



**Annual National Review (ANaR) on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNF-IFL)**

**on the national context**

**ANaR Report 2008-2010**

**Country: Austria**

**Name: Monika Prokopp, Karin Luomi-Messerer**

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## I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
<p><b>1. National strategy:</b> is there one? <i>What</i> is in place re the VNF-IFL, at <i>which level</i>? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies?</p> <p><i>Any reference or URL links to official documents, Websites?</i></p> <p><b>5. National Qualification Framework:</b> How do VNF-IFL practices or initiatives relate to <i>NQF</i> in place or in construction, if they do? If not, why not?</p> <p><i>Brief description of the NQF (diagram etc)? Reference to docs or website?</i></p> <p><b>7. structural and institutional impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has it had an impact on <i>education and training (or lifelong learning) policies</i>?</li> <li>• <i>On other</i> legislation, official/ governmental organisations, bodies, institutions?</li> <li>• On the negotiations between <i>social partners</i> (who are those anyway in your country?)</li> <li>• In the private sector, <i>on staff qualification and training strategies</i> within companies?</li> <li>• On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector?</li> <li>• On <i>building bridges</i> (of communication, working partnerships...) between different systems of certification, sectors etc?</li> </ul>	<p>The Austrian national report for CEDEFOP on Theme 8: Accumulating, Transferring and Validating Learning (Prokopp &amp; Luomi-Messerer, 2006) describes the status quo in VNF-IFL in 2006. In the following report, developments from 2006 to <b>2010</b> will be considered.</p> <p>Recognition of non-formal and informal learning only plays a minor role in Austria, in comparison to other EU member states. Several reasons have been given on why that is the case; for example, because the Austrian educational and economic culture is traditionally strongly oriented towards the IVET sector; because the dual system already incorporates a high amount of informal learning, so that there is no need to have additional procedures to recognise this form of learning; and, because the Austrian system is oriented towards occupational profiles and activity descriptions and hence builds on formally acquired qualifications as proof of abilities and competences. This view is supported by relatively well developed provision of second chance education (viz. adults acquiring IVET qualifications). (Tritscher-Archan &amp; Mayr [eds.] 2008, 30)</p> <p>Although there are also many good reasons for introducing a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, so far nothing has been developed on a national level: <b>Austria does not have a uniform legal framework to regulate validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. So far, there is no explicit national strategy on validation of non-formal and informal learning outside the formal system. Nonetheless, in the education and training system, different acts and regulations include mechanisms and arrangements that enable formal education and training institutions to recognise learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings.</b></p> <p>Austria's present certification policy can be summarised as focussing on 'external examination': almost all degrees (from the school system and dual system, but not university degrees) might be obtained without participating in the relevant programmes or courses, but not without passing the same exam (external examination) as required in the regular system. <b>Therefore, the formal education system contains a major share of the procedures for recognising non-formally or informally acquired knowledge and skills in Austria. Procedures also exist for acquiring certificates without any corresponding qualification in the formal system. Such procedures are often focussing on visualising individual development processes.</b> Beside the lack of a national system for the recognition of informal learning, Austria's educational policy and practice has limited differentiation in formal, non-formal and informal learning. (Markowitsch et al 2007, 5)</p> <p>However, recording and validating competences has been increasingly debated in public among adult learning (ALE) actors. In addition, the higher education (HE) sector has more frequently participated in the discussion, because of the conversion to the Bologna system, which increases expectations that more applicants for Master's programmes have previous professional experience. Currently, the corporate and school sectors seem to be less</p>

engaged with these issues. (Tritscher-Archan & Mayr [eds.] 2008, 30) In the private sector, there are competence-oriented concepts for human resource development in large companies and there are at least some pilot projects experimenting with recognition of individual competencies.

Developments within the EU and EU funds have had a strong influence on Austrian validation initiatives. There is still no overall validation system, projects are initiated by social partners, educational institutions and ministries. Supra-regional political initiatives can be identified in the collection and conception of possible examples (nationally and internationally). Thus, for example, Austria took part in the RNFL initiative (Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning) by the OECD. A working group to develop a national validation procedure has been set up at the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BMUKK). In addition, the BMUKK has published a relevant systematic analysis (cf. Zürcher 2007) (Tritscher-Archan & Mayr [eds.] 2008, 30).

Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a central element in the Austrian lifelong-learning (LLL) strategy, which includes the principle of 'competence orientation' (cf. DUK [ed.] 2007): Educational actors and relevant stakeholders should jointly develop a system in which competences, in the sense of learning outcomes, can be used to enhance transparency and comparability between the different sectors. It is recommended to support recognition of non-formal and informal learning, either through individual competence portfolios or by a national system of recognition (Markowitsch et al 2007).

In the last two years, interest in validation of non-formal and informal learning has been growing. New projects have been developed; the most prominent are the Academy of Continuing Education (Weiterbildungsakademie), an adult educators certification based on teaching experience; and the initiative 'DU kannst was!' (the approximate translation is 'YOU are able to do something!' or 'YOU have skills/competences!'), a project to help unskilled workers with job experience in certain sectors obtain a certificate through portfolio work and further education. Competence balances and portfolios as well as related coaching measures exist in many variants in Austria; many of the projects described in the CEDEFOP Theme 8 Report have been continued and elaborated. Information on and experiences from the projects that were not continued could foster sustainability of these measures.

In recent years, policy discussions cover measures to validate non-formal and informal learning, particularly in connection with the development of a national qualifications framework (NQF). A NQF consultation paper was produced in 2007 and a national consultation process was conducted in 2008. Based on the results of the consultation process and of some testing projects as well as of further discussions, at the end of 2009, the national NQF steering agreed upon a 'political strategy paper' on the further development and implementation of the Austrian NQF. The Austrian NQF primarily seeks to map all obtainable national qualifications and present them in relation to each other and to make explicit the implicit levels of the Austrian qualification system. The main objectives include supporting lifelong learning and enabling stronger links between the adult learning sector and the formal education and training system as well as recognising broader range of learning forms (including non-

formal and informal learning) (cf. Luomi-Messerer 2009).

Within this NQF, these learning contexts should be given basically the same significance as formal learning processes. However, as the procedures and methods are still relatively new, a different time specification is laid down here. (Tritscher-Archan & Mayr [eds.] 2008, 30). The NQF development process is divided into three strands or 'corridors' ('sectors of learning'): 1. formal qualifications system, 2. qualifications acquired in non-formal learning (for example, in adult education institutions outside the formal education and training system) and 3. informal learning. Relevant stakeholders participate in working groups which elaborate proposals on how to make more visible the learning that takes place outside formal settings.

In 2009, a thematic working group prepared a proposal for a strategy paper related to Corridor 2 (cf. Schlögl 2009). The proposal suggested setting up so-called 'bodies responsible for qualifications' (Qualifikationsverantwortliche Stellen, QVSs) "...as regulators for qualifications which are valid sectorally and/or nationally, without an equivalent in the formal education system, which will undertake the validation and quality assurance function. Authorities, chambers, associations and similar institutions which are already responsible for handing out certificates can take on QVS functions. An accrediting authority (NQF office, NQF steering group) which still needs to be set up could entrust QVSs with the task of handing out individual or several national qualifications. Cross-sectoral standards for validation and competence identification procedures need to be taken into consideration with this accreditation. Another suggestion is to compile a criteria catalogue for the authorisation of QVSs and to discuss methodical and procedural aspects of a national strategy to validate non-formally and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competence" (bm:ukk 2009, 25).

The core elements of this proposal have been included in the national NQF strategy presented at the end of 2009 that identifies the conclusions, decisions and activities for the development of the NQF following the consultation process. Furthermore, pilot projects have been and will be conducted, for example, dealing with the possibilities of classifying offers of non-vocational adult learning to the NQF, the role of key competences in this context and in particular of civic competences (cf. Erler 2009). A pilot project from the construction sector and exemplary referencing of non-formal qualifications from this sector are also planned. Based on the experiences from these projects, the preliminary strategic considerations and proposals will be evaluated and refined. At the same time, the strategy of referencing qualifications coming from non-formal learning will be developed, and implementation will begin afterwards (bm:ukk 2009, 25).

Integrating and recognising non-formal and informal learning in the NQF is of particular interest for the adult or further education sector. In the long term, the NQF should substantially help in the construction of a 'strategy of lifelong learning'

<p><b>2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Who</b> has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL? Which ministry (ies), which institution (s), organisation or body (ies)? <b>Who</b> gives the main impetus and direction?</li> <li>• <b>Who</b> regulates, monitors and assesses practices and pilots new initiatives?</li> <li>• <b>Or</b> are they local, regional, sectoral, institutional initiatives?</li> </ul>	<p>Austria does not have a single national institution responsible for validation. The respective procedures or measures involve different institutions and actors with different roles and responsibilities. The main actors are the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (bm:ukk), the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth (bm:wfj), the Federal Ministry of Science and Research (bm:wf), educational institutions (secondary academic and VET schools and colleges, universities of applied sciences, universities, adult education institutions), social partner institutions and apprenticeship offices of the competent economic chambers. Some cases also involve companies or the Public Employment Service Austria.</p> <p>These actors divide their responsibilities for the different measures and procedures of validation (cf. ibw 2007, 57pp). The main role of the relevant ministries is preparing and adopting the legal framework conditions for the validation procedures. Social partners play a major role in the designing of the legal, economic and social framework conditions in Austria. Educational institutions organise or provide bridging or preparatory courses; furthermore, they give exams or design other procedures to validate non-formal and informal learning in order to issue certificates (based on their respective quality assurance procedures). The main actors in providing information, promotion and awareness-raising are the ministries as well as the social partners; whereas, specific counselling and guidance is mainly provided by the relevant educational institutions.</p> <p>Practical implementation during the past several years has been mostly on a project basis and has been shaped by local or regional initiatives. Individual projects can be identified within the framework of the EU's Leonardo da Vinci programme or several portfolio projects, particularly on competence aspects of voluntary activities, EQUAL development partnerships, immigrants' initiatives and the Weiterbildungsakademie (Academy of Continuing Education) (Tritscher-Archan &amp; Mayr [eds.] 2008, 30).</p>
<p><b>3. Sectors: where, which sectors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does VNF-IFL apply to all educational sectors? Or to specific ones (vocational education &amp; training, Further Educ. Colleges, universities, adult education etc....)</li> <li>• Or/ and does it apply to other sectors: 3<sup>rd</sup> sector, private sector</li> </ul> <p><i>Name some examples or references to examples (websites, documents etc....?)</i></p>	<p>In Austria, external exams are an essential part of the VNF-IFL culture. They are theoretically possible in all Austrian schools, general education and VET. One of the most important measures is access to the final apprenticeship exam for persons with relevant professional experience but without a regular apprenticeship certificate (außerordentlicher Zugang zur Lehrabschlussprüfung) which is a part of IVET. In general education, the most common external exam is the Reifeprüfung (school leaving examination).</p> <p>The adult education sector and also the higher education sector increasingly indicate a pronounced interest in the topic of recording and validating competences. Currently, less resonance can be identified in the corporate and school sectors (Tritscher-Archan &amp; Mayr [eds.] 2008, 30).</p> <p>In the higher education sector, the increasing interest results from the transition to the Bologna architecture, which gives rise to expectations that more applicants for Master's programmes will have previous professional experience. The most recent status-quo report on the implementation of the Bologna process in Austria (cf. bm:wf 2009, 83) mentions two major goals in this context: global recognition of prior learning (recommendation in the 2004 University Act) and recognition of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. The report mentions a 'turnaround' in some institutions (without naming them) that reasonably and uncomplicatedly handle the</p>

recognition of prior learning. However, the report also states that the overall awareness still needs to grow. However, validation practices already exist at universities of applied science (*Fachhochschulen*) based on specific admission regulations: Access is possible for persons with 'relevant professional experiences', which usually indicates that graduates of secondary technical and vocational schools or apprenticeships with professional experiences have access without a *Matura* (upper secondary school leaving exam). Generally, they must pass additional examinations (for example, in mathematics, German and English) in the first year of study (Prokopp & Luomi-Messerer 2009).

The procedures for identifying and recording competences that have been developed in Austria are mainly offered in adult learning institutions and are often oriented toward career planning for specific target groups. For example, the portfolio projects are carried out in institutions of adult education and further education. Also preparatory courses for taking external exams are often offered at adult education providers. The third sector is also actively involved in developing and implementing the strategy for including qualifications acquired in non-formal or informal learning contexts into the future NQF.

In the private sector, large companies have competence-oriented concepts for human resource development. Several pilot projects experiment with recognition of individual competencies.

An overview of most recent validation initiatives can be obtained in the following publications:

- Prokopp, Monika; Luomi-Messerer, Karin (2006): Accumulating, transferring and validating learning. CEDEFOP Theme 8. Online: [http://refernet.at/\\_TCgi\\_Images/refernet/20070313095403\\_abf%20InfoDoc%203-2006.pdf](http://refernet.at/_TCgi_Images/refernet/20070313095403_abf%20InfoDoc%203-2006.pdf) (10.07.2008)

- Schneeberger, Arthur; Schlögl, Peter; Neubauer, Barbara (2007): Praxis der Anerkennung von nicht-formalem und informellem Lernen und deren Relevanz für einen künftigen NQR. (Practice in validation of non-formal and informal learning and its relevance for a future NQR) In: Entwicklung eines Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmens für Österreich – Vertiefende Analysen, p. 75ff Online: <http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/NQR%20-%20nationaler%20qualifikationsrahmen.pdf> (10.07.2008)

- Zürcher, Reinhard (2007): Informelles Lernen und der Erwerb von Kompetenzen. Theoretische, didaktische und politische Aspekte. (Informal learning and competence acquisition. Theoretic, didactic and politic aspects).

Materialien zur Erwachsenenbildung 2/2007. Online:

[http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/services/publikationen/materialien\\_zur\\_eb/nr2\\_2007\\_informelles\\_lernen.pdf](http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/services/publikationen/materialien_zur_eb/nr2_2007_informelles_lernen.pdf) (10.07.2008)

Brandstetter, Genoveva; Luomi-Messerer, Karin (2010): European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning. Country up-date – Austria 2010. Forthcoming

<p><b>4. Terminology:</b> Is there a <b>common definition</b> of VNF-IFL, or are there <b>specific terms</b> used by different institutions implementing VNF-IFL? What would be the best way to translate it / them into English?</p>	<p>Austria has no common definitions regarding VNF-IFL. The German term Anerkennung is used very often as an overall reference to processes of recognition of non-formal and informal learning either connected with a formal certificate or with a competence profile or portfolio. Anerkennung in a wider context can also mean appreciation and acknowledgement.</p>
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## II. Impact of Validation

<p><b>6. Impact on individuals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What impact has VNF-IFL had on <b>individuals</b>? <b>On whom</b>, in your opinion, has it had the most impact: Validation candidates/ learners, practitioners, teachers/ academics/ tutors/facilitators in adult education, careers advisers, human resource managers...any more?</li> <li>• <b>In what way</b> has it had an impact:</li> <li>• in the actors/ stakeholders' <b>attitudes, practices</b> and methodologies, <b>interaction</b> with each others, <b>understanding</b> of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc...?</li> <li>• Do you have evidence whether <b>it is felt</b> as a <b>positive, negative, problematic impact</b>? <i>Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Hardly any data has been published on validation's impact on individuals. One study available (Triebel 2005) describes the Kompetenzbilanz (Competence Balance) of the Zukunftszentrum Tirol (Tyrol Centre of the Future), a portfolio project without formal certification. Participants feel that the experiences from the Competence Balance process enable them to approach problems and tasks in a more active and creative way, have a better concept of their knowledge, skills and competences, better problem-solving abilities and stress-coping strategies. At the workplace, they feel less pressure because they found new perspectives in the Competence Balance process and could clearly improve their work situation (see also Schildberger 2010). <a href="http://www.zukunftszentrum.at/themen/kompetenzen/kompetenzenbilanz/kurzbericht-der-evaluation.pdf">http://www.zukunftszentrum.at/themen/kompetenzen/kompetenzenbilanz/kurzbericht-der-evaluation.pdf</a></p> <p>An evaluation of the competence profile KOMPAZ offered at the Volkshochschule Linz (Adult Education Centre Linz) showed that 63% of the persons who were unemployed before the measure were successful in finding a job. They were more self-confident, developed their learning strategies and could also actively use their informally acquired knowledge and competences for improved profiling within the working context. In general, people with higher formal qualifications stated that they got more benefits out of the portfolio process than those with lower formal qualifications; this included finding appropriate further education useful for the labour market. The authors state a need for better linking-up of educational institutions and the labour market to gain transparency on the actual usefulness of particular qualifications and competences (Auer et al. 2007).</p> <p>In a recent dissertation (Prokopp 2009), feedback from participants in two VNF-IFL initiatives was partly derived via interviews with people responsible for these initiatives. In an academic secondary school for adults in the city of Salzburg, VNF-IFL has been practiced since the establishment of a modular course system in 2000. Thus, students can have their prior learning accredited and accordingly start the school on various module levels. Students' feedback on that reform was said to be positive; the number of dropouts has been reduced. In the province of Burgenland, the regional</p>
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*Volkshochschule* (adult education centre) offered a VNF-IFL programme with elaboration of personal portfolios for women who want to return to the labour market after an interruption (mostly because of rearing children). After the programme, these women gave the feedback that they had learned to recognize and describe their competences acquired non-formally or informally and that this had been of great help when applying for a job. Two thirds of the 116 participants had been able to find a job subsequent to the programme.

### III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

<p><b>8. Stakeholders' engagement:</b> how would you rate the <b>stakeholders' level of interest</b> in your country regarding the VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which stakeholders in particular are very interested?</li> <li>• Which ones are not so/ not at all interested?</li> </ul> <p><i>Why</i> is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons? <i>Reference to examples, documents?</i></p>	<p>The institutions initialising and organising validation programmes are highly interested in relevant developments. Workers' organisations and educational institutions seek to improve their clients' professional and financial situation and follow an empowerment-based strategy. There are contacts and co-operations between most of these institutions. Their further interest and engagement will probably depend on the national strategy as well as on further developments on national level.</p> <p>Employers are ambivalent about VNF-IFL: On the one hand, they want to use the full potential of knowledge, skills and competences of workers in the labour market; media regularly reported on the urgent need for skilled workers (especially in tourism and metal-related professions). <i>Now that many jobs are eliminated (status quo: summer 2009), especially in the production sector, the need for skilled workers is not urgent. However, there are considerations that, partly due to demographic change, labour demand will grow again after the economic crisis.</i> On the other hand, employers would have to pay higher wages for skilled workers – collective contracts in Austria are mostly related to certificates and not to jobs or functions. Therefore, employers might prefer workers with well developed skills but without certificates because then they would be able to pay lower wages. However, employers' organisations have initiated projects (e.g. Quali-Box, BIFO Vorarlberg, cf. Theme 8) or cooperate with workers' organisations and other institutions on a regional level ('DU kannst was!', cf. case study)</p> <p>The governments interests combine economic and emancipatory aspects. They pursue the Lisbon goals and at the same time claim to implement measures for empowerment and equal participation.</p>
<p><b>9. Debates-discussions:</b> Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has it stimulated discussion on <b>specific issues</b> (social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants...)</li> <li>• On the <b>nature</b> of assessment,</li> </ul>	<p>VNF-IFL is discussed within the institutions that offer validation, within the relevant ministries (bm:ukk, bm:wf, bm:wa, bm:sg) and by the social partners at large. Specific initiatives are advertised and described in local or regional media, but there are no large-scale, nationwide discussions outside the practitioners' and experts' sphere.</p> <p>Kumpfmüller &amp; Morgan (2007, 157) report that even experts from non-profit organisations (NPOs), from projects in general and vocational education and training and from enterprises were not familiar with the terms 'informal learning' or did not see a relation to LLL although they were involved in relevant practices.</p> <p>For some years, the topic has been gaining importance among practitioners, experts and policy makers. In 2006,</p>

<p>knowledge...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Between which stakeholders mainly/ or within which sector mainly?</b></li> </ul> <p><i>Any evidence or references to those?</i></p>	<p>making visible competences from informal learning was the topic of the annual convention of the KEBÖ (Konferenz der Erwachsenenbildung Österreichs, Conference of Adult Education in Austria), the umbrella organisation for the most important adult education (AE) institutions. Competence orientation and validation were discussed in a workshop at bifeb (Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung, Federal Institute for AE) in 2007.  <a href="http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/kompetenzorientierung_doku.pdf">http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/kompetenzorientierung_doku.pdf</a> (15.07.2008)  <a href="http://publikationen.bvoe.at/perspektiven/bp4_06/s67-73.pdf">http://publikationen.bvoe.at/perspektiven/bp4_06/s67-73.pdf</a> (16.07.2008)  <a href="http://www.bifeb.at/kompetenzzentrum/Seminare_2008/lebenslanges_lernen_2008.html">http://www.bifeb.at/kompetenzzentrum/Seminare_2008/lebenslanges_lernen_2008.html</a> (15.07.2008)</p> <p>In 2008, the Institut für Wissenschaft und Kunst (IWK, Institute for Science and the Arts) organised a course of lectures on informal learning dealing with related concepts, places and controversies.  <a href="http://www.amsforschungsnetzwerk.at/download/Vortragsreihe-Informelles-Lernen_2008.pdf">http://www.amsforschungsnetzwerk.at/download/Vortragsreihe-Informelles-Lernen_2008.pdf</a> 10.07.2008)</p> <p>The topics discussed are related to individual aspects of VNF-IFL such as access to education and training or better chances on the labour market. Zürcher (2007, 98) outlines numerous topics connected with VNF-IFL of which some are essential in the Austrian discussion: validation and LLL; transparency or learning processes and learning outcomes; permeability; better employability, especially for persons with low formal qualifications; transparency in the international context; a better self-concept and rising motivation for further learning and personal development; and activation of competences useful for society. In the general discourse, the main arguments involve empowerment and economic issues.</p> <p><b>In 2009, the following events were organised to discuss VNF-IFL:</b></p> <p>The Institut für Wissenschaft und Kunst (IWK, Institute for Science and the Arts) continued the course of lectures on informal learning that deal with related concepts, places and controversies.  <a href="http://www.univie.ac.at/iwk/09ak.html#inf-lern">http://www.univie.ac.at/iwk/09ak.html#inf-lern</a> (19.08.2009)</p> <p>On 3 June, "Universities Austria" organised in Graz a one-day event on validation of non-formal and informal learning in universities. Among other things, a study on this topic was presented (Spiel, Finsterwald &amp; Schober 2009 – the study will probably be published at the end of 2009). This study discusses the political framework, various definitions in this contexts and the perspective of selection processes in universities in order to prepare the ground for recommendations for the accreditation of prior learning in universities. These recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recognition should be conducted by the receiving institution;</li> <li>- universities' aims and tasks should be reflected and related to students' and graduates' profiles;</li> <li>- the underlying philosophy of competence assessment should be made transparent; and</li> <li>- theoretical and educational quality criteria should be met.</li> </ul> <p>This study outlines the recognition procedure and gives further recommendations (for example, concerning the European perspective, the role of the European University Association and application of validation also for</p>
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	<p>modules within a study course). The main challenge is seen as combining the complexity of the task and economic handling of the process.</p> <p><a href="http://www.uniko.ac.at/upload/Programm_Konferenz_Non-formales_und_informelles_Lernen(1).pdf">http://www.uniko.ac.at/upload/Programm_Konferenz_Non-formales_und_informelles_Lernen(1).pdf</a> (19.08.2009)</p> <p>On 27 April, another one-day event took place in Linz for vocational counsellors on recognition of competences in vocational guidance and counselling. The workshop was organised by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (bmukk) and included an introduction into competence-related vocabulary, the presentation of several models and workshops on further validation models as well as an introduction to the EQF and NQF.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at/download/einladung_bib_konferenz2009.pdf">http://www.ams-forschungsnetzwerk.at/download/einladung_bib_konferenz2009.pdf</a> (19.08.2009)</p>
<p><b>10. Research and VNF-IFL:</b> Does <b>research</b> feed these debates? <i>Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc...?</i></p>	<p>Research is mostly related to existing initiatives, their description and classification. Zürcher (2007) describes theoretic, didactic and politic aspects of informal learning and puts validation in a wider context.</p> <p>Zürcher, Reinhard (2007): Informelles Lernen und der Erwerb von Kompetenzen. Theoretische, didaktische und politische Aspekte. (Informal learning and competence acquisition. Theoretic, didactic and politic aspects). Materialien zur Erwachsenenbildung 2/2007. Online: <a href="http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/services/publikationen/materialien_zur_eb/nr2_2007_informelles_lernen.pdf">http://www.erwachsenenbildung.at/services/publikationen/materialien_zur_eb/nr2_2007_informelles_lernen.pdf</a> (10.07.2008)</p> <p>Kumpfmüller &amp; Morgan (2007) have analysed in detail several of the Austrian portfolio initiatives with regard to development, aims, practices and methods, experiences with the practice, feedback from the participants, perspectives and possibilities for further developments.</p> <p>Kumpfmüller, Bernd; Morgan, Hildegund (2007): Erkennen und Anerkennen. Informelle Kompetenzen und Lebenslanges Lernen. Individuelle Standortbestimmungen – regionale Aspekte – Chancengleichheit. (Identify and recognize. Informal competences and lifelong learning. Individual positions – regional aspects – equal opportunities), Linz.</p> <p>Relevant practices are classified and delineated in the study of Schneeberger, Schlögl &amp; Neubauer (2008), which was prepared in the context of the development of the Austrian NQF consultation paper. The authors conclude that Austria must catch up on explication, development and dissemination of VNF-IFL methods. Validation would encourage participation in LLL and cope with the rising mobility in education and training and on the labour market. The VNF-IFL system must be developed in accordance with the NQF. Qualifications must be allocated based on the quality of learning outcome orientation of the certificates and performance on the labour market. It remains to be decided whether certificates from formative portfolio projects without 'official' certification will be included in the NQF.</p> <p>Schneeberger, Arthur; Schlögl, Peter; Neubauer, Barbara (2007): Praxis der Anerkennung von nicht-formalem und informellem Lernen und deren Relevanz für einen künftigen NQR (Practice in validation of non-formal and informal learning and its relevance for a future NQR). In: Entwicklung eines Nationalen Qualifikationsrahmens für Österreich</p>

	<p>– Vertiefende Analysen, 75ff Online: <a href="http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/NQR%20-%20nationaler%20qualifikationsrahmen.pdf">http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/NQR%20-%20nationaler%20qualifikationsrahmen.pdf</a> (10.07.2008)</p> <p>The most recent report on VNF-IFL in Austria is the one prepared for the OECD (ibw [2007]: New OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-Normal and Informal Learning (RNFIL). Country Background Report Austria. Vienna.) and has not yet been published. The report covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_contextual factors (demographic change, internationalisation, new ICT, economic developments and skills shortage and social developments);</li> <li>_institutional arrangements (political and legal framework, governance and the role of government, resources);</li> <li>_technical arrangements (qualifications, qualification systems, qualification frameworks, credit accumulation and transfer, assessment methods and procedures);</li> <li>_stakeholder behaviour (characteristics of stakeholders, access, participation, incentives and disincentives); and</li> <li>_case studies on benefits and barriers.</li> </ul> <p>Further information concerning the Austrian situation related to VNF-IFL will soon be published in the ECOTEC inventory: <a href="http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/2007.html">http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/2007.html</a> (10.07.2008).</p> <p>In spring 2009, a dissertation on 'Validation of non-formal and informal learning for persons with low formal qualifications in Austria' (Prokopp 2009) was finished and will be published within the next months. The author provides, among other things, statistical data on persons with low formal qualifications in Austria and on their labour market situation. Validation is described as the possibility to enhance employability and empowerment. Austrian validation initiatives are described, and some recommendations are given for further action. However, at the same time, the sense of validation is questioned. With regard to the labour market, the dissertation notes that unemployment is a structural and not an individual problem, and that validation should not create false hopes about getting a job. Social reform is seen as a system alternative to the individualisation connected with validation.</p> <p>A study (Spiel et al. 2009) commissioned by Universities Austria discusses the political framework, various definitions and the perspective of selection processes at universities in order to prepare the ground for recommendations for APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning) in universities. These recommendations include: the receiving institution should grant recognition; the students' and graduates' profiles should reflect and relate to the universities' aims and tasks; the underlying philosophy of competence assessment should be made transparent; and theoretical and educational quality criteria should be met. This study sketches the recognition procedure and gives further recommendations (e.g. concerning the European perspective, the role of the European University Association, application of validation also for modules within a study course). The main challenge is seen in combining the complexity of the task and efficient handling of the process.</p>
<p><b>11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any emerging? If so <b>which</b> ones? <b>What</b> type?</li> </ul>	<p>Austria lacks a national strategy for VNF-IFL, it will have to be developed alongside the NQF, and it remains to be seen if and how existing initiatives will be taken into account in the creation of the strategy.</p> <p>Currently, the main problem is a lack of overall information on current projects and initiatives for researchers and</p>

<p>(strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc...)</p> <p>Is there <b>resistance</b> appearing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>At which</b> level?</li><li>• <b>In which</b> sector in particular?</li><li>• <b>From which</b> category of actors/ stakeholders?</li></ul> <p><i>Evidence available? Some examples?</i></p>	<p>practitioners. There are co-operations on the institutional level, and information is often gained at an informal level, i.e. via personal contacts. Responsibilities are not yet clear for matters of VNF-IFL. There are initiatives in several ministries, but it is not clear and transparent enough who is responsible for what. A very helpful initiative would be for a single person or institution to administer a website where all actors from current or finished projects could contribute and discuss.</p>
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### Any other comments

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