

European Inventory

on validation of informal and
non-formal learning



European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning Liechtenstein

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Update based on the Liechtenstein chapter of the 2005 Inventory by Kerstin Junge

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1.0 Introduction

Validation of non-formal and informal learning does not currently play a major role in Liechtenstein politics. The country is very small (160 square km / 35,000 inhabitants) and has few human resources available for developing this area. To illustrate this, each year some 300 students graduate from vocational education and training establishments and at the end of 2004, there were some 1,100 students in vocational education and training. Moreover, due to its small size Liechtenstein has a strong orientation in the field of education towards Switzerland. Liechtenstein is taking over Swiss vocational training regulations and a large proportion of the Liechtenstein youth are educated in Switzerland or Austria. Any methods to validate non-formal and informal learning, therefore, will tend to come from Switzerland or Austria.

2.0 Review of existing initiatives

Currently there is only limited experience with validation of non-formal and informal learning in Liechtenstein.

One mechanism for validating informal learning is laid down in Article 31 of the Liechtenstein Vocational Education Act and is based on a Swiss regulation. Article 31 of the Liechtenstein Vocational Education Act grants access to the apprenticeship final examination to people who have not formally passed through the dual system of vocational training.¹ For this the individual must have worked in the occupation for which the examination is to be taken for twice the number of years as the duration of the formal training period (i.e. 6 years of work experience for a 3-year apprenticeship training in the dual system).

Two sets of stakeholders are involved in granting permission to participate in the final examination:

- The employer must provide proof of the work experience in the form of employer issued work certificates showing the period of work with the employer and the type of activities carried out.
- The Liechtenstein Office for Vocational Education (<http://www.llv.li/amtsstellen/llv-abb-home.htm>) assesses the application and decides whether the applicant needs to enrol at a vocational school before the apprenticeship final examination can be taken and how much of the schooling needs to be completed. This decision is based on whether or not the applicant has already completed a (different) training in the dual system. If this is the case, the period of schooling for the new occupation can be reduced as the “general knowledge” elements have already been completed. The school-based training for the relevant occupation needs to be completed in any case.

The Liechtenstein regulations thus follow a clear process and aim at the ex-post accreditation of informal and non-formal learning. It is a formative method.

There is one similar initiative according to the EUROPASS on national level, launched by the “Gewerbe- und Wirtschaftskammer” (Business and economic chamber) Liechtenstein. They call their initiative “Berufspass”. All the courses/classes and knowledge training during life (education, work or leisure time) is documented in this document.

¹ The dual system of vocational training consists of work-based training with an employer which is complemented by a few days of school-based training per week.

3.0 Conclusions

Liechtenstein is a small country that with regard to its education system has a strong focus on neighbouring Switzerland. For the validation of non-formal and informal learning this means that not only Swiss qualifications but also Swiss methods of validation are taken over into Liechtenstein law. Currently, this is restricted to the approach outlined in Article 31 of the Liechtenstein Vocational Training Act. In future, however, this could also mean that Liechtenstein employers take on board the “qualification book” (Qualifikationsbuch) that individuals in Switzerland can use to identify and validate the skills they gained through informal means.

Furthermore, the Maastricht Communiqué and the Copenhagen Process have played a mayor role to develop and conceptualise a framework of validation of informal and non-formal learning. Within this scope the Leonardo-da-Vinci-Programme and the third generation of the lifelong learning¹ program will strengthen the process of validation not only in Liechtenstein.

Finally, a new vocational training act is currently under development, which is likely to come into effect at the earliest in summer 2008. The act refers to the validation of non-formal education as a central theme – it considers the key issue of valuation and acceptance of non-formal qualifications.² It thus remains to be seen whether the introduction of this act will lead to developments in the validation of informal and non-formal learning.

¹ COM(2004) 474 final, 2004/0153 (COD) Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning

² Information provided by a representative of the Amt für Berufsbildung und Berufsberatung Liechtensteinische Landesverwaltung