer to the crediting of learning periods and are based on a comparison of curricula or training plans (Tritscher-Archan & Nowak, 2011, 16). European credit transfer systems are only partly being implemented in Austria. The higher education sector has implemented the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) according to the Bologna process. The European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) has not yet been fully implemented. ECVET is currently mainly used as an instrument to support transnational mobility stays/placements. The ECVET strategy launched in 2014 (BMBF, 2014) emphasises that ECVET should not only be used to support mobility but also in the national lifelong learning context to facilitate permeability and validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences. ECVET is, for example, expected to enhance possibilities for validating competences acquired in informal learning contexts in view of the apprenticeship or the master craftsperson examination (dual VET) and should provide an umbrella for initiatives and projects, such as 'You have skills/ competences!' and 'Competence with a system' (cf. Section 2.2). In relation to adult education, the strategy focuses on the following aims and activities: exploring possible use of ECVET in non-formal learning contexts, enhancing learning-outcomes-orientation in adult education, enhancing permeability between non-formal and formal learning contexts, offering transparent programmes in adult education, and supporting the implementation of the Recommendation on validation (BMBF, 2014, p. 8). Some activities related to ECVET and validation of non-formal and informal learning include:

- A pilot project was commissioned by the Ministry of Education for exploring the use of ECVET in the non-formal learning context and at the interface between the non-formal and the formal learning contexts (for example, in the adult learning area or in second-chance education) (Tritscher-Archan & Petanowitsch, 2015a,b).
- The biennial 'ECVET experts' conference' that was organised by the Austrian ECVET team in November 2016 focussed on the use of ECVET principles for supporting the validation of non-formal and informal learning. This topic was chosen because it is highlighted in the ECVET strategy and was closely linked to the policy process related to the development of a national strategy for validation (Kristensen & Luomi-Messerer, 2016).⁹⁸
- In 2016, a project was launched on 'ECVET & validation of non-formal and informal learning in healthcare education' for developing a validation procedure that makes use of ECVET principles (in particular, units and learning outcomes) (Luomi-Messerer et al., 2016).

Modularised structures in the Austrian qualifications system

In Austria, modularised structures can currently only be found in some segments of the formal education system. For example, due to the Bologna process, study programmes at higher education institutions are delivered through a modular scheme. In the non-formal area modularisation is a basic principle. Since 2002, the master craftsperson examination (*Meisterprüfung*) has been structured into modules,

⁹⁸ All presentations and further documents from the event are available online: <https://bildung.erasmusplus.at/de/aktuelles/artikel/2016/11/ecvet-experts-conference-validation-of-non-formal-informal-learning/>

whereas modularisation of apprenticeship training and the creation of modular vocational degrees started some years later. A modular apprenticeship trade has a maximum training period of four years and comprises, for example, a two-year basic module and various other modules lasting 18 months. In addition, a special module can be selected. Since 2010⁹⁹ apprenticeship occupations have been modularised (Lachmayer, 2012, 8). Several technical and vocational schools offer evening classes for people in employment and since autumn 2011 all schools for people in employment have been switched to a new modular system and thus have a flexible design (Lachmayer, 2012, 32). This gives participants the chance to provide evidence of acquired knowledge by sitting for a module examination without having taken part in lessons.

Based on the amendment to the School Organisation Act (Federal Law Gazette no. 9, 14 February 2012) modularisation has been introduced in school-based VET: the legal base for a 'new upper cycle' entered into force in the whole of Austria in 2016. The 'new upper cycle' offers a range of opportunities and support options for students with special talents that take into account their different learning speeds (BMB, 2016). For example, it is possible to take examinations on individual compulsory subjects without attending courses; this could be linked to the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

4 Standards

There are no specific standards in place to support validation. For the acquisition of certificates/qualifications of the formal education system (such as 'exceptional admission to the final apprenticeship exam', the 'acquisition of lower secondary school qualifications by adults' or other so called 'external exams'), the same education and training standards used in formal education and training are taken into account in the assessment process. In the case of apprenticeship training, this also includes occupational standards (the occupational profile associated with a qualification). The certification process of the recently introduced 'engineer qualification' (*Ingenieur*)¹⁰⁰ (cf. Section 2.3) is based on specifically developed occupational standards: these are specifications of activities which are described in the form of sector-neutral learning outcomes, which express both technical knowledge and skills as well as competences (autonomy and responsibility) related to these activities (BMWF, 2017b).

Procedures also exist for acquiring certification without any corresponding qualification in the formal system. Some initiatives have developed their own standards for obtaining non-formal qualifications based on validation (for example, the certifications offered by the Academy of Continuing Education (*Weiterbildungsakademie, wba*)¹⁰¹). Formative validation approaches, such as the competence identification procedure offered by *KOMPAZ* (see Section 2.3.1), have also developed their own standards.

⁹⁹ Based on the Vocational Training Act (*BAG, Berufsausbildungsgesetz*) amendment in 2006.

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/Ingenieurwesen/Seiten/default.aspx>

¹⁰¹ www.wba.or.at

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

Institutions and stakeholders are involved in developing and implementing validation

Austria does not have a national institution responsible for validation across all sectors. The working group (linked to action line 10 and measure 10.3 of the LLL: 2020 strategy) which was established in 2013 for the development of the Austrian validation strategy comprises the following institutions:

- relevant federal ministries (currently: Education, Science and Research; Digital and Economic Affairs; Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection; Defence; Federal Chancellery: Families and Youth),
- social partner organisations (Chamber of Labour, Chamber of Commerce),
- youth organisations (Austrian Youth Association),
- adult education (Austrian Conference of Adult Education),
- Universities Austria,
- Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences.

One of the thematic working groups set up for the implementation of the national validation strategy refers to 'System Synergies'. The aim of this group is to coordinate and further develop existing validation initiatives (BMB & BMWFW, 2017, p.20).

The currently existing validation procedures or measures involve different institutions and actors with different roles and responsibilities (see Section 2). In addition to those listed above, the main stakeholders are:

- educational institutions (secondary academic and VET schools and colleges, universities of applied sciences, universities, adult education institutions),
- apprenticeship offices of the competent economic chambers,
- the Austrian Public Employment Service,
- organisations operating in the third sector,
- research institutes.

The previously listed actors divide their responsibilities for the different measures and procedures of validation (cf. ibw 2007, 57pp.). The main role of the relevant ministries is preparing and adopting the legal framework conditions for validation procedures. Social partners play a major role in the design of the legal, economic, and social framework conditions. Educational institutions organise or provide preparatory courses for exams; furthermore, they hold exams or design other procedures to validate non-formal and informal learning in order to issue certificates (based on their respective quality assurance procedures). In the case of exceptional admission to the final exam of the apprenticeship training, apprenticeship offices of the responsible economic chambers offer the exam. Organisations operating in the third sector (e.g. in youth area or volunteering) have set up their own procedures for validation (mainly focussing on identification and documentation of learning outcomes). The ministries and the social partners are the main actors in providing information, promotion and awareness-raising as well as commissioning evaluations, whilst counselling and guidance is mainly provided by the relevant educational institutions. Research, monitoring and evaluation activities related to validation are carried out by research institutes (within and outside higher education institutions).

In terms of strategy development for the higher education sector, Universities Austria (*Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz, UNIKO*), which represents the Austrian public universities, plays an important role. For example, they commissioned a study on validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education (Spiel et al.,

2009) and have prepared position papers on related issues (Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz, 2009 and 2010). Furthermore, AQ Austria (Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria) has - together with eleven higher education institutions - coordinated a project dealing with the design of permeability through recognition and crediting of non-formally and informally acquired competences (AQ Austria, 2016).

Links between (the predominantly public) validation arrangements and the competence measures taking place in enterprises

There is little information available related to competence measures taking place in enterprises and therefore it is not possible to provide information on their currency in the public sector.

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising

There are no specific awareness raising campaigns/approaches in place to improve overall awareness of validation arrangements. However, the thematic working group on 'communication' set up in relation to the national validation strategy aims to increase awareness and accessibility of validation offers; it does this by developing an online portal to provide information about validation and accompanying services as well as by developing a target group-oriented communication concept.

Outreach activities are currently carried out primarily by those institutions offering opportunities for second chance education or by those institutions offering validation or portfolio processes. In addition, information about the options for validation is shared by the Public Employment Service, responsible ministries, social partners and various advisory or career guidance centres for different target groups. Relevant information is available on websites - for example:

- The website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Research provides information about second-chance education (such as acquisition of compulsory qualifications by adults, *ExternistInnenreifepfung, Studienberechtigungsprüfung, and Berufsreifepfung*).¹⁰²
- The website - www.erwachsenenbildung.at - provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research, presents comprehensive information on Austrian adult learning and second-chance education offers, including possibilities for the validation and recognition of informally developed competences.
- The website of the Austrian Initiative for Adult Education¹⁰³ provides information about accreditation of programmes and courses provided within this framework.
- The website of the initiative for professional recognition (*Berufsanerkennung*)¹⁰⁴ targeted at migrants provides information about the acceptance and recognition of vocational qualifications or professional experience acquired in other countries as well as about counselling offers.
- The website of the Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs informs the public about apprenticeship training as well as the exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination. This website also gives detailed information about the awarding of the *Ingenieur* qualification.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/bw/zb/index.html>

¹⁰³ www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.berufsanerkennung.at/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/Ingenieurwesen/Seiten/default.aspx>

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

In Austria, there is no overall information, advice or guidance network related to validation of non-formal or informal learning. As noted above, information and also counselling and guidance is mainly provided by the relevant educational institutions or by those institutions offering the validation or portfolio processes.

The Austrian validation strategy refers to the development of a coherent communication strategy for informing about validation opportunities in different sectors (BMB & BMWFW, 2017, p.19). Existing validation measures should be coordinated and made centrally visible and accessible. For this purpose, an easily accessible online portal will be developed that presents information on available validation measures, their link to the qualifications system and on accompanying measures. On the one hand, it should be useful for interested individuals, and on the other hand it should also be used by educational career counsellors and for labour market placement. First steps towards the development of this online portal have been taken in 2018.

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

There is no specific profile of professionals carrying out validation processes in Austria. Depending on the specific measures and the sector it belongs to, the validation practitioners are teachers, career counsellors, experienced professionals, and members of the respective authorities, ministries, or social partners. As the assessment is often carried out by a commission, usually members of several of the above-mentioned groups are involved.

A thematic working group that will be established for the implementation of the national validation strategy focuses on 'professionalisation'. It refers to the development of competence profiles for validation practitioners and, if necessary, training courses to strengthen quality principles in all stages of the validation process (BMB & BMWFW, 2017, p.19).

7.2 Qualification requirements

Currently, there are no general mandatory requirements for validation practitioners. The requirements set depend on the respective context and measure.

As mentioned above, the development of competence profiles for validation practitioners is included in the Austrian validation strategy. Based on current discussions, it can be expected that there will be no strict regulations in terms of specific qualifications required.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

It is expected that specific training programmes will be offered in relation to the competence profile that will be developed in the future; these training programmes will aim to apply the quality criteria for validation that have been developed based on the national validation strategy (s. Chapter 8). Currently, the training and support provided depends on the respective context and measure.

For example, there is no specific training for validation practitioners in the context of external examinations (formal system). Since the same assessment procedures are used, their professional training and experience is considered sufficient. For example, teachers at VET schools and colleges must have a degree from a university or from a university college of teacher education; all teachers at VET schools and colleges – with the exception of teachers for general education subjects – are obliged to provide proof of completion of several years of professional experience in the world of business.

Many practitioners supporting the processes for identifying and documenting competences (including portfolio methods) are trainers or career counsellors at adult-education institutes. They have to prove expertise in the field of adult education and/or counselling and undergo the respective special training, if existing. In some cases, a specific training for using the Swiss Qualifications Handbook (CH-Q) System of Managing Competencies is required. Another example is the training course offered by the platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations (*Ring Österreichischer Bildungswerke*) for carrying out '*Kompetenz+Beratung*'¹⁰⁶.

For supporting validation practitioners, the Austrian Public Employment Service funded the development of a manual including methods for 'competence balances' and 'portfolio analyses' in 2009 that was updated in 2016 (Steiner et al., 2016).

8 Quality assurance

Current situation

Currently, there is no comprehensive quality framework and there are no common quality standards for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in place. In general, the extent and way validation initiatives are underpinned by quality assurance measures depends on the respective measure and context.

In Austria, different ministries and sections within these ministries are responsible for the different qualifications in the formal system and also for the relevant quality assurance activities. Manifold and partly systematic quality efforts exist in the different segments of the Austrian qualifications system. Some are directly in line with European principles for quality assurance. Since many procedures and initiatives for validating non-formally or informally acquired competences belong to the formal education system and/or aim at a qualification equivalent to one of the formal system, the same quality assurance activities as in the respective formal sub-system are relevant. Outside the formal system, the situation is very diverse and it is not possible to provide an overview.

Strong focus on quality in the national validation strategy

The thematic working group on 'quality' set up in the context of the national validation strategy aims at the development of a common understanding of quality by issuing a set of quality criteria that take into account essential characteristics of the different validation measures and can be applied in different areas (e.g. education, labour market, voluntary work) (BMB & BMWFW, 2017, p.19). The thematic working group on 'quality' has developed a catalogue of quality criteria for VET and adult education:

The catalogue of quality criteria for validation procedures in the area of VET and adult education in Austria was published in Spring 2018 (BMBWF, 2018a) and presented at a conference in May 2018 on 'Quality development in the validation of non-formal

¹⁰⁶ <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/14/bildungsberatung-kompetenzberatung>

and informal learning. Peer review procedures and use of quality criteria - European experience, benefits for Austrian validation providers'.¹⁰⁷ It was developed as a bottom-up approach based on analyses of existing validation initiatives in Austria. Furthermore, the development of the criteria was inspired by two European projects on 'Transnational Peer Review for quality assurance in Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning'¹⁰⁸ as well as by experiences and approaches in other countries (in particular France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the Nordic Network for Adult Learning). Finally, the 'European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning' (Cedefop, 2015) were taken into account as well as principles and requirements included in ISO/IEC 17024:2012¹⁰⁹. The set of quality criteria that is presented in the box below is currently being piloted in selected initiatives (e.g. in the 'Du kannst was!' project described in Section 2.2).

Box 8.1 Catalogue of quality criteria for validation procedures in the area of VET and adult education in Austria

Currently, the catalogue is considered as a recommendation. Validation providers can and should use it as an orientation for the (further) development of validation procedures and/or as a guideline for internal quality assurance. In a longer-term perspective, the set of criteria could become more binding: e.g. as a voluntary commitment of the providers, as a qualitative catalogue of requirements for receiving subsidies or as the basis for a quality seal or for accreditation.

The catalogue of quality criteria comprises a preamble (referring to key principles, such as voluntariness, benefits for candidates and embeddedness in their career pathway) and nine quality areas:

1. **General quality criteria** (learning outcomes orientation, orientation towards general standards of competence or making individual competences explicit, equivalence of validation results with qualifications acquired through educational programmes or connectivity of the results, access for target groups, interface management before, during and after validation procedures, data protection and data security),
2. **Public relations and information** (active advertising, information in advance free of charge, inclusion in the planned online-portal for validation),
3. **Clearing and agreement** (free initial consultation and clearing, agreement on the validation procedure),
4. **Counselling and support** (professional counselling and support),
5. **Validation focusing on identification and documentation** (suitable methods and instruments for identification, comprehensible and sufficient documentation, written and transferable documentation),
6. **Validation focusing on assessment and certification** (multi-eye principle in assessment, independence and suitability of assessors, clear purpose and transparent conditions of assessment, appropriate methods and instruments for assessment and appreciative process, documentation of assessment process and result, candidates' rights: feedback to candidate, inspection of files, right of objection and possibility of repetition, meaningful certification document, credible organization and recognition of certification by relevant stakeholders),
7. **Outcomes for candidates** (benefits for candidates, offering follow-up information and advice),

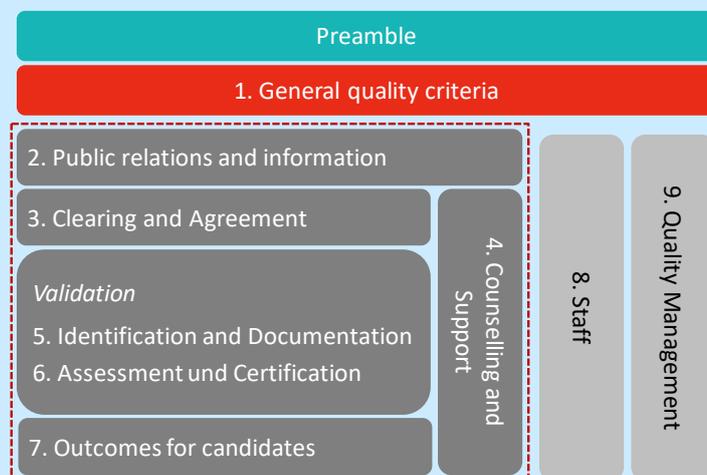
¹⁰⁷ https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten_details.php?nid=12338

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.peer-review-network.eu/pages/peer-review-vnfil-extended.php?lang=EN>

¹⁰⁹ ISO/IEC 17024:2012 contains principles and requirements for a body certifying persons against specific requirements, and includes the development and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons - <https://www.iso.org/standard/52993.html>.

8. **Staff** (competences of the practitioners/counsellors, competences of assessors, regular further training),

9. **Quality management** (internal quality management, documentation of all procedural steps, involvement of relevant stakeholders/cooperation partners, feedback of candidates, including an external perspective, further development of the validation procedure, cross-institutional quality assurance).



Source: BMBWF, 2018b.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

There is no national funding framework for validation in Austria. Also, there is no funding specifically allocated to the implementation of the validation strategy.

The funding for validation activities depends on the respective measure, procedure, or project. For example, the Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Public Employment Service of Austria support those who are preparing for the compulsory school leaving certificate, the apprenticeship diploma (exceptional admission to the final apprenticeship examination), the *Studienberechtigungsprüfung* or the *Berufsreifeprüfung*. Co-financing is provided by the ESF. The programme *Lehre mit Matura* is financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research. Those involved in up-skilling processes can also find a range of subsidies, for example by the Public Employment Service Austria. In some provinces, people can receive financial support from the authorities, Chambers of Labour or Chambers of Commerce. Depending on who maintains or implements the project or measure, the municipal and provincial governments also provide support and ministries and social partner institutions may set up their own initiatives.

9.2 Distribution of costs

Because Austria does not have a national institutional framework for validation, no overall data on costs to individuals or organisations is available. The direct and indirect costs differ between the different measures and initiatives. Also the fees that might have to be paid by individuals to complete a validation process differ across providers of such initiatives.

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

Hardly any data has been published on validation's impact on individuals. Evaluation studies addressing this issue are only (publicly) available for certain measures. Some examples are available in the 2016 update of the Austrian Inventory report; some more recent reports are presented here below.

Long-term effects of validation in adult education are emphasised in a recently published article, which is an outcome of a European project¹¹⁰ (Bisovsky, 2017b). For example, validation procedures contribute to the improvement of self-confidence and increase the ability to reflect, validation supports professionalisation and quality development in adult education, and suitable validation measures in combination with in-service training and coaching can attract adult education specialists both in remote regions and where there is a shortage of teachers.

In 2017, an impact evaluation of the '*Weiterbildungsakademie – wba*' was conducted (Breyer, 2017). Results of this big 10-year impact evaluation in particular refer to personal benefits of participants. More than three quarters of the respondents had a higher awareness of their own abilities and strengths through the *wba*. More than half of those surveyed perceived an increase in their own self-esteem. A third of all respondents were able to establish important contacts and networks through the *wba* certification.¹¹¹

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

Because Austria does not have a national institutional framework for validation, no overall data on flows of beneficiaries is available. Specific figures related to the overall situation are not available but since new validation initiatives have been introduced during the last few years (e.g. for low-qualified people or refugees), it can be assumed that the number of participants has increased accordingly.

Some data can be provided:

- Apprenticeship-leave exam (*LAP*) in second-chance education (exceptional admission to the apprenticeship examination): Overall, there has been a significant increase (especially since 2006) in the number of apprenticeship-leave examinations taken and passed in second-chance education. Since 2006 their number has almost doubled and in 2016, 18% of all successful final apprenticeship examinations in Austria were taken this way (Dornmayr & Nowak, 2017). The number has also been slightly increasing during the last couple of years, from 17% in 2014 (Dornmayer & Nowak, 2015, p. 83) and 15% in 2012 (Dornmayer & Nowak, 2013, p. 75).
- Non-traditional students in higher education programmes (AQ Austria, 2014): approximately 3% of all first-registered ordinary students at public universities gain access based on a *Berufsreifprüfung (BRP)*; the number has been quite stable during previous years. At universities, the number of first-year students who have passed a *Studienberechtigungsprüfung (SBP)* continues to decline: 0.2% in 2012/13 to 0.12 in the winter semester 2015/16 (Statistik Austria, 2017). At universities of applied science, the number of first-registered ordinary students that gained access based on a *BRP* has been quite stable during the last few

¹¹⁰ <https://eaea.org/project/action-plan-for-validation-and-non-formal-adult-education-ava/>

¹¹¹ <https://wba.or.at/de/leistungen/vorteile.php>

years with 7%. In contrast to the public universities, the importance of the *SBP* for admission to studies at universities of applied science is relatively constant with 1-2% (1.3% in the winter semester 2015/16 - Statistik Austria, 2017).

- *'Kompetenz+Beratung'* (Competence+Counselling)¹¹²: Since the start of the current funding period (2015-2018), the number of documented consulting contacts using this format has increased: in 2015, there were 826 documented Competence+Counselling contacts; in 2016, there were 1 191 documented counselling contacts using this form; the preliminary evaluation (as of May 2018) for the year 2017 results in 1 025 documented Competence+Counselling contacts.¹¹³

9.4.2 Validation users

Because Austria does not have a national institutional framework for validation, no overall data on flows of beneficiaries or their profile is available.

9.4.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

Introduction

All initiatives that aim at upskilling or that provide opportunities to obtain qualifications in second chance education (see Section 2.2) and several measures linked to skills audits (see section 2.3.1) are targeted towards low-qualified adults or unemployed people. Some initiatives are specifically targeted towards other disadvantaged groups (but they might also be addressed in initiatives related to low-qualified people). Some examples are presented here below:

Initiatives specifically targeted towards migrants/refugees/asylum seekers

- Multilingual Competency Questionnaires¹¹⁴: The Multilingual Competency Questionnaires, developed by the PES Graz, are used for the systematic collection/evaluation of the competencies of refugees who register as unemployed in various PES across Austria. In some cases, the information collected from the Competency Questionnaire acts as an advisory tool for the PES, enabling it to decide whether refugees are assigned to further planned integration measures.
- Competence check of PES – initiative for asylum seekers (*'Kompetenzcheck des AMS für AsylwerberInnen'*)¹¹⁵: this initiative is based on a pilot project launched by PES Vienna in 2015 and was rolled-out nationwide at the beginning of 2016. It is offered to people admitted as asylum seekers and aims to promote their fast integration into the labour market. The focus is on helping them to recognise their existing qualifications, competences, aptitudes and professional experiences and/or desired qualifications. These competence checks include tests carried out in real work places (enterprises). The competence check has been designed as a course of ten hours. It lasts for five weeks and includes one-to-one coaching. Language support is also provided (e.g. in Arabic, Farsi, Russian and French). In

¹¹² <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/14/bildungsberatung-kompetenzberatung>; Gugitscher et al., 2018.

¹¹³ Based on Schlögl et al. (2016) and on preliminary calculations by öibf (based on reports from bodies active in consulting in 2016). öibf is responsible for the meta documentation system in the framework of the initiative 'Bildungsberatung Österreich' (Educational Counselling Austria) - http://neu.oeibf.at/db/index.php?class=Calimero_Webpage&id=14516.

¹¹⁴ European Commission, 2017; AMS, 2016b.

¹¹⁵ DG EMPL, 2017; AMS Österreich News (Wien, 12.01.2016); AMS Österreich News Österreich (Wien, 17.02.2017).

2016, 5 982 people (75% men) concluded a competence check. As of March 2018, around 12 500 people have attended the competence checks since 2015.¹¹⁶

- migrare - centre for migrants in Upper Austria (*'Zentrum für MigrantInnen OÖ'*)¹¹⁷: To improve the visibility, development and usability of qualifications and competences of migrants in Upper Austria, migrare offers a range of advisory and project services focussing on competences. For example, they offer competence-oriented intensive consulting that also includes the 'Competence Kaleidoscope', a new form of competence mapping. Migrare works on behalf of the PES of Upper Austria. Migrants registered there can take part in the programme.
- *'Du kannst was! (F)'* ('You can do it!' / 'You have skills!' for persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection)¹¹⁸: Since December 2016, in Upper Austria, this initiative (described in Section 2.2) has also been offered specifically for refugees entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection who are at least 22 years old and have several years of professional experience and basic knowledge of German (A1).
- JUST INTEGRATION Implacment Foundation for young adults between 18 and 30 years (*'JUST INTEGRATION Implacment-Zielgruppenstiftung für junge Erwachsene von 18 bis 30 Jahren'*)¹¹⁹: This Austrian-wide initiative supports and accompanies the target group of unemployed persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection as well as other unemployed young adults facing various difficulties. Their vocational education and training is the goal of JUST INTEGRATION. The project provides shortened apprenticeship training and takes previous professional experience into account. Integration into the labour market is promoted in this way, while companies receive support in filling vacancies. Experienced consultants analyse professional experience, interests, skills and previous knowledge of the young adults. Together with them and with the involvement of interested companies, they develop individual training plans. The identification of existing competences is carried out by using methods defined by PES.
- Competence audit for migrants: At the contact point for people with qualifications acquired abroad (*'AST'*) in Vienna, for example, a competence audit process is used that is specifically adapted to this target group. 'The aim of the audit is to help individuals to think about and clearly identify their own competences. The competence audit is a structured individualised coaching procedure that combines the coaching phase with the completion of independent tasks. The whole process is intended to take about nine hours' (Mayerl & Schlögl, 2015, p. 22).
- Competence centre for validating VET qualifications acquired abroad (*'BBE - Kompetenzzentrum zur beruflichen Anerkennung im Ausland erworbener Qualifikationen'*) - initiative for migrants¹²⁰: The competence centre offers a special competence-oriented professional assessment, in which, in addition to social skills, professional and methodical competences are tested. Based on the results of the assessment, the centre of competence creates an individual expertise profile which includes existing competences and qualifications. These are compared with the current needs of the Austrian labour market (needs assessment are carried out in close cooperation with the service for companies of

¹¹⁶ ORF-Wien News (12.03.2018).

¹¹⁷ <http://www.migrare.at/cms1/index.php/angbote-kompetenzzentrum>

¹¹⁸ <http://www.favoee.at/initiativen/du-kannst-was-f/>

¹¹⁹ Aufleb, 2017.

¹²⁰

https://www.bildungsangebote.at/BBE_Kompetenzzentrum_zur_beruflichen_Anerkennung_im_Ausland_erworbener_Qualifikationen_5

the PES). Differences between the acquired knowledge, experience and skills and the needs of local companies are made visible in the profile. This results in individual recommendations for further training.

- StartVienna – youth college (*'STARTwien das jugendcollege'* - initiative for refugees)¹²¹: The programme starts with a clearing phase, where existing skills and competences are recognised and the level of education is determined. Based on this information, an individual training plan is developed. The modular and individualised programmes offered by the youth college are intended to take into account the spectrum of previous education, experience, skills and talents of young people in need in a demand-oriented manner. This is to enable young people to enter the regular training system or the labour market as quickly as possible.
- Competence analyses by social services Tyrol - initiative for asylum seekers (*'Kompetenzanalysen'* - *Tiroler Soziale Dienste GmbH*)¹²²: The initiative is based on two main aspects: On the one hand, the identification of linguistic, educational and professional knowledge; on the other hand, the visualisation of interests, strengths and aptitudes. Visualising the competences of the refugees should support their integration. In addition, there is the possibility of finding suitable charitable activities, apprenticeships and leisure activities which can be accessed during the asylum procedure.

Initiatives specifically targeted towards people with disabilities

Competence assessment for counselling people with disabilities or chronic illnesses - biv (academy for integrative education)¹²³: the instruments can be used within 3-4 sessions. The objectives of this competence assessment are to support participants in a self-reflection process, to identify their strengths and interests and to get clarity on the next steps in terms of career, learning or education. Those competences that have developed from experience with disability and illness should be taken into account and appreciated.

10 Validation methods

Methods for identification, documentation, assessment and certification most often used for validation purposes

Many procedures and initiatives for validating non-formally or informally acquired competences belong to the formal education system and/or aim at a formal education and training qualification (external examinations). Therefore, the assessment methods used in this context are usually the same as those used in the formal system. Relevant exams are also held at education and training institutions authorised by law.

For 'summative validation approaches', the most commonly used methods (e.g. in the context of external examinations for achieving formal qualifications) are written tests and oral exams. The apprenticeship-leave exam – also in the case of exceptional admission to the exam – consists of a practical and a theoretical examination. The examinees must provide evidence of their practical know-how and job-related skills. This exam tests whether the apprentice has acquired the practical skills and qualifications relevant to his or her occupation and whether he or she is able to perform properly the tasks that are vital to the apprenticeship trade.

For 'formative validation approaches', in many cases, the portfolio method is used, e.g. in the initiatives developed at adult learning institutes. In this context, supported

¹²¹ <https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/ankommen/start-wien-fluechtlinge/jugendcollege.html>

¹²² <http://www.tsd.gv.at/kompetenzanalyse.html>

¹²³ <http://www.biv-integrativ.at/index.php?id=118>

self-assessment is usually the chosen method - with a strong focus on developing the ability of self-reflection. This is similar to many initiatives in the youth and volunteering field, where the focus is on the phases of identification and documentation of competences.

Some 'summative validation approaches', such as the 'Du kannst was!' ('You have skills/competences') initiative, also use portfolios. In these cases, the portfolios are created with a focus on competences relevant for the chosen profession and will be compared to those in the job profiles and examination regulations of the corresponding apprenticeship qualification. However, in many cases the portfolio method alone seems not to be sufficient for establishing trust in one's competences, in particular in relation to professional competences. Thus, the 'You have skills/competences' initiative, for example, also uses 'performance checks' (practical assessments including profession-specific tasks). Also in case of the 'wba'-certificates, a combination of methods is used: at the beginning, candidates have to develop a portfolio to provide evidence of their competences; at the final phase, they have to participate in an 'assessment workshop' where they have to show a practical sequence from their activities in adult education. They will receive feedback and suggestions for further development. Furthermore, as part of the certification workshop, they also have to take a multiple-choice test on educational theory topics. For receiving the *Ingenieur* qualification, candidates first have to indicate the areas of work in which they worked in their practice and the activities they performed there. They draw up a job description and explain these activities on the basis of concrete projects and tasks in which they were/are involved or which they may even have managed. This description serves as a basis for the expert discussion with the certification commission, which aims at ensuring and confirming the existence of the professional requirements for the acquisition of the engineer qualification.

Since there is no comprehensive validation system determining the methods, different methods are applied in the different initiatives. The examples presented above suggest that the methods are adapted to the respective purposes and target groups.

ICT-based assessment methods used for validation

ICT based assessment methods are currently probably used to a rather low extent but they are used in some initiatives. Examples include:

- The assessment methods at the postgraduate university course, *Bildungs- und Berufsberatung*¹²⁴ (educational and vocational guidance) offered at the Danube University Krems, that certifies competences of people with professional experience in educational and vocational guidance, include an online-test (for assessing competences related to the professional field).
- The 'EBmooc'¹²⁵, the online course for adult educators, includes ICT-based assessment: Questions are presented at the end of each unit (quizzes) with which learners can test to what extent they have accomplished their essential tasks and understood the core concepts. If participants complete the unit positively, they will receive a digital learning badge.
- The PLAYMIT.com, the learning and quiz platform provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research, requires the completion of an ICT-based assessment in order to receive the certificate 'education for practice' that can be attached to applications (e.g. for apprenticeships).

¹²⁴ <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/bbb>

¹²⁵ <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/ebmooc/>

- PES Austria offers the '*Berufskompass zur Neuorientierung*'¹²⁶ ('career compass for re-orientation'), an online self-assessment tool to support people who are interested in changing their career pathway. It is accessible for free and takes about 30 minutes. The compass combines the profile drawn up on the basis of the interests, training and professional experience of the person together with the requirement profiles of occupations and draws up a list of proposals for professional change on this basis.

EU templates used for validation

The Youthpass is used – see Section 2.3.

11 The position of validation in society: visibility and trust

Due to the current situation of a rather fragmented approach to validation it is not possible to clearly state the position of validation in the society or to assess the visibility of validation opportunities or the trust in validation outcomes.

Many summative validation initiatives lead to a formal qualification and these usually have the same standing and value as the same qualification obtained in the traditional pathway.

Formative validation initiatives are currently less visible and seem to have high value for individuals. The value of their outcomes for formal education and training or for the labour market is in many cases not clear.

¹²⁶ <http://berufskompass.at/neuorientierung/>

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Akkreditierung Austria (Accreditation Austria): <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/TechnikUndVermessung/Akkreditierung/Seiten/AkkreditierungsstellePIZ.aspx>

AMS-Berufskompass zur Neuorientierung (career compass for re-orientation offered by PES Austria): <http://berufskompass.at/neuorientierung/>

AMS - 'Kompetenz mit System' ('competence with system' offered by PES): <http://www.ams.at/service-arbeitsuchende/angebote-frauen/kompetenz-system>

AMS Österreich News (Wien, 12.01.2016) - Pressekonferenz - Asylberechtigte auf Jobsuche: <http://www.ams.at/ueber-ams/medien/ams-oesterreich-news/asylberechtigte-auf-jobsuche>

AMS Österreich News Österreich (Wien, 17.02.2017) - Arbeitsmarktintegration geflüchteter Menschen: Bilanz und Ausblick: <http://www.ams.at/ueber-ams/medien/ams-oesterreich-news/arbeitsmarktintegration-gefluechteter-menschen-bilanz-ausblick>

aufZAQ: <http://www.aufzaq.at/>

BBE - Kompetenzzentrum zur beruflichen Anerkennung im Ausland erworbener Qualifikationen (Competence centre for validating VET qualifications acquired abroad): https://www.bildungsangebote.at/BBE_Kompetenzzentrum_zur_beruflichen_Anerkennung_im_Ausland_erworbener_Qualifikationen_5

Berufsanerkennung (initiative for professional recognition): <http://www.berufsanerkennung.at/>

Bildungs- und Berufsberatung (Postgraduate university course on educational and vocational guidance) offered at the Danube University Krems: <http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/bbb>

Bregenz aktiv!: <http://break.bregenz.at>

biv – akademie für integrative bildung - Kompetenzassessment (academy for integrative education – competence assessment): <http://www.biv-integrativ.at/index.php?id=118>

Du kannst was! ('You have skills/competences!'): www.dukannstwas.at/

Du kannst was! (F) ('You have skills/competences!' for persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection): <http://www.favoee.at/initiativen/du-kannst-was-f/>

EBIS - Entwicklungsberatung in Schulen (EBIS - Development consulting in schools): <http://www.sqa.at/course/index.php?categoryid=27>

EBmooc (MOOC for adult educators): <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/ebmooc/>

ECVET Experts Conference 'Validation of Non-formal & Informal Learning': <https://bildung.erasmusplus.at/de/aktuelles/artikel/2016/11/ecvet-experts-conference-validation-of-non-formal-informal-learning/>

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Frauenstiftung Steyr - Validierung (validation offered at the Women's Foundation Steyr): <http://www.frauenstiftung.at/de/beratung/fbz---frauenberufszentrum.php>

Freiwilligennachweis: <http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/de/freiwilliges-engagement/freiwilligennachweis;>
https://www.sozialministerium.at/site/Service_Medien/News_Veranstaltungen/News/Neuer_Nachweis_ueber_freiwillige_Taetigkeiten

Gewerbeordnung.at (information about regulated trades in Austria): www.gewerbeordnung.at

Graz University of Technology: www.tugraz.at

Initiative Erwachsenenbildung (Initiative for Adult Education): www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at

iMooX (Austrian MOOC-Plattform): www.imoox.at

Initiative Erwachsenenbildung (Austrian Initiative for Adult Education): www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at

ISO/IEC 17024:2012: <https://www.iso.org/standard/52993.html>

'KOM-KOM - Kompetenzerweiterung durch Kompetenzerfassung' ('expanding competences based on competence identification': <http://www.bmkz.org/komkom/index.html>

Kompetenz+Beratung (competences and counselling): <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/14/bildungsberatung-kompetenzberatung>

'Kompetenz mit System' ('Competence with system'): <http://www.ams.at/service-arbeitsuchende/angebote-frauen/kompetenz-system>

Kompetenzanalysen - Tiroler Soziale Dienste GmbH (Competence analyses by social services Tyrol - initiative for asylum seekers): <http://www.tsd.gv.at/kompetenzanalyse.html>

Kompetenzportfolio der Akademie für Neue Medien und Wissenstransfer der Universität Graz (Competence portfolio of the Academy of New Media and Knowledge Transfer at the University of Graz): <http://portfolio.uni-graz.at/doku.php>

Kompetenzportfolio für Freiwillige des Rings Österreichischer Bildungswerke (Competence portfolio for volunteers of the platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations): www.kompetenz-portfolio.at

Kompetenzprofil - Kompetenzerkennungszentrum der Volkshochschule-Stadtbibliothek Linz (competence profile offered at the Adult Education Centre Linz): <http://www.kompetenzprofil.at>

Kompetenzrahmen für die Kinder- und Jugendarbeit (competence framework for youth workers): <http://www.kompetenzrahmen.at/>

Lebenserfahrung sucht Engagement (Life experience seeks opportunities for engagement): <http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/13/kompetenz-workshop-fuer-aeltere-menschen-slic>

migrare - Zentrum für MigrantInnen OÖ - Kompetenzzentrum (centre for migrants in Upper Austria): <http://www.migrare.at/cms1/index.php/angbote-kompetenzzentrum>

'NQF Inclusive - Accreditation and Certification of basic vocational education for disadvantaged people through NQF': <http://www.nqfinclusive.org/>

Ö-Cert (quality label for adult education providers in Austria): <https://oe-cert.at/>

Österreichische Hochschulkonferenz: http://www.hochschulplan.at/?page_id=6#dokumente

Open Education Austria: www.openeducation.at

ORF-Wien News (12.03.2018) - Kompetenzchecks: Sicherheits-Know-how fehlt:
<http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2900416/>

PLAYMIT: www.playmit.com; <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/schule40/playmit.html>

PPÖ – Ausbildungen: <https://ppoe.at/ausbildung/jugendleiterinnenausbildung/gesamtueberblick/>

ProfilPass: <http://www.profilpass.de/>

QUALI-QIBB: <https://arqa-vet.at/de/qualifizierung-beratung/quali-qibb/>

Qualifikationsbezeichnungen 'Ingenieurin' und 'Ingenieur' (engineer qualification):
<https://www.bmdw.gv.at/Berufsausbildung/Ingenieurwesen/Seiten/default.aspx>;
<https://www.bmnt.gv.at/land/land-bbf/bildung-agrar-schulen/ingenieurtitel.html>

Qualifikationspass Wien (Qualification Pass Vienna):
<https://www.wien.gv.at/arbeit/waff/qualifikationspass.html>

Qualifikationsplan Wien (Qualification Plan Vienna): <https://www.wien.gv.at/arbeitswirtschaft/qualifikationsplan.html>

Qualifikationsregister - 'Ingenieurin' und 'Ingenieur' (qualification register - engineer qualification):
<https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/public/qualification/43>

SLIC - Valuing older people's skills and experience: Training peer facilitators: <https://slic-project.eu/>

STARTwien das jugendcollege (StartVienna – youth college):
<https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/ankommen/start-wien-fluechtlinge/jugendcollege.html>

Transnational Peer Review in Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) Extended:
<http://www.peer-review-network.eu/pages/peer-review-vnfil-extended.php>

UNIPOINT - Karriereservice der Universität Wien (career service at the University of Vienna):
<https://www.uniport.at/site/karriereberatunginfo/karriereberatung/article/7.html>

University of Graz: www.uni-graz.at

VET-CERT: <https://vet-cert.arqa-vet.at/index.php.html>

waff - Beratungszentrum für Beruf und Weiterbildung (Vienna Employment Promotion Fund - counselling centre for jobs and further education): <https://www.waff.at/beruf-weiterbildung/>

Weiterbildungsakademie, wba (Academy of Continuing Education): www.wba.or.at

WIK:I - Was ich kann durch informelles Lernen' (What I can do based on informal learning):
<http://ring.bildungswerke.at/pages/15/kompetenzportfolio-fuer-jugendliche-wiki>;
<https://www.bmfj.gv.at/jugend/beschaefigung-bildung/wiki.html>

Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut, WIFI (Economic Promotion Institute of the Economic Chambers):
<http://www.wifiwien.at/Default.aspx/Kurse/@/menuid/2152/>

Youthpass - Erasmus+: Jugend in Aktion: www.jugendinaktion.at/youthpass

Zertifikat ehren.wert.voll – Jugendreferat des Landes Steiermark 'Worth. To be. Cherished' – certificate offered by the Provincial Youth Department in Styria):
<http://www.jugendreferat.steiermark.at/cms/beitrag/12026354/108648752/>

Zivildienst Kompetenzbilanz – Ausfüllhilfe (civilian service standardised competence balance – filling aid):
http://www.zivildienst.gv.at/403/files/KompetenzbilanzAnlage_2013_10_01_Ausfuellhilfe.pdf

Zweiter Bildungsweg – BMBWF (second-chance education):
<https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/schulen/bw/zb/index.html>

12.2 Sources

Information was collected through participation at relevant national events and meetings:

- Meeting of the thematic working group on 'communication' on 28 February 2018;
- Conference introducing the competence framework in youth work (aufZAQ-Fachtagung 2018: "Kinder- und Jugendarbeit kann was!?") on 2 March 2018;
- Meeting of the working group responsible for the development and implementation of the national validation strategy (linked to action line 10 and measure 10.3 of the LLL: 2020 strategy): '12. Sitzung Handlungsfeld 10 „Verfahren zur Anerkennung nicht-formal und informell erworbener Kenntnisse und Kompetenzen in allen Bildungssektoren“ im Rahmen der Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen in Österreich) on 6 April 2018;
- Conference on validation and quality assurance on 5 May 2018¹²⁷.

¹²⁷ https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten_details.php?nid=12338