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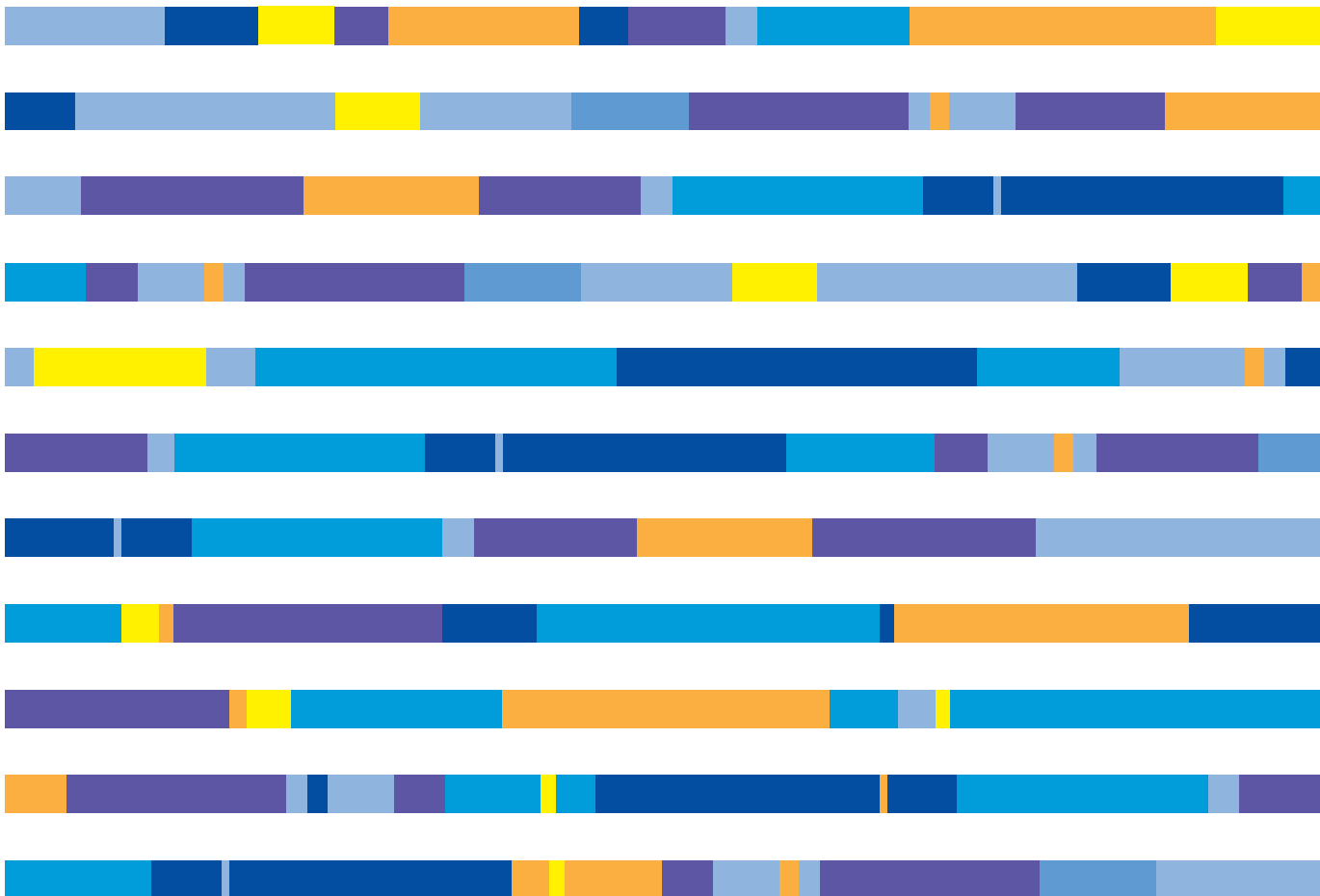
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update

COUNTRY REPORT:
LATVIA

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
1 Abstract	4
2 Introduction.....	4
3 National perspective.....	5
3.1 Overarching approach to validation	5
3.2 Validation in education and training.....	8
3.3 Validation and the labour market	8
3.4 Validation and the third sector	9
4 Links to credentials and qualifications	9
5 Standards	11
6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and their coordination.....	12
7 Outreach, awareness raising, provision of information, advice and guidance	13
7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising.....	13
7.2 Information, advice and guidance	13
8 Validation practitioners.....	14
8.1 Profile of validation practitioners.....	14
8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners.....	14
8.3 Qualifications and experience.....	14
9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes.....	15
9.1 Funding and costs	15
9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes	16
9.2.1 Validation trends	16
9.2.2 Validation users.....	16
9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups	16
10 Validation methods.....	17
10.1 Methodologies and methods.....	17
10.2 Use of ICT in validation	17
11 Quality assurance	17
11.1 Quality assurance processes.....	17
11.2 Monitoring and evaluation.....	17
12 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust	18
13 References	19
13.1 Reference	19
13.2 Sources	21

1 Abstract

Since 2018, the focus has been on making incremental improvements to the existing validation system rather than implementing radical changes. The introduction of modular vocational education programmes, complete with module maps, has marked a significant step forward. In the higher education sector, the previous restriction of allowing only 30% of credit points through validation has been lifted, providing greater flexibility for learners.

The validation system is operational, and efforts are concentrated on improving accessibility and directing potential users towards validation opportunities. Project-based activities, largely funded by European Funds, have been instrumental in achieving this goal. One notable project involved participants benefiting from consultations with adult education coordinators and career counsellors, allowing their skills to undergo a professional audit. Immediate feedback on learning offerings and skill validation opportunities empowered participants to align their profiles with labour market demands.

Financial support has also been extended to individuals, making them eligible for 90%-100% expense compensation for validation costs.

Targeted support has been provided to specific groups, such as refugees and 'alternative status'¹ migrants, through a social mentoring service.

The national education strategy emphasises skills development. Key aspects include flexible modular learning, the recognition of partial qualifications, micro-credentials. Technology will be harnessed to digitize educational documents. Additionally, the implementation of individual learning accounts is part of the national investment plan.

2 Introduction

The validation initiatives have undergone some improvements rather than radical changes in the existing system since the last update of the Inventory in 2018.

The first modular vocational education programmes have been developed along with module maps, programme content and required teaching equipment. Within the higher education sector in 2018 the restriction that only 30% of credit points from the respective study programme may be granted through validation of the learning outcomes was lifted.

The validation system is operational, and the focus is on the fine-tuning of targeted activities by improving the accessibility for potential validation users. These targeted, project-based activities have been consolidated and largely EU-funded.

In one of the projects, participants benefitted from consultations with both adult education coordinators and career counsellors. This enabled their skills to undergo a professional audit by experts in skill acquisition and demand. Consequently, they received prompt feedback on learning opportunities and validation prospects, helping them align their skill profiles with the current requirements of the labour market.

Since, 2017, employed individuals aged 25 and over are eligible to receive 90% financial compensation for validation-related costs. This support aims to facilitate their

¹ Under Latvian law, alternative status is granted to a person if there is reason to believe that: 1. the person is subject to the death penalty or corporal punishment, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or degrading punishment in the country of citizenship or in the previous country of residence (if the person is a stateless person); 2. because of widespread violence caused by international or internal armed conflicts, the person needs protection and cannot return to the country of his or her citizenship or to his or her former home country (if he or she is a stateless person).

efforts to adjust their skills to meet the demands of the labour market. Individuals on low incomes are eligible to receive 100% compensation. Since 2018, unemployed persons are also eligible for full compensation.

Until 2021, persons with a refugee status (and alternative status, as defined in Latvian law) were able to benefit from social mentoring services focusing on increasing the integration of individuals at risk of discrimination in society and the labour market. The role of the mentors was to assist eligible persons in acquiring the necessary skills for entering the Latvian labour market.

Furthermore, Latvia's national education strategy, elaborated in close cooperation with OECD and conceptually focused on skills as per its title "*Future skills for the future society*- Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027" - foresees a range of important policy developments:

- professional higher education shall be strengthened by introducing a flexible learning offer based on a modular approach;
- partial recognition of competences acquired outside of formal education;
- providing opportunities for evaluation, validation, accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes in different levels and types of education in a national and transnational context;
- universities will play a crucial role in providing lifelong learning and adult education opportunities;
- the modular approach in higher education, including the introduction of study module micro-credentials on a European scale, will be evaluated;
- use of technologies, for example in the digitization of education documents, thereby promoting the mobility of learners, as well as simplifying the process of certification, comparison and recognition of qualifications;
- further improvement of transparency of the diploma, as well as the professional qualification system and the efficiency of the recognition procedure.

The guidelines foresee improvements to the skills validation system by introducing the recognition of partial qualifications of modular vocational education programmes. Guidelines for evaluating learning in non-formal, work-based and informal settings will be developed for employers.

The Latvian Recovery and Resilience Mechanism foresees the implementation of individual learning accounts and determining the most suitable Individual Learning Account solution for Latvia as part of the investment.

3 National perspective

3.1 Overarching approach to validation

The development of the Latvian education and skills strategy was supported by Erasmus+ ² in two phases – 1. assessment and 2. implementation of the guidelines.

The Latvian Ministry of Education and Science collaborated with the OECD to create tailored policy solutions suiting that address Latvia's skills requirements and demands. Their collaboration aimed to assess existing challenges and opportunities strategically and comprehensively to build a more effective skills system for the country.

² OECD Prasmju stratēģija [OECD Skills Strategy], Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/projekts/oecd-prasmju-strategija>

The report *OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations*³, published in December 2019, highlighted the opportunities and offered suggestions to improve skills acquisition, promote a culture of lifelong learning, lessen skill imbalances on the labour market, and improve the management of the skills system.

Based on the report's recommendations, the implementation guidance was developed and published in October 2020: *OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia - Developing Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027*⁴. As stated, "A wide range of Latvian actors across ministries, levels of government, education and training providers, employers, trade unions, the non-profit sector and learners have been involved in the development of the Guidelines".

As indicated by the title of the implementation guidance, the results of the comprehensive national skills analysis conducted in collaboration with the OECD were directly incorporated into Latvia's education policy - Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027⁵ (in force since 22.06.2021)

The Education Development Guidelines were developed under Latvia's Education Law, (Paragraph 18 of Section 141)⁶, and constitute Latvia's National Medium-term Strategy for Education and Skills, also supporting Latvia's relevant national and international commitments. The Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 are titled "Future skills for the future society", emphasising the importance of the skills acquisition, as well as referring to current European and global development planning initiatives – i.e., the OECD's National Skills Strategies Project and the European Commission's European Skills Agenda.

According to the aforementioned implementation guidance: "adult learning matters for Latvia, as the lack of productivity in workplaces, coupled with demographic trends, are exacerbating skills shortages, thus requiring workers to enhance their skills" and "a strong culture of lifelong learning, particularly in adulthood, is essential for Latvia to boost the skills of its adults".

One of the challenges for Latvia –is to improve the governance of the skills system, developing more systematic cooperation together with and among municipalities on skills policy for better strategic oversight. In July 2023, Cabinet regulations came in force for licencing non-formal education programmes⁷.

The efforts are towards the centralisation of quality assurance processes in non-formal education, enhancing stakeholder cooperation at all governance levels, developing an integrated monitoring and information skills system, and increasing all stakeholders' investments in lifelong learning – as reliance is currently mainly on EU funding.

One of the potential monitoring indicators suggested for adult learning is the "Number of adults receiving professional qualifications outside formal education through the validation process" based on OECD guidance: "Consider the challenges of interpreting the indicator. If the number is decreasing it could be that fewer adults have participated in the validation process in total, or the same number of adults has participated but fewer were able to pass the validation process for a variety of reasons

³ OECD Skills Strategy Latvia: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/74fe3bf8-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/74fe3bf8-en>

⁴ OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia: Developing Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027, OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/publications/oecd-skills-strategy-implementation-guidance-for-latvia-ebc98a53-en.htm>

⁵ Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2021.-2027. gadam "Nākotnes prasmes nākotnes sabiedrībai" [Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 "Future skills for the future society"], <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/324332-par-izglitibas-attistibas-pamatnostadnem-20212027-gadam>

⁶ Izglītības likums [Law on Education], <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/50759-izglitibas-likums>

⁷ Cabinet Regulations No. 395 "The procedure for on issuing permits for the implementation of the non-formal education programme" (in force since 19.07.2023)

(e.g. ineligibility). A share would be easier to interpret, but it may be challenging to identify the total number of adults who participated in adult learning outside the formal system and are eligible for the validation process. Consider tracking whether the qualifications gained through this process are sufficiently understood by stakeholders (e.g. employers)”

The Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 aim to improve the skills recognition system by integrating the recognition of partial qualifications. This means that not only full qualifications, but also partial competences will be recognised (and monitored). The purpose is to certify the acquisition of specific competences that align with the modular vocational education programmes. This will promote the effective utilisation of acquired skills. Additionally, guidelines will be developed to evaluate non-formal education, workplace education, and everyday learning outcomes for companies.

The national validation framework is currently operational, and the work on partial recognition (modular vocational education programs) is underway.

On October 11, 2022, amendments to the Education Law entered into force⁸, aiming to ease the implementation of non-formal education programmes designed for children, young people, and adults alike. “*These amendments to the law are an important step in ensuring validation of non-formal education of children and young people*”⁹.

In July 2023, Cabinet Regulations No. 395 introduced centralised procedures for issuing accreditation permits to educational institutions and other organisations (e.g., National Armed Forces) for the implementation of Latvia’s non-formal programme (in force since 19.07.2023). Before then, this was the responsibility of municipalities.

The Recovery and Resilience Mechanism Plan of Latvia was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 28.04.2021. It contains strategic investment plans for digital skills, for sustainable and socially responsible adult education systems, and for the development of individual learning accounts (ILAs). The Plan explicitly refers to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts: the expectation is reforms linked to the development of ILAs should be implemented by the end of 2023 as part of establishing a sustainable and socially responsible support system for adult education.

Similarly, the provisions of the Cabinet of Ministers that govern the creation of ILAs are expected to come into force. This includes establishing eligibility criteria for users and quality criteria for selecting educators. Until May 31, 2026, reforms related to the pilot project “*Individual learning account approach pilot project*” (No. 61) will be carried out, which part of the target indicator “*Development of a sustainable and socially responsible support system for adult education*” (2.3.1.r). The purpose of this pilot project, to be completed by 2026, is to come up with the most suitable ILA solution in the context of Latvia. The pilot project aims to involve 3,500 to create and manage their ILA; data on participation and achievements will be kept throughout the project.

Amendments were made to Latvia’s Vocational Education Law in 2022 which promote flexible learning and validation for levels 1-4 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF). Validation is liberalised and decentralised, in the sense that it can be undergone anywhere and at any time, with validation leading to a state-recognised

⁸ Grozījumi Izglītības likumā [Amendments to the Law on Education], <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335868-grozijumi-izglitibas-likuma>

⁹ Veikts nozīmīgs solis neformālās izglītības atzīšanā darbā ar jaunatni [An important step has been taken in the recognition of non-formal education in work with youth], JaunatnesLietas.lv, <https://jaunatneslietas.gov.lv/current-events/veikts-nozimigs-solis-neformalas-izglitibas-atzisana-darba-ar-jaunatni>

document not only certifying completion of a qualification, but also of partial qualifications¹⁰.

The Latvian qualifications database (LQD - <https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/>) includes qualifications that are referenced to the LQF., meaning that professional qualifications at LQF levels 1-4 obtained through validation are the same as those as obtained in formal education¹¹.

LQD qualifications comprise knowledge, skills and competences, which are confirmed by an educational document. The website provides detailed information on Latvia's education system, on the qualifications that can be obtained, also allowing a comparison of the contents of qualifications.

The LQD structures qualifications into eight levels, in accordance with the LQF, which is referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF). LQF covers almost all types and levels of education (except preschool education).

The LQD provides data on qualifications issued in Latvia since 2016. The content of LQD is regularly updated with information received from sources such as the State Education Information System / national education register. The LQD's information in English on the content of qualifications is included in the EU's Europass portal.

With the support of the ESF, the OECD's International Program for the Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) was conducted in Latvia in Spring 2023 to collect data from 7,700 residents¹² which are to inform the development of educational and training programmes targeting adults to help them acquire the missing skills.

One of the OECD's conclusions is that the government lacks capacity to make full use of information on skills available in the workforce to formulate policies. Yet, the amendments to Latvia's Vocational Education Law in 2022, which promote flexible access to validation at LQF levels 1-4 through process standardisation. Despite these developments, there is still no overarching monitoring system in place for validation.

3.2 Validation in education and training

As described in the previous sections, the main development in this sector relates to the amendments made to the Vocational Education Law in 2022. These amendments aim to build a flexible VET and adult learning system whereby validation can be easily accessed, notably through the standardisation or streamlining of the process. Importantly, this also entails the validation and recognition of partial qualifications (at certification stage).

3.3 Validation and the labour market

The State Employment Agency (SEA) supports unemployed persons in finding and applying for suitable job opportunities. The SEA also supports unemployed refugees by directly introducing them to employers. SEA counsellors assist jobseekers in identifying and documenting their skills. Jobseekers may also access the SEA's electronic unemployment profiling method to set job searching options and to find suitable labour market activation measures.

The landing page for Ukrainian jobseekers states that "*information on the vacancies portal is available in Latvian, therefore, when searching for vacancies on your own,*

¹⁰ Source: Eurydice <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/latvia/national-reforms-vocational-education-and-training-and-adult>

¹¹ Latvijas kvalifikāciju datubāze [Latvian Qualifications Database], <https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/>

¹² Latvijā pēta pieaugušo prasmes; respondenti saņem uzaicinājuma vēstuli, Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija [Adult skills are studied in Latvia; respondents receive an invitation letter, Ministry of Education and Science], <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/latvija-peta-pieauguso-prasmes-respondenti-sanem-uzaicinajuma-vestuli>

you will need the help of people who know the Latvian language"¹³. Latvian language courses are considered as one of the labour market activation measures in relation to migrants and refugees. Tools are also available for these groups to self-assess their knowledge of the Latvian language¹⁴. Labour market action measures and unemployment prevention measures are based on the voucher method¹⁵ giving jobseekers access to professional development programmes and continuing educational programme modules or sets of modules.

Until December 30, 2021, social mentoring could be requested by jobseekers with a refugee or alternative status or by their employers upon the signature of an employment contract. The social mentors were recruited via the European Social Fund (ESF) operational programme "*Growth and Employment*" 9.1.4. of the specific support objective "*Increase the integration of persons exposed to the risks of discrimination in society and the labour market*" 9.1.4.4. within the framework of the "*Promotion of diversity (prevention of discrimination)*". The role of the social mentors was to support persons with a refugee or alternative status in acquiring the necessary skills for their professional development.

The ESF project of the State Education Development Agency "*Professional competences development of employed persons*" which ran between 2017 and 2023 provided adult education and career counselling, mainly to groups at risk of social exclusion, including refugees and persons with an alternative status.

There are also licensed private employment agencies¹⁶ entitled to offer job placement services (consultations regarding job placements, information on the vacancies, or other employment-promoting services). Licences for providing job placement services are issued by the State Employment Agency to organisations which are listed on its website.

3.4 Validation and the third sector

There have been no major developments in this respect since the last Inventory update of 2018. Validation is not established within the third sector. Only the Agency for International Programs for Youth has initiated a reflective exploration into potential avenues for validation in the third sector.

4 Links to credentials and qualifications

There is a National Qualification Framework¹⁷ Validation practices are embedded into the LQF. Qualifications awarded through validation are referenced to the LQF's qualification levels. For LQF levels 1-4 (VET qualifications), state-recognised certificates of professional qualification are issued by VET institutions to candidates who have passed their examinations¹⁸.

¹³ Ukrainas civiliedzīvotājiem, kuri meklē darba iespējas, Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra, [For Ukrainian civilians who are looking for job opportunities, State Employment Agency] <https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/ukrainas-civiliedzivotajiem-kuri-mekle-darba-iespejas>

¹⁴ Pašvērtēšanas un pašmācības rīks [Self evaluation and self learning tool], valoda.lv, <https://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/pasvertesanas-un-pasmacibas-riks>

¹⁵ Kvalifikācijas ieguve, Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra [Qualification acquisition, State Employment Agency], <https://www.nva.gov.lv/lv/kvalifikācijas-ieguve>

¹⁶ Licensed private employment agencies, Nodarbinātības valsts aģentūra [State Employment Agency], <https://www.nva.gov.lv/en/licensed-private-employment-agencies>

¹⁷ Latvijas kvalifikāciju ietvarstruktūra, Latvijas NKP [Latvian Qualifications Framework, Latvian NCP], <https://www.nki-latvija.lv/par-iki>

¹⁸ Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia. Self-Assessment Report, Academic Information Centre, 2018, https://aic.lv/portal/content/files/VNIL-report_LV_2018_final.pdf

The validation for the recognition of full qualifications in regulated professions is not possible.

Certificates issued through validation are not distinguishable from certificates issued from formal education and training.

For Latvian Qualification Framework's level 5-7 qualifications (professional higher education / higher education qualifications), the validation of learning outcomes is referenced to the learning outcomes of formal study programmes or specific courses.

After receiving a validation decision, applicants have the opportunity to contest it with the higher education institution's leadership. If necessary, the dispute can be escalated to the Administrative Court. Individuals who are not currently enrolled in a specific study programme have the option to validate their non-formal and informal learning. Based on the validation results, they can potentially enrol in the relevant study programme at an appropriate stage. In these instances, any additional learning requirements, such as specific courses or modules, may be tailored on an individual basis, accompanied by relevant assessments or exemptions from certain courses and examinations.

The modular programs, modules and learning modules of lifelong learning competences in professional education are listed¹⁹ on the website of the National Centre for Education. The modularisation has been elaborated in frameworks of 1.2.1.1.1 of the "*Human Resources and Employment*" operational programme of the European Social Fund, sub-activity "*Establishment of the sectoral qualifications system and restructuring of professional education*" of the project "*Establishment of the sectoral qualification system and increasing the efficiency and quality of professional education*" (agreement No.

2010/0274/1DP/1.2.1.1.1./10/IPIA/VIAA/001), as well as 8.5.2 of the European Social Fund operational program "*Growth and employment*" within the framework of the specific support objective "*Ensure compliance of vocational education with the European qualification framework*" - in the project "*Improvement of the sectoral qualification system for the development of vocational education and quality assurance*" (Agreement No. 8.5.2.0./16/I/001).

The modular vocational programmes are described by occupational sector, qualification and contain detailed additional information such as: module map, programme content and necessary equipment for teaching, link between professional qualifications and modular professional education programmes, level of professional qualification. The learners that have studied all modules for obtaining a specific professional qualification are eligible for a final examination. The Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 state explicitly that lifelong learning competence modules in VET can be taught as part of non-formal education programmes.

As already mentioned, the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027 aim to improve the skills recognition system by integrating the recognition of partial qualifications. It is still too early to know how validation will be linked to it.

Latvia has still not officially defined the concept of **micro-credentials**, and as such the inclusion of them in national qualification framework is at an early stage of development. A report commissioned by Academic Information Centre and prepared by Anita Līce in 2021, titled "Micro-Credentials in Latvia"²⁰ concludes that the implementation a modular approach for educational programmes together with improved access to validation essentially aligns with the concept of micro-credentials in professional education. During the implementation period of the Education

¹⁹ Modulāras programmas, Valsts izglītības satura centrs [Modular programs, National Centre for Education], https://www.visc.gov.lv/lv/modularas-programmas?utm_source=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

²⁰ Mikrokvalifikācijas Latvijā [Microqualifications in Latvia], Anita Līce, 2021, https://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/2021_Zinojums_MiKv_AL_1.pdf

Development Guidelines 2021-2027, it is “*planned to strengthen professional higher education by creating a flexible learning offer, based on a modular learning approach. In the period until 2027, additional attention will also be paid to the development of skills and knowledge of persons with higher education and a higher level of skills, therefore it is necessary to strengthen the offer of universities in lifelong learning and adult education. The modular approach in higher education can be evaluated as a new initiative connected with the introduction of study module micro-credentials on a European scale. Strengthening the modular approach is a prerequisite for the implementation of work-based learning in higher education*”.

5 Standards

There have been no major changes regarding standards since the last update in 2018. The Regulations on ‘Procedure for the Evaluation of the Professional Competence Acquired Outside Formal Education System, stipulates the procedure on how the professional competence that corresponds to LQF levels 3-4 obtained outside formal education is assessed according to Occupational Standards²¹, as the validation standards are occupational.

For higher education (LQF levels 5-8), the Cabinet of Ministers regulation on “Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Learning Outcomes Acquired in Non-Formal Education or Professional Experience”²² determines the procedure for the assessment and validation of learning outcomes obtained during the previous education (meaning non-formal and informal learning) or professional experience, as well as criteria for validation. It is based on learning outcomes and as such the validation standards have a clear educational component. However, it has to be emphasised that higher education study programmes in Latvia are still divided into academic and professional/vocational education. While occupational standards are also a reference point for the validation in the higher education sector²³ validation for academic study programmes not referenced to an occupational standard is also possible²⁴.

The standards and reference points used for validation relate to those used in formal qualifications in a very direct way, as the accreditation of educational programmes includes assessment according to these standards and reference points.

Industry expert councils delegate responsibilities to industry experts for developing professional standards and qualification requirements. These councils also evaluate and gather opinions on professional standards, proposing changes or developments in professional qualification requirements based on their assessments. The National Centre for Education provides methodical support and ensures the development of professional standards and professional qualification requirements for all LQF levels (1-8), while the Sub-council of tripartite cooperation of professional education and

²¹ Ministru kabineta (2011) noteikumi Nr. 146 Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci [Cabinet of Ministers (2011) Regulation Nr 146 Procedures for assessing professional competences acquired outside the formal education system] <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>

²² Ministru kabineta (2018) noteikumi Nr. 505 Ārpus formālās izglītības apgūto vai profesionālajā pieredzē iegūto kompetenču un iepriekšējā izglītībā sasniegtu studiju rezultātu atzīšanas noteikumi [Cabinet of Ministers (2018) Regulation Nr 505 Procedure of Validating the Learning Outcomes Achieved through Learning Outcomes Acquired in Non-Formal Education or Professional Experience], <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301013-arpus-formalas-izglitibas-apguto-vai-profesionalaja-pieredze-ieguto-kompetencu-un-ieksekseja-izglitiba-sasniegtu>

²³ National Centre for Education, Register of Occupational Standards since 2017, https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/stand_registrs_2017.shtml

²⁴ Academic Information Centre (AIC) self-Assessment Report: Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia. 2018. https://nki-latvija.lv/storage/resources/vnil-report_lv_2018_final.pdf

employment²⁵ (Cabinet of Ministers, Employers Confederation, Trade Unions) coordinates these standards and requirements.

The integration of methods and their interaction with standards/reference points, supported by the involvement of the various stakeholders influences validity, reliability and scalability of validation very positively, leading to “same ‘market value’”.

There are no radical changes in the validation initiatives. Instead, the focus is on incremental improvements to the existing system, with an aim to eliminate any barriers or limitations. For example, the positive experience with organizing the validation of non-formal and informal learning at higher education institutions (building upon i.e., previous experience of higher education institutions with recognizing Erasmus exchange periods of the students) “*served as the basis for amendments to regulatory acts - in 2018; restrictions were lifted that limited the amount of the validated learning outcomes within a relevant study program to only 30%*”²⁶.

6 Institutions involved in validation arrangements and their coordination

The reform of the Vocational Education Law in 2022 has led to changes in terms of the roles and responsibilities of organisations involved in Latvia’s validation system:

- The Ministry of Education and Science remains responsible for the overall education policy framework, including validation.
- The State Education Quality Service remains responsible for quality assuring the validation process. However, prior to the reform of 2022, it was responsible for accrediting schools and vocational education institutions as validation providers,
- Vocational secondary education institutions (*tehnikums* in Latvian), art education competence centres, vocational further education institutions and short-cycle education institutions (*koledža* in Latvian) can all act as validation examination centres (for LQF 1-4 levels) since the reform of 2022. Prior to the reform of 2022, Vocational Education Competence Centres were the designated validation examination centres for LQF levels 1-4.
- Higher education institutions continue to act as validation examination centres for LQF levels 5-7.

Since the reform of 2022, validation at LQF levels 1-4 is decentralised to the aforementioned institutions and no longer centrally coordinated by the State Education Quality Service.

There is no coordination of validation and recognition processes at the national level. In the higher education sector. Higher education institutions use the regulatory framework and methodological recommendations developed by the Ministry of Education and Science as reference points to develop their own validation practices. They are also free to fix their own fees for validation and recognition procedures. To promote a common understanding of validation among higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the Academic Information Centre organise seminars and trainings allowing them to exchange their experiences,

²⁵ Profesionālās izglītības un nodarbinātības trīspusējās sadarbības apakšpadome, Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija [Sub-council of tripartite cooperation of professional education and employment, Ministry of Education and Science], <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/profesionalas-izglitiba-un-nodarbinatibas-trispusejas-sadarbibas-apakspadome>

²⁶ Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia. Self-Assessment Report, Academic Information Centre, 2018, https://aic.lv/portal/content/files/VNIL-report_LV_2018_final.pdf

to develop good practice guidelines and common approaches to the monitoring of learning outcomes.

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

7.1 Outreach and awareness-raising

There are no awareness-raising campaigns at the national level apart from regular press releases that are often linked to changes in the regulatory framework and are visible in the activities of educational stakeholders. Thus, for example, when the amendments to the Education Law were made to facilitate and simplify the implementation of non-formal education programs for children and youth, the “*validation possibilities in the future*” were mentioned ²⁷.

The core outreach measure and promotional activity for national skills policies and strategies (including validation) are seminars and networking events, both related to policy development and implementation.

It is important to emphasise that many activities linked to the development of the validation system in Latvia are based on EU-funded projects and dissemination activities are an integral part of these projects.

7.2 Information, advice and guidance

Validation practitioners and other stakeholders provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) about validation, based on the conversation they have with potential users to appraise their interest in validation procedures. For instance, the Academic Information Centre provides IAG to people looking to have their qualifications recognised.

Various platforms are used for IAG: i.e., websites (e.g., of higher education institutions²⁸ and vocational education institutions providing validation services), brochures, telephone, face-to-face.

The regular counselling and guidance provided by validation practitioners and other stakeholders are further enhanced by other targeted measures. For example, the ESF-funded project of the State Education Development Agency “*Professional competences development of employed persons*” links both adult education and career counselling into one accessible service. The groups targeted under this project include employed persons aged 25 and over, including working retired persons, new parents who are on parental leave, persons aged 45 and over with a low or insufficient level of education for the labour market (completed or incomplete basic education or general secondary education), as well as refugees and persons with alternative status.

Validation is often associated with lifelong learning. As a result, validation practitioners and stakeholders consider the validation process as an integral part of continuous learning rather than as a one-off procedure. The purpose of validation is to facilitate individuals' personal development, encouraging them to seek further guidance or feedback. The State Employment Agency offers information and guidance on skills demanded in the job market both before and after validation.

²⁷ Jaunatneslietas.lv, [Policy Initiative and Development Department, Ministry of Education and Science], <https://jaunatneslietas.gov.lv/>

²⁸ For instance, the website of a higher education institution for validation at LQF 5-8 levels: <https://www.szf.lu.lv/studijas/pieredzesizqlitibas-atzisana/citas-pieredzes-atzisana/> and at secondary vo

Educational institutions provide information and guidance regarding available study opportunities.

General IAG about validation is offered free of charge by validation practitioners and other stakeholders (e.g., consultations on the standard requirements of the relevant profession and the process of the professional qualification exam). The most noticeable target groups are individuals who are either looking to enhance their qualifications (for educational institutions) or seeking employment opportunities (for the State Employment Agency).

8 Validation practitioners

8.1 Profile of validation practitioners

The primary practitioners responsible for validation are the staff members within educational institutions possessing the required expertise. In cases where the validation process necessitates passing a state examination, additional validation practitioners, such as representatives from relevant stakeholder groups, may be involved as mandated by legal examination requirements for obtaining specific vocational qualifications. These representatives might encompass individuals from employers, sectoral vocational associations, or ministries.

The guidance and counselling roles are fulfilled by different experienced professionals involved in validation. The extent of their participation varies based on their expertise, profile, and background in guiding or counselling.

External observers, often experts from the State Education Quality Service, frequently fulfil the role of monitoring the quality of validation institutions during field visits.

8.2 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Support and training are based on the guidelines and methodological recommendations developed by various stakeholders at the policy level. However, no regular training courses or seminars are held by the various organisations involved in the provision of validation. However, these may be held on an occasional basis.

8.3 Qualifications and experience

There is no mandatory requirement for validation practitioners to have a certain level of qualification or experience. They must be qualified experts in their relevant field, and the responsibility for appointing them is often granted to the individual educational institution itself. While this autonomy allows for freedom in the selection process, there is a risk that failure might lead to a loss of trust from the supervising institution. Career advisors have their own occupational standard, which outlines the specific skills required for becoming a validation practitioner.

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding and costs

Validation users are expected to cover their validation expenses themselves, but financial support is provided as part of an ESF project) whereby certain groups can have 90%-100% of their validation expenses covered.

Since 2017, employed persons aged 25 and over can receive financial support - 90% of their validation expenses are covered by the ESF the state budget within the framework of an adult education project.

Since 2018, jobseekers and people with a low-income status can have their validation expenses fully covered under the ESF programme "Growth and Employment" specific support objective 8.4.1 "Education, skills and Lifelong learning" of the priority axis "Support for the education of the unemployed", project No. 8.4.1.0/16/l/001. The LQF level 1-4 professional qualification examination is a paying service. Fees are determined by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 146 of 22.02.2011 "Procedure for evaluating professional competence acquired outside the formal education system"²⁹. The validation costs in the VET sector (qualifications level 1-4) are based on a price list. The information on the cost of validation is not monitored other than for the purpose of EU-funded projects that aim to cover the validation costs.

Validation fees within the higher education sector are not monitored at the state level. This means that higher education institutions have full autonomy in fixing their fees).

Validation arrangements are otherwise not included in collective labour agreements in Latvia.

Fees have remained unchanged since 2018. For LQF qualification levels 1-4, (vocational education sector), fees are defined by regulation No. 79122 on "Price list of Paid Services of Vocational Education Institutions and Examination Centres" (10 September 2013).

Fees for validation vary based on the educational field and the program category. Similarly to tuition fees for formal studies, fields like healthcare and engineering tend to have higher validation costs compared to other areas. Additionally, validation fees fluctuate depending on the number of individuals taking the qualification examination. The lowest fee per person, EUR 43 to EUR 74.30, is applicable when at least 12 individuals undergo validation together, as in the case when candidates take the examination collectively at an educational institution or examination centre. In contrast, individual validation can cost between EUR 192.75 and EUR 404.37. For example, 'Commercial Sciences and Administration' incurs the lowest fee, while 'Healthcare - Nursing' involves a higher cost per person when validated for at least 12 individuals. However, the most expensive individual validation occurs in 'Civil and military defence - firemen.'

Within the higher education sector, regulations specify that a fee may be charged to candidates for conducting the validation of prior learning outcomes. The specific amount of this fee is determined based on the regulations set by the higher education institution.

²⁹ Ministru kabineta (2011) noteikumi Nr. 146 Kārtība, kādā novērtē ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūto profesionālo kompetenci [Cabinet of Ministers (2011) Regulation Nr 146 Procedures for assessing professional competences acquired outside the formal education system] <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=226788>

Validation expenses are fully reimbursed for certain groups beneficiaries – such as the unemployed or people on a low income.

It is not yet possible to ascertain if **individual learning accounts (ILAs)** or similar arrangements are used towards the cost of validation.

9.2 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.2.1 Validation trends

Higher educational institutions' self-evaluation reports include information on the activities they carry out to facilitate the validation of learning outcomes and data on their associated performance indicators for the LQF levels 1-4.

Even though the numbers of successfully validated qualifications have dropped from 1,453 at its highest in 2016 to 575 in 2021 (coinciding with Covid-19)³⁰, trends show that there is still interest in the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and that there has been a slight uptick in the number of validation processes undergone since 2021.

The higher figures reported in 2016 are attributed to the piloting phase, during which validation expenses were subsidised by the government. Additionally, a key factor contributing to the increased number of professional qualification certificates obtained through the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Latvia is the presence of regulatory acts or specific requirements mandating skills certification for individuals employed within the respective industry.

There is no monitoring data available regarding validation in the higher education sector. Participation data is not centrally collected and readily available for analysis but might be available in the future.

9.2.2 Validation users

At the national level, only validation for LQF levels 1-4 qualifications is monitored.

Data records from the State Education Quality Services dating back to 2011 indicate that the age groups of 26-35 and 36-50 years old constitute the most prominent user groups in validation processes³¹.

9.2.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

The State Education Development Agency's ESF project titled "Professional Competences Development of Employed Persons" aims to provide consultation services for adult education coordinators and career counsellors, integrating both education and career guidance into a single accessible service. The target groups for this project included working pensioners, individuals with incomplete or completed education at any level, and new parents on parental leave. The project specifically focused on social risk groups, such as individuals aged 45 and above with low education levels for the job market (including those with incomplete basic or general secondary education), as well as refugees and individuals with alternative status.

³⁰ Annual Report of State Education Quality Service - 2021, <https://www.ikvd.gov.lv/lv/media/3914/download?attachment>

³¹ Ziņojums par ārpus formālās izglītības sistēmas apgūtās profesionālās kompetences novērtēšanu laika posmā no 2011.gada līdz 2015.gadam, Valsts Izglītības Kvalitātes Dienests [Report on the validation of the professional competence acquired in other than formal education system in the period from 2011 to 2015 by the State Education Quality Service], <https://www.ikvd.gov.lv/lv/media/43/download?attachment>

Since 2018, unemployed individuals can also receive financial support through the European Social Fund project called "Support for the Education of the Unemployed." This support provides expense compensation covering 100% of the costs.

10 Validation methods

10.1 Methodologies and methods

There have been no major changes since the last update of the Inventory in 2018 regarding the use of methods in validation processes, i.e., for identification, documentation, assessment, and certification.

See [Chapter 10 of the 2018 Latvia Inventory report](#) for further information.

10.2 Use of ICT in validation

Jobseekers may access the electronic unemployment profiling method developed by State Employment Agency (SEA) to learn about different options they have available to find a job and to find suitable SEA labour market activation measures. An online tool for validation users to self-assess their knowledge of the Latvian language is also available³² (some of the professions in public sector i.e. in teaching, health sector requires a mandatory level of national language knowledge). These tools for assessing competences are considered as auxiliary.

Youthpass and Europass are promoted as ICT tools for other purposes related to validation (management of processes, monitoring, interoperability, and transfer of achievements, etc.)

More reliance on digital technologies is upcoming with the Individual Learning Accounts system being developed.

11 Quality assurance

11.1 Quality assurance processes

There have been no major changes since the last update in 2018. There is still no overarching quality assurance framework for validation. Quality assurance remains fragmented across different sectors and depending on the LQF levels for which validation is undertaken.

11.2 Monitoring and evaluation

Up until the reform of the Vocational Education Act in 2022, the State Education Quality Service was responsible for the monitoring of validation in the VET sector (LQF levels 1-4). Since the reform of 2022, this responsibility has been decentralised to vocational educational institutions.

³² Pašvērtēšanas un pašmācības rīks [Self evaluation and self learning tool], valoda.lv, <https://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/pasvertesanas-un-pasmacibas-riks>

12 The position of validation in society; visibility and trust

According to the “*Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia. Self-Assessment Report, Academic Information Centre, 2018*” there is growing trust among stakeholders in validation outcomes, as the following excerpt shows: “*The experience of the higher education institutions in the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes served as basis for the amendments to the regulatory enactments. One of such cases was the elimination of the restriction in 2018, which determined that only 30% of credit points from the respective study programme may be granted, when validating the learning outcomes achieved in previous experience.*”³³

³³ Implementation of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes in Latvia. Self-Assessment Report, Academic Information Centre, 2018, https://aic.lv/portal/content/files/VNIL-report_LV_2018_final.pdf

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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.

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