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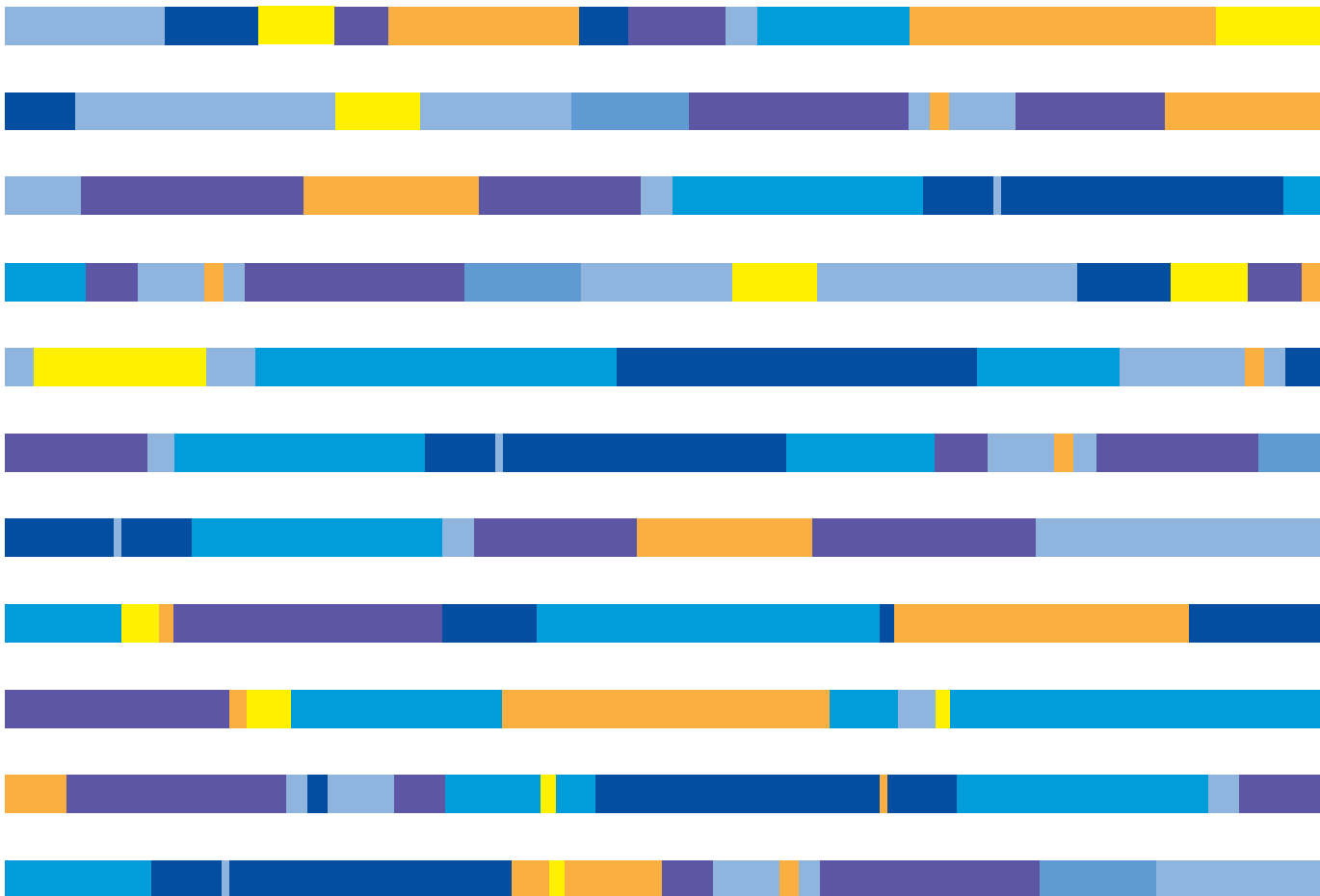
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

COUNTRY REPORT:
LIECHTENSTEIN

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1 Abstract

Validation of non-formal and informal learning remains low on Liechtenstein's policy agenda. There is no centralised, holistic approach to validation, although approaches have been developed in initial vocational education and training (IVET) and higher education (HE). Take-up of validation initiatives remains at a very low level.

No major changes have been reported since the 2018 update of the Inventory – neither regarding the overall policy context, nor to specific initiatives or the overall uptake. The National Qualifications Framework for the Principality of Liechtenstein (NQFL) has been implemented since 2018. The framework covers formal education and training qualifications (except for general education, which is not included), while there are no immediate plans to open up the scope towards non-formal and informal learning.

Progress towards the 2012 Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) has been limited. In higher education, validation is at the full discretion of higher education institutions. As for vocational education and training, the country's IVET system is intrinsically linked to that of Switzerland – hence, validation arrangements for VET are also shared between the two countries, i.e. validation candidates who strive for an IVET qualification will be directed to a Swiss canton that implements the respective procedure.

2 Introduction

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is not a policy priority in Liechtenstein, nor is it very much a focus of public attention.

No major changes have been reported since the 2018 update of the Inventory – neither regarding the overall policy context, nor regarding specific initiatives or the overall uptake.

The limited relevance of validation can at least partly be explained by the small size of the country and its very favourable labour market situation, with exceptionally low unemployment rates (annual average of 1.3% in 2022). Although the Principality of Liechtenstein has experienced constant population growth since the 1960s, its population remains below 40 000 (Budimir, 2021; Principality of Liechtenstein, n.d.).

Validation approaches have been developed for initial VET and higher education, while other sectors have not been covered so far. The National Qualifications Framework for Liechtenstein (NQFL) has been implemented since 2017. Its scope is currently limited to formal qualifications, more specifically to formal VET qualifications and to the higher education system, while general secondary level qualifications have been excluded.

Liechtenstein's VET system is closely aligned with the Swiss system. Liechtenstein does not maintain its own VET schools. Instead, the school-based part of IVET takes place in VET schools located in neighbouring Switzerland.

As a result, only the first in four steps in the validation process (i.e. information and guidance) is delivered in Liechtenstein, whereafter candidates are referred to a Swiss canton that offers the validation procedure for the requested IVET qualification.

The low level of take-up can thus on the one hand be traced back to small numbers of low-qualified and unemployed individuals in the country, as outlined above. On the other hand, the complexity and high demands of the IVET validation procedure likely act as a deterrent to the potential target group (i.e. adults without completed upper-secondary education). Ultimately, many adult candidates for an IVET qualification rather opt for another pathway such as the direct admission to the final exam or the

shortened IVET pathway (which usually includes elements of validation of learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts as well).

3 National perspective

3.1 Overarching approach to validation

No significant developments have been reported regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning since the 2018 update of the inventory, i.e. policy context, approach, focus, methods and the use of validation have remained largely unchanged.

One rather recent document is the **Educational Strategy 2025plus**, which lists eight strategic goals. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is featured as one of several fields of action within the third strategic goal 'Diverse educational paths', which focuses on promoting more individualised educational pathways, up- and reskilling opportunities and improved permeability of the education system (Ministerium für Äusseres, Bildung und Sport, 2021). However, to date it has not been linked to specific actions to promote validation of non-formal and informal learning in the country.

The legal basis for validation of non-formal and informal learning has not changed since the 2018 update of the Inventory.

The Liechtenstein **VET system** is closely linked to that of Switzerland. IVET is organised as a dual system, i.e. training takes place alternately in the company and in a vocational school. Since Liechtenstein does not maintain its own vocational schools, the entire school-based part of initial VET takes place in Switzerland. Liechtenstein contributes both directly (through shareholding) and indirectly (through participation in inter-cantonal finance agreements) to the running costs of these educational institutions (Eurydice, n.d.). As a result, the validation process in VET is also based on a similar process to that developed by Switzerland.

Within the VET system, section V (focused on qualification approaches) of the 2008 Vocational Education and Training Act covers the most important provisions:

- a) Article 45 states that vocational qualifications can be proved by state-recognised qualification approaches to validation of non-formal learning.
- b) Article 46 determines that the admission to any examination or qualification approach does not depend on attending certain educational programmes; where vocational qualifications have not been acquired in an organised educational programme, admission is only granted if the applicant has at least five years of work experience.
- c) Article 47 states that the government can promote organisations that develop or provide qualification approaches for the validation of non-formal learning/education.

The legal basis of validation in the higher education system was reformed in 2010 regarding the admission to higher or further education programmes based on the validation of non-formal or informal learning. In 2011, in conjunction with the new Law on Higher Education, also a new Regulation on Higher Education came into force (Government of Liechtenstein, 2011b) stating:

- a) the conditions and the process of admission without a Matura degree (upper secondary qualification) or a comparable degree *sur dossier* (on the basis of a written application with documents providing evidence of knowledge and

competences relevant to the respective degree) (Ordinance on Higher Education, Article 23 ff.);

- b) the limitation of the crediting of learning acquired outside of the higher education system regarding the acquisition of a protected further education master (Ordinance on Higher Education, Article 16, Paragraph 2).

Decisions on admission to higher education programmes without a *Matura* (i.e. the upper-secondary school leaving exam) – the admission *sur dossier* – are at the discretion of the individual higher educational institutions, in practice the individual faculties. They decide on the prospective student's ability to study based on validation of non-formal or informal learning (Government of Liechtenstein, 2013). Admission *sur dossier* can be implemented only in Bachelor programmes and in Master programmes for continuing education.

In Master programmes for continuing education, additionally, up to one-sixth of the necessary workload for the full qualification – 10 out of 60 ECTS credit points - can be validated through the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Individual learning accounts

Liechtenstein does not make use of individual learning accounts.

Skills audits

As regards skills audits, there is no specific offer provided in Liechtenstein. Skills audits are however an integral component of the validation process in VET, undertaken in Switzerland. Candidates describe and document their competences in a dossier, which is then assessed by an expert panel. On the basis of this assessment, the candidate receives a proof of learning achievements, which states their knowledge, skills and competence acquired. In addition, the document points out the necessary steps to achieve a full qualification (e.g. through additional training).

No information on any existing skills audits in PES to address migrants or refugees could be obtained.

3.2 Validation in education and training

Liechtenstein does not have a national system for validation in place. However, validation approaches have been developed and are implemented in higher education and in initial VET (the latter being delivered together with Switzerland). No validation approaches could be identified for general education nor adult education, confirming the information reported in the 2018 update of the Inventory.

In higher education, validation is under the supervision of the Office of Education (*Schulamt*), but within the purview of individual higher education institutions, more specifically the faculties, which implies a lack of a shared national reference point for all validation cases, and case-by-case tailoring. Validation for initial VET is carried out in Switzerland (see below for more information), while ABB (Office for VET and Career Guidance) provides only initial information and guidance, before forwarding candidates to respective Swiss cantons that offer the requested procedure.

There is no policy area or sector that has been specifically prioritised. Although validation of non-formal and informal learning is mentioned as one field of action in Liechtenstein's Educational Strategy 2025plus (see above), overall, it is not considered a priority in the country, given the small size of the country's population and generally good employment situation.

Validation in upper-secondary IVET

Validation procedures in IVET are addressed to adults who wish to catch up on upper-secondary level vocational qualifications, i.e. to obtain a VET certificate (Berufsattest,

BA) or a VET diploma (Fähigkeitszeugnis, FZ). Besides the regular full-time dual pathway¹ (i.e. without any validation), there are three different pathways available to adults. Only the first one is specifically referred to as a validation procedure, whereas the others (shortened basic VET and qualification procedure without VET) may include elements of validation of non-formal and informal learning. The validation procedure is only available for a list of specific IVET occupations, for which such a procedure has been formulated, whereas the qualification procedure without VET (see b) below) is generally available for all IVET qualifications.

(a) Validation procedure (validation of learning achievements)

Based on a dossier, an individual demonstrates that they already possess the required knowledge, skills and competence required for the vocational qualification in question. Possible gaps are filled with supplementary courses. Once all the required competences have been documented, a VET qualification will be awarded. For this pathway, no apprenticeship contract is signed (AIBA, 2017).

This validation procedure includes all four stages of validation (identification, documentation, assessment and certification) as described in the Council recommendation. The overall duration is quite extensive, with most candidates acquiring their aspired IVET qualification within 1.5 and 3 years.

Only the first step – information and advice – is (partially) offered in Liechtenstein. Information and some initial guidance are given but further guidance takes place in Switzerland. The multi-stage process involves various competence tests and showcasing of prior experience. Candidates who lack proof of a certain core competence need to follow relevant courses and take exams, which contributes to a time-consuming and demanding process. The procedure is described as follows (ABB, n.d.):

Step 1 - Information and advice (partly delivered in Liechtenstein)

ABB provides information and advice to interested individuals. This includes information on the ABB website through the Gateway Portal (*Eingangsportal*) and the first interview during which the validation process is explained and the needs of the candidate are identified. The ABB then allocates the candidate to the appropriate VET centre in Switzerland which offers further advice on validation (*Abklärungszentrum*)².

Candidates are expected to attend an information event at the VET centre, where detailed information on the following aspects will be provided: i) target groups of validation, (ii) information relevant to employers regarding the validation process and (iii) the approximate duration of the process. Participation in this information event is usually a mandatory requirement before the candidates can proceed to the next step.

Step 2 - Skills audit and guidance (in Switzerland)

The applicant describes and documents his/her competences in a standard format dossier (generally online,) and can add assessments/references from others. Guidance seminars and coaching are available, and the candidate has access to

¹ The dual VET or apprenticeship system plays an important role in Liechtenstein. Every year around 50% of pupils start an apprenticeship after compulsory education, while 10 to 15% follow a full-time school-based VET course. The apprenticeship programme consists of a practical component, which is carried out at the workplace (in-company training) and a classroom-based component which takes place at vocational secondary schools. As there are no vocational secondary schools in Liechtenstein, learners will mostly attend schools in Switzerland. Apprenticeships are organised in close cooperation with businesses and last between two and four years (2 years for programmes leading to a VET certificate, and 3-4 years for programmes leading to a VET diploma). In-company training is offered by some 700 businesses from industry, trade and the service sector. Approximately 1200 apprenticeships are currently registered, with 360 learners graduating with a final examination each year (Eurydice, n.d.).

² The VET centres can be found on the Gateway Portal (Eingangsportal) of Liechtenstein's Office for Vocational Education and Vocational Counselling ABB.

guidance services in Switzerland. The aim of step 2 is to complete and submit the full dossier correctly.

Step 3 – Assessment (in Switzerland)

A panel of experts is responsible for the assessment of the candidate's dossier (Panel Audit). The dossier, which includes the confirmation from the ABB to cover the costs of the validation, is then examined by the expert panel and a discussion is held with the candidate to clarify any questions.

The aim of step 3 is to enable the expert panel to make an assessment of the candidate's dossier.

Step 4a - Validation/Partial certification (in Switzerland):

The candidate receives a proof of learning achievements, which identifies the competences they have acquired as well as the modules/competences which must be obtained in order to achieve the qualification. (This proof of learning can on its own improve the applicant's chances on the labour market).

The candidate can attend the necessary training or acquire additional work experience in order to achieve the full qualification. Candidates do not have to participate in the final examination to validate basic vocational education. The aim of step 4a is to identify which of the candidate's existing skills can be recognised.

Step 4b – Certification (in Switzerland):

The expert panel re-evaluates the candidate's dossier. If all requirements are met, the candidate is awarded the full qualification (VET diploma).

(b) Qualification procedure without VET according to Article 46³ Vocational Education and Training Act (BBG)

Adults with at least five years of professional experience may directly apply for admission to the final apprenticeship examination, without attending an organised VET programme. Candidates either prepare themselves independently for the final exam or may attend preparatory courses. This pathway is available for all apprenticeship qualifications.

(c) Shortened basic VET

Individuals with completed secondary education and at least two years professional experience, or alternatively holders of a general baccalaureate, may opt for a shortened basic VET pathway. This pathway is offered for a number of qualifications in the fields of healthcare, childcare, personal care and agriculture. Learners sign an apprenticeship contract with a company. The overall duration of the shortened pathway is two years (AIBA, 2017).

Validation in higher education

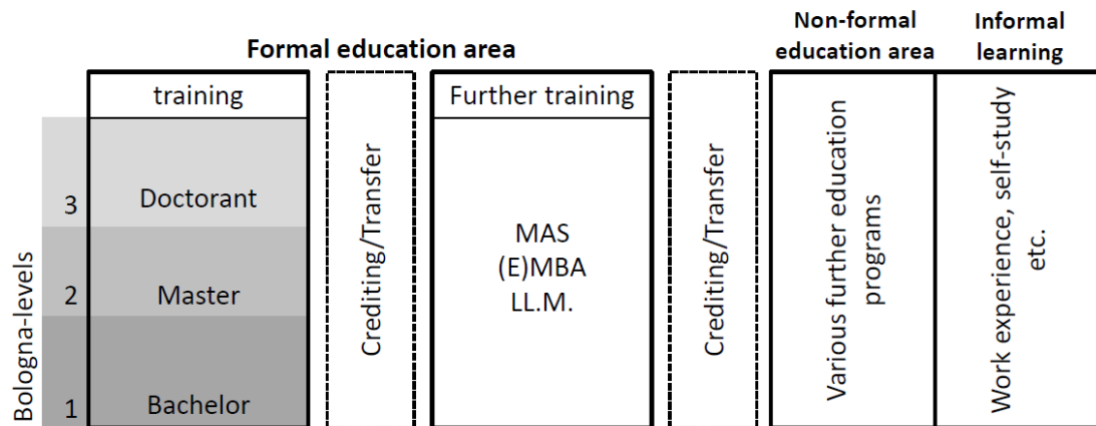
In higher education, the higher education institutions are free to choose appropriate approaches towards the validation of non-formal and informal learning as long as they are fair and undiscriminating (LLV, 2013). The validation of non-formal and informal learning is mainly used for access and admission to higher education programmes (called admission *sur dossier*)⁴ or gaining credits on the basis of prior learning or work experience, but not to obtain a full qualification or certification. Figure 3.1 below

³ Article 46 of the Vocational Education and Training Act stipulates that determines that the admission to any examination or qualification approach does not depend on attending certain educational programmes; where vocational qualifications have not been acquired in an organised educational programme, admission is only granted if the applicant has at least five years of work experience.

⁴ Article 23 of the Ordinance on Higher Education (Hochschulverordnung, HSV) provides the arrangements for an admission *sur dossier* to Bachelor programmes and Master programmes for continuing education, which allows the validation of non-formal and informal learning achievements on a case-by-case basis.

illustrates the relationships between the formal, the non-formal, and the informal areas of education (LLV, 2013) in higher education. Recognition and transfer of learning outcomes is possible between these different areas.

Figure 3.1 Relationships between formal, non-formal and informal areas of education in higher education



The development of the national qualification's framework for higher education (NQFL-HS) in 2011 has brought opportunities for validation and recognition of prior learning towards admission to higher education (LLV, 2013):

- admission towards study programmes (Bachelor/Master level) – the opportunity of admission *sur dossier* and assessment of the ability to study by the higher education institutions;
- permeability from higher vocational education to continuing education study programmes in the higher education institutions;
- validation of non-formal and informally acquired skills and knowledge for the recognition of programme achievements – especially within continuing education.

The *sur dossier* admission to higher education programmes (Bachelor programmes and Master programmes for continuing education) without a *Matura* (upper-secondary school leaving qualification) is based on a portfolio in which the applicants showcase the courses they have attended and their professional competences in line with the curricula of the given programme⁵. Validation is carried out for a specific educational programme chosen by the candidate. The validation is not a statement of equivalence or validation of the *Matura* exam, but validation of prior acquired learning towards admission at higher education level.

Validation cannot be used to obtain a full qualification, degree or diploma, but can only be used to access or gain admission to a higher education Bachelor programme or to a Master programme for continuing education, or to gain credits for Master programmes for continuing education (up to 10 of the 60 ECTS credit points⁶).

⁵ The University of Liechtenstein also sets an upper limit on the share of students admitted *sur dossier* at least for some of its Executive MBA programmes (e.g. up to 15% for the MBA Technology & Innovation). <https://www.uni.li/de/weiterbildung/themen/entrepreneurship/mba-technologie-innovation/zulassung>

⁶ According to Article 16 of the Ordinance on Higher Education.

3.3 Validation and the labour market

No specific initiatives linked to the labour market were reported, confirming the information provided in the 2018 Inventory. There are currently no known validation arrangements in place to help people access the labour market or to support their career development other than the validation procedures offered in the field of IVET; as described in 3.2.

3.4 Validation and the third sector

In line with what was reported in the 2018 Inventory, no specific initiatives linked to the third sector could be identified.

As regards volunteering, the Voluntary Social Year initiative (*Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr*) can be mentioned (aha, n.d.), which is open to young people between the ages of 17 and 30 and offers volunteering opportunities in various fields. The guided voluntary year allows participants to have their experience validated for the mandatory training in social work. The final certificate serves as a proof for mandatory training (*Vorpraktikum*) or provides extra points in other study fields and facilitates job search. No information could be found whether or to what extent the programme is designed alongside education institutions.

4 Links to credentials and qualifications

Link between the NQF and validation

The National Qualification Framework of Liechtenstein (NQFL) has been implemented since 2017. It covers formal VET and higher education, while general school education has been excluded. The NQFL takes the form of a Y and consists of the NQF-HS for academic higher education and the NQF for VET. VET qualifications are not allocated to NQF levels by Liechtenstein but by Switzerland, i.e. Liechtenstein has adopted within its NQF the VET framework employed in Switzerland. The self-certification process for the NQF-HS (for academic higher education) was finalised in 2013 (AIBA, 2017). The NQFL currently only covers formal qualifications, with no immediate plans to open up the framework.

The respective legal framework includes the decree on the NQF-HS which has been complemented with the decree for the NQF for VET, which was adopted at the end of 2017, together with the EQF-referencing report.

Due to the close cooperation with Switzerland in VET, the development of Liechtenstein's NQFL has been strongly linked to the Swiss model.

Furthermore, many labour market federations in Liechtenstein are integrated into the *Organisationen der Arbeitswelt (OdA)*⁷ in Switzerland and cooperate in the decision-making process of the Swiss framework of qualifications. Liechtenstein accepts the Swiss framework for VET with the relevant rankings and classifications of qualifications.

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

As described in chapter 3, there are several tangible outcomes that can be achieved through validation of non-formal learning, including:

⁷ *Organisationen der Arbeitswelt* refers to professional organisations; it is an umbrella term used to refer to social partners, trade associations as well as other competent organisations and providers of vocational and professional education and training.

- a) the award of qualifications (i.e. validation procedure towards IVET qualifications);
- b) access to formal learning opportunities (e.g. admission *sur dossier* to Bachelor programmes and Master programmes for continuing education);
- c) exemptions (as described for IVET and higher education).

Certificates of VET qualifications awarded through validation are the same as those awarded based on non-validation pathways. It is technically possible to identify whether a VET a qualification has been obtained through validation due to the absence of an apprenticeship training company stated on the document.

In higher education, only validation for access and admission is specifically regulated by law (i.e. the admission *sur dossier*), while validation for credit earning within a programme is not regulated or monitored – except for Master programmes for continuing education. For Master programmes for continuing education, the possibility to gain credits based on validation is limited by law to 10 of the 60 ECTS credit points (i.e. one sixth of the programme). The use of ECTS in higher education and modularised study programmes may in principle facilitate validation of non-formal and informal learning, but there is no robust evidence of the extent to which this is the case.

The term ‘partial qualifications’ is not used in Liechtenstein.

The term ‘micro-credentials’ has so far not been used in the context of Liechtenstein, and their relevance is still somewhat unclear. Supra-company training courses (LLV, 2023) offered in IVET could possibly be considered as ‘micro-credentials’, but this has not been part of a policy debate so far. They have so far not been linked to validation.

5 Standards

As reported in the 2018 Inventory, the (education and training) standards used for the validation processes for both admission decisions and assessments in VET and higher education are the same as those used within the formal education system. Swiss quality standards play an important role in the Liechtenstein education system. There are no nationally agreed standards or procedures to certify competences gained through non-formal and informal learning. No relevant changes could be reported in this regard.

VET qualification profiles are elaborated by the Swiss *Organisationen der Arbeitswelt* (OdAs), in which also associations from Liechtenstein have a direct seat.

The validation procedures in IVET specifically refer to the respective (Swiss) qualification profiles and the professional competences listed therein. For each IVET qualification that is accompanied by a validation procedure, SERI (Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation) issues a document listing all professional competences that makeup the qualification profile and need to be validated.⁸

⁸ For example, <https://www.becc.admin.ch/becc/public/bvz/beruf/download/4271> lists the requirements for the Federal VET Diploma in culinary arts.

6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and their coordination

There have been no changes regarding the organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and their coordination since the 2018 update of the Inventory.

In **initial VET**, ABB and employers continue to be the key stakeholders for validation, together with the respective stakeholders in the Swiss cantons which cover the main phases of the validation procedure.

Due to the small size of the population and the country – less than 40 000 inhabitants in 160 square km – there has been no need for decentralisation or major coordination: the provision of information and guidance in the validation in initial VET is offered at the national level by the ABB.

After initial advice and guidance provided to validation candidates, the ABB refers candidates directly to a Swiss canton which offers the requested validation procedure, where the remaining phases of the procedure will take place.

The role of the employer is to provide evidence of work experience in the form of an employer-issued work certificate. This document should indicate the period of work with the employer and the type of activities undertaken by the employee.

The Foundation for Adult Education (Foundation Adult Education Liechtenstein, n.d.) is a government-established and 100% government-funded institution. It receives the state funding allocated to non-formal learning – 1.7% of the education budget – and distributes the majority of this funding to providers of non-formal learning activities. The Foundation advocates the validation of non-formal and informal learning and also develops projects to pursue this goal. It is currently coordinating an Erasmus+ funded project on a lifelong learning strategy for Liechtenstein (2022-2023) (Foundation for Adult Education, 2022). The project seeks to improve cooperation between formal and non-formal learning sectors, and to facilitate access to lifelong learning for all population groups.

In **higher education**, autonomous higher education institutions have the responsibility for all validation approaches as confirmed by the 2010 ordinance on higher education and formalised by the development of the NQFL-HS (comprising the whole process of validation). Each higher education institution which provides education programmes is responsible for its own approach towards validation of non-formal and informal learning within the legal framework. The approach is subject to quality assurance and supervised by the government. The Liechtenstein higher education and research system consists of the following accredited institutions:

- a) the University of Liechtenstein (Universität Liechtenstein);
- b) one small private higher education institution which offers only PhD, namely the Private University in the Principality of Liechtenstein (Private Universität im Fürstentum Liechtenstein, UFL); and
- c) the Liechtenstein Institute, a research institute which has no education provision.

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

7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising

In line with what was reported in the 2018 Inventory, no specific measures to increase outreach or awareness-raising initiatives have been identified. This reflects the overall policy approach on validation in the country, which is not key priority at the moment and probably also not in the foreseeable future.

For validation procedures in IVET, specific information is available online (see next section) but no specific actions are taken to raise awareness of opportunities for validation. Potential candidates are required to take initiative themselves and actively seek information and guidance.

7.2 Information, advice and guidance

For validation in VET, the main access point for information is the Gateway Portal (*Eingangsportal*)⁹ which leads to information provided by ABB (Office for VET and Career Guidance). The support to individuals covers the online platform as first point of access, online material available for download and the possibility to arrange a face-to-face interview with ABB.

The website provides information to individuals on the validation process for acquiring IVET qualifications, but also on alternative pathways for adults to achieve an IVET qualification. The website furthermore explains the phases of the validation process and the distribution of costs. Information provided on the ABB website is available in German language only. To obtain further information, interested individuals are invited to phone the ABB and arrange a face-to-face meeting.

Information provided by the ABB is publicly financed and free of charge, apart from the nominal fee of CHF 50 charged to candidates who decide to enlist in the validation procedure.

As soon as a candidate submits their application for a validation procedure with ABB, they will refer the candidate to the appropriate VET centre in Switzerland (usually to one of the larger cantons). The implementation of the following phases of the process will thus not take place with ABB but with the respective Swiss canton.

Furthermore, candidates also have access to guidance seminar and coaching during the process, i.e. during and after the skills audit and when preparing their dossier.

In higher education, validation is at the discretion of higher education institutions. No specific information sources could be identified. As reported for the 2018 Inventory, the ABB provides information to applicants interested in higher education. Information on validations provided to applicants on an individual basis, e.g. in cases where they ask for admission to a study programme without Matura (upper-secondary school leaving qualification) or for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The Office for Education ('Schulamt'), which acts as NARIC, takes an advisory role but is not actively involved in providing information and guidance.

⁹ <https://www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/61264>; <https://www.llv.li/>; <https://www.llv.li/inhalt/12066/amtsstellen/berufsabschluss-fur-erwachsene>; https://www.llv.li/files/abb/f1_infoblatt.pdf Starting from the Swiss [berufsberatung.ch](https://www.berufsberatung.ch) portal, the site lists entrance portals for all Swiss cantons and for Liechtenstein, adding that the latter does not offer validation procedures but should be contacted for further information and counselling. This portal solely addresses adults who want to catch up on their vocational qualifications.

8 Validation practitioners

8.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The number of staff involved in validation in VET is small, while in HE staff is spread across faculties. For IVET, only step 1 in the validation process (information and advice) takes place in Liechtenstein. ABB employs one counsellor tasked with validation (and a deputy), who take on this role along with other duties, given the small numbers of interested individuals who are interested in undertaking the validation procedure. Most validation professionals in Switzerland do not have a specific qualification related validation (for more information, see country report for Switzerland).

In higher education institutions, it is typically faculty-level administrative staff who take on the role of validation practitioners and are tasked with validation alongside other duties. Heads of faculty are generally involved in the validation.

8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

As reported in the 2018 Inventory, there is limited information available on the training and support provided to validation.

The ABB staff member in charge of validation exchanges with the various Swiss VET centres that are involved in providing validation procedures, and attends the annual meetings of representatives of all cantonal Gateway Portals in Switzerland.

In higher education, the Office for Education (*Schulamt*) acts as NARIC and organises annual meetings for HEI staff in charge of recognition, which includes validation of non-formal and informal learning. In addition to national-level workshops, there are also workshops held at institutional and regional level where representatives from neighbouring countries are invited.

8.3 Qualifications and experience

In line with what has been reported under 8.1. there are no mandatory qualification requirements for validation practitioners in Liechtenstein. As reported in the 2018 Inventory, ABB counsellors (for VET) and administrative staff (in HEIs) may have certain mandatory qualification requirements, which are however not specifically related to the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding and costs

The costs for the validation procedure refer to developing the validation dossier, accompanying coaching sessions (which are optional), the dossier evaluation through experts, the cost for complementary education provided, as well as a fee for the ABB service. The State (i.e. in this case the ABB) covers the majority of the cost of the procedure, up to a maximum value of approximately CHF 8 000.¹⁰

¹⁰ This maximum amount corresponds to the costs of full-time vocational training, which is regulated in the intercantonal vocational school agreement (*Interkantonale Berufsfachschulvereinbarung*) and is adjusted annually. See <https://www.edk.ch/de/themen/bildungsfinanzierung/berufsfachschulen>

Information about the distribution of costs vis provided in a handout, which is publicly available on the ABB website.

Table 1 Distribution of costs for the IVET validation procedure

Phase	Cost (in CHF)	Cost to be borne by...
1: Develop validation dossier	EUR 154–309 (CHF 150–300)	ABB
2: Accompanying coaching	Optional EUR 411–1 645 (CHF 400 – 1 600)	Candidate
3: Dossier evaluation	EUR 257–823 (CHF 250 – 800)	ABB
4a: Complementary education	EUR 514–5 039 (CHF 500 – 4 900)	ABB
4b: Fees for ABB service	EUR 51 (CHF 50)	Candidate

Source: https://www.llv.li/files/abb/f1_infoblatt.pdf (own translation)

Candidates receive a guarantee for a state subsidy to cover the costs of the validation process. Any resident of Liechtenstein is eligible to benefit from this support. Candidates need to bear a moderate share of the costs, which refers to the nominal fee of EUR 51 (CHF 50) to be paid to ABB for its services as well as the cost for any accompanying coaching (which is optional for candidates); if applicable.

Furthermore, candidates may incur additional cost for travelling to the respective Swiss canton in charge of their validation procedure.

If the validation procedure is carried out by a Swiss canton that makes use of an ICT validation portal, candidates may need to pay an additional fee for registration on the validation tool. This is, for instance the case in the cantons of Zurich, Bern, Basel Land and Wallis, where candidates need to pay EUR 93 (CHF 90) to receive the login details to register on the validation tool (Kanton Zurich, 2019; Kanton Zurich, 2020).

To sum up, while the State covers most of the cost for the validation procedure, candidates might still incur considerable expenses, in particular when they make use for accompanying coaching sessions.

Furthermore, the indirect costs for individuals should be mentioned, which include the (work) time foregone during the validation process which for those in employment may imply a salary reduction as well as the time devoted to the validation process including the development of a detailed dossier with documentation and evidence of their knowledge, skills and competence.

Companies do not contribute to the funding and there are no tax incentives to encourage their involvement in validation.

In higher education, it is up to each HEI to decide on any fees for an admission approach *sur dossier*. The University of Liechtenstein, for instance, does not charge any additional feeds for validation – the costs are covered by the general application fee.

Liechtenstein does not make use of individual learning accounts.

9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.2.1 Validation trends

There is no systematic data collection at national level monitor take-up of validation. Detailed data is only available at the level of education providers, i.e. HEIs in Liechtenstein and VET schools in Switzerland.

The main target group for the IVET validation procedures are adults with more than five years of professional work experience but without a completed qualification at upper-secondary level. The level of take-up has remained relatively stable, at a very low level, over the years. Per year, no more than one to two candidates opt for the validation procedure to obtain an IVET qualification. The procedure is very demanding, it requires a high level of language and writing skills from candidates. In addition, a high degree of independence, self-discipline and self-organisation skills are required to undergo the procedure.

In addition, further uptake is limited by the fact that the validation procedure is currently only offered for a small share of IVET qualifications, and not all procedures are offered in all Swiss cantons. This means that candidates from Liechtenstein might not always find a validation procedure in the cantons that are closest to the border.

In higher education, information received suggests that the University of Liechtenstein is in practice implementing a ceiling to limit the number of admissions based on validation to 5-10% of the total number of students, although this is not explicit in the university regulations or admission information. Exemplary information is only available for the Executive MBA programme Technology & Innovation, which has set an upper limit of 15% on the share of students admitted *sur dossier* according to the admissions information on their website (University of Liechtenstein, n.d.). Overall, current data shows that the number of validation users is negligible.

9.2.2 Validation users

Given the overall low level of take-up of validation procedures, there is no clear pattern of how validation users are distributed in terms of age, gender, qualification level achieved.

Validation users in IVET have all so far acquired a qualification in the field of healthcare. Now, there are no more than one to two new validation users per year in IVET. There is a significantly larger number of 20-30 candidates per year who opt for one of the other catch-up pathways towards an IVET qualification (i.e. the qualification procedure without VET and shortened basic VET, presented in 3.2)¹¹. As part of step 1 (information and advice), ABB presents all available opportunities to candidates to catch up on their IVET qualification – they point out that often, other pathways are more suitable and quicker to achieve than the validation procedure.

Higher education institutions do not report comprehensive figures on validation users. The only relevant data that could be retrieved in this context was the number of enrolments 'sur dossier' in Master programmes for continuing education (Executive Master programmes) at the University of Liechtenstein. In the 2019/2020 study year, four students were accepted based on *sur dossier* applications (in this case Matura + required work experience) – this corresponds to some 6% of total number of enrolments in Master programmes for continuing education that year (Universität Liechtenstein, 2021).

¹¹ Although these alternative pathways towards an IVET qualification often include elements of validation of learning acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, graduates from these alternative pathways are not counted as part of the number of validation users at national level.

9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

There are no specific initiatives in place to use validation offers to support disadvantaged groups such as unemployed people or those at risk of unemployment, low-qualified adults, NEETs, migrants or people with disabilities.

As reported in the 2018 Inventory, support for migrants and refugees is available through the general process of initial VET and higher education validation, but the current system may disadvantage them given their low language proficiency.

More generally and not specifically related to validation, the war in Ukraine has brought back the issue that migrants without sufficient language proficiency in German are practically excluded from the VET system.

Also in higher education, there are no special validation procedures in place for migrants and refugees, although the process itself is aligned with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The participation of refugees in HE is very low, confirming what already been reported in the 2018 Inventory. This is partly because Liechtenstein does not offer bachelor's programmes in English.

10 Validation methods

10.1 Methodologies and methods

There have been no significant changes reported on the validation methods used since the 2018 Inventory. The validation process in both initial VET and higher education is focused on a dossier/portfolio system as a basis for decisions by the validating stakeholders/institutions. The applicant's portfolio consists of documents and proofs of the individuals' knowledge, skills and competences acquired in different contexts, including especially non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

As reported in previous Inventory reports, there is limited knowledge of the extent to which the needs of different target groups and different purposes of education, labour market and the third sector are considered in the validation process. While the validation in initial VET is characterised by personalised support, the take-up by users is low.

10.2 Use of ICT in validation

For validation procedures in the field of **IVET**, the respective ICT tools used in Switzerland are of relevance. As pointed out before, candidates who wish to acquire an IVET qualification will be directed to a suitable Swiss canton which offers the requested validation procedure. In Switzerland, the use of webtools to support validation processes has increased in recent years. Several cantons, such as Zurich, Bern, Wallis and Basel Land make use of ICT-based validation tools to support the elaboration of the validation dossier and guide candidates through the validation process.

For the canton of Zurich, it can be accessed at <https://www.zh.bae-dpa.ch/Verwaltung/111/40>. The dossier can only be submitted through the validation tool and not in any other way. Based on the experts' evaluation, a certificate of prior learning will be issued, which will be available in the validation portal and will additionally be sent to the candidate as a paper copy by mail. If the evaluation of the dossier leads to a positive result, this will automatically lead to the award of the respective VET qualification (Federal VET Certificate or Federal VET Diploma). In case of a negative evaluation outcome, the certificate of prior learning will list recommendations on how the unsuccessful candidate could acquire the missing learning outcomes (for more information, see country report for Switzerland).

For HE, no information on the use of ICT-based tools was reported.

11 Quality assurance

11.1 Quality assurance processes

The quality assurance for validation in VET is linked to general quality assurance mechanisms in the education system and thus closely linked to Swiss quality assurance arrangements for VET.

In higher education, institutions are supervised by the Office for Education under the Ministry of Education. There is no specific framework for quality assurance for validation in place.

11.2 Monitoring and evaluation

As reported in the 2018 Inventory, there is currently limited evidence of the benefits and impact of validation practices on users, simply due to the small numbers of individuals who have actually gone through the process. There is no mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the take up and impact in place.

Previous Inventory reports pointed to potential benefits, which especially for validation in VET, could include improved employability as well as enhanced access to further training. It was further noted that individuals going through the validation process would be more likely to keep their jobs than other low-qualified employees and would be more interested in additional training and increasing their prospects to find new employment. Furthermore, the validation could improve the integration and flexibility of mobile EU citizens in Liechtenstein's labour market.

12 Position of validation in society; visibility and trust

There are no reported changes regarding the position of validation in society, compared to the 2018 update of the Inventory.

Validation is not a policy priority in Liechtenstein, and it is not firmly anchored in national strategies. There is no lifelong learning strategy in place (although the Foundation for Adult Learning is currently involved in a related project, which might signal development in this regard). While validation of non-formal and informal learning is featured as one of several fields of action in the current Educational Strategy 2025plus, this is not accompanied by specific measures or actions.

Not surprisingly, take-up by users of the initial VET validation procedure is at a very low level. With only one to two validation candidates per year and no specific outreach and awareness-raising activities in place, the take-up is expected to remain at a very low level for the foreseeable future. The demanding procedure and long time required for the validation process contribute to the lack of interest in validation, compared to other pathways towards a VET qualification.

Validation in the higher education sector is a legal right in Bachelor programmes and Master programmes for continuing education but based on the decisions of autonomous institutions which so far have not developed institutionally shared regulations and procedures in validation. The limited take-up of validation is partly caused by the de facto cap for validation applicants in the University of Liechtenstein which ensures that the maximum number of validation applications for admission remains small, and the number of validation users modest.

The detailed and thorough validation process in the VET sector has gained the trust of employers, at least on the basis of Swiss experience. Interest in validation among employers, trade unions and recruitment agencies is greatest in sectors which mainly employ low- or medium-skilled workers and often non-nationals (e.g. in cleaning, construction, etc.).

In general, however, there is limited understanding about the benefits of validation for the individual and the society. There is no national push to include non-formal and informal learning in the NQF or prioritise validation, mainly because of the positive labour market and educational outcomes in Liechtenstein which implies that the majority of nationals have formal qualifications and the rate of early school leaving is low.

There is scope for greater efforts in the validation of non-formal and informal learning, given the rate of change in the world of work, the important share of low skilled population, and significant migration flows which drive the economy. Liechtenstein is a highly industrialised country with 36% of total employment in the goods-producing industry in 2019 (Amt für Statistik, 2023), which is subject to globalisation trends, including possibly relocation to low wage countries.

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