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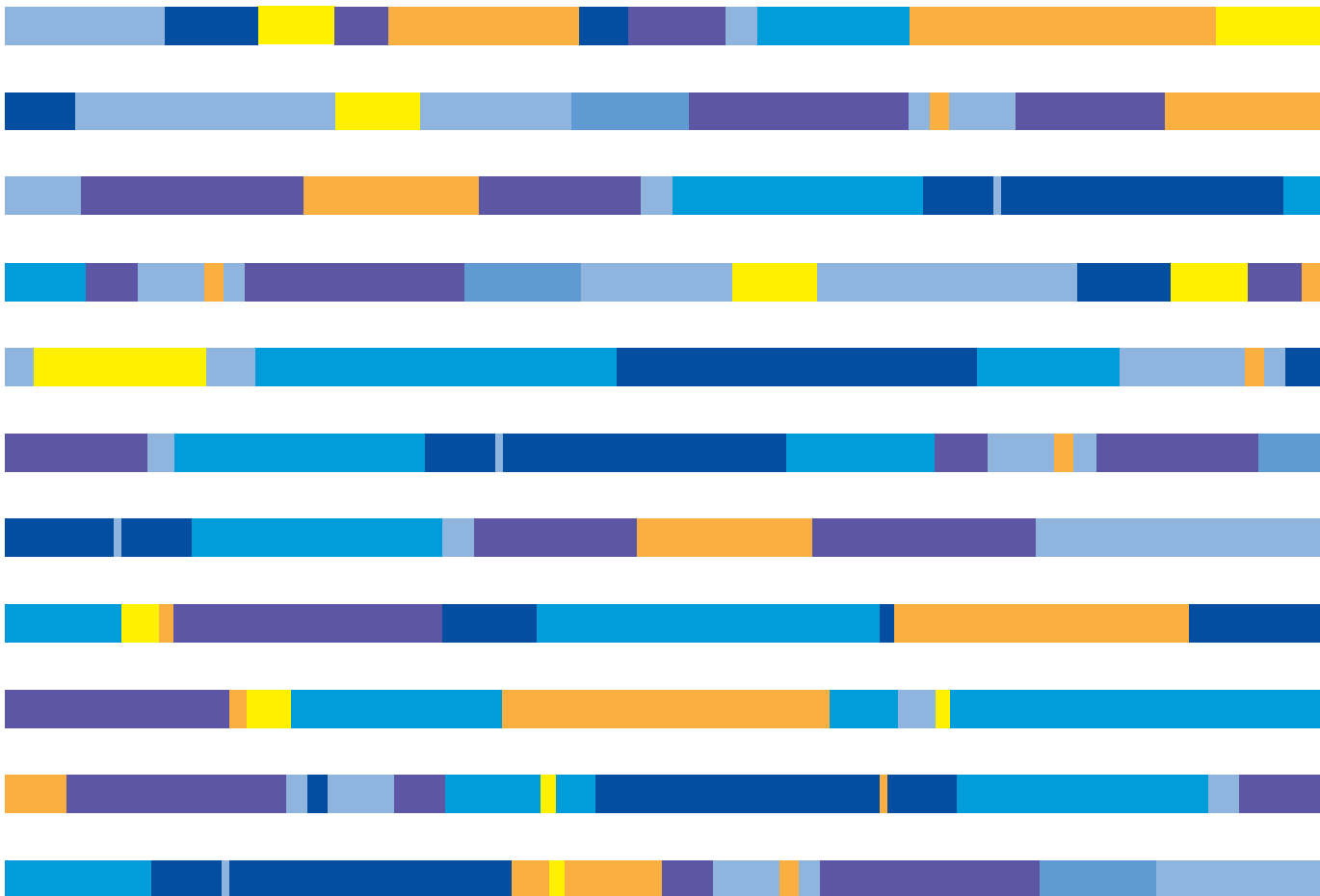
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

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Author: Dora Vajai



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1 Abstract

Hungary lacks a comprehensive nationwide validation system, with regulated procedures having limited scope. The term "validation" is mostly known among researchers and experts, with varying terms used in different sectors. Development work for validation is done in the framework of single projects, and a comprehensive system has not been developed. Although validation is mentioned in several recent strategies, there is no coherent approach to its detailed tasks, actors, procedures, responsibilities, target groups, and precise objectives. There have been strategic development programs launched since 2016, some with EU funding, but legislative developments in the field of validation have been lacking. In 2017, a new EU-supported project was launched, which contains a sub-project on the development of validation solutions related to the vocational examination system. In 2018, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference established a working group that published recommendations and observations on the key challenges regarding mutual recognition. The National Co-ordination Point of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) organised an expert working group in 2017, which formulated recommendations for the development of the validation system. A recent 2022 study by the Education Authority discusses different aspects of skills recognition and validation in Hungary. The lack of a comprehensive validation system remains a systemic problem, with development and regulation needing to be addressed.

2 Introduction

Hungary does not yet have a nationwide validation system based on uniform principles and procedures. One of the main reasons for this is the strong separation of educational and economic sectors. There are some sector-specific regulated procedures but these have very limited scope in relation to practice.

The term, validation, is known mostly among researchers and experts. There are still many misunderstandings or too general use of validation as a term in the discourses on the subject. In the adult training sector 'assessment of prior learning' is the more common term. In the higher education sector, the term mostly used is 'gaining credits on the basis of work experience'.

It is still a systemic problem that it is not clearly identifiable who is responsible for the development validation at national level. Development takes place in the framework of single projects, which means that development work ends as projects are completed.

The development of a comprehensive validation system has not begun. In 2017, a group of experts was asked by the Educational Authority to evaluate the situation and formulate recommendations, but no further information on the use of the completed proposals was available.

While there have been amendments to the regulations governing vocational education and training (2019. évi LXXX. törvény) there have been no legislative developments in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Validation as an objective is explicitly mentioned in several recent strategies (on lifelong learning [LLL] 2014-2020 (Government of Hungary, 2016) mid-term strategy against early school leaving (Government of Hungary, 2014)¹ national social catching

¹ The strategy targeting low-educated young people and adults mentions one of the tools is a "comprehensive national recognition model / knowledge recognition system", the operation of which is based on a nationally-based

up strategy, (Government of Hungary, 2010)² but there is no coherent approach to the detailed tasks, actors, procedures, responsibilities, target groups, and precise objectives.

Significant strategic development programmes have been launched from 2016, partly with EU funding (in the frame of the National Development Plan).

- In mid-2016, the government adopted a decision on the National Digital Education Strategy (DES) and its implementation. Validation is mentioned in the chapter on Adult Learning as a tool for access to training (without detailed recommendations). The DES promotes the idea of making visible and also recognising adults' previously acquired digital competences (however the mechanisms of the validation are not yet developed).
- Additionally, in 2017, a new EU-supported project was launched, which contains a sub-project on the development of validation solutions related to the vocational examination system (GINOP-6.2.4-VEKOP/16). According to the project plan an analysis of the current situation, a validation methodology (including a task bank) will be prepared and two pilots were organised. Based on the results of the pilots the national validation system for vocational training and adult training will be developed.
- Hungarian rector conference on mutual recognition and validation: Relevance of the recognition was recognised by the Hungarian Rectors' Conference which established a working group in 2018. Results of the work of the recognition working group of the Hungarian Rectors' Conference published its recommendations and observations on the key challenges the higher education system faces regarding mutual recognition. The Working Group found that the lack of knowledge and experience is the main challenge of the recognition process. Emphasis should be placed on teachers' low confidence in knowledge "brought in" from the institution, inflexibility of curricula, excessive decentralisation of procedures, lack of institutional reflection on their own institutional practice, and demotivation and tolerance of students. However, it has also been revealed that the concept of recognition is undefined, and the use of related terms is inconsistent even in legislation.

In 2022, a study was published on different aspects of skills recognition and validation in Hungary by the Education Authority (Oktatási Hivatal, 2022), in which nine experts present the different aspects of validation in Hungary. This publication summarises the analysis and suggestions that have been made over the last decade and is intended to draw the attention of decision-makers to the potential of validation.

3 National perspective

3.1 Overarching approach to validation

There is no comprehensive, national-level validation strategy in place. The development of validation in Hungary is still dominated by sectoral approaches.

The current validation process is fragmented and lacks essential elements such as strategic goals, stakeholder participation, funding, quality assurance, and participant preparation. Development of validation practice in each sector is conducted through

territorial network-based career advisory system. However, the text of the strategy does not contain any detailed information on that system.

² The National Catching Up Strategy II. (2011-2020) does not give details about the interpretation of validation activity, but the target group is designated: drop-out students, Roma youth.

individual projects, and their results may not be sustainable after the project is completed. Further development is mostly spontaneous and occurs at the institutional level, leading to a slower and divergent process due to the absence of management and standards for uniform direction.

Sectoral development projects (in public education, vocational education and higher education) that had, to a greater or lesser extent, the objective of establishing a validation procedure, were launched in the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan. The first phase started in 2009 (ended in 2011), the second phase has been implemented during the period 2012-2015 (and there is no follow-up since then). A detailed recommendation for the operation of a validation model was developed only for the higher education sector.³ More recently in 2017, a GINOP-6.2.4-VEKOP/16 project ended up with recommendations of developing the validation model for VET.

Each of the education and training sectors operates in isolation and also large projects are organised in this way. There are no players in the system who would be responsible for the overall development of validation or provide coordination between the sectors.

Social partners are still not involved in the development of validation.

A sign of some small change is the initiative mentioned in the previous chapter on the formulation of validation recommendations. A group of experts produced a paper in 2017 (recommended by the Educational Authority), which made the following major recommendations: a small size coordinating body should be set up to bring together developments in different sectors; networked services should be developed, offering validation services (following the European common principles on validation from 2004), providing the easy geographic availability; skills audit services and the certification of previously acquired competences should be made accessible to low-skilled people and job-seekers; a pilot project should be launched in order to develop assessment methods and validation procedures. The recommendations were made with the collaboration of several ministry representatives, but there is no information on further use of the recommendations or decisions on the issue.

Activity related to the purposes of the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation began in the framework GINOP 6.1.1-15 project.⁴ The target group is employed people, adults with low educational qualifications and registered in public works, which comes to a total of 80 000. Within the programme, recognition of previous experience and competences already acquired has taken place. In the course of implementation, the career inquiry questionnaire and the individual training plan that builds on previously acquired qualifications and competences will provide the target group with the choice of the most appropriate training for their needs. The training plan will be developed using knowledge, skills and work experience, using the experiences of the questionnaire. The process is mentored, and the mentor's priority task is to keep track of the implementation of the training programme, to promote active participation and successful completion of training and if necessary, initiate an intervention to prevent the dropout. These are not widely used methods in the adult training sector in Hungary, which hopefully provide good examples and arguments for the benefits of using skills audits and validation.

No database exists of qualifications that can be obtained through validation.

³ Derényi, A.;Tót, É. (2011). *Validáció – a hozott tudás elismerése a felsőoktatásban* /Validation – recognition of prior learning in Higher Education/ Budapest, OFI, 2011.

http://www.ofi.hu/sites/default/files/attachments/validacios_kotet_vegleges.pdf

⁴ https://www.nive.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=746

More recently, National Reform Programme⁵, introduced in 2022, notes that Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) aim to use expertise to help reform the adult learning system. A project⁶ was launched with the support of DG Reform for the introduction and implementation of ILA to promote international practices, the development of a Hungarian system of training accounts, the identification of the eligibility criteria for adult educators in the system, and to carry out a pilot programme for its introduction.

Skills audit

The 1991 Employment Act provides for the possibility of career guidance to be extended to all citizens. The purpose of this provision was to help the individuals concerned to make decisions, with the assistance of a professional, about whether or not they needed training or reorientation. Jobseekers' previous career pathways were reviewed, and the qualifications and learning acquired through work experience were identified. This provision is still in force but there is no precise information on the staff employed by Public Employment Service (PES) guidance services. In any case, the employment service provision system has limited capacities to provide this particular service.

In recent years, experts' recommendations included skills audit as a basic, widely available service to develop, but for the time being, these proposals have not been implemented.

In the framework of the project mentioned above (chapter 1.1. GINOP 6.1.1-15 project) a questionnaire was used to examine the previously acquired skills of participating adults (with a low level of education). An individual training plan will be developed based on knowledge, skills and previous work experiences explored by the questionnaire. The process is mentored, and the mentor's priority task is to keep track of the implementation of the training programme, to promote active participation and successful completion of training. This programme can offer experience in creating a comprehensive skills-audit service.

3.2 Validation in education and training

The focus of development has so far been the formal education sectors but cooperation between these sectors is still missing. In the absence of an overall policy on validation, education institutions tend to operate validation autonomously in the framework of the given legal environment (see the examples below for each educational subsector).

The lack of financial resources at institutional level as well as the lack of qualified validation experts is a significant obstacle of development.

Although some elements of validation (using different terms) are present in the legal arrangements (in higher education, VET and in the adult training sector), these elements lack reference to any explicit policy goals.

Interpretation of validation for public education would mean that primary school or maturity certificates could be obtained in a validation procedure by measuring and certifying appropriate competences. The lack of description of education requirements in learning outcomes is a serious obstacle to this practice. The primary and general secondary school certificate is basically justified by the participation in the education process and the fulfilment of partial requirements (subject requirements).

⁵ National Reform Programme Hungary, 2022. [MAGYARORSZÁG 2022. ÉVI NEMZETI REFORM PROGRAMJA \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-operations/infographic-116326/image001.png)

⁶ Reform/SC2020/159 Development and Implementation of the Individual Learning Accounts in Hungary ("HUN-ILA")

The previous work experience (and acquired competences) of a student can be taken into account if the learning outcomes of work experience meet practical training requirements in school-based vocational training. The director of the school is entitled to make decisions on the exemption (but the procedure is not regulated in detail). There is no information available as to the number of people who use this option and the means for measuring and evaluating the problems that arise in the process.

In higher education, the legislators linked the recognition of informal learning (work experience) to the already operating European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Article 11 of Act 2007 on Higher Education (complementing the Act on Higher Education of 2005) provided that 'The Credit Transfer Committee [in the higher education institution] shall be authorised to recognise prior learning outcomes and work experience as the performance of academic requirements. The number of credits recognised on the basis of work experience shall be no more than 30.' Higher education institutions' practice of recognition was based on this statutory provision until 2012. Act CCIV of 2011 and its amendment Act CXXIII of 2012 reformulated the rules of recognition: 'The Credit Transfer Committee is authorised to recognise prior non-formal and informal learning outcomes as well as work experiences – in accordance with specifications stipulated within the scope of the Act and the Government Decree – as the performance of a course requirement. Matters related to the execution of specifications set out under Paragraphs (3) to (6) of Section 49 shall be regulated in the examination regulation by stipulating that the credit defined in the Academic and Examination Rules, however, at least one-third of the credits required for the student to obtain their degree (diploma) – even in the case of the recognition of credits taken in the given institution or in courses taken earlier, as well as prior learning – shall be obtained in their home institution.'

According to observations, the most typical form of validation in higher education is granting exemption for prior work experience and/or awarding credit for programme units leading towards a qualification. The idea of the recognition of knowledge acquired outside of the provider institution is present in higher education due to the existence of the credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS). The regulated institutional level validation practice is limited to only a few fields or subjects and depends on some enthusiastic innovators (teachers or managers). Teachers in higher education have great autonomy to accept or refuse prior learning (to recommend exemption from some requirements). It is also possible to award credit for a programme unit; such recommendations based on the evaluation of prior learning by a teacher is officially approved by a formal credit awarding body in the institution. Due to the concurring poor results concerning credit recognition in Hungarian higher education in the Eurostudent VI survey as well as in the interim report on the Erasmus+ programme, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference has launched a task force (working group) on exploring obstacles of and opportunities to enhance recognition. The working group deals with the issue of recognition in a holistic approach, taking the competences acquired through non-formal, informal learning and work experiences into consideration under one umbrella with credits earned in formal settings. The final report that includes recommendations to higher education institutions as well as to governmental bodies was published in 2019 (Hungarian Rectors Conference, 2019).

In the validation process, the recognition, documentation, assessment and credit award or the exemption from the training requirements are essentially reflected in higher education. As far as interest is concerned, the "stake" of the validation process is rather modest. This is also the reason that rather than a costly formalised procedure, it is more typical that higher education teachers and students directly agree on the management of the exemptions.

There is no validation procedure in which full qualifications can be obtained.

In the vocational education and training sector, existing rules largely allow someone to be exempted from certain training requirements in the course of the training (based on their previously acquired and certified competencies). In a very narrow area (for some EQF level 2 training programmes), it is possible for someone missing the qualification required as an entry requirement to start a training programme by successfully completing a competence test.

In adult training, matching the previously acquired competences with training standards, evaluation (mostly test) and exemption from a given part of the training programme are steps of the recognition procedure.

In the adult training sector, legal regulations have allowed assessment and recognition of the prior learning of entrants to training programmes since 2001. The purpose of introducing this provision was to allow for the customisation of training. While prior learning assessment and recognition was defined as an individual right in the first act on adult training (2001), enacted in 2013, the new Adult Training Act retained this scheme. Furthermore, it made the assessment of prior learning an obligation in vocational education and language training but did nothing to eliminate the circumstances which make its application difficult or impossible in the case of state subsidised programmes. Supported adults (mostly jobseekers) receive social assistance benefits based on their attendance at classes. If their prior learning is recognised and thus they are exempted from attendance, their benefit is reduced, which jeopardises their subsistence. In the experience of adult training providers, recognition of prior learning works well in self-financed programmes (where participants pay a tuition fee), and in the case of programmes ordered by companies, in other words, where there is no subsidy. Also in this example, assessment of prior learning outcomes serves primarily for differentiation of the participants. The assessment is a kind of placement test, which enables teachers to set up more homogeneous groups based on prior learning, and in this sense, it is a tool promoting teachers' work and the efficiency of training. The teacher routinely gives individual tasks to those who possess prior learning while he or she works with the rest of the group.⁷

The Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry developed a validation procedure in the context of a pilot project in 2022 for those training courses preparing for the "profession master's examination" (the pilot involved three professions and their renowned representatives: hairdresser, car mechanic, confectioner). However, there is no feedback yet on the operation of the validation procedure, its experiences and the lessons learnt.

Training providers have no interest in shortening the training programme if it reduces their income (the price of training). Training generally takes place in groups (usually a minimum of 18-20). If validation of prior learning applied to many of the applicants, i.e. many customised training plans had to be designed, it would upset the rules of the organisation of training programmes. Due to the fact that most of the training institutions have no relevant experience in the assessment of competencies, managing a grounded recognition process for most of them is still complicated.

There is no sector that has been prioritised explicitly. Policy documents, project plans and experts' recommendations are focused on low educated and unemployed people.

There is no policy (or any recommendation) on the validation of learning outcomes acquired through open educational resources (OER).

⁷ Based on interviews made in the framework of OECD RNFIL project. See in Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning OECD RNFIL Project Country Background Report–Hungary. <https://www.oecd.org/hungary/41679667.pdf>

However, there are two very successful validation procedures in the field of single competence certification.

The European Computer Driving Licence examination scheme provides certification for ICT skills obtained by any means and is based on international standards. It has been applied in Hungary since 1997 as the certification of digital literacy.⁸ The ECDL examination system co-ordination is carried out by a non-governmental organisation, the John von Neumann Computer Society (NJSZT). Since the 2006/2007 school year, the ECDL has been recognised as an accredited examination and has been integrated into training within various vocational programmes and a growing number of higher education institutions.

The foreign language proficiency examinations have traditionally been open to learners coming from any learning environment. This means that applicants can acquire a certification (of the level in accordance with their actual language proficiency) without participating in any language training course (that is, they can learn on their own in an informal way). Language proficiency examinations are organised by accredited language centres, which issue accredited language certificates to candidates passing the examination.

These two procedures represent successful implementation of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, even if such procedures are somewhat isolated cases these procedures relate only to certifying a single competency.

3.3 Validation and the labour market

There is no information on validation-related initiatives which have been developed by enterprises. The term validation is not known amongst employers. Based on anecdotal evidence (experts' declaration during workshops dealing with validation) employers take into consideration the outcomes of informal learning (described in CVs) of candidates during the recruitment process. So the "validation" exists in enterprises' practice but not as a formalised procedure.

3.4 Validation and the third sector

The main voluntary organisations are open to the validation approach and – on the basis of their international experiences – are well informed on the issue. They are familiar with the practices of the voluntary sector in Europe, including the portfolio method. They provide methodological guidelines on their websites.

According to the National Public Education Act (CXC. of 2011), the issue of the secondary school leaving certificate shall be subject to proving the performance of fifty hours of community service. Students applying to take the secondary school leaving examinations after 1 January 2016 must serve proof of community service. Higher education students will also be required to perform a certain amount of voluntary work during their studies. Although not directly related to validation procedures, these measures are the expression of the fact that educational decision makers consider voluntary work as a learning opportunity, which may lay the foundations for future recognition of voluntary work in the framework of validation. In the Hungarian context this is an important measure for changing attitudes.

The Voluntary Centre Foundation (ÖKA by its Hungarian acronym) is an organisation established by five non-profit organisations. The aim of the ÖKA is to support the Hungarian voluntary sector with information, training, counselling and development of different methodological tools. One of these tools is the "volunteer competence

⁸ For further information see: <http://njszt.hu/en/ecdl/europai-szamitogep-hasznaloi-jogositvany-ecdl>

portfolio” as a tool to enable the documentation of competencies acquired in voluntary work. No statistical data on its use are available, but according to the executive manager of ÖKA, it is spreading. This is part of the development of the voluntary culture and at the same time it is a way to raise awareness of the learning content of voluntary work. The brochure on the competence portfolio (and additional supporting documents) are available on the website of the organisation (Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány, 2011).

There are no standards for using the portfolio directly on the labour market but the use of Europass is widespread in Hungary (and it gives room to present experiences in volunteering).

The use of Youthpass in Hungary is still in the initial stages. The certificates can also be issued for projects that were granted under the previous European youth programmes (Youth in Action 2007-2013; Erasmus+: Youth in Action 2014-2020 and European Solidarity Corps 2018-2020). All participants of the projects approved within these frameworks are entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate, and thus recognition for their non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

4 Links to credentials and qualifications

The Hungarian Qualifications Framework (HuQF) was formally adopted by government decision (No 1229/2012). The referencing process of the HuQF was completed in early 2015.

To date no rules have been set out on the link between validation and the NQF.

In professional debates and projects’ workshops, the question regularly arises about the standards that should be used during the validation process. Hungarian experts unanimously recommend the use of the standards of the formal education and training system (in order to create trust in validation).

An essential element of the validation process is that the requirements must be described in a comparable way (for example in the form of learning outcomes). One of the most significant impacts of the HuQF was the spread of the use of learning outcomes (as a means of output-based approach to training). The greatest change in this field was in higher education.⁹ This process is slowly advancing in public education.

More recently, Act LXXX of 2019 on Vocational Education and Training has been amended. As a result, from 2020, secondary vocational education was subject to output regulation. Thus, the curricular regulatory documents (training and outcome requirements and programme requirements) set out the outcome requirements for a given occupation or qualification in terms of learning outcomes. The new curricula will be gradually applied in VET from September 2020.

5 Standards

As the validation procedures are essentially organised within the education and training programmes, the competences previously acquired by the participants are compared to the formal training programmes’ requirements.

If the references used in education and training are defined in the form of learning outcomes (this is not always the case), candidates will indicate which study

⁹ Decree 18/2016 (05 August)

requirements from which they wish to be exempted (in higher education typically from a particular course).

In higher education since 2017, and in vocational education since 2020, learning outcomes are explicitly used. Programme and outcome requirements are uniformly described in terms of learning outcomes (in the context of knowledge, skill, attitudes and autonomy-responsibility) in the case of each VET programme, many adult learning programmes, vocational higher education programme, Bachelor and Master course. This can enhance the validation of competences (e.g. work experience) acquired through non-formal learning because the acquired competences can be compared more easily with the learning outcomes of qualifications. However, at the level of teachers and lecturers, the traditional practice of using thematic titles and knowledge elements of the discipline in the course syllabi has been widely preserved. The outcome requirement described in the term of learning outcomes are rather a formal approach kept in the legal regulations; with poor impact on the regular practice of teaching staff. In the case of a few degree programmes only, one can experience changes and shift towards the use of learning outcomes in course design and assessment.

So far there has been no suggestion that special validation requirements should be formulated.

6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

There is no national institution with responsibility for the coordination of validation development.

The operation of validation solutions is characterised by sectoral separation.

In the absence of an overarching validation policy, there is no government actor that would have exclusive competence in developing the validation system. The current framework of development is provided by EU supported projects, each of which is relevant to a particular sector of education and training.

The training institutes themselves are responsible for the conduct of the procedure. They also develop methods of assessment (there are no centrally developed standardised methods and the quality assurance is also the responsibility of the training provider institution).

In the higher education institutions, the committees responsible for validation are mostly attached to credit transfer committees.

In adult training, training providers carry out evaluation and decide on offsetting.

7 Outreach, awareness raising, provision of information, advice and guidance

7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising

Validation is closely linked to the educational sector and concern those involved in particular programmes (higher education or adult training). Validation in higher education is available for students already enrolled. In the context of various events providing study-related information on their studies, they are advised that under the Higher Education Act it is possible to have their work experience validated. Awareness amongst teachers and higher education leaders is raised mainly by

participation in development projects and through dissemination activities related to the projects.

Some publications are available on the website of the Educational Authority. Different analyses made in the TÁMOP 4.1.3 development project (validation model for higher education) between 2009 and 2015, a glossary on validation, presentation materials, reports on the international practice of validation, conference presentations and work materials are partially available with a targeted search through the website of the Education Authority.

7.2 Information, advice and guidance

As the validation procedure is entirely the responsibility of the institution organising education or training, information and guidance are also provided at this level.

In the adult training sector, recognition of prior learning is possible upon entry into training. Many adult training providers have some information about this recognition on their website.

In higher education institutions, the information provision about the credit transfer and accreditation on the basis of work experiences is the responsibility of learning administration units (there is no systemic collection of information on the practice). In some institutions this is part of the general information day organised for entry students.

Some of the higher education institutions inform the students about the possibility of validation on their website. If the students have further questions, they will typically be advised by a team member of the study department assigned to such a task.

Adult training institutions also provide information on the course of the proceedings primarily on their website but information is usually limited.

8 Validation practitioners

8.1 Profile of validation practitioners

As there is no complete validation system, the profile of validation practitioners cannot be clearly identified. Evidence from expert interviews shows, it would be important to develop and launch the training of experts on validation methods and its evaluation and assessment methods. The formal training of such experts would also promote the establishment of a national validation system.

In most higher education institutions validation of learning acquired outside formal education takes place outside the framework of official procedures, in a 'grey zone', and is subject to direct agreement (outside of any procedure) between teachers and students. The student approaches the teacher and requests validation, and the teacher decides, at his or her discretion, to, for instance, exempt the student from attending classes.

It is teachers that students seek out directly with validation requests. Teachers rely on their experience in making their decisions (as they are generally well versed with the credit transfer system as this is often a starting point for their decision).

The most typical request is to validate work experience (which is permitted by the relevant statutory provisions). The staff of the Registrar's Department assess exemption requests, checking the compliance with rules at institutional level. After that the candidate presents his/her work experiences and the learning outcomes

gained from these experiences in front of a jury composed of teachers. This jury decides on the result.

8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Information and guidance is organised within the framework of training provider institutes, mostly preparing staff for the performance of this task. The typical form of this preparation is short internal training. This applies to higher education institutions and adult training providers.

8.3 Qualifications and experience

As there is no comprehensive regulation, there are no mandatory qualification requirements for validation practitioners.

In higher education institutions it is mostly teachers and members of administrative staff that are involved in the practice of validation. The teacher, who teaches the course on which student wishes to validate his/her prior learning, has to be involved in the validation procedure.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding and costs

As there is no overall system of validation, there is no national framework for funding of validation activities.

The national investment in a validation system for the time being is the organisation of sectoral development projects (organised in EU funded projects where one-third of the budget is financed by the government).

The costs of prior learning outcomes assessment in the adult training sector are borne by training providers. Training providers themselves are funded by the state, by employers, by participants, or by a mix of these. The procedure itself is free for adult students entering training, regardless of how the training provider is financed.

Costs are basically 'hidden' as there are no calculations regarding the cost items of guidance, assessment or any other related services as such. Providers consider prior learning assessment as part of the training. Providers usually count the hours spent on assessment (test writing and evaluation of the tests) by the trainers in the time frame of the given training programme. So the cost of the assessment procedure is absorbed into the programme fees (paid by the adult learner, the employer or by the government).

The costs of credit transfer in higher education are completely borne by the higher education institutions concerned. The practice is the same as in the case of validation. There are no calculations on effective costs.

As for the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), participants have to pay the fees of the training modules (the cost varies between EUR 15 and 40). Students are given significant discounts and some employers choose to cover the training costs of their employees. Since 2002, the ECDL examination is part of civil servants' training, with funding coming from the national budget. The ECDL is also part of the nationwide (obligatory) education and training of teachers financed from the national budget. Teachers can choose ECDL training from the teacher training list. Funding for

participation in these courses can be provided by the individual, by the employer or by a grant/project.¹⁰

9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.2.1 Validation trends

Not applicable. There is no data for analysis.

9.2.2 Validation users

There is no data collection system on validation. According to experience, there is a high occurrence of a kind of validation in a non-open procedure, i.e. when at the end of direct agreement (outside of a formal procedure) between the teacher and the student, the teacher makes his decision and grants the student exemption from certain requirements (attendance, papers, and examination).

In the pilot initiative described earlier, a few hundred students (approximately) were involved in the open validation procedure (most of them part-time students).

Data on flows are only available for the ECDL examination system. In more than 400 examination centres, nearly 100 000 individuals apply for certification per year.

A similar certificate of competence is a language examination certificate (which uses standard valuation criteria and the method of language learning can be non-formal or informal). In accredited language exam centres, an average of 80 000 students take an exam in a foreign language every year.¹¹

Some credit transfer and validation related questions were integrated into the Hungarian questionnaire of the Eurostudent V data survey. The survey was organised in 2013 and the results published later. 16 745 Hungarian students participated in the data collection (76.3% full time students, 74.5% at BA level). 20% of all respondents declared that he/she tried to validate/recognise knowledge acquired previously. Unfortunately, the credit transfer process (credits gained from formal education, i.e. from another higher education institution) and validation (recognition of learning outcomes gained in non-formal and informal learning) has not been clearly separated in the relating question. The two different procedures have been treated as identical (under the name recognition). While among full time students this proportion was 15%, among part-time (typically older) students the rate was 40.9%. Of all part time students, 3.8% applied for credits on the basis of their previous work experiences. The equivalent rate among full-time students is less than 1%. These data strengthen the experience that validation mainly affects older, part time students.

9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

There is some contradiction in the fact that in the policy declarations and in the strategic documents validation is related to the low qualification of the named target group. Actually, the formalisation of validation procedures in the higher education sector is of particular importance, and its participants do not belong to the group of low-skilled people.

¹⁰ 277/1997. (XII. 22.) government decree 5. § (2) ah) point

¹¹ See at National Education Authority Language Exam Accrediting Center (NYAK) https://nyak.oh.gov.hu/doc/statisztika.asp?strId=_43_

10 Validation methods

10.1 Methodologies and methods

In the adult training sector, the test method is often used, not rarely in electronic form. Tests focus essentially on the knowledge element of competences. Evidence from interviews shows that there should be a complex way of assessing learning outcomes, e.g. in practice, in real work situations.

A validation process or a written report is set out during the validation. A written report is presented to the participants in the validation process which lists their previous work experience and the learning outcomes obtained in front of a jury.

There is also information which the employer provides. This is in the form of a certificate of the type of work that has been completed by the student participating in the validation process. This is primarily the case when adult students apply for exemption from vocational training in higher education.

In 2022, an accredited independent vocational examination centre was set up in each county of Hungary to organise and conduct vocational examinations at the end of VET programmes. These examination centres could also carry out validation, but they have neither the know-how, resources nor methods to do so at present. In the future, however, this network could be a promising potential site and resource centre for validation.

10.2 Use of ICT in validation

There are no existing ICT-based initiatives to support validation. Additionally, ICT tools are not being used for other purposes related to validation, such as management of processes, monitoring, and interoperability of achievements. Furthermore, digital technologies are not currently being used to register and keep track of the learning achievements of individuals. Currently, a new project is under implementation to develop of a website through which adults can apply for the validation procedure.¹²

In relation to the forward-looking aspect of ICT in validation there is widespread optimism among policy stakeholders that Individual Learning Account and the micro-credentials (for which a TSI project has also been launched with the support of the OECD), together with strong ICT background, will also bring significant progress in validation.

11 Quality assurance

11.1 Quality assurance processes

There are no existing national/ regional/ local frameworks for quality assurance for validation.

11.2 Monitoring and evaluation

There are no existing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the take up and success of validation practices.

¹² GINOP-6.1.9-18-Transport Training and Testing Centre

12 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust

Thinking about validation solutions was inspired by the international practice of the 1980s, so the use of the term “recognition” would be more accurate to describe the fragmented practice. This means that the validation process actually works in the form of “recognition” as in the 1980s. It works within the educational institution and is intended to relieve some of the study requirements. The decision and the certificate are valid only within the specific training institution.

The concept and the practice of validation are known in a narrow circle, especially among the experts dealing with the topic. (Hungarian laws do not use this term, recognition and exemption are the terms used). Through limited scope development projects or smaller projects funded by the EU, a few dozen people are getting to know more about the practice of other countries which are really operating validation systems.

According to interviews made in the frame of validation related projects (TÁMOP 4.1.3 and OECD RNFIL project country report on Hungarian validation practice) most teachers in higher education are reluctant to recognise the knowledge that a student has acquired in another institution. They declare they take responsibility only for the knowledge and certify with the degree they taught themselves.

Employers often believe that formal training or self-organised training is worth more than a (not really known) validation process.¹³

¹³ 80 interviews were made with employers in Hungary (in 2017) in the frame of NQF-in project.
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

This report is part of the 2023 update of the [European Inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). The inventory provides a comprehensive overview of validation practices across Europe, covering 32 systems in EU-27 Member States and EFTA countries.

The European inventory is the product of a long-standing cooperation of the European Commission, Cedefop and ETF on the field. The inventory was endorsed by the [Council recommendation of 2012](#) on validation and works together with the [European guidelines](#) as a tool to support countries in developing and implementing validation arrangements.

A rich source of information, the inventory informs dialogue and learning between countries and stakeholders developing and implementing validation in Europe. Our key objective is to support Member States so that more learners and workers can acquire and make visible new skills, which will support their career and further learning and improve their quality of life.

**CEDEFOP**European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE
Postal address: Cedefop service post, 57001 Thermi, GREECE
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu

visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu
