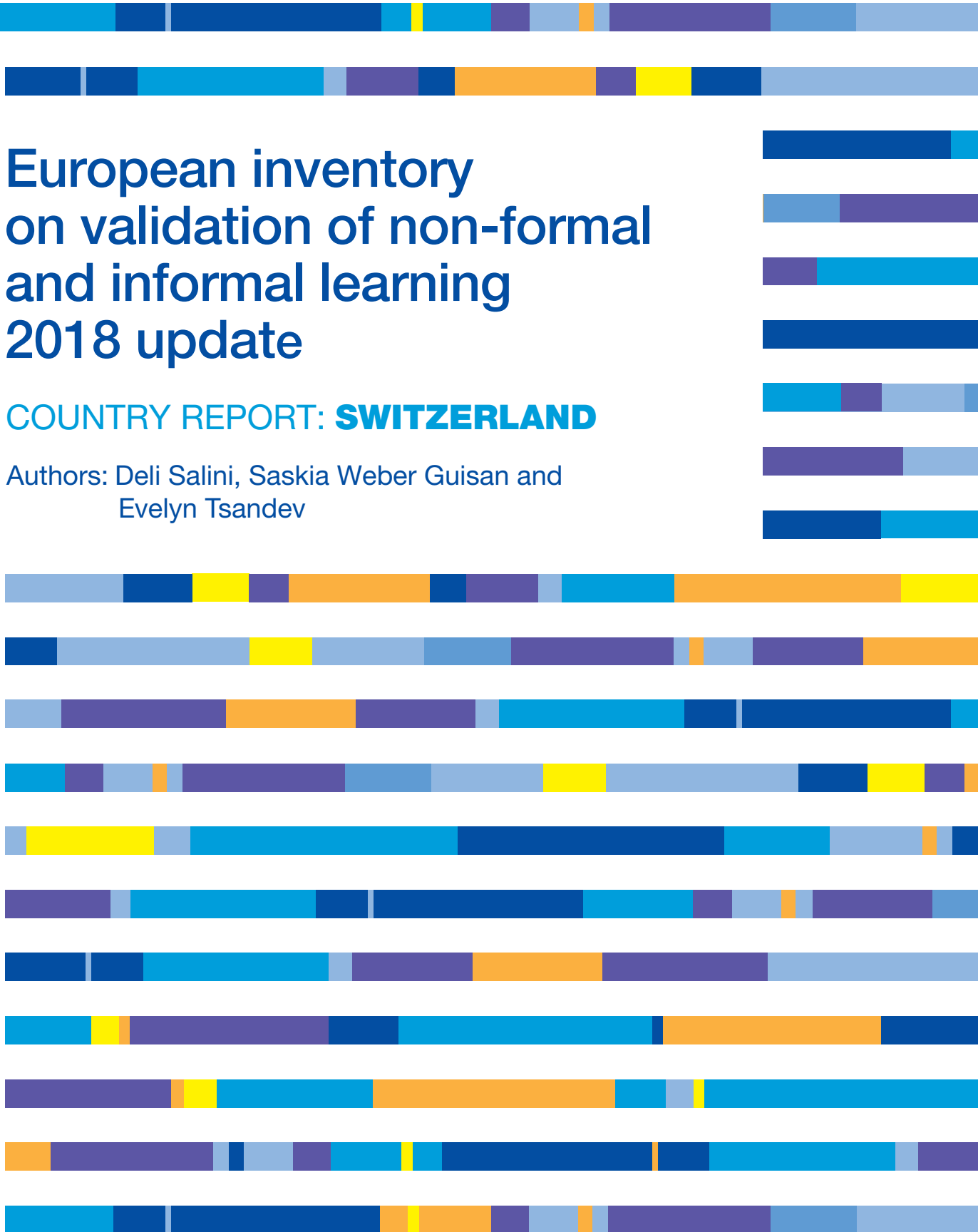EN

European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update

COUNTRY REPORT: SWITZERLAND

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Acknowledgements

Disclaimer:

1   Introduction

In Switzerland, a slow but steady expansion of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) can be seen as a result of the development of relevant policies, the legal framework of the education system and the dissemination of practices. In terms of policies, the issue of validation is being increasingly incorporated as an inherent part of educational policies. Thus, the educational research and innovation (ERI) guidelines for 2013-2016 and for 2017-2020, the 2017 Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training, the Vision 2030 of vocational training, as well as the priority field 'Professional degree and change of profession for adults[1]' in the VET sector, all stress the importance of recognising previous non-formal and informal learning achievements, regardless of the way they were acquired. Nevertheless, employment and youth policies as well as those in the third sector are still not sufficiently involved in this development. The same applies to migrants and refugees. Except in one case (see chapter 9.4.3) there are no specific validation measures for this target group, even if some skills audits are proposed for their specific needs.

Regarding the dissemination of practices, it is found that validation procedures progressively develop in all training sectors. At the same time, in the VET sector, validation practices have been clearly integrated into the overall qualification possibilities for adults. Furthermore, in 2014 the commissions for the recognition of teaching diplomas established two guidelines specifying the use of VNIL to reduce the length of studies. In terms of information concerning access, and the methodology for the establishment of the requested dossiers, some projects are underway in the IVET sector to facilitate access to VNIL practices, but in this domain the potential for the use of ICT and Open educational resources (OER) is still low. At every education and training level there has been a slight increase in the number of qualifications that can be obtained through validation, although the current number of beneficiaries has been relatively stable during the past three years and is in decline compared to 2014.

Although the national action plans in the field of education and training contain indications for the development and diffusion of validation procedures, regulation and practices related to VNIL in Switzerland are more widespread in the VET sector. No binding rules exist in labour policies, in youth policies or in the third sector. Therefore, currently validation procedures are organised in a national structure mostly in the VET system (especially at upper-secondary level), as well as in teacher training. Overall, access to validation is considered as an individual right, whilst validation practices are optional.

Usually it is rather state organisations that take the initiative in developing VNIL practices, while always involving the various stakeholders, both directly interested (the institutions responsible for issuing titles by validation) or indirectly interested (trade unions and / or associations or other institutions).

The partnership between professional organisations and training providers in the VET sector brought an increased awareness of validation procedures among professional organisations. Those are responsible for developing the training plans for the VET and professional education (PE) sectors, and for controlling the qualification criteria. Through this, they are increasingly involved in validation procedures and in acquiring the principles and practices of a 'culture of validation', although currently, only a limited number of qualifications can be awarded via validation. On the other hand, the project 'Professional degree and change of profession for adults' aims to promote and

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[1]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult.html

make more visible any form of taking into account of learning acquired in non-formal and informal ways. In this sense, it should be stressed that the recognition of educational achievements (partial validation) exists in all basic vocational training courses, to allow access to IVET courses[2].

However, validation is still not considered a systematic measure to fight unemployment. For unemployed people, VNIL is financed as an exceptional measure and only in particular cases. Nonetheless, skills audits, which can be designed to correspond to the identification and documentation stages of validation, are regularly promoted and financed as specific intervention measures for unemployed persons.

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

The Swiss education system is very complex from an organisational and decision-making point of view. By extension, this state of affairs also applies to validation practices. Furthermore, a number of key national factors should be taken into account when considering the Swiss perspective on validation: the federalism, the quadrilingualism[3] and the composite articulation of the Swiss Education Area (Conseil fédéral suisse, 2012; OFS, 2005). For this reason we introduce this chapter explaining the general structure of the education system.

Confederation and cantons have different roles for different education levels. However, they are constitutionally required to collaborate closely at every level. In particular, the cantons are primarily responsible for compulsory education (pre-school, primary and lower-secondary school). The post-compulsory education or upper-secondary level is divided into general education schools (baccalaureate schools and specialised schools) and vocational/professional education and training (VET). Swiss tertiary-level education is divided into two sectors:

■ The tertiary A sector is comprised of cantonal universities, Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (ETHZ and EPFL), universities of applied sciences (UAS), universities of teacher education (UTE) and various specialised institutions.

■ The tertiary B sector (higher vocational sector) is comprised of PE (professional education) where various kinds of diplomas are included.

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is the Swiss federal government's specialised agency for national and international matters concerning education, research and innovation policy. Based on this framework, the Confederation and the cantons share the responsibility for the education system, the research system and the innovation system. Together they ensure the quality and permeability across several educational fields (see Figure 1).

The cantons are also responsible for general education, and coordinate their work at the national level through a political body: the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK/CDIP)[4]. The Confederation acts in a full regulatory capacity within the VET/PE system, in collaboration with the cantons and the professional organisations. The cantons are responsible for implementation and professional

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[2] This includes particularly Article 15 of the Vocational Training Act.

[3] The four official languages are: German, French, Italian and Romansh.

[4] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11926.php

organisations establish training content and create apprenticeship positions for VET programmes.

The universities are coordinated by the rectors' conference Swiss universities[5], in which there is one chamber for universities, one for universities of applied sciences and one for universities of teacher education. Those chambers constitute themselves and carry out university-specific duties.

The Confederation and the cantons work together to enact legislation, fund, manage and supervise tertiary-level education. They are jointly responsible for the coordination and guarantee of quality in higher education. In fulfilling this responsibility, both the Confederation and the cantons take into account the autonomy of the higher education institutions.

Figure 2.1   Swiss education system (SERI, 2017)
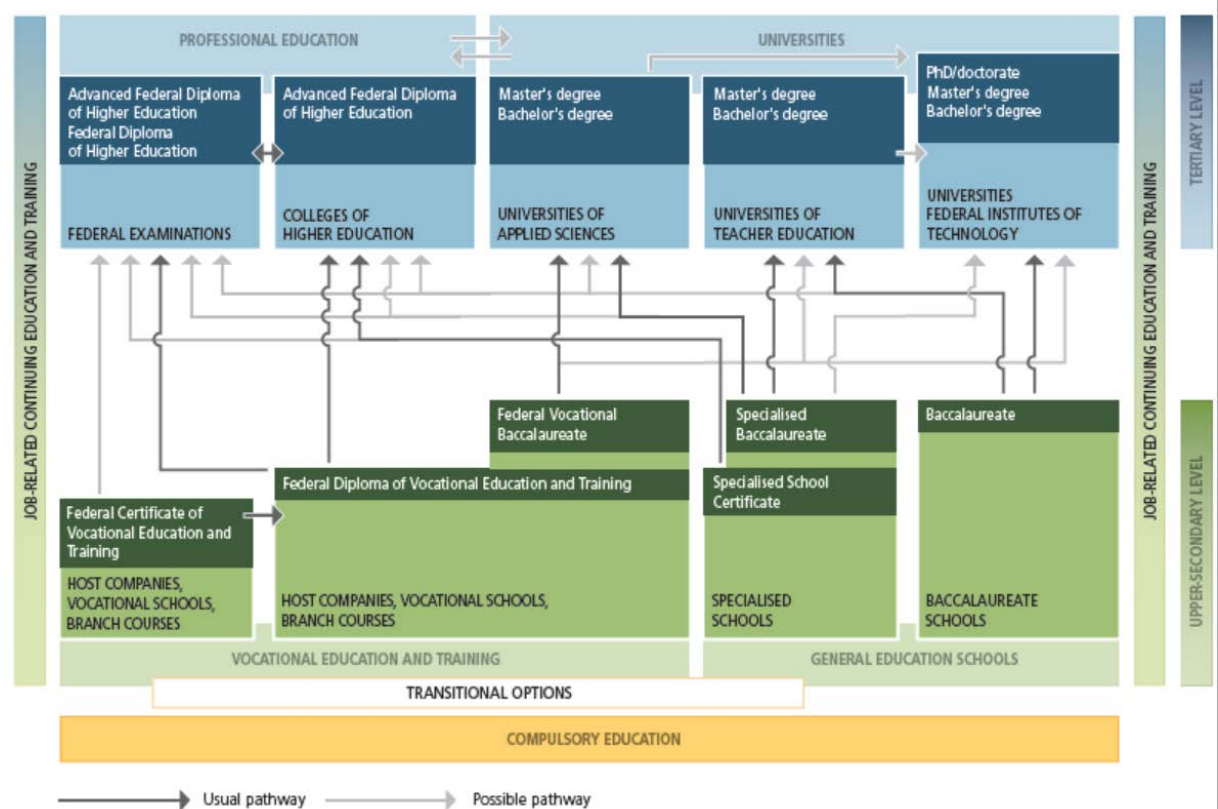
Essentially, validation procedures are integrated within each education and training sector, but not in the third sector, nor in labour policies. A common negotiation involving all partners always takes place in the implementation of the validation procedure in the different sectors. As we have already pointed out when describing the historical evolution of validation procedures, these procedures always develop through interaction between third sector initiatives or professional groups, centres of skills audit or of guidance, or schools and governmental projects, at cantonal or regional level and at national level.

From 2005 to 2009, OPET's national 'Validation project' supported the initial development of norms and tools for validation in IVET. This project, financed by the Confederation, consisted of a platform for dialogue and decision, where all stakeholders interested in the validation procedures were present: OPET and SECO (for the Confederation), representatives of vocational training offices of each Canton,

professional groups, representatives of pilot projects in the field of validation, ARRA, CH-Q and VALIDA associations, private and public centres for skills audit, occupational, educational and career guidance offices, groups of experts in the different subjects and representatives of the training and education institutions involved. This platform was managed by a coordination group and by a conception group, and each year it proposed an information and exchange conference (Salini, Petrini, Voit, 2012).

SERI has run since 2014 the 'Professional degree and change of profession for adults' project[6]. The goal of this project was to increase graduation rates in IVET among adults with no relevant qualifications to gain access to the job market, specifically to deal with the shortage of qualified workers in certain professions. This project was the result of a report outlining the current situation and providing programmatic guidance on the measures to be taken in this context (SEFRI, 2014). The cantons of Switzerland, organisations in the domain of work and third parties were encouraged to develop innovative projects to create structures and tools in the following areas:

■ Training and exams tailored to adults,

■ Information and awareness,

■ Consulting, coaching and promotion of projects.

This project presents and clarifies in greater detail the different possibilities for adults to acquire a formal qualification, that is to say a Federal Diploma of Vocational Education and Training (FDVET) or a Federal Certificate of Vocational Education and Training (FCVET), which includes also the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Based on these indications, the previous explanations and descriptions (see Inventory 2016) are gradually being outmoded as there are now multiple ways to take into account prior learning and for it to become more visible.

Several initiatives[7] are promoted and supported by SERI in order to implement the 'Professional degree and change of profession for adults' project where VNIL is also seen as an important measure to be developed and promoted.

Another document has been published in this context: The Adult Vocational Training Manual[8]. This manual is currently the basis for adult qualification, including VNIL (more on this in section 2.2). It describes, in an accessible way, the different qualification options for adults. One of the strengths of the 2002 Vocational Training Law lies in the wide leeway it offers for the development of training courses and qualification procedures for adults. The Adult Vocational Training Manual introduces this legal framework.

In order to better clarify all types of means and methods for the recognising and validating of non-formal and informal learning, a new guide for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning (which includes validation) in IVET has been produced by SERI and is currently under consultation.

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[6] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult.html

[7] For more information about these projects and initiatives: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/projet/projektfoerderung.html

[8] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene.html

In addition, two studies[9] have been launched for the 2016-2017 period. The first was made by the SFIVET and investigates the employers' point of view regarding the professional certification of adults. The second study, conducted by 'across concept' and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts North-western Switzerland (FHNW), analyses the needs and experiences of adults who have taken one of four adult vocational certification pathways or whom, despite their interests, have not taken the plunge.

National legal framework for validation in the Swiss education system

According to the education and training sector, a number of laws, programmes and directives are issued.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA)

The Federal Act of 13 December 2002 on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETA, SR 412.10), which came into force on 1 January 2004, opened the way for the validation (referred to as 'other qualification procedures').

The most important articles include the following:

■ Art. 9.2 Technical or general skills, knowledge and know-how gained outside usual formal education and training channels (non-formal education and training) as well as professional or non-professional experience (informal education and training) shall also be recognised and/or validated where appropriate;

■ Art. 17.5 Competencies acquired through non-formal or informal education and training may be validated through specific qualification procedures leading to the issuance of a Federal VET Diploma;

■ Art. 33 Professional competencies shall be demonstrated on the basis of a general examination, a series of partial examinations or other OPET-recognised qualification procedures;

■ Art. 34.2 Access to qualification procedures shall not be dependent on attending specific courses of study. OPET shall establish the conditions whereby applicants may undergo qualification procedures;

■ Art. 35 The Confederation may provide funding to associations that develop or offer other qualification procedures.

The aim of the law is to give people with practical experience the chance to validate their prior learning and obtain a federally recognised qualification.

Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Ordinance (VPETO)

The Federal Ordinance of 19 November 2003 on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETO, SR 412.101) came into force on 1 January 2004. This legislative text provides more information about what is meant by 'other qualification procedures' mentioned in VPETA. The most important articles include the following:

– Art. 4 Recognition of prior learning
　　1. Recognition of prior learning shall be decided by:
　　　　a. The cantonal authorities when determining whether or not an individual may shorten the duration of work-based learning;
　　　　b. The VET/PE provider when determining whether or not an individual may shorten the duration of a VET or PE programme;

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[9]　　https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/projet/studien.html

<ol type="c" start="3">
The examining bodies when determining whether or not an individual may be admitted to qualification procedures for the validation of prior learning (i.e. leading to the issuance of a qualification).

<ol start="2">
The Cantons shall establish guidance counselling offices that will be able to help individuals draft assessment portfolios presenting all professional and non-professional experience gained outside the formal education system. These assessment portfolios shall serve as the basis for recognition and/or validation of prior learning described in paragraph 1 above.
The guidance counselling offices shall work with professional organisations and external experts.

– Art. 31 Other qualification procedures

Other qualification procedures include procedures that are generally not covered by VET ordinances but are nevertheless suitable for competency assessment.
The qualification procedures referred to in paragraph 1 may be standardised for specific groups of people and regulated in corresponding VET ordinances.

– Art. 32 Other prerequisites

If competencies were obtained outside an established course of study, only applicants who have at least five years of professional experience may be permitted to undergo qualification procedures.

Messages of Federal Council for the Promotion of education, research and innovation for 2013-2016 and for 2017-2020

In the first message[10], the Federal Council describes the policy guidelines and objectives to promote Education, Research and Innovation in the period 2013-2016. Validation is mentioned among the goals for the promotion of education, specifically the goal of "creating the general conditions for continuing education and training". For this goal, it is specified that "in the whole educational system, a validation of the acquired skills and learning must be instituted, establishing that they are to be considered for the acquisition of formal diplomas. The increasingly irregular development of careers is also to be considered: new professional orientations, pauses due to family requirements and re-integration in the labour market" (Conseil fédéral, 2012). The latest message (26 February 2016) confirms the need to optimise the consideration of continuing education and informal learning in the formal training degrees.

Vision 2030 of vocational training

The evolution of the labour market and society has a strong influence on vocational training. Megatrends such as digitization, increasing job mobility and demographic change pose new challenges for working people and businesses and need to be identified in time.

For these reasons, the Federal Council was invited to develop with the cantons and organisations of the world of work a coherent long-term strategy for vocational training. SERI was in charge of coordinating this work. On January 29 2018, the Vision 2030 of Vocational Training as well as a programme containing action lines were adopted[11], developed jointly by the partners. The Vision 2030 and the programme

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[10] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/le-secretariat-detat-a-la-formation--a-la-recherche-et-a-linnova/encouragement-de-la-formation--de-la-recherche-et-de-linnovation0.html

[11] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/berufsbildungsstrategie-2030.html

form a reference framework for the development of the Swiss vocational training system in the years to come.

Within the 10 strategic guiding lines, four are related to lifelong learning, permeability and flexibility of the training system, the possibility to acquire skills and competencies in a formal, non-formal or informal way and to valorise non-standardised training paths.

Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training

The Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training[12], which was approved in 2014 and implemented in 2017, regulates the principles for: accountability (art. 5); quality (art. 6); taking into account non-formal and informal achievements in formal training (art. 7), in particular paragraph 2 which states that "the Confederation and the cantons promote permeability and the implementation of validation procedures"; improving equal opportunities (art. 8); and, competition (art. 9). These principles primarily concern special legislation at federal and cantonal level. In addition, the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training regulates measures to encourage the acquisition and maintenance of basic skills for adults (art. 13). This is to enable the target groups to acquire the basic skills they lack in reading, writing and speaking in one or more of the national languages, basic mathematics and the use of ICT, to help these people integrate into society and on the job market.

The Ordinance of the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training[13] February 24 2016 regulates the Law for financial aid for organisations active in the field of continuing education and for the financial assistance for the acquisition and maintenance of basic skills for adults[14].

SERI promotes the implementation of this Law in offering financial subsides for research in the following three themes:

■ Social disparity of participation in continuing education, continuing education of older people,
■ Taking into account continuing education and informal training in formal training,
■ Basic skills for adults.

Initiative aimed at responding to the shortage of qualified staff

Since 2011, the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) in cooperation with the Conference of the Canton Departments of Public Economic Affairs (VDK/CDEP) promoted an initiative aimed at fighting the shortage of qualified staff (DEFR, 2015). This DEFR initiative, together with the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training, defines four priority fields of action. In the first field, the importance of validation procedures is emphasised in relation to the need to raise the qualification level in order to meet the requirements of companies. It is highlighted that the Confederation and the cantons should introduce the validation of the knowledge acquired in professional contexts in order to obtain formal qualifications in the whole of the educational system (DEFR, 2015). In fact, the project mentioned above on 'Professional degree and change of profession for adults' promotes the advancement of policies linked to this initiative (Conseil Federal, 2017).

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[12] https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20141724/index.html

[13] https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/official-compilation/2016/713.pdf

[14] For further information see: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/formation-continue/competences-de-base-chez-ladulte.html and https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/formation-continue/foerderschwerpunkt-grundkompetenzen-am-arbeitsplatz.html

2.2 Validation in education and training

Framework for Validation in IVET

Due to the law and the ordinance described above as well as OPET's national 'Validation project' (Salini, Voit & ICF, 2016), the National Validation Guidelines for the IVET sector were established in 2010 (OFFT, 2010a). These guidelines constituted a very important step to develop and implement VNIL for the IVET sector. In May 2018, they were abrogated by SERI even if they will remain in force until the new guide for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning (which include validation) in IVET (currently under consultation) enters force. The purpose of this new guide is to better clarify all types of means and methods for the recognising and validating of non-formal and informal learning in IVET. In fact, since the national priority action field led by SERI, 'Professional qualification for adults', priority is given to encourage all procedures of qualifications for adults, including VNIL, and the manual 'Initial vocational education and training for adults' (SEFRI, 2017) now constitutes the reference for IVET qualification for adults as well as the profession-specific Regulation on the qualification procedure with VNIL.

The manual (SEFRI, 2017) is intended for specialists from cantons, organisations from the world of work and training institutions who wish to develop adult education courses leading to a FDVET or FCVET. It is presented in a didactic form, with pieces of puzzle, showing how different paths could lead to a FDVET or a FCVET. In this manual it is specified that besides qualifications procedures with a final exam, there are 'other qualification procedures' (according to Art. 33 VPTA) recognised by SERI. Within them, a) VNIL and b) 'scattered or split exam' (SEFRI, 2017, pp. 23-24):

A. Qualification procedure with VNIL

The qualification procedure with VNIL is one of the "other qualification procedures". The candidate demonstrates that he/she possesses the required operational skills and meets the general knowledge requirements by means of a dossier in which he/she has documented the acquired experience. The validation procedure takes place in several phases:

1.   **Application and Dossier**: after having been admitted to the qualification procedure with VNIL, the candidate submits to the competent department the application for validation together with a dossier in which s/he has documented the prior experience required. These achievements may have been obtained through practical professional or extra-professional experience or through specialised or general training.

2.   **Evaluation**: the experience acquired in the application is evaluated and then discussed with the candidate during an evaluation interview. In case of uncertainty as to the relevance of the dossier or the outcome of the interview, additional verification methods may be used on a case-by-case basis. The results of the evaluation are recorded in the evaluation report.

3.   **Validation**: on the basis of the experts' evaluation report, the competent cantonal authority decides on the validation of operational skills and compliance with general knowledge requirements, indicating whether or not they have been fulfilled in a certificate of prior learning.

If the qualification procedure is successful, the candidate is awarded with a FDVET or a FCVET. An unsuccessful candidate receives, in addition to the certificate of prior learning, a recommendation on how to fill the gaps. However, he or she is free to fill its gaps as he or she wishes.

A new application for VNIL may be submitted a maximum of two times after an initial failure of the qualification procedure. Operational skills and general knowledge requirements considered to be fulfilled in the attestation of prior learning are taken into account and do not need to be reassessed.

VNIL is possible in professions for which the body responsible has formulated a regulation and implementing provisions recognised by the SEFRI. To date, 22 IVET qualifications (out of 230 different occupations in IVET and two more than in 2016) are accessible through VNIL[15], in various Swiss cantons, although the possibility of validation varies from canton to canton, as each canton decides on which IVET diplomas can be offered by VNIL. Between those, five are in the field of mechanics, four in health and social care; three in electronics and automation, three in the hotel and food sector, two in IT occupations, two in the field of commerce, one in construction, one in logistics and one in manufacturing occupations. Specific documents[16] are available besides the manual 'Initial vocational education and training for adults' (SEFRI, 2017):

■ Reference model Regulation on the qualification procedure with VNIL (SEFRI, 2018b)
■ Complementary instruments such as a) Guidelines for the development and quality control b) Instruments for validation and c) Information about the procedure.

B. Qualification procedure with scattered or split exam

The split exam qualification procedure is a second component of the "other procedures of qualification". Control of operational skills acquired during training is divided across several exams. These can take place for example, as part of a modular training course, at the end of each module. Specific success criteria must be defined. If the candidate completes, the FDVET or FCVET is issued. Split exam is possible in professions for which the responsible body has developed regulations and enforcement provisions recognised by the SEFRI.

Besides the manual 'Initial vocational education and training for adults' (SEFRI, 2017), the other important document is the 'Reference model Regulation on other qualification procedures'[17] (SEFRI, 2018a).

Legal bases for other qualification procedures (VNIL and Scattered exam) in IVET are the articles 19.3, 33, 37.1 and 38.1 of the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETA).

In the manual (SEFRI, 2017, pp. 27-28), it is also specified that learning outcomes can be taken into account even if vocational training is designed for adults from the outset. Taking into account experience enables adults with experience and knowledge to benefit from an exemption from teaching or from some of the parts of the school examination and a possible additional shortening of the duration of training. This is the most general instrument of VNIL. A new guide for the recognition and accreditation (included validation) of prior learning in IVET is currently under consultation and will be implemented soon.

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[15] This means 9.5% of all diplomas in IVET (SERI, 2018).

[16]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

[17]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/aufgeteilte-pruefung.html

To access the validation procedure, usually five years' experience is required and often at least three of them in the profession related to the desired qualification. Other rules may be established in accordance with the requirements of professional organisations (Art. 32, VPETO). For migrants, at least part (usually more than the half) of the five years' professional experience required must have been performed in Switzerland. Depending on professions and cantons, this rule may be interpreted differently. The procedure can be started before completion of the five years' experience (KEK-CDC, 2012). On the other hand, these rules do not concern the other forms of recognition and accreditation of prior learning described in the aforementioned Manual.

Framework for validation in Professional Education (PE)

The legislation establishing validation practices are the same as for IVET, with the addition of the following:

■ Article 44 of the Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 2002, as for VET colleges, specifies: learners who obtain passing scores on the final examinations organised by a PE college or whose competences have been validated through an equivalent qualification procedure shall be awarded a PE college degree.

■ Article 13 of the Ordinance of EAER[18] concerning the minimum requirements for recognition of the education cycles and of the studies post-diploma of the Upper specialised schools (OCM-ES, 2005), subparagraph 3, specifies that admission to the education cycles is possible (these training cycles usually require a diploma of secondary degree) on the basis of qualifications considered equivalent.

At present, the following PE qualifications can be obtained through (partial or full) validation:

■ Federal Diploma[19] and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education[20], promoted by FSEA/SVEB, the Swiss national Umbrella Organisation for Adult Education;

■ Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for Community interpreters[21] promoted by INTERPRET (2 first modules), the Swiss Association for Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation;

■ Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs[22] promoted by the Swiss Association of small and medium sized enterprises (SME), with organisations fostering women's careers;

Discussions are on the way to reform the VNIL procedure for:

■ Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Childhood Education, promoted by the Geneva Centre for health and social training, providing opportunity to reduce the length of studies.

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[18] https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20042470/index.html

[19] This diploma also includes the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning certificate, which corresponds to both a CET title and Module 1 of the Federal Diploma. For simplicity, we mention all these titles in the PE category.

[20] https://alice.ch/fr/devenir-formateurtrice/validation-des-acquis-va/

[21] www.inter-pret.ch and http://www.inter-pret.ch/admin/data/files/marginal_asset/file_fr/311/gwb_reglement_f.pdf?lm=1512395934

[22] http://www.sgv-usam.ch/nc/fr/content/informations-detaillees/article/le-brevet-de-gestion-pme-reconnaissance-des-competences-des-femmes-1690.html and http://www.femmespme.ch/brevet-federal-par-validation-des-acquis/

The previous procedure was long and complex to follow. Thus, there were very few participants and the majority preferred the formal way with the possibility to do it part time in order to continue a professional activity alongside.

In this sector, phases of identification and documentation are structured in different ways according to the given degree.

Framework for validation in continuous education and training (CET)

In the area of continuing education at both secondary and tertiary level, validation practices are relatively absent; nevertheless, some interesting initiatives have been underway for several years while others have developed recently. The reference framework has not been specifically established, but the procedures are in line with the strategies put into action in other education and training areas. The validation possibilities in this sector are as follows:

■ VNIL for the qualification of health auxiliary certificate, of the Swiss Red Cross (SRC), constituting certification at the level below FCVET and FDVET (Croix-Rouge vaudoise, 2013). Originally proposed in the canton of Vaud, this procedure is intended for candidates (whether employed or not) who have worked for several years in the field of healthcare and have regularly attended continuing education courses. Once the candidate's dossier is accepted, the health auxiliary certificate is obtained on the basis of a practical and theoretical (oral) examination taken at the candidate's workplace or during a three-week work placement[23].

■ Three proposals for the validation skills, which are offered by the Swiss Association of Managers (Association Suisse des cadres)[24] and do not focus on formal qualifications but on the granting of diplomas or certificates, validate experience and achievements in leadership, management and even more for:

– a) Swiss army officers[25]: it offers three levels of recognition depending on the experience of leadership within the Swiss army;

– b) Municipal executive members[26] with a minimum of four years' experience. The certificate obtained comprises maximum ten key-competences;

– c) Women[27] with skills acquired informally, for example in voluntary work or in family enterprises. Eight different certificates are proposed and coaching is planned. This proposal is supported by the labour office of the Canton Wallis as a measure to help unemployed women to reintegrate in the labour market. The Swiss Association of Managers is actively promoting this measure in other cantonal labour offices.

■ DAS in Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Management[28]. This project is proposed by the University of Geneva and University of Savoie (France) and was the subject of a study (Bachelet & de Jonckheere, 2013)[29]. This course combines validation of previous learning outcomes and a course for

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[23]   http://www.croixrougevaudoise.ch/nos-activites/formation/auxiliaire-de-sante-croix-rouge-suisse/auxiliaire-de-sante-validation-des-acquis.html

[24] http://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/

[25] https://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/officiers /

[26] https://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/conseiller-communal

[27] https://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/valorisation-femmes

[28] http://gsem-executive.unige.ch/bachelor-en-emploi/ and http://gestion.unige.ch/

[29] http://www.unige.ch/formcont/files/1314/3921/7145/VAE.pdf

complementary continuous training, intended for validation beneficiaries. This DAS follows the French model.

- ■ Swiss Register for engineers, technicians and architects (REG)[30]. This is the only private institution in Switzerland mandated to officially recognize professional experience in Engineering, Architecture, Industry and Environment as equivalent to Swiss degrees. The REG is the most ancient institution in Switzerland which considers professional experience in order to authorise inscription into its register. This form of recognition, endorsed by SERI, allows people who do not have a recognised qualification, but are able to demonstrate a year-long experience in a specific field, to be evaluated on the basis of a dossier which confirms their professional practice. This is a special form of validation, because it does not issue a professional title, but it permits practice of one of the REG professions, according to the corresponding level in the register.

- ■ Another interesting initiative is the online skills audit proposed by the Swiss Association of labour offices. This proposal permits an equivalence to be obtained (it is not a validation) of the Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education of specialist in Human Resources. The skills audit online (self-evaluation and external evaluation), together with the skills audit delivered by the labour officer, is an important compulsory part of the procedures to be followed in order to receive the certificate of equivalence concerning professional requirements needed for people responsible for public labour market services. Each canton has established a description of the skills, on which the skills audit and the level of requirements are based[31]. This is an internal procedure only for employees working in labour offices (AOST, 2017).

- ■ From January 2018, new regulations apply for the naturalisation procedure: The Swiss federal law defines the levels of language competency required in one of the national languages. One possibility of attesting language skills is the language passport issued by the fide Secretariat on behalf of the State Secretariat of Migration (SEM) which can be acquired through validation as of autumn 2018. [32]

Framework for Validation in higher education

In Switzerland, the higher education level is divided into different sorts of higher education institutions: the cantonal universities, the federal institutes of technology (ETHZ and EPFL), the universities of applied sciences, the universities of teacher education, other various specialised institutions, and the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET). The coordination of higher education is now assigned to the Swiss universities conference[33] that proposes since 2015, within the Swiss Higher Education Bill, the promotion of universities and coordination in Switzerland's higher education sector.

The Qualifications Framework of the Swiss Higher Education Area (CRUS, KFH, & COHEP, 2011) describes and defines higher education levels and qualifications in Switzerland on the basis of the following elements: generic descriptors, admission criteria, ECTS credits, academic degrees. The nqf.ch-HS contributes to the implementation of the Bologna process goals; it serves as an orientation tool for the higher education institutions to develop and describe their study courses and programmes; it improves the information about the Swiss higher education system,

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[30] www.reg.ch

[31] http://www.vsaa.ch/service-de-la-formation/execution-laci/equivalence-selon-art.119b-oaci/

[32] https://www.fide-info.ch/en/einbuergerung

[33] www.swissuniversities.ch

particularly with regard to teaching; and, it facilitates the comparability of qualifications within Europe and enhances transparency.

In this framework, for some bachelors, there is the possibility to be admitted to the first cycle of studies, on the basis of former training valued as equivalent to a baccalaureate. Moreover, for each typology of university, there are legal bases or programmatic indications which legitimate or enable the activation of validation practices. This framework allows both the possibility to be admitted for those who do not have a baccalaureate and the possibility to validate partially a university degree. Moreover, in each institution of higher education, it is possible to obtain a partial exemption from the studies, for those who wish to change course inside the same institution or who pass from one institution to another. This varies according to the relevance of the received education to the desired education.

The phases of identification and documentation are structured in different ways according to the considered degree. Moreover, it is not possible to have access separately to the phases of Assessment and Certification.

Below, different existing possibilities of validation for each sector of HE are described.

Cantonal universities and federal institutes of technologies

Validation procedures depend on the universities themselves and refer to cantonal legislations. To access cantonal universities and federal institutes of technologies (EPFL and ETHZ), the most common way is the (academic) baccalaureate. However, holders of a Federal vocational baccalaureate or, since Summer 2017, of a specialised baccalaureate can access through the so called 'DUBS bridge' which is an examination carried out in several disciplines (languages, mathematics, experimental sciences, human sciences). It is possible to prepare for this test as an autodidact or by following a course generally over six months or a year. Furthermore at the federal institutes of technologies (EPFL and ETHZ) and the cantonal universities of Bern, Fribourg, Lucerne, Neuchâtel and USI of Lugano it is possible under certain circumstances to be admitted to a Bachelor's degree programme in several faculties without a baccalaureate. In these cases, special admission procedures are applied, which vary from one university to another as well as from one faculty to another. Only Geneva University (since 1978) and Lausanne University (since 2004) propose an admission based on a dossier, which takes into account non-formal and informal learning.

The University of Geneva[34] is also the first Swiss University, since 2008, to propose validation procedures for admission, based on partial validation, to the following Faculties: Psychology and Educational Sciences; Natural Sciences; Science of Society; University Institute for Teacher Education (IUFE) and University Computer Centre (CUI).

The legal bases of validation at Geneva University are:

■ The University of Geneva Regulation on the Validation of non-formal and informal learning procedure (2015) that defines the conditions, the structure of the validation file, the accompanying forms as well as the assessment methods and the percentage of possible reduction of the duration of studies.

Since 2016, the University of Lausanne[35] offers the possibility to obtain by VNIL max 60 ECTS for a bachelor and max 1/3 ECTS of a Master without the ECTS of the master thesis in the following faculties: Bachelor and Master in Arts (ès Lettres),

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[34] https://www.unige.ch/vae/

[35] https://www.unil.ch/vae/fr/home.html

Bachelor and Master in Social sciences, Bachelor and Master in Political sciences, Bachelor and Master in Sport sciences, Bachelor in Biology and Master in Law.

The legal bases of validation at Lausanne University are:

■ Regulation 3.17 on Validation of non-formal and informal learning[36]
■ Regulation 3.18 on Recognition of ECTS or equivalences[37]

Currently, there are no validation procedures in the federal institutes of technologies.

Universities of applied sciences

Created in 1994, the specialised universities of applied sciences (UAS) propose an education near to practice, highly praised by students and employers. At present, Switzerland has nine UAS (formed by about sixty schools), depending on a single canton or an inter-cantonal agreement. In this context, legal bases for validation procedures were founded on the Federal Act of 6 October, 1995, on Universities of Applied Sciences (SR 414.71). Currently, the legal bases for validation are integrated in the SERI prescriptions coming from the ERI 2017-2020 messages. It should also be noted that the Higher Education Act sets a Higher Education Council which gives indications on diploma recognition and on validation procedures (Art.12).

As far as postgraduate education is concerned, the FDEA Ordinance concerning continuing education, postgraduate education and qualifications in universities of applied sciences (2005), in art. 3, paragraph 2 stipulates that *"the students not holding a qualification from a tertiary level institution may be admitted to postgraduate programmes if they are able to provide evidence of some kind of their aptitude to attend such programmes"*.

These norms are not binding and the Cantons and institutions have been assigned the responsibility for their implementation. It is then these latter who take decisions on admission and on dossiers, as well as on the procedures for the validation aiming at the acquisition of modules or ECTS credits. There are no standardised policies concerning validation. Some schools have internal norms on this subject, established in agreement with cantonal authorities. These directions are often integrated in wider programmes aiming at making education more flexible, in order to facilitate access for students or mothers. This project has established norms that make it possible for training and educational institutions to make their training courses more flexible, without losing their quality.

At national level, the admission on the basis of a dossier including non-formal and informal work-based learning is possible for the course of social work as well as for the course of health in the UAS of western Switzerland. This kind of procedure was already possible in French-speaking Switzerland before the creation of UAS for the admission to specific schools for nurses, which in those times were under the rule of the Swiss Red Cross, as well as for the admission to social work schools. As a consequence, this procedure has remained when these schools have been changed into UAS. Recently most courses for social work in the UAS in German-speaking Switzerland have introduced a joint procedure on the basis of a dossier including non-formal and informal learning.[38] There are also some other courses (e.g. Engineering

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https://www.unil.ch/vae/files/live/sites/vae/files/home/pdf/unil_directive_3_17_validation_acquis_experience_vae.pdf
37

https://www.unil.ch/vae/files/live/sites/vae/files/home/pdf/unil_directive_3_18_reconnaissance_des_credits_ects.pdf

38 www.asdvillari.ch

in UAS of North-western Switzerland) which allow explicitly admission by dossier based on non-formal learning outcomes. Considering the breadth and the diversification of the proposed curricula and the lack of online accessibility on information, as far as the other UAS are concerned it is not possible, at present, to draw up a complete framework of all the forms of admission on the basis of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Partial validation of an education curriculum is possible only in the UAS of western Switzerland after 2010 for the following areas: design and visual arts (5 bachelors, 1 master); economics and services (6 bachelors, 2 masters); Engineering and Architecture (20 bachelors, 4 masters); music and scenic arts (2 bachelors); health (1 bachelor, 1 master), Social work (1 bachelor). Negotiations are currently ongoing with the Swiss Army[39] to recognise transversal competencies in Bachelors of UAS.

An equivalence of max 120 ECTS can be obtained by VNIL for a Bachelor degree and a max of 30 ECTS for a Master degree.

The demand is growing constantly since 2010.

If VNIL remains an individual procedure, for some specific groups, a special procedure is created. This is the case for example for Health or Tourism, where ancient diplomas of Tertiary B level (Colleges of higher education) can be recognised in the 120 ECTS and the 60 ECTS which has to be done are specifically thought for these groups of people.

The legal base of validation at UAS Western Switzerland is:

■ Regulation on Validation of non-formal and informal learning from May 26 2011

The universities of teacher education

The universities of teacher education (UTE) have an independent position in higher education, as they are under the exclusive responsibility of cantons and are subject to inter-cantonal laws. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK/CDIP) has entrusted the coordination of the different institutions working in the field of teaching to the specific chamber of Swiss universities[40]. This chamber is made up of the rectors of all universities of teacher education and of other training institutions for teachers.

Until 2011, for the same reasons as for UAS, standardised policies on recognition and VNIL did not exist in the universities of teacher education. Nevertheless, since August 2012, there are common rules for the 'professional re-training in teaching', set by EDK/CDIP and relating to teachers working at pre-school, primary and secondary I levels[41]. These rules are based on the modification of the following regulations: those concerning the recognition of UTE qualifications at preschool and primary school level (10 June 1999)[42] and regulations concerning the recognition of UTE qualifications at secondary I level (26 August 1999)[43]. These reforms provide for people without a formal admission certificate (gymnasium diploma or equivalent qualification) the possibility of an admission procedure aiming at verifying the applicants' aptitudes for higher studies (CDIP/EDK, 2012). In this framework, the possibility to be admitted through VNIL has also been determined. Also in this case, these norms are not restrictive and the Cantons and institutions may decide whether to apply them or not.

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[39] https://www.vtg.admin.ch/fr/actualite/themes/bildungslandschaft-und-armee/anerkennung-fuehrungsausbildung-durch-hochschulen.html

[40] http://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/organisation/chambers/chamber-of-universities-of-teacher-education/

[41] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/27621.php

[42] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/27620.php

[43] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/27622.php

Apart from the above mentioned 'professional re-training in teaching', the regulations on the recognition of teaching diplomas specify that UTE have to validate formal learning, which has been obtained on the secondary or tertiary level (CDIP/EDK 1999). New national guidelines are in place since 2014, which specify the above mentioned VNIL (CDIP/EDK 2014a and b). In fact, all UTEs have to allow students to reduce the duration of their studies through validation, although some restrict this to specific sectors. These procedures, which require the preparation of a portfolio and passing of an interview, also offer the chance to reduce practice time (but only if the previous practice has been validated by an external body).

In the French part of Switzerland a convention including four UTE (Vaud, Valais, Fribourg, BeJuNe) and two training centres attached to universities (IUFE Geneva and CERF Fribourg) regulates practices in VNIL for the Bachelor in pre-primary and primary education and the Master in secondary I education. The common directive[44] on regional procedure of VNIL which dates from October 9 2013 is currently being revised. It is possible to obtain max 60 ECTS for the bachelor and max 30 ECTS for the Master by VNIL.

The French part of the Switzerland Commission of VNIL (CORVAE) is active to coordinate VNIL. Members of CORVAE examine together the dossiers of candidates. This way, they avoid cantonal disparities and harmonise the practices.

In the German part of Switzerland, it is more procedures of equivalences than VNIL to recognise previous teaching activities.

In Ticino[45], the only possibility of VNIL is for teaching accreditation in Baccalaureate schools, but the demands are rare as the procedure is expensive (3600 CHF/c. EUR 3'066[46]). Currently, SFIVET is in charge of it but in 2019 it will be the Department of training and learning of SUPSI, for the admissibility, guidance and constitution of the jury[47].

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)

The SFIVET has a specific status among universities of teacher education. According to the corresponding articles of VPETA and VPETO and since 2004, SFIVET Lausanne (Albornoz & Dupuis, 2008; Rywalski, 2012) has developed a validation procedure for the federal diploma of teachers working in vocational schools[48]. This procedure, which makes it possible to receive the complete qualification, was updated in 2007, when SFIVET became a federal higher education institution. The procedure is open to persons with at least five years of experience in teaching and a tertiary A or B level of education in the teaching field. The procedure includes several different ways of support and evaluation. Evaluation is developed according to a dossier comprising the analysis of three situations related to teaching activities, an on-the-job visit (a period of teaching lesson followed by an interview), a collective two-day-assessment and a final interview. Currently, a validation procedure is being developed for the SFIVET sites in German and Italian-speaking Switzerland.

In addition to this, in the SFIVET sites located in the German and Italian parts of Switzerland, an additional procedure of qualification was implemented between 2009-2014 – under the authority of SERI and of SBBK/CSFP (2011) – for the acquisition of

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[44] https://candidat.hepl.ch/files/live/sites/systemsite/files/comite-direction/directives/directive-commune-procedure-regionale-vae-2013-hep-vaud.pdf

[45] http://www.supsi.ch/dfa/bachelor-diploma-master/diploma/vae.html

[46] Exchange rates of Mai 2018.

[47] http://www.supsi.ch/dfa.html

[48] https://www.iffp.swiss/validation-des-acquis-de-lexperience

an equivalent qualification for teaching in vocational training. Thanks to this additional qualification procedure, it was possible to have direct access to final examinations for the courses Certificate and Diploma[49] in teaching within Vocational Training. These examinations are formed by several parts (four for the diploma, three for the certificate). One of these parts is the elaboration of a dossier with the aim of identifying the correspondence between the practice of the applicant and the requirements of the reference framework of studies. The procedure was proposed for a limited period of time and the released title is a diploma for teaching, with the logo of the Confederation and the SFIVET.

CSFO/SDBB certification on 'Occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor'

On the basis of the VPETA and VPETO regulations and thanks to collaboration between OPET and the CSFO/SDBB, the norms for the acquisition through validation of the Certification for guidance counsellor qualification are available since 2010. This specialisation is not issued by a higher education institution, but open only to holders of a higher education degree. It allows for the acquisition of the title of 'Occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor', awarded by SERI.[50] This procedure will be abolished in the future[51].

CSFO/SDBB validation of teachers working in vocational schools

At the request of the SERI, CSFO/SDBB coordinates and supports the validation process. The procedure is carried out as a temporary pilot project in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. This procedure will be abolished in the future. However, negotiations are currently underway that this offer will be taken over by another provider.

2.3   Validation and the labour market

In Switzerland, labour market policies are coordinated by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)[52]. The Labour Market and Unemployment Insurance division, is part of this Secretariat. In this area, the use of validation procedures is rare, because it is considered too long to be used for a quick reintegration into the labour market. When this opportunity is given, the jobseeker might validate different modules, as it is the case in the validation of Module 1 of the Federal Diploma Certificate in Adult Education, or with the project INFORMA[53] addressed to experienced specialists in the professional fields Engineering, Economy, Commerce, Construction and especially ICT, who do not have the necessary qualifications or who want to improve their skills, including migrants and those people who are unemployed. This project is recognised in the field of the labour market measures between Bern and Zurich. The recognition procedure at the tertiary level makes it possible to shorten educational and study programmes by recognising existing work experience and extra-occupational practice[54]. Depending on the case, this procedure may be covered by unemployment insurance. Moreover, in some cantons (e.g. Valais) and thanks to an important collaboration between the different cantonal authorities it is possible, under certain conditions, to activate individual validation projects, recognised as

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[49] The certificate (10 ECTS) targets those who teach on a secondary basis (with a workload of less than 50%), while the diploma (60 ECTS) targets those who teach on a primary basis.

[50] http://www.csfo.ch/dyn/194347.asp

[51] http://www.sdbb.ch/dyn/197968.asp

[52] https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/en/home.html

[53] http://www.informa-modellf.ch/informa

[54] www.ict-berufsbildung.ch/

labour market measures by regional employment centres. For example, in the canton of Valais, the specific procedure of validation for women held by the Swiss association for managers (ASC) (see section 2.2) which can lead to several certifications, can be financed by the labour office of the Canton Wallis as a measure to help unemployed women to reintegrate the labour market.

In this sector, as well as that of the skills audit sector aiming at vocational (re)integration, quality controls are managed by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) or by external organisations which it mandates. Thus, the 2015 report on 'Effectiveness and efficiency of the public employment service' (SECO, 2015[55]) analyses the national re-integration strategy and provides directions and guidelines to improve services. In this respect, specific reference is made to the importance of tailored advice to users' needs.

Two recent reports[56] analyse how unemployment insurance can help and support the return to the labour market in offering tailored measures (like specific training or possibilities of VNIL): 'Offers in continuing training. Possibilities and limits for unemployment insurance' (KEK-CDC Consultants, Stalder & Guntern, 2015) and 'Use of labour market measures of unemployment insurance during structural professional reorientations: Possibilities and limits' (SECO, 2018)

Initiatives from private companies also exist. For example Swisscom, a large telecommunications company, initiated an offer for information and support for its employees in 2009. Since then, 56 people have earned a diploma in four professions (mediamatician, computer specialist, commercial clerk and salesman) and 17 people are still in the process. The offer was terminated at the end of 2017 but employees still have the opportunity to undergo the validation process in the cantons. The expansion of the process in the cantons and the resulting improved support for participants is one reason why support is being discontinued at Swisscom.

2.3.1 Skills audits

Despite what has been said previously, skills audits are commonly used in Switzerland to help jobseekers re-entering the labour market. In fact, skills audits or assessment portfolios (*bilans de compétences*) are an essential part of active labour market policies, both considering the number of participants and budget (Joubli, 2012). Cantonal services for labour market policies use them in order to clarify the perspective of jobseekers, shorten the period of unemployment and reduce the risk of misemployment. The *bilans de competences* are carried out by the 'centres de bilan' or by the 'competences assessment centres', recognised by the Government. The processes of 'bilan' proposed are often inspired by the French model of 'bilan de competences', comprising self-evaluation. In addition to these processes, a more general inventory is possible in order to focus the support measures.

The results of *bilans* are often included in a report, which is given to the counsellors working in regional employment centres. The latter thus receive a general overview of skills and perspectives of the person they are following. The counsellors can also identify obstacles to employment or risks of long-term unemployment. Generally, a *bilan* is followed or accompanied by a course on job search techniques. *Bilans* can

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https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/fr/home/Publikationen_Dienstleistungen/Publikationen_und_Formulare/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Informationen_Arbeitsmarktforschung/Wirksamkeit_Effizienz_oeffentlichen_Arbeitsvermittlung.html

[56] https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/fr/home/Arbeit/Arbeitslosenversicherung/oeffentliche-arbeitsvermittlung/arbeitsmarktliche-massnahmen/Nachholbildung_im_Rahmen_der_Arbeitslosenversicherung.html

include also evaluations, evaluation interviews with a counsellor, self-evaluations and evaluations by third parties, as well as psychological tests and performance tests.

In order to meet the very different needs of jobseekers, skills audits and job search training have been refined during recent years. Skill audits are particularly relevant for low-skilled individuals, to foster self-confidence and stimulate them in having their skills recognised through validation and for experienced, older jobseekers that need to make the skills they have acquired over time visible, and identify new possible professional sectors. Skill audits can be related to specific professions and organised by professional groups.

The methods used for the skills audits aim at taking stock of skills and know-how acquired in a formal or informal context, and they are often accompanied by the drawing up of a competences portfolio. In Switzerland, the following model concepts are particularly used: 'competences bilan-portfolio' of the Association for the recognition of non-formal and informal leaning (ARRA)[57] and the CH-Q model[58] which has been recently incorporated into the new platform VALIDA.Suisse.

The high number of skills audits offers proposed in Switzerland confirms the positive consideration for this kind of personal and professional assessment all over the country. They are already a part of the classic procedure for career guidance. The targets for these are:

– Women, where recognition of the skills gained from voluntary work and housework can facilitate their reintegration into the labour market;

– Migrants, where recognition of qualifications, skills and experience gained abroad can facilitate their (re)integration into the labour market;

– Qualified or unqualified job seekers for the same reasons;

– Persons undertaking retraining;

– Persons who lack qualifications but would like, nevertheless, to enrol in an education and training programme;

– Groups of people with the same professional background (sometimes supported by enterprises);

– Anyone wishing to assess their (formal or informal) learning or career development.

2.4   Validation and the third sector

In the third sector, there is no specific regulation concerning the validation of skills acquired through voluntary work. Nevertheless, in several educational sectors and particularly in the health and social sectors, these experiences are taken into account when drawing up the portfolio for the validation procedure. Moreover, since 2001, a national project called Volunteer Dossier has been implemented concerning the identification and documentation of skills and competencies acquired through volunteering.

This Volunteer Dossier proposes instruments for the identification and documentation of voluntary experiences. The aim of the recognition procedure is to give value and greater visibility to the experience gained from volunteer work. The recognition procedure is based on the applicant's prior learning as presented in an assessment

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[57] www.arra.ch

[58] https://www.valida-suisse.ch/fr/service-ch-q.html

portfolio. This dossier was drawn up in 2001, in the framework of the UNESCO year for voluntary work, and is now used all over the country and, in particular, supported by the Swiss conference of youth associations, which proposes the training pamphlet '*Je m'engage*' as an aid. This pamphlet allows the recognition of all the training and the experiences acquired in different youth organisations and can be used when looking for an apprenticeship. Voluntary work thus acquires an added value and receives the same consideration as remunerated work.[59] Benevolat-Vaud, which is a cantonal umbrella organisation promoting volunteering, proposes workshops for people responsible for associations in order to give them tools to write volunteer certificates which testify activities and competencies (soft skills or specific skills) developed by volunteers through their activity (like a work certificate).

To encourage voluntary work in the youth sector, the 'Youth leave' (set in the Code of Obligations, Article 329e), entitles all employees and apprentices under the age of 30 who are volunteering for youth up to five days of unpaid leave each year. A cantonal law in the Canton of Vaud (art. 30 LSAJ[60]) permits recognition of the experience of supervising youth activities as equivalent to internships in the curriculum of vocational training. It is especially interesting to enter an UAS in social work where a one-year experience is requested.

For the youth sector, policies do not systematically consider validation as a tool for social inclusion and unemployment prevention. The strategies focus primarily on practices' recognition, assessment and valuation of non-formal learning. Even so, there are many national and cantonal initiatives intended to support young people in their training course, in order to avoid drop-out and to facilitate access to the labour market. Since 1977, monitoring of the apprenticeship market is performed twice a year in order to detect imbalances between supply and demand early on and take the necessary measures. Currently, the offer of available apprenticeship places is higher than the demand of young people seeking such a position[61]. The main reason for this is probably demographic change. Imbalances are particularly pronounced in certain sectors. In addition to the Apprenticeship Barometer, there is another important national-scale project: The Case management in VET[62] (Egger, Dreher & Partner, 2015) intended for young people under 24 years of age having difficulties to integrate into the labour market after completion of compulsory schooling (interruption of apprenticeship, failure of exams, unable to find a job after completion of apprenticeship). Although the project itself has been terminated by the end of 2015, the corresponding tasks have been transferred as regular tasks to the cantonal authorities.

In the area of enhancing young people's achievements, it is important to note the project developed as part of the voluntary activities of the Vaud Federation of Young People from the countryside (*Fédération vaudoise des jeunesses campagnardes* - FVJC)[63]. This project, led by SFIVET and completed in 2015, focused on skills developed in the context of youth activities and establishing a collective portfolio of

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[59] www.dossier-benevolat.ch; http://www.sajv.ch/politique/engagement-benevole/?lang=fr

[60]   https://www.vd.ch/themes/vie-privee/enfance-et-jeunesse/promotion-et-soutien-aux-activites-de-jeunesse/reconnaissance-en-tant-que-stage/

[61]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/formation-professionnelle-initiale/barometre-des-places-d-apprentissage.html

[62] http://www.sbbk.ch/dyn/20280.php

[63] http://www.sfivet.swiss/project/recognitionof-prior-learning-acquired-volunteer-work-within-federation-vaudoise-des

skills, available online.[64] This was the practical side of a research concerning youth voluntary work and the development of competencies (Cortessis, Weber Guisan & Tsandev, *in press*).

3   Links to national qualification systems

Many Swiss VET/PE qualifications are relatively unknown in other countries, potentially hindering Swiss citizens seeking employment abroad. For this reason, Switzerland sees the link to European cooperation on qualifications frameworks (both the European qualification frameworks - EQF, and the Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area - QF-EHEA), as an opportunity to strengthen the transparency and comparability of its national qualifications in a European and wider international context.

The national qualifications framework is currently intended to integrate all qualifications in the field of vocational education and training (VET, upper-secondary level) and professional education (PE, tertiary, non-university level). Continuing education and training (CET) cannot be integrated into the NQF. The referencing of this qualifications framework (NQF Vocational and Professional Education and Training) to the EQF was established in 2015. Since the summer of 2016, professional organisations are given two options: applying for simplified referencing of qualifications or applying for individualised referencing of qualifications.[65] For the simplified referencing of qualification, SERI proposes a standard reference level for each type of qualification. If the professional organisation feels that the given qualification should be referenced to a higher level within the NQF VPQ, then it may apply for individual referencing of that qualification. This individual referencing process is based on the learning outcomes of each qualification and takes into account the specificities of each profession. It is however complex and requires a close cooperation and coordination with the relevant stakeholders of each profession in order to reach consensus regarding the appropriate NQF level.

As previously mentioned, universities have elaborated their own, separate qualifications framework, with reference to the Bologna reform (NQF.CH-HS), on the basis of the QF-EHEA.

The vocational training system in Switzerland was not changed when the NQF for VET/PE qualifications came into force. This means that, since the classification of qualifications does not imply a change of the Swiss system of vocational training, the current procedures for VNIL have not changed, but stayed the same.

In the universities or UAS where validation is present, the recognised learning outcomes give a right to obtain corresponding ECTS credits. These credits are registered in the study plan of the student.

SERI applies the recommendation regarding ECVET and is favourable to its objectives (Fondation CH, ECVET Swiss team, 2013). In this area, some projects have experimented in the use of ECVET connected with validation procedures (Salini & ICF 2014). SERI has promoted working groups on this matter and the results (Fondation CH, 2013) specified the following elements:

– A high consistency can be declared by comparing the elements and processes established in Switzerland and the ECVET recommendations of the European Council and the European Parliament on the validation of results of non-formal and informal

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[64] http://www.fvjc.ch/documents.php

[65] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/bildung/mobilitaet/nqf-vpet/das-vorgehen-zur-einstufung.html

learning. The qualification profiles in Switzerland list the professional competences which in ECVET correspond to the units of learning outcomes.

– Mobility stays during initial vocational training involve a heavy organisational burden, especially in dual vocational training systems such as the Swiss one with its three training locations, preventing this option from being fully utilised at the moment.

– Associations which have already run a project with ECVET have gathered significant knowledge about the use of ECVET in vocational training in Switzerland and serve as examples of good practice.

4   Standards

In Switzerland there are several definition levels for training standards, according to different training and educational contexts. Here we only present those sectors where there is a validation procedure.

As far as upper-secondary and higher vocational training (VET/PE) is concerned, all diplomas have standards and national examinations (ordinance on initial vocational training and national education plan for all places of training) and are based on skills. These qualification standards are established by labour market organisations, so that a strong relationship between occupational, educational and training standards and employment is ensured.

The validation procedure in IVET refers directly to these standards, as well as to:[66]

■ *The qualification profile*, which lists all the skills required, which must be validated for each specific profession. Its contents correspond to the ordinance on initial vocational training and it is formed by compact and functional unities. It allows applicants to compare their own position to the skills required and it allows experts to evaluate if the student has reached the level required.

■ *The Language, Communication and Society (LCS) subjects in VET profile* (which includes personal, social and methodological skills). The applicant confirms that she/he has the skills required for the profession and for the management of day-to-day life.

■ *The assessment, validation and certification standards* are defined according to the qualification profile and to the LCS requirements.

As far as universities are concerned, the main basis for training standards is the Qualifications Framework for the Swiss Higher Education Area[67]. If validation practices are applied in this sector, they refer directly to these Educational and training standards, as well as to the rules of the Bologna Process.

5   Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

Coordination, governance and allocation of responsibilities

The coordination of validation projects throughout Switzerland is ensured by SERI, although the educational institutions keep a high degree of autonomy in the higher education sector. SERI supports and checks the pilot projects implemented in

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[66]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

[67]https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fr/espace-des-hautes-ecoles/cadre-de-qualifications-nqfch-hs/

cooperation with the specific services coordinating the processes in the different education and training sectors (see sections 2.1 and 2.2). While respecting the consensual dimension wherein all validation projects are established, they ensure coherence and quality as to the enforcement of laws, ordinances and the different Qualification Frameworks of the Swiss educational system. Likewise, all educational and training providers that prepare or manage validation projects perform them in accordance with such regulations. They can also take the initiative to develop validation projects. The projects are prepared under the auspices of the competent national professional organisations. Moreover, the coordination of the various stakeholders involved in validation is part of the already described coordination practices concerning the functioning of the Swiss education system.

Design of national or local procedure/approach

Responsibilities differ depending on the type of qualification/education sector:

- IVET: cantonal services in charge of qualification procedures for adults, in collaboration with the professional organisations, based on the Manual Initial VET for adults (SEFRI, 2017).
- CVET[68]: In general there are bottom-up approaches, where the professional organisations as well as third sector organisations (e.g. women's associations or trade unions) can initiate validation projects. The projects must always be approved by SERI.
- Higher education: in general there are bottom-up approaches. Single universities take the initiative for a validation project, referring to (or soliciting) the existing legal framework. Inside these universities, specific working groups (sometimes across universities) handle the processing of projects. The projects of universities have to receive approval from their relevant canton. As already mentioned, a specific case concerns Universities of Teacher Education, where common guidelines were developed in 2012 allowing professional retraining in teaching for people who do not meet access requirements. These guidelines also allow the training period to be shortened through VNIL.[69] In 2014, an agreement was also drawn up between all the UTE regarding the validation procedures for teachers' training (CDIP/EDK, 2014, 2014b).

Information, promotion and raising awareness

This is a shared responsibility between various organisations (professional organisations, the State, educational providers, some chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, the third sector, etc.). Concerning IVET, cantonal services play a key role (services in charge of adult qualification and of occupational, educational and career guidance). In some cases, the information and promotion is ensured by employers' organisations or by individual employers (for example in the health sector).

Providing counselling and guidance

During the phases of identification and documentation, this is ensured by cantonal services (upper-secondary level VET titles) and/or individual educational and training providers and private counselling operators for the other sectors.

Undertaking assessment and certification of the outputs of validation procedures

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[68] Considering both PE both Continuing Education

[69] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/27621.php

For all education and training degrees and sectors, professionals and organisations involved in assessment and certification are the same as those involved in assessment and certification in the formal education and training sector.

Setting up standards

In the VET sector, the national professional organisations are responsible for defining the standards, for ensuring the quality of vocational qualifications, if necessary reformulating the content of ordinances in terms of competences; for establishing qualification profiles and for defining equitable and objective assessment criteria.

The role of private sector actors, social partners and third sector organisations

It is due to the initiative of many social partners, trade unions and organisations of the third sector (associations for equal opportunities - gender and multicultural l- and for adult education and voluntary work organisations) that a great number of validation initiatives have been implemented in Switzerland. Currently, these organisations are still encouraging new projects in the sphere of validation of non-formal and informal learning (see chapter 6), referring to the legislative framework of the relevant professional-educational sector.

6   Information, advice and guidance

6.1   Awareness-raising

Overall, awareness-raising is the responsibility of organisations in charge of the procedure and of other stakeholders. Other key information sources include professional organisations and trade unions.

Regarding IVET, the cantonal services are responsible for the procedures of adult qualification. They manage and develop an information portal about the validation procedures, almost always in cooperation with the cantonal services of occupational, educational and careers guidance, and register applications. Currently, either cantons provide their own service, or they use inter-cantonal portals. The SEFRI has issued a checklist about the setting up of such portals[70]. Due to be repealed at the end of May 2018, it will nonetheless remain valid until the implementation of the new Guide for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning (which includes validation) in IVET from SERI (currently under consultation). The cantonal services supply information for the public as well as for those wishing to initiate validation procedures.

At federal level, the official website of VNIL procedures[71] refers to two other information portals: a) the portal of occupational, educational and careers guidance[72], addressed to the general public; and, b) the portal addressed to those stakeholders interested in implementing validation procedures. The first website explains the validation procedures through dedicated pages designed for the procedure of adult qualifications[73]. The second one is the portal of Swiss VET[74] and it shows the

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[70]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

[71] www.validacquis.ch

[72] https://www.orientation.ch/

[73] https://www.orientation.ch/dyn/show/7193

[74] http://www.fpa.formationprof.ch/dyn/8736.aspx

validation procedures in a page which includes the VET qualifications for adults[75]. Again, for all organisations involved in validation procedures, the SERI's webpage, which covers validation instruments, gives all the information and supporting documents required[76]. General information about VNIL is also accessible on the recent platform VALIDA.Suisse (in French and in German), the new umbrella organisation for VNIL, with the objective to promote the management of individual competences and the validation of non-formal and informal learning throughout Switzerland[77].

Concerning CVET and Higher Education, all organisations or universities that offer a validation process provide information and contacts on their web pages (see references in the last pages of this report). Concerning teacher education, the CDIP/EDK, as well as the UTE[78] provide information.

More targeted information and more promotion measures are implemented whenever there is a need to reach specific occupational groups (e.g. health and social care workers or certain low-skilled workers), as well as in the case of pilot projects. More generally, efforts are underway to simplify information and make validation practices easier to understand for potential users as well as for stakeholders interested to get involved. Currently it is advised to refer systematically to the 'Manual Initial VET for adults'"[79] (SEFRI, 2017).

6.2   Information, advice and guidance

Every institution or organisation that offers validation has a service that provides basic information to possible users for free. Counselling regarding the validation procedure varies based on contexts and users' needs[80].

In relation to validation in IVET, every canton had to set up an adult qualification service that follows and supports a candidate from the beginning until the end of the procedure. In addition, this service is in charge of coordinating all the other organisations and institutions that take part in the qualification procedure. The missions and constraints of those services have been specified by the CSFP/SBBK in 2007.

This service has to: welcome adults who wish to obtain a VET diploma by whichever way; inform them about the existing possibilities of all qualifications procedures; counsel them about the relevance of these procedures; inform them about the necessary prerequisites and financing methods; inform them about what is expected from them to complete a qualification procedure (including validation); organise the various phases thereof; and, ensure contact with the VET cantonal services and all the involved professional organisations[81].

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[75] http://www.fpa.formazioneprof.ch/dyn/13137.aspx

[76] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

[77] https://www.valida-suisse.ch/fr/

[78] For example, the UTE Vaud: https://candidat.hepl.ch/cms/accueil/admissions/reconversion-professionnelle.html

[79] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene.html

[80] https://www.orientation.ch/dyn/show/7193

[81] See for example the portal of Canton de Vaud: https://www.vd.ch/themes/formation/formations-pour-les-adultes/certification-professionnelle-pour-adultes-cfc-afp/validation-des-acquis-de-lexperience-vae/

The qualification service can differ from canton to canton in size, operational methods and type of services. However, each canton has to guarantee the service financing so that the informational aspect is free of charge on the national level. In addition, the service has to be located in an accessible location within an existing structure and have a good visibility for the interested public. The staff is made up of consulting and guidance professionals or with an equivalent education, with an excellent knowledge about the qualification procedures. Lastly, the service has to be able to offer advice not only for validation procedures but also for the other three possible qualification pathways.

The guidance in the identification and self-evaluation can differ in duration from service to service and is based on the needs of the public. Generally, guidance is offered on an individual basis. However, sometimes it is possible for small groups that wish to achieve the same title, to conduct guidance in a group. The guidance gives the candidate methodological indications on how to prepare the validation dossier, but it does not enter into the specifics of the content that has to be validated. The canton of Zurich offers candidates a supporting online instrument which navigates them through the entire procedure and can be used to list their competencies. Before entering the procedure, two compulsory information events must be attended. At the first event, interested parties receive information on how to obtain a Federal VET Diploma and some general information about the validation procedure. At the second information event they are given information on how best to compile the required validation portfolio. In the universities that propose validation, an eight-hour guidance period is offered. For all the target sectors, guidelines for the preparation of the dossier are provided.

In the French part of Switzerland, two universities (Geneva and Lausanne) and the University of applied sciences of Western Switzerland have built a common portal[82] which centralises and provides information for candidates, a check list[83] as well as a 'Quiz VNIL'[84] in order to guide candidates in their project. The University of Geneva (Université de Genève, 2016) has edited a guide for candidates as well as UTE of Canton Vaud (Haute école pédagogique du canton de Vaud, 2017). In the University of Lausanne as well as in UAS Western Switzerland, complete information is available on their specific websites.

Other services or platforms are listed in section 6.1 and are also active in providing information, advice and guidance.

6.3   Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

With variations at cantonal level, which means that some cantons are more proactive than others, the validation providers and stakeholders generally organise information events, conferences and workshops about validation practices. Furthermore, every year, since 2013, the SFIVET organises a study day on the theme of validation to which some actors from these practices (including advisors and interested adult educators) are invited[85]. However, there is no active measure at national level to improve awareness of validation amongst guidance practitioners. It has been

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[82] http://vae-formations.ch/

[83] http://vae-formations.ch/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/checklist_reaseau_vae_01.pdf

[84] http://vae-formations.ch/la-vae-et-moi/

[85] https://www.iffp.swiss/journee-rvae

acknowledged though that those who are involved with validation procedures generally have a higher level of acceptance towards them (Salini, Petrini, Voit, 2012).

As in IVET validation is one of the possible ways to obtain a formal qualification, conferences and presentations are rather dedicated to the topic of adult qualification but VNIL is nevertheless often mentioned[86].

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

Research on validation professionals shows that there are three main types of practitioners in Europe and in Switzerland. Those who do information and counselling generally have a background in education, guidance and/or adult training. Those who are in charge of assessment are experts in the specific professional field. Lastly, those who manage the validation procedures have a background as managers in the specific professional field (Salini, Ghisla, Bonini, 2010). Currently, the majority of people working in the area of VNIL in Switzerland do not have a specific qualification on the methods and strategies of validation, even if several proposals for training do exist (see § 7.3).

7.2 Qualification requirements

Qualification requirements only concern validation practitioners in the IVET sector[87]. Such requirements are part of the quality assurance measures and differentiate between guidance practitioners and assessors.

For validation guidance practitioners, the legal document of reference is the 'Control list for the Skills audit centres', approved in 2010. This document specifies that the guidance practitioners should be trained for validation practices, without specifying a structure for their training. It also specifies firstly that guidance practitioners do not take part in the assessment and certification phases, and secondly that the methods used by the guidance practitioners are developed for an adult target audience and are oriented to the candidates' needs.

Guidelines for the development and quality control (OFFT, 2010b) state that assessors need to have a background in the field of validation. The status of assessor is defined by his/her ability to assess the competences and the general knowledge of a candidate, not only through the examination of his personal certifications. For IVET assessors, compulsory training is required, as described below in section 7.3.

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[86] See for example: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/projet/tagung-27--september-2017.html

[87] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/validation-des-acquis-de-lexperience/guide-et-documents-complementaires.html

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Starting from the 1990s, several training offers for practitioners involved with the recognition and the validation of non-formal and informal learning have been developed.

Training as bilan-portfolio counsellor

This training is offered in French and German by EFFE[88], a training, counselling and skill assessment centre in Bienne. It trains counsellors in helping people to gain validation of their non-formal and informal learning through bilan–portfolio techniques. It is structured in two modules: in the first one, counsellors develop their own bilan-portfolio and in the second one, they sharpen their counselling techniques[89]. The portfolio template is presented on the ARRA[90] website, while the method is explained in a publication available in French, German, Italian, and Spanish (EFFE, 1998).

Training as career advisors

This training was offered in German until 2017 by the CH-Q association to form career advisors. This training focused on the production of a portfolio (also available in digital format). This model included a comprehensive path for qualifying professionals and people in the field of self-management of competences, design and implementation of recognition and validation pathways, supplement and assessment of competences. This training will be offered soon in a new form. Currently this proposal is no longer available, as CH-Q has been integrated into the project to develop a new competency management title, managed by VALIDA.Suisse, as indicated below.

Certificate of Advanced Studies in recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning [91]

This training is organised by the SFIVET, the academic institution in charge of qualifying and certifying VET teachers and trainers. It is based on the qualification profile for the three types of validation practitioners which emerged from the study mentioned above. This modular qualification pathway – currently delivered in French and Italian - includes specific modules aimed at specialising professionals in advising, assessing and/or managing the validation procedures (Salini, Bednarz, 2010). In SFIVET Lugano and Lausanne, the CAS in VNIL has now run six times (the latest 2017-2018). Furthermore, SFIVET organises sessions of analysis of practices in order to permit stakeholders in VNIL to share experiences, build a common network and exchange information[92]. These exchanges of practices are also organised and encouraged by ARRA[93]. In Italian-speaking Switzerland, these meetings are organised by the LIMEN association[94], which brings together advisors in VNIL.

Project of diploma: *Training as 'Competency manager'* [95]

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[88] www.effe.ch

[89] http://www.effe.ch/index2.php?page=pages/fab_1&id=131&sous_id=136&langue=1

[90] www.arra.ch

[91] http://www.iffp.swiss/cas-rvae

[92] https://www.iffp.swiss/reconnaissance-et-validation-des-acquis-dexperience

[93] http://www.arra.ch/prestations/echange

[94] http://limen.info/wordpress/

[95] https://www.valida-suisse.ch/fr/gestionnaire-de-competences.html

This project is conducted by VALIDA.Suisse on the basis of a competency profile developed together with Swiss Federation for Adult Learning in recent years, following the comparison of several training courses in the field of validation or consulting. In this profile, it is foreseen that the Competency Manager should have the necessary skills to advise and assist institutions in the introduction, application and assurance of the quality of skills management, and to develop relevant concepts and implement corresponding projects. They therefore act as specialists, trainers of training managers, consultants in the processes of learning, accompaniment and planning in the management of skills. They develop appropriate validation procedures.

Training for assessors in the validation procedure at IVET level

This training, available in French, German, and Italian, is based on art. 44 and following the VPETO (CBVA & EB, 2006). This study[96] identifies the competency profile for assessors, and proposes this training structure:

■ Short group training paths (groups of 10 to 16 learners);

■ A mixed formula, including two days of training face-to-face (14 lessons), and different phases (preliminary and follow up) based on individual learning (10 hours as an average), and the development of an experiential / reflective project work on individual practices, to be supported by exchanges and peer learning between the learners (assessors);

■ The focus of the additional path on existing qualification pathways targeted at the qualification of experts engaged in formal training evaluation;

■ A strong link between theory and practice, for example the face to face training sessions are based on the elaboration and assessment of individual dossiers, therefore on practising the competences to be transferred in assessing prior informal and non-formal learning (Bednarz, 2013).

This training is mainly managed by the SFIVET and it is compulsory for assessors. The two mandatory days are structured as follows: the first day gives the principles and main regulations for VNIL (for all VNIL experts). For the second day, participants are grouped in their domain of expertise and the training consists of practical work on real dossiers (portfolios).

Furthermore, short seminars dedicated to specific areas of the validation practice are offered by the various partners in validation procedures. These seminars are dedicated to counsellors and assessors. In addition, seminars dedicated to the bilan (skills audit) and to validation are integrated into the programme of the Guidance Diploma at the University of Lausanne.

8 Quality assurance

The quality assurance for validation is linked to general quality assurance mechanisms in the education system. In the whole Swiss educational system, quality control, as well as evaluation and review, is committed to the political structures, to the related legal bodies (Confederation, cantons), as well as to the professional organisations who are involved in vocational training. In compliance with Art. 61a of the Federal Constitution, the Confederation and the cantons undertake, within the

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[96] See Documents complémentaires, zip, Procedure: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

limits of their respective competences, to care jointly for the quality and the permeability of the Swiss education and training sector.

Both the Confederation and the cantons support jointly and on equal level the monitoring of education. The General Secretariat of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (CDIP/EDK) and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), being executive State Secretariat, monitor jointly with the Federal Office for Statistics (OFS). In addition, each sector of the education system has specific guidelines for quality control, including the quality development paper[97] for the professional sector and the Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance AAQ of universities[98].

8.1   Quality assurance systems / procedures

Specific regulations for quality assurance of validation procedures for IVET[99] were issued in 2010 by OPET, in cooperation with CSFP/SBBK. This quality control system is based on Article 8 of the VPETA. This article specifies that for every educational offer, quality development has to be defined. In this matter, the responsibilities are clearly defined:

Confederation is responsible for ensuring the quality of the whole system. It also has the duty to guarantee that regional and sectoral differences are protected. The Confederation has a role to recognise cantonal procedures, competency profile and criteria assessment for the various professions.

Cantons are responsible for implementing qualification procedures. In particular, they have to: create the structures and designate the services responsible; ensure the quality of the procedures, release the qualifications, set up the complementary training, issue the federal qualifications, state legal procedures; and, participate in the ongoing development of procedures. In addition, they have to establish the validation accreditation organs that, in a collegial way, work as a quality control system and a place of negotiation regarding all the issues of validation in the canton or region of reference. This accreditation organ verifies that the federal requirements regarding validation are respected. It is chaired and coordinated by the head of the cantonal validation service and it is made by: a) representatives of organisations in the sector of the labour market and corresponding education sector; b) representatives of the assessor, legitimised by the professional associations of the sector; and, c) representatives of the directors of the educational institutions.

The Swiss Conference of the offices of Vocational Training (CSFP/SBBK) is responsible for the coordination and exchange of experiences between cantons. Within it, a specific working group deals with the issue of validation.

The professional organisations are responsible for the content of the IVET programmes. These organisations are structured on two levels: national and regional. At the regional level these organisations are in charge of identifying the assessors (who are the same as those who operate within the traditional procedures of

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[97]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/abgeschlossene-projekte-und-initiativen/developpement-de-la-qualite-dans-la-formation-professionnelle.html

[98] http://aaq.ch/fr/

[99]   https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

qualification). At the national level these organisations are in charge of defining the competency profile and the assessment criteria for the validation procedure.

A series of control lists for the various validation phases and activities are made available as review instruments for the 'Development and insurance of validation procedures quality' (OFFT; 2010b).

■ Control list for processing and developing the qualification profiles and the assessment criteria

■ Control list for the cantonal authorities of vocational training

■ Control list for the access services (counselling offices)

■ Control list for the services responsible for skills audits

■ Control list for the experts of the cantonal evaluation organisations

■ Control list for the services responsible for validation.

The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) commissioned a supervisory assessment to ensure that all aspects of the pilot phase of the validation procedure in IVET (2005-2009) could be examined (Wolf et al., 2009). This assessment has taken a snapshot of the current situation, examined the effects of validation procedures and uncovered any potential difficulties and development potential. The supervisory assessment has emphasised the fact that the guidelines have taken on a normative role.

Other studies, on people with lower levels of education are mentioned in the document: 'Diplôme professionnel et changement de profession pour les adultes'[100] (Professional degree and change of profession for adults) (SEFRI, 2014).

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

Currently, only the upper-secondary level of VET has a specific financing system for validation. In the other contexts and levels of education, funding for validation is almost always integrated within the overall budget.

The funding of the validation practices in IVET is connected to the general funding framework. According to Article 53 of VPETA, the 'other qualification procedures' are included in the federal flat rate that the cantons receive. This means that the validation procedures are funded with the same budget as apprenticeships for young people.

Given that the validation procedure can be followed by an individual in a canton different from his/her canton of residence, the Swiss Conference of VET/PE agencies give indications on inter-cantonal financing methods. Specifically, a person can follow validation procedures outside his/her canton of residence, whenever that canton does not offer a validation procedure for the selected profession, or when there are a limited number of people for the procedure (CSFP/SBBK, 2007a).

Additionally, specific financing measures are in place so that professional organisations can develop the competence profiles and assessment criteria necessary to establish a validation procedure (SEFRI, 2013). These measures

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[100] Report downloadable under https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult.html

include a federal contribution of approximately EUR 10 220 (CHF 12 000) for the development of competence profiles and assessment criteria for IVET qualifications. This contribution is reduced to EUR 1 703 (CHF 2 000) for professions that are currently in review.

The same applies to other validation routes at the tertiary level. As a whole, pilot projects receive special State or institutional grants, and must be self-funded in the consolidation phase. As for direct funding granted to beneficiaries, the 'Professional diploma for adults' project envisages better coordination of the conditions for allocating scholarships as well as for the re-qualification option and higher age limits for eligible persons. (In some cantons the limit is 35 or 40 years). The Ordinance of the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training [101] regulates the financial aid for organisations active in the field of continuing education and for the financial assistance for the acquisition and maintenance of basic skills for adults.

9.2 Distribution of costs

Upper-secondary level VET

It has been estimated that the average cost per person for a validation procedure including all the services is around EUR 5 960 (CHF 7 000) (CSFP/SBKK, 2007b). This cost is clearly lower than the cost of a person following a complete vocational education (CSFP/SBBK, 2007b). In 2010, a consultation with the various cantonal services carried out an estimate of the average costs per person for each phase of the procedure (CSFP/SBBK; 2012, Salini & ICF, 2014). Based on those average costs, cantonal services established a maximum flat rate of subsidy for each of the procedure phases when they sponsor the procedure.

The recommendations of the CDIP/EDK of 16 June 2005 (CDIP/EDK 2005) declare that the basic offer for the occupational, educational, and career guidance are completely free of charge and that only the special or extended services can be charged to individuals. In addition, since 2018 the CSFP/SBBK has made the following recommendations[102]:

The cantons shall bear the same costs for pathways enabling adults to acquire a vocational qualification as they normally bear for ordinary initial vocational training. The decisive factor is the cost guarantee obtained in advance from the canton concerned (CSFP/SBBK, 2018, p. 2). In addition, a modification of the Intercantonal agreement about Specialised PE schools is currently under discussion, in which the principle of allocation of costs will be better defined, foreseeing that Cantons, where beneficiaries have a permanent residence at the moment of entering qualification procedures will be responsible for taking charge of the costs.

This is possible whether it is training with or without an apprenticeship contract, a first or second certificate or diploma. What is important is that the acquisition of a title gives users real job prospects.

Currently, the majority of cantons follow these indications, but detailed statistics about the distribution of costs are currently not available.

Other levels

All information on the distribution of costs, for each title accessible by VNIL (when the data are available), is summarised in Table 1.

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[101] https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20151907/index.html

[102] http://www.sbbk.ch/dyn/bin/20490-23505-1-empfehlung_finanzierung_berufsabschluss_f_r_erwachsene_f.pdf

According to the recent law and ordinance on continuing education, the persons who access a PE diploma could benefit from a reimbursement of 50% of the fees at the time of registration to the exams, including for the Federal Diploma and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education[103].

Table 9.1   Distribution of costs according to qualification via VNIL[104]

Type of qualification	Average cost per person for the whole VNIL procedure	Cost to the person	Other forms of funding
Federal Certificate or Federal diploma of Vocational Education and Training	CHF 7 000 (c. EUR 5 960) but detailed statistics about the distribution of costs are currently not available.	No uniform cantonal practice. There are recommendations CSP / SBBK 2018 to support the procedure financially, but these recommendations are not binding.	Cantons
Federal diploma and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education	n/a	CHF 600 (c. EUR 511) for each module, CHF 1 350 (c. EUR 1 150) for five modules	Federal contributions (50% of the fees). Sometimes insurance assumes the costs of the procedure to the person
Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for Community Interpreters	n/a	CHF 800 (EUR 681) for the two modules	Federal contributions (50% of the fees).
Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs	CHF 8 000 (c. EUR 6 815) Half of which covers support for creating the portfolio, and the other half for registration for the final assessment	During the pilot, candidates covered half the cost, now they assume the total cost	Federal contributions (50% of the fees).
Faculties of Geneva University	n/a	CHF 1 000 (c. EUR 851)	n/a
Faculties of Lausanne University	n/a	CHF 1 000 (c. EUR 851)	n/a
Universities of applied sciences of Western Switzerland	n/a	CHF 1 000 (c. EUR 851)	n/a
Health auxiliary certificate	n/a	CHF 900 (EUR 766),	Sometimes covered by unemployment insurance or the candidate's institution of origin.
Recognition for Swiss army officers (Swiss Association of Managers)	n/a	Between CHF 200-500 (c. EUR 170-426)	n/a

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[103] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/la-formation-professionnelle-superieure/financement.html

[104] When the data are available.

Type of qualification	Average cost per person for the whole VNIL procedure	Cost to the person	Other forms of funding
Certificate of competencies for Municipal executive members (Swiss Association of Managers)	n/a	Between CHF 300-750 (c. EUR 255-639)-	n/a
Certificates of the Swiss association for managers for Women	n/a	Between CHF 1 400-2 200 (c. EUR 1 192- 1 874).	This procedure is supported by the labour office of the Canton Wallis as a measure to help unemployed women to reintegrate into the labour market

Note: Information on prices valid for 2018

Concerning the time invested in the VNIL procedure, the length of a validation procedure to acquire an IVET qualification is between one and two years. The identification and documentation of non-formal learning takes around six months (Salini, Petrini, Voit, 2012). For PE and HE qualifications, the length of the validation procedure varies based on the number of credits/modules that the candidate can validate or has to re-visit to fulfil the requirements. The development of the validation dossier requires normally between three and six months[105].

Initiatives supported by EU Programmes

There is a great number of initiatives intended to implement practices of validation in various domains and at different levels that have recently been supported by European programmes, although the funding of local partners is in any case provided by the Swiss Confederation. The Swiss organisations currently involved in European projects are professional organisations, educational providers, trade unions, the Swiss federation for adult learning SVEB, the SFIVET and some skills audit services. The national agency Movetia for Exchange and Mobility [106] centralises the demands for EU funding, especially for Erasmus+. Since 2014 Switzerland is no longer associated to Erasmus+ but has the status of partner country. To enable Swiss institutions to continue taking part in cooperation and mobility activities with the Erasmus+ programme countries, the Federal Council adopted an interim solution financed with Swiss funds. The most recent project in VNIL is:

■ *VALISKILLS[107]* (2015-2017)
   The 'ValiSkills' competence assessment procedure aims at the identification and evaluation of professional competences of low-skilled adults through reliable methods and procedures. In the frame of this Transfer of Innovation Project, a web tool has been created which is used to document competences in the field of commerce. Swiss partners: Swiss Federation of Adult Learning (FSEA/SVEB).

■ *VALIDOSS* (2013-2015)

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[105] Interviews with stakeholders of various institutions that offer validation procedures in Switzerland, from the report Salini, Petrini, Voit, 2012.

[106] https://www.movetia.ch/en/

[107] http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details-page/?nodeRef=workspace://SpacesStore/41cf14ca-704b-458d-844e-cf9707292c6c; www.valiskills.eu

Within the framework of a Leonardo project, five European partners (Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Spain and Ireland) analysed, compared and synthesised the essential elements for the implementation of a process of validation of prior learning with a portfolio approach[108].

Currently there are few Swiss-EU projects in relation to VNIL. Focus is given to projects promoting basic skills for adults (mainly run by the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning[109]), for migrants (by different trade unions) and for digitalization.

9.3   Evidence of benefits to individuals

There are no national studies focusing on the benefits of validation to individuals. Some information can be found in the 2009 assessment (Wolf *et al*. 2009), which investigated the validation pilot projects. This report highlighted that when existing skills were taken into account within the VET context, the candidate's self-esteem and motivation to learn increased. This was especially the case with low-skilled participants. In addition, it was found that validation encourages transferability between individual training courses and forms of education. However, there are some master thesis with data and analysis concerning candidates in VNIL (Bize, 2016; Cochand, 2011; Gullin, 2017; Jaouhar, 2015; Rosselet, 2014).

Furthermore, a study carried out by Bern University of Applied Sciences (Fritschi, Oesch, Jann, 2009) attempted to estimate how much could be saved if an 'un-trained' person was to obtain a vocational degree *a posteriori*. The authors of this study concluded that active persons without an IVET diploma earned, on average, nearly EUR 13 286 (CHF 15 600) less a year than holders of a vocational degree. The Swiss Federal Council estimated in 2000 that the costs were even higher than these figures: "*the systematic integration of vulnerable groups in the world of work*" – including people who have not completed initial vocational training – *has enabled, in terms of social benefits alone, savings of EUR 15 335 (CHF 18 000) per person per year*[110]. These studies emphasise the benefits of promoting vocational training for adults for whom validation of non-formal and informal learning is one of the entry routes.

Once again, we point out the importance of the report 'Diplôme professionnel et changement de profession pour les adultes' (Professional degree and change of profession for adults) (SEFRI, 2014) which gave the strategic orientation for adult training, development and recognition of different pathways in Switzerland. Other studies have been carried out at local level:

- A doctoral research about the argumentative activity of assessors in interaction with the candidates was completed for the SFIVET validation procedure (Cortessis, 2010; 2013).

- A doctoral research about the impact on users and counsellors of the initial phase of information and counselling in validation practices was concluded in 2012 (Salini, 2013).

- Finally, in 2014, the SFIVET initiated a study that examines learning and skills development among young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are involved in voluntary work. One of the aims of this research is to identify the skills

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[108] https://ec.europa.eu/epale/fr/content/resultats-du-projet-leonardo-validoss-validation-des-acquis-par-approche-dossier

[109] https://alice.ch/fr/fsea/les-projets/

[110] Message du 6 septembre 2000 relatif à la nouvelle loi sur la formation professionnelle, FF 2000, p. 5314.

acquired by young people in voluntary activities[111] (Cortessis, Weber Guisan, Tsandev, in press).

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

Given the differences in the distribution of validation practices in the Swiss education and training system, as well as the fact that information on some sectors is incomplete, it is difficult to identify trends for the past two years. However, from the partial data available, it can be concluded that the number of validation options (possible paths) in Switzerland is developing in every education and training sector, while the number of beneficiaries is slowly increasing. A special case that is worth examining is that of UTEs, where a marked increase has been detected in access to training courses and probably also (although this cannot yet be quantified) increased validation practices relating to the 'professional re-training in teaching'. The VNIL counsellor we interviewed for UTE in French-speaking Switzerland told us that in time of crisis, people may be inclined to reorientate their professional lives into teaching. This statement must be confirmed by research, but this point seems interesting in terms of tendency. This could explain why more and more persons are engaged in VNIL for UTEs.

However, a decrease in validation cases has been observed in VNIL projects for the Federal Diploma and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education, Health care workers, Community interpreters, Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs and for the Certification in occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor. This reduction could be partly explained by the fact that most people working in these sectors have already completed their validation within the past few years, the gap has been then filled. However more in-depth studies should be carried out to understand the reasons for these decreases.

In Geneva and Lausanne Universities, where it is possible to reduce the length of studies by VNIL, there is high demand, but only a few persons actually continue the validation to the end. The VNIL counsellors we interviewed told us that the first demand is often a way to orientate and to guide the person in his or her training project. It helps them to formulate better their choices and the way to attain it. The first VNIL interview can become an instrument of orientation. Furthermore, VNIL is now in Switzerland one of the four ways to obtain a title as an adult. This active policy is probably one of the reasons for the few people who really engage in VNIL in universities, as they may have other possibilities which are more compatible with their lives. VNIL in universities means always a return to study, and this may be difficult for persons who are in charge of a family. They may sometimes prefer to take up another training option which fits in better with work, for example, courses in the evenings or on Fridays and Saturdays.

The majority of validation users are women. This is explained by the prevalence of courses in 'female' professions or disciplines. In terms of age, most users are between 25 and 55, with most persons undergoing initial vocational training between 40 and 55. Finally, with regards to the distribution in different language regions, there has been an increase in validation users for IVET in the German-speaking region of

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[111] http://www.sfivet.swiss/project/youth-voluntary-work-and-skills-development

Switzerland, and a wider presence of validation options at the different levels and in the various training sectors in French-speaking regions.

9.4.2 Validation users

Official centralised statistics regarding the validation procedures, number and gender of users and success rates are not fully available. However, efforts have been undertaken to improve this aspect in recent years, but the Swiss Federal Statistical Office still has no dedicated indexes for validation procedures. On the other hand, the data collected for the present report makes it possible to define different elements for most of the validation projects present in Switzerland. Hereinafter, data collected is presented by education and training sector and normally refers to years 2015, 2016 and if available, 2017.

IVET

In recent years, the figures have stabilised at around 550-600 qualifications in IVET awarded through VNIL per year (589 for 2017), representing less than 1% of the total awarded per year (OFS/BFS, 2018a). Taking into account all the qualification procedures specifically geared towards adults, and especially encouraged in recent years, it can be noted that out of four qualification pathways available to adults (direct admission to the final exam; VNIL; shortened initial vocational training; ordinary initial vocational training), 8 315 adults took a qualification in IVET in 2015, respectively 8 593 in 2016, amounting to nearly 12% of the total number (7% of these users opted for the validation procedure, as illustrated in Table 2) (OFS/BFS, 2018b).

Women account for 82% of validation users in 2015, 80% in 2016 and 76% in 2017, which is explained by the prevalence of validation in 'female' professions, such as those in health and social care (constituting 80% of total validation uses). Of these qualifications, 53% were obtained in the German-speaking regions of Switzerland (especially in large cities), confirming the VNIL consolidation trend in this region. As for the age category of users, the most represented category is 40+ with 57% for 2015 and 61% for 2016 (Table 3).

For 2017, the most represented domains of professions are in health care, with 44% and in education and social care with 27% out of the total.

Figure 9.1   Share of validation users in 2016 in IVET, by pathways to obtain the adults qualification
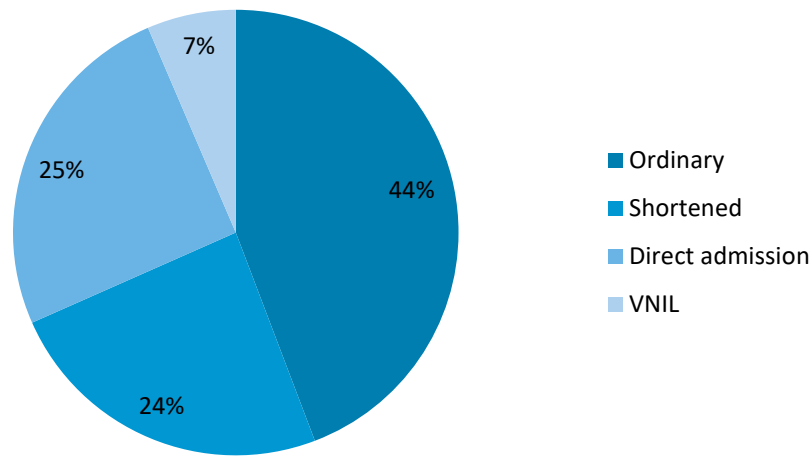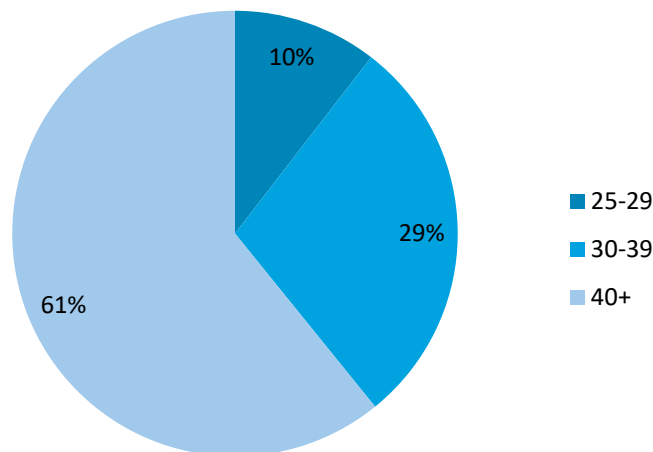

Figure 9.2   Share of validation users in 2016 in IVET, by age groups

Moreover, some cantonal services of adult qualification are systematically collecting data in a structured way about their activities (e.g. Geneva, Valais, Zurich and Bern). The information collected about validation users can include: the number of candidates and the number of successful validation procedures, the years of professional experience, languages, gender and age, nationality and occupational status. However, this data has not yet been standardised for every canton.

Professional Education (PE)

Data is available for three types of PE diplomas:

■   The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning issued 196 modules of Federal Diploma[112] and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education acquired by VNIL in 2017 (this number has been gradually

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[112] Whose 154 of SFAL certificate

decreasing in recent years, and compared to 2014 the decrease is 40%) out of a total of 3 757 certificates and diplomas issued during 2017 (i.e. VNIL constituted 5.2% of the total), of which 75% were in German-speaking regions of Switzerland, 19% in French-speaking regions of Switzerland and 6% in Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland. The majority of candidates are aged from 37 to 57, while 60% of the candidates were women (FSEA/SVEB, 2017).

■ The INTERPRET issued 20 Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for Community Interpreters in 2016 and 2017 (a serious decrease compared to 2011 where the number was 41), of which 75% were in the German-speaking regions for 2016 while only 25% in 2017. The success rate was 60% for 2016 and 100% for 2017. Women constituted the largest majority of candidates. The reason for such a significant decrease in the number of validation users is explained by the fact that the vacancies for people without qualifications in this field have been filled.

■ The Swiss Association of small and medium sized enterprises issued 11 Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs by 100% VNIL between 2016 and 2017. It is twice less than in 2014-1015 where 22 diplomas were awarded. The project is specifically targeted at women. The decrease of candidates can be explained by the fact that the project was supported by the initiators who put a lot of energy into promoting it, which is why this procedure was a real success when it was launched.

Continuous VET (CVET)

Data is available for two types of qualifications:

■ The Vaud Red Cross issued 43 health auxiliary certificates in 2016 and 38 in 2017 (compared to 180 in 2011, which means a serious decrease). 93% of validation users were women for 2016 and 85% for 2017 (compared to 90% in 2011). The most common age groups of users were 50 to 60 years and 40 to 50 years. The reason for this decrease could be explained by the implementation of the recent Federal certificate of vocational education and training in health care which is also accessible by VNIL.

■ In 2014, 42 applications were submitted to be included in the REG (Swiss Register for engineers, technicians and architects), of which 26 were accepted (approximately 60%). Currently there are no data available for REG's applicants.

Higher education

For most educational institutions in this sector, data on validation practices is not fully available because the number of validation users is considered too low to establish such statistics. However, statistics on admission requirements are available, including for persons without a recognised *Baccalaureate* (PWB). Although the admission through portfolio is not really a validation procedure (but a kind of recognition of experience), we consider that it is important to mention this data, because it is related, on one hand, to the opening (or not) of the educational institution towards this kind of recognition and on the other hand, to the interest of the audience to that possibility. In this case, the entry to higher education was done on the basis of a portfolio or by sitting a full examination while, for UTEs and UASs, entry was done also on the basis of an FDVET (a category of PWB not obtained for cantonal universities).

Swiss universities

In 2016, the average percentage of PWB applicants to all universities was still 1%, as in 2014 (OFS/BFS, 2018c). However, some internal differences can be identified between the universities, as mentioned below.

At Cantonal universities, the percentage of admissions of PWB is 2% of the total number of applicants, of which 40% by validation dossier, 50% by specific admission examination, and the remaining 10% on the basis of other certificates. Compared to other indicators, the women admitted with validation dossiers correspond to 40% (which shows a reversal of trend compared to the past, when there were more women). The average age was 33. In terms of fields of study, 62% were in the humanities and social sciences, 12% in law, 8% in economics, 3% in natural sciences, and the remaining 15% in interdisciplinary fields.

At Geneva and Lausanne Universities, there are lots of demands of VNIL in order to obtain a reduction of the length of studies, but only a few persons pursue the validation to the end. In Geneva University, since 2016, 5-10 candidates per year complete their training with a VNIL process, the majority of them are in the University Institute for Teacher Education (IUFE) which is linked to University of Geneva (contrary to other cantons where UTE are separate from universities). For The University of Lausanne, the VNIL is too recent and statistics are not yet available.

At the University of applied sciences (UASs), the total number of admissions for PWB was 3%, of which 41% on validation dossier, 29% by examination, 16% on the basis of other certificates, and 14% on the basis of a Federal Diploma of Vocational Education and Training (FDVET). Women admitted with a validation dossier were 54%, and the average age was 31.5 years. As regards the fields of study, 55% were admitted in the Health, Social and Arts fields, and the remaining 45% in the Technical, Economy and Design fields.

In UAS Western Switzerland, there are around 20-30 candidates per year for the VNIL procedure to obtain a reduction in the duration of studies, with a majority in health care and aged between 35-50 years.

In the Universities for Teacher Education, UTEs, there are different levels of education and the percentages vary according to the reference titles. For admission to the Bachelor of Arts in Pre-Primary and Primary Education, the total number of admissions for PWB was 6%, of which 25% on validation dossier, 16% per examination, 11% by other Swiss certificates and 48% on the basis of a FDVET. The percentage of women is 76% and the average age is 39 years.

For admission to the Master of Arts in Secondary Education the PWB admitted were 1%, of which 14% on dossier, 14% by examination, 73% by other certificates and 6% on the basis of a FDVET. Women represent 75% and the average age is 46 years. Finally, for the teaching diploma for Baccalaureate schools, PWB admitted were 5%, including 11% on validation dossier, 15% by examination, 49% by other Swiss certificates, and 11% on the basis of a FDVET. Here the women entering on dossier represent 50% of the candidates and the average age is 39 years.

In the French speaking region, the VNIL procedure which shortened bachelors and masters in education encounter a strong success: for example, 20 persons could enter into the bachelor in primary education by VNIL, which is two times more than in 2014. 23 persons entered into the master in secondary I education, which is 3 times more than in 2014.

Certification in occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor[113]

Although there was a significant number of applications when the procedure was first launched (14 applications were accepted in 2011), only one in 2016 and 4 in 2017 applications per year were submitted to CSFO. The success rate of applicants over the last years is around 98%. The average age of participants is around 37. In 2016

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[113] http://www.csfo.ch/dyn/194347.asp

and 2017, all validation applicants were women. The previous experience considered for validation totalled, on average, around 5-6 years. Participants had a university degree in psychology. Participation in the procedure costs EUR 3 833 (CHF 4 500) and this is borne either by the participant or partly by the applicant's employer.

Certificates and diplomas for VET Teacher at SFIVET

The VNIL procedure for SFIVET in Lausanne provides access to the full teaching diploma or reduced length of studies. It regularly has around 30 participants a year, aged from 30 to 61, with the percentage of men and women varying in the given year: for 2016 and 2017, men constituted 58% of participants, while in 2014 they represented 48%. 42% validated the whole diploma first time in 2016 and 2017; the others had to do some extra training during the following years to get the diploma.

9.4.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

In the area of migration, there are projects of integration rather than validation, even though the topic of migration has become a national priority topic. Currently the only structured proposal for VNIL for migrants is the validation of a 'fide portfolio'[114] issued by the 'fide' system promoted by the State Secretariat of Migration (SEM)[115] In 2015, the State Secretariat for Migration, SEM, commissioned a study on the assessment of the potential of refugees and provisionally admitted persons. The report includes an inventory which shows that the assessment of potential is already carried out in many cantons and that it is often integrated into a case management allowing an individual an integration plan on the labour market (SEM et al., 2016).

Practices in terms of potential assessment are heterogeneous between cantons and methods may vary from a questionnaire to a portfolio approach for potential assessment. But in all cases, the first step is to assess the linguistic level and the educational, professional and even extra-professional career paths of individuals in order to establish their potential for integration into the labour market. Individual measures are then taken. Sometimes they are language courses, internships in companies, specific courses or even a VET training, like the Pilot programme for pre-apprenticeship, integration and early language promotion[116]. These measures are aimed primarily at young migrants[117] with greater potential for integration into the labour market, but also at people under 55. Although VNIL is often evoked and praised by certain actors, it is little applied because it is difficult to compare foreign diplomas with Swiss ones and certificates (proofs) are often missing.

However, some initiatives[118], such as in the canton of Geneva, contain some validation, such as the one initiated by the Geneva Bilan Centre (CEBIG). The objective of the CEBIG positioning assessment[119] is to assist the beneficiary in describing his or her professional and extra-professional career path, in recording the activities carried out throughout the career path and in a reflection linked to interests and motivations (career path and project). At the end of the service, the beneficiary obtains a document giving an overview of the professional career, indications of

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[114] "fide" stands for «Français, Italiano, Deutsch in Switzerland» and is the name of the Swiss system for promoting the linguistic integration of the migrant population: https://www.fide-info.ch/en/entwicklung

[115] https://www.fide-info.ch/en/einbuergerung

[116] https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/themen/integration/ppnb/integrvorlehre-sprachfoerd.html

[117] Another study of the SEM was dedicated to training for adolescents and young adults who arrived in Switzerland: https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/themen/integration/themen/bildung.html

[118] Other local or cantonal initiatives can be seen on : https://www.personnelqualifie-suisse.ch/fr/refugies/

[119] https://www.personnelqualifie-suisse.ch/fr/refugies/exemples/387/bilan-de-positionnement-cebig/

interests, one or two ways of training and/or professional integration, the identification of obstacles to training and the identification of qualifications (training, professional experience, etc.) obtained previously in order to enable the beneficiary to proceed to the recognition of diplomas and VNIL. The service includes four group workshops of two and a half days and three individual interviews of about an hour and a half.

Another initiative is currently underway in the Canton of Geneva[120]. An officially recognised certificate will soon take place and will make it possible to attest and assert basic skills (oral expression and comprehension; written communication; calculation; logical reasoning; location in space; time tracking). In the longer term, this title could promote job search. It could also help access to professional training because the various professional associations may recognise the certificate as the basis of acceptance of adults who wish to obtain a professional qualification.

No validation projects are specifically targeted towards <u>unemployed people</u>, although the challenges of low-qualified people are given priority in the aforementioned federal project: 'Professional degree and change of profession for adults' (SEFRI, 2016). In which asides from SERI, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the Federal Social Insurance are also represented.

10   Validation methods

The main method used in Switzerland to identify, document and assess learning outcomes is the validation dossier. This is a collection of descriptions and documents showing what the candidate has learned in non-formal and informal contexts. An interview with the assessor is often carried out in addition to this. In some cases, other forms of assessment are used (see table 4 below).

Table 10.1 Methods used for validation processes in Switzerland

	Identification	Documentation	Assessment
Debate			
Declarative methods	X	X	
Interview	X		X
Observation			X
Portfolio method	X	X	X
Presentation		X	
Simulation and evidence extracted from work		X	X

During the identification phase and sometimes during the assessment, the counsellor or assessor often use particular forms of interview to help candidates to express and to identify implicit skills acquired in non-formal and informal situations. It is known that candidates are often unaware of those skills. These particular interview forms are based on the French and international approaches to develop awareness and reflection in experiential learning situations (Salini & ICF 2014).

Furthermore, in the IVET sector, a study was conducted in 2013 in the canton of Zurich to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the validation process with a view to optimising and further developing it. Among other aspects, the study showed that language requirements for preparing the portfolio constitute a major obstacle for

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[120] https://www.c9fba.ch/le-projet-dispositif-cantonal/

many validation applicants. In 2016, this canton therefore adopted a new strategy that permits new forms of proof of competences. In addition to the usual written experience report, there is now also the possibility of an oral experience report, a practical visit and, in certain occupations, project documentation. Employers may also conduct an external assessment to complement the self-assessment and skills check. In the end, the written part of the portfolio will be reduced in favour of the other types of proof of competence (Salzmann, Salini, Tsandev & Weber Guisan, 2017). It should be noted that these new methods did not meet unanimous approval as some point out that employees in certain professions also have to demonstrate writing skills[121].

There are some specific methods used in the various sectors of education, as presented below. As mentioned earlier in this report, the validation procedures do not consider the labour market or the third sector. Similarly, validation procedures do not consider Open Educational Resources (OER).

IVET

The procedure is based on the preparation of a validation portfolio. The candidate receives support for the preparation of his/her dossier via the interview method. Support instruments for the validation procedures (OFFT, 2010b[122]) include guidelines to write the validation dossier and guidelines for the assessment methods, the latter including workplace observations, concrete situations, execution of a practical work and production of an object, piece and others. At this level, only the Canton of Zurich uses a web-tool to prepare the dossier and assess the IVET level of the candidate. This tool is accessible only after registration in the validation procedure. At the moment, there are no specific studies on the impact of this web-tool on the success of the validation process.

Continuous VET and higher education

The validation dossier is a core element of the validation procedures in the CVET and HE sectors. The assessment varies from one context to another. In general, for the PE Diplomas accessible by validation procedures, for CSFO/SDBB certification on 'Occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor', as well as in the REG procedure, the interview method is not used. In these cases, the assessor makes an evaluation based solely on the dossier.

In the validation procedures of universities, including those of universities of teacher education, universities of applied sciences and in the Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education of Specialist in Business Management SME, an interview is always carried out. The validation body is not always present at the interview. However, the assessor must always argue the results of the assessment via a written report. Nevertheless, since in the universities the validation is always only partial, the validation candidates have to follow formal courses and undertake specific tests and exams to achieve a complete certification or qualification.

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[121] http://www.panorama.ch/dyn/1026.aspx?id_article=1540

[122] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/bildung/berufsbildungssteuerung-und--politik/projekte-und-initiativen/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult/handbuch-berufliche-grundbildung-fuer-erwachsene/validierung-von-bildungsleistungen.html

11 The position of validation in society: visibility and trust

In Switzerland, the importance of promoting VNIL opportunities is embedded in all levels of national training policies and regulated by law in the initial vocational training sector. This means that the most important practices and efforts of the government for the implementation of VNIL procedure takes place especially in IVET sector, which has a high degree of formalization of practices. This also explains why it is in this sector that the number of titles accessible by VNIL as well as the number of titles acquired by VNIL is higher compared to the other sectors, although the latter always remains rather weak (1% of IVET titles are obtained by VNIL).

The visibility of VNIL opportunities is present in all government organizations and learning providers that offer VNIL. As regards IVET procedures, the information available (offered on several state sites) is mainly addressed to the actors involved in the management of these procedures, rather than to users. However, in some cantons information leaflets on this topic are produced. For other levels of training (PE, HE, CET), learning providers offer generally a clear visibility on their VNIL procedures on their websites.

With regard to the acceptance of the titles acquired by VNIL, there is still some mistrust or suspicion towards VNIL, both among educational institutions and employers: a title acquired by VNIL is sometimes considered to be a title acquired with a 'discount' and thus does not have the same value as a diploma acquired via the formal route. However, it should be stressed that all the full titles awarded in the IVET and PE sectors or in certain cases at the university level are worded in the same way as for formal training. Consequently, this does not lead to differences in the treatment of users in terms of social recognition according to the access route to the title. With regard to the HE sector, all VNIL procedures are internal to the institute that awards them and as a general rule, persons who have obtained credits through VNIL (or who have been admitted through VNIL) follow regular training courses like other students.

With regard to the Federal Act on Continuing Education and Training implemented in 2017, where the aim is to promote the taking into account of non-formal and informal achievements in formal training (art. 7), little evidence is currently available about how the Confederation and the cantons promote permeability and the implementation of validation procedures, because this new law is too recent.

12: References

12.1 References

(All links verified in May 2018)

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Websites - Useful links

Federal and cantonal institutions

-   Federal Authorities of the Swiss Confederation: www.admin.ch

-   Federal Department of Home Affairs - FDHA: www.edi.admin.ch

-   Federal Office for Swiss Statistics: www.bfs.admin.ch

-   State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO : www.seco.admin.ch

-   State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI: www.sbfi.admin.ch

-   State Secretariat for Migration – ODM: https://www.sem.admin.ch

-   Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance – http://aaq.ch

-   Swiss Association of SME – USAM: http://www.sgv-usam.ch/fr.html

-   Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education – EDK/CDIP: www.cdip.ch

-   Swiss Conference of VET/PE Agencies - CSFP/SBKK: www.csfp.ch

-   Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education - CSRE/SKBF: http://www.skbf-csre.ch/en/news/

-   Swiss education server - EDUCA : www.educa.ch

-   Swiss federal institute of vocational education and training - SFIVET www.sfivet.swiss

-   Swiss Portal for VET, HE and career guidance: www.orientation.ch

-   Swiss Vocational Education and Training documents in English: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/bildung/vocational-education-and-training--vet-.html

-   Swissuniversities: portal of Swiss universities http://www.swissuniversities.ch

-   Vocational training portal: http://berufsbildung.ch/dyn/13126.aspx

Other organisations

-   Centre for continuing education and lifelong learning - ECAP: www.ecap.ch

-   Centre for training in adult education and skills audit centre - EFFE: www.effe.ch

-   Movetia exchange and mobility https://www.movetia.ch/en/

-   Réseau romand de la VAE: http://vae-formations.ch/

-   Skills Assessment Centre of Geneva CEBIG: www.cebig.ch

- Swiss Association for Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation – INTERPRET: www.inter-pret.ch

- Swiss association for managers (ASC) https://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/

- Swiss association for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning - ARRA: www.arra.ch

- Swiss Federation of Adult Learning - FSEA/SVEB: www.alice.ch

- Swiss register of professionals in the subjects of engineering, architecture and environment – REG: www.reg.ch

- University of Geneva : www.unige.ch

- University of Lausanne: www.unil.ch

- VALIDA.Suisse: http://www.valida-suisse.ch/fr/

- Volunteering dossier : www.dossier-benevolat.ch

12.2 Sources

Interviews (face-to-face or by phone) were conducted with the following persons:

- Office for Continuing Education and Innovation of the Canton Ticino

- Association VALIDA.Suisse

- French speaking part of the Swiss Association for Managers

- VNIL Counsellor, Swisscom

- VNIL Counsellor, University of Fribourg.

- VNIL Counsellor, University of Geneva

- VNIL Counsellor, University of applied sciences Western Switzerland

Contacted Organizations and Institutions:

- Association des offices suisses du travail, AOST, http://www.vsaa.ch/fr/

- Centre suisse de services Formation professionnelle | orientation professionnelle, universitaire et de carrière CSFO : http://www.sdbb.ch/dyn/11.asp

- Ecole supérieure d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs de l'enfance (ESEDE-CFPS). https://edu.ge.ch/cfps

- Federal Office for Swiss Statistics: www.bfs.admin.ch

- Human Resources Swiss Exams (HRSE) www.hrse.ch

- Kantonales Eingangsportal Kanton Zurich: https://ajb.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/ajb/de/berufsberatung/berufswechsel_und_berufsabschluss.html

- Movetia Exchange and mobility https://www.movetia.ch/en /

- Red Cross Vaud, Validation service: http://www.croixrougevaudoise.ch/nos-activites/formation/auxiliaire-de-sante-croix-rouge-suisse/auxiliaire-de-sante-validation-des-acquis.html

- Réseau romand de la VAE: http://vae-formations.ch /

- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI, IVET sector: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch

- State Secretariat for Migration – ODM: https://www.sem.admin.ch

- Swiss Army: https://www.vtg.admin.ch/fr/actualite/themes/bildungslandschaft-und-armee/anerkennung-fuehrungsausbildung-durch-hochschulen.html

- Swiss Association for Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation – INTERPRET: www.inter-pret.ch

- Swiss association for managers (ASC) https://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/

- Swiss Association of SME – USAM: http://www.sgv-usam.ch/fr.html

- Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11926.php

- Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET: www.sfivet.swiss

- Swiss Federation of Adult Learning - FSEA/SVEB: www.alice.ch

- Swiss register of professionals in the subjects of engineering, architecture and environment – REG: www.reg.ch

Annex 1 Glossary

Swiss acronym	Definition in French	Web site	English acronym	Definition in English
AAQ	Agence suisse d'accréditation et d'assurance qualité	http://aaq.ch/en/	AAQ	Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
AFP	Attestation fédérale de formation professionnelle		FCVET	Federal Certificate of Vocational Education and Training
ARRA	Association pour la reconnaissance des acquis	www.arra.ch		Association for the Recognition of Prior Learning
CDIP/EDK	Conférence suisse des directeurs cantonaux de l'instruction publique	www.cdip.ch		Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education
CFC	Certificat fédéral de capacité		FDVET	Federal Diploma of Vocational Education and Training
CH-Q	Programme suisse de qualification pour le parcours professionnel	www.ch-q.ch		Swiss career qualification programme
CSFP/SBKK	Conférence suisse des offices de la formation professionnelle	www.csfp.ch		Swiss Conference of VET/PE Agencies
DFER	Département fédéral de l'économie, de la formation et de la recherche	www.wbf.admin.ch	EAER	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research
DFI	Département fédéral de l'intérieur	www.edi.admin.ch	FDHA	Federal Department of Home Affairs
EHB IFFP IUFFP	Institut fédéral des hautes études en formation professionnelle	www.sfivet.swiss	SFIVET	Swiss Federal Institute of Vocational Education and Training
EPF	École polytechnique fédérale			Federal Institute of Technology
FSEA/SVEB	Fédération suisse pour la formation continue	www.alice.ch		Swiss Federation for Adult Learning
HEP	Haute école pédagogique		UTE	University of Teacher Education
HES	Haute école spécialisée		UAS-	University of Applied Sciences
LEHE	Loi sur l'encouragement et la coordination des hautes écoles	www.admin.ch	HEdA	Higher Education Act
LFCo	Loi fédérale sur la formation continue		FACo[123]	Federal Act on Continuing Education
LFPr	Loi fédérale sur la formation professionnelle 2002		VPETA	Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training
OFCo	Ordonnance sur la formation continue		FOCo[124]	Federal Ordinance on Continuing Education

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[123] Currently there is no official English translation for this Law.

[124] Currently there is no official English translation for this Ordinance.

OFPr	Ordonnance sur la formation professionnelle 2003		VPETO	Federal Ordinance on Vocational and Professional Education and Training
OFS	Office fédéral de la statistique	http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index.html	FSO	Federal Statistical Office (FSO).
OMT	Organisations du monde du travail		PrO	Professional organisations
SECO	Secrétariat d'État à l'économie	www.seco.admin.ch		State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SEFRI	Secrétariat d'État à la formation, à la recherche et à l'innovation	www.sbfi.admin.ch	SERI	
SEM	Secrétariat d'Etat aux Migrations	https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home.html	SEM	
SQUF	Réseau patronal pour la formation professionnelle	www.squf.ch		
Swissuni	Formation continue universitaire suisse	http://www.swissuni.ch/index	Swissuni	Swiss university continuing education
Swissuniversities	Conférence des universités suisses	www.swissuniversities.ch	Swissuniversities	Swiss conference of Universities
USAM	Union Suisse des arts et des métiers	http://www.sgv-usam.ch/fr.html		Swiss Union of Arts and Crafts