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Country report

Switzerland

2016 update to the European inventory
on validation of non-formal and informal learning

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Acknowledgements

Disclaimer:

1 Introduction and evaluation

1.1 Abstract[1]

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, not as a separate subject but as an inherent part of educational policies. Thus, the educational research and innovation (ERI) guidelines and federal objectives for 2013-2016 and for 2017-2020, as well as the new law on continuing education and, in the VET sector, the "Professional degree and change of profession for adults" project launched in 2013, 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.

Regarding the dissemination of practices, it is found that validation procedures are increasingly important in IVET. Furthermore, the commissions for the recognition of teaching diplomas established in 2014, on the basis of the regulations for the recognition of teaching diplomas, two guidelines specifying the use of VNIL to reduce the length of studies. In terms of information concerning to 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 use of ICT and Open educational resources (OER) potential 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 is relatively stable compared to 2014. Overall, while there is still little evidence of significant, concrete results, it seems that the most important step in establishing a policy is laying the foundations for future increases in the use of validation in Switzerland.

1.2 Main changes since the 2014 update

Practices related to validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) in Switzerland evolved progressively, yet slowly. Overall, the policy, regulations and guidelines incorporating the concept of validation have been developed to promote coordination internally or between the various educational sectors, although many projects are still ongoing. In particular, the following relevant initiatives have been introduced since 2014: i) education research and innovation (ERI) policy guidelines and objectives for 2013-2016[2], ii) the Message on the promotion of ERI for the years 2017-2020[3], iii) the new law on continuing education[4]; and, iv) a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) drawn up and introduced in 2014[5]. Furthermore, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) launched, in 2013, the project "Professional degree and change of profession for adults"[6] to increase graduation rates in vocational training among adults with no relevant qualifications to gain access to the employment market. This has resulted firstly in a clearer definition and organisation of the four established ways (one of which being validation) to obtain a qualification in this sector and, secondly, in a series of preparatory measures designed to facilitate access for adults to an initial qualification or a re-qualification.

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[1] All links in this document have been verified in August 2016.
[2] 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
[3] 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-linnovation.html
[4] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-continue/documentation-loi-sur-la-formation-continue.html
[5] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/cnc-formation-professionnelle.html
[6] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult.html

In the IVET sector, the number of qualifications that can be gained through validation has increased slightly. Moreover, after a decline in 2013, the number of validation users has grown again. In the CVET sector, which includes the formal qualifications at non-university tertiary level (PE - professional education) and non-formal qualifications (CET - continuous education and training sector), the qualifications that can be obtained through VNIL and the number of validation users have marginally increased; however, some areas are showing no development or even a drop in validation applications. In higher education where, except for some cases VNIL practices (see chapter of VNIL in HE) allow only for a reduction in the duration of study, new national guidelines were issued mainly for teacher training purposes, leading to a significant increase in admissions of secondary school graduates. However, there are still no comprehensive statistics on the number of validation users in the whole sector.

In Switzerland, terms used with regards to VNIL vary across the different sectors of the Swiss education system (VET and PE sectors, Higher education sector and Continuous Education Training CET sector). In addition, there are also definitions proposed by the Valida association (Valida, 2013), which generally serve as a reference for the adult education sector. This association proposes a set of principles for the recognition of prior learning, which draw a distinction between three forms of recognition: personal recognition (self-evaluation), institutional recognition (external evaluation) and validation of prior learning (certification). Thus, the validation terminology is different depending on the education/training sector.

In VET, the validation is defined as another qualification procedure to recognise experiences gained outside the vocational education and training system, without performing a complete formal training (VPETA, SR 412.10). In fact, the laws and ordinances on the Swiss VET System do not explicitly mention the term 'validation'. However, in the terminology of the three official languages (German, French, Italian) the concept of validation is present because the VNIL is called respectively "*Validierung von Bildungsleistungen*" in German, "*Validation des acquis de l'expérience*" in French and "*Validazione degli apprendimenti acquisiti*" in Italian (CH-Inventory, 2014). The concept of validation is therefore present in the three languages and the notion of prior experience is mentioned in French only.

In the higher education sector, a glossary is included in the national qualifications framework (NQF CH-HS, 2011). In this glossary, there is a general reference to the terminology used in European countries but no definition of the term 'validation'. Moreover, the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (UASA, 1995-2007) uses the same terminology as that contained in the Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETA). Lastly, within the CVET sector, the definitions that may be linked to VNIL concern the notions of formal, non-formal and informal learning. They are set forth in Art. 3 of the Federal Continuing Education and Training Act (CETA, 2014).

Though the national action plans in the field of education and training contain indications for development and diffusion of validation procedures, regulation and practices related to the VNIL in Switzerland are more widespread in the VET sector. However, at present, other education sectors are adopting national guidelines. 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 the upper-secondary level), as well as in teachers' training. Overall, the access to validation is considered as an individual right, whilst validation practices are optional.

Historically, practices, initiatives or regulations concerning validation – including the initiatives fostered by civil society, local organisations, NGOs and professional groups – have been developed through bottom-up and top-down approaches. They have mutually influenced each other and, owing to their continuous interaction, local and national projects have emerged at various levels of the educational system and in the professional contexts. Until now, the evolution of the Swiss VNIL practices can be characterised in four phases: 1) fore-runner projects before the 1990s; 2) pilot projects developed at local level in the 1990s;

3) diffusion of projects in the VET sector based on the VET Act of 2002 that are more institutionalised and extended to national level – since then, individuals with at least five years of professional experience can engage in validation and receive a federal VET qualification upon completion of the procedure; and, 4) re-organisation of the educational policies management bodies (from 2013) that led to the creation of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). Within the programmatic texts that underlie this reorganisation, the principles of validation in all educational contexts are integrated. The aim is to increase permeability between education sectors and to remedy the lack of specialised workers in some professional sectors.

This progressive centralisation and institutionalisation of validation practices has modified the approach taken in the development of validation, from a bottom-up and decentralised approach, to a centralised and top-down approach. Consequently, most of the non-governmental partners, which promoted the validation practices in the past, are now confined to the periphery, because they cannot intervene with an official role in validation practices. This is because they are not part of the official bodies responsible for the procedures, although they can be consulted.

As already mentioned, due to the Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act of 2002 and to the ordinance that refers to it, the relevance of validation is gradually being recognised in the VET sector, especially at upper-secondary level. This means that, whilst in the past, and for historical reasons, the validation practices were more widespread and accepted in the French-speaking region of Switzerland, currently they are beginning to spread also in the German-speaking region (mainly in Zürich and Bern). Moreover, even in the higher education sector, validation proposals are being developed gradually, both nationally and at local level (especially in French-speaking regions). In any case, almost all validation practices in Switzerland allow the candidate to obtain the same qualification that can be achieved via formal education.

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 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 the "culture of validation". However, currently, only a limited number of qualifications can be awarded via validation. Furthermore, the validation is still not considered a systematic measure to fight unemployment and, for the unemployed, 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.

The same applies to migrants and refugees. There are no specific validation measures for them, even if some skills audits proposals ("*bilan de compétences*") take into account the specific needs of this target group.

Obstacles to further development

Some obstacles to the further development of validation practices in Switzerland can be identified:

■ In general, information about validation practices has still not been widely disseminated at national or local level, nor has it been in all of the sectors where they are possible. Therefore, the possibility of obtaining validation of professional experience is still relatively unknown to the general public.

■ There are dissimilarities across the regions and sectors regarding the possibility of obtaining a qualification via validation, as well as in the way they are promoted and publicised. Some are proactive, while others tend to be more cautious and conservative.

- The discussion surrounding validation often remains limited to the professionals involved and it is not sufficiently shared with the public who might benefit from it. In addition, youth policies, employment strategies and policies for migrants do not systematically consider validation as a tool for social inclusion and unemployment prevention.

- A similar discrepancy can be found in the definition of the roles and competences of validation practitioners. If in the IVET sector the competences and roles of the assessors are clearly stated (this does not happen in other sectors), the qualifications of those that work in information and guidance are generically defined and do not permit the identification of the necessary level of competences. However, some training for validation counsellors exists. In this sense, a national forum for discussion, sharing, elaboration and regulation of validation practices in all sectors seems to be required and should involve all stakeholders (including the third sector).

- Official centralised statistics regarding the validation procedures, number of users and success rates are not fully available; although in recent years efforts have been undertaken to improve this aspect (the Swiss Federal Statistical Office still has no dedicated indexes for validation procedures).

- Currently, neither ICT nor open educational resources are sufficiently used in the validation practices.

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

The Swiss education system is very complex from an organisational and decision-making standpoint. By extension, this state of affairs also applies to the 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 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 the 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)[7]. 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 organisations establish training content and create apprenticeship positions for VET programmes.

The universities are coordinated by the rectors' conference Swissuniversities[8], 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, 2016)
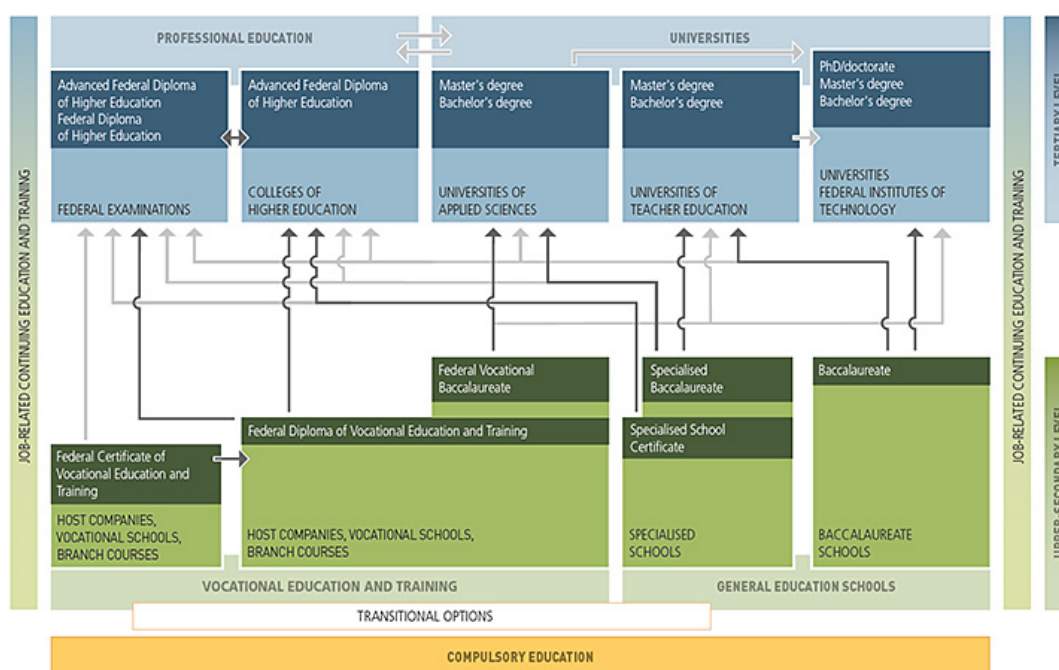
Essentially, validation procedures are integrated within each education and training sector, but not in the third sector, nor in labour policies. A common negotiation involving all partners always takes place in the implementation of the validation procedure in the different sectors. As we have already 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, the 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

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[7] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/11926.php
[8] http://www.swissuniversities.ch/fr/

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; Thomas, 2006).

As previously mentioned, SERI is currently running the "Professional degree and change of profession for adults" project[9]. The goal of this project is 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 (SERI, 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 qualification routes for adults and includes validation of non-formal and informal learning. Thus, any adult wishing to undertake an initial qualification or re-qualification has four possible ways of obtaining a Federal Diploma of Vocational Education and Training (FDVET) (or a Federal Certificate of Vocational Education and Training (FCVET). The first two, which do not require an apprenticeship, are: a) direct access to final exams (sometimes supported by non-compulsory preparation courses); and, b) validation of non-formal and informal learning acquired previously. The other two pathways involve an apprenticeship with a company providing training and are: c) shortened initial vocational training (lasting one or two years depending on the individual's level of attainment); and, d) standard vocational training, which is based on the same rules as training for young apprentices. For holders of a qualification obtained abroad, the procedure for the recognition of qualifications completes this list.

In this project, the VNIL is considered as one of the key measures to be developed. Indications are also provided on the revision of the current IVET guidelines. Another document is also foreseen. It will describe, in an accessible way, the different qualification options for adults. In addition, two studies have been launched for the 2016-2017 period. The first one aims to assess the need for companies in terms of professional qualifications for adults. The second study is designed to assess the needs and experiences of adults who have successfully completed initial vocational training, have dropped out or have shown interest, but decided not to start.

National legal framework for validation in the Swiss education system

According to the education and training sector, a number of laws, programs 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:

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

- 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;
     c. 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).
  2. The Cantons shall establish guidance counselling offices that will be able to help individuals draft assessment portfolios presenting all professional and nonprofessional 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.
  3. The guidance counselling offices shall work with professional organisations and external experts.

- Art. 31 Other qualification procedures
  1. Other qualification procedures include procedures that are generally not covered by VET ordinances but are nevertheless suitable for competency assessment.
  2. 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 more and more irregular trend 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.

Federal law on continuing education

The law on continuing education[11], which was approved in 2014 and implemented in 2017, regulates the principles for: accountability; quality; taking into account non-formal and informal achievements in formal training; improving equal opportunities; and, competition. These principles primarily concern special legislation at federal and cantonal level. In addition, the law on continuing education regulates measures to encourage the acquisition and maintenance of basic skills for adults. 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.

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, 2013). This DEFR initiative, together with the bill on continuous learning, 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, 2013, p. 14). In fact, the project mentioned above on "Professional degree and change of profession for adults" promotes the advancement of policies linked to this initiative.

2.2 Validation in education and training

Framework for Validation in IVET

Due to the law and the ordinance described above as well as to the OPET's national "Validation project", the National Validation Guidelines for the IVET sector were established in 2010 (OFFT, 2010). These guidelines (currently under review) contain national directives ensuring the comparability and quality of qualification procedures, two characteristics that are critically important for long-term acceptance. When necessary, the experience and knowledge gained from (pilot) projects to develop and introduce qualification procedures are used to periodically update the National Validation Guidelines. Validation is specified as one of four possible ways of how to obtain a formal qualification. The other ways are: a) the structured curriculum of study (classical formal way); b) the admission of experienced adults to professional exams without having participated in a formal curriculum of study; and, c) a shortened initial vocational training if the adult is able to demonstrate his or her knowledge within the desired professional domain. As part of the completion of the National Validation

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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/themes/formation-continue/documentation-loi-sur-la-formation-continue.html

Guidelines, a series of support documents were developed by the OPET in collaboration with the Swiss Conference of VET offices (SBBK/CSFP). A specific working group of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK/CDIP) is in charge of the inter-cantonal coordination about vocational education. The support documents cover: a) instruments to activate Validation practices; b) guidelines to activate procedures on a cantonal level; and, c) guidelines for the development and quality control (SEFRI, 2010).[12]

The National Validation Guidelines specify the following five phases of the validation procedure as shown in Figure 2. These phases, although referring specifically to the upper-secondary level of VET, also act as a general indicator of the other Swiss practices of validation.
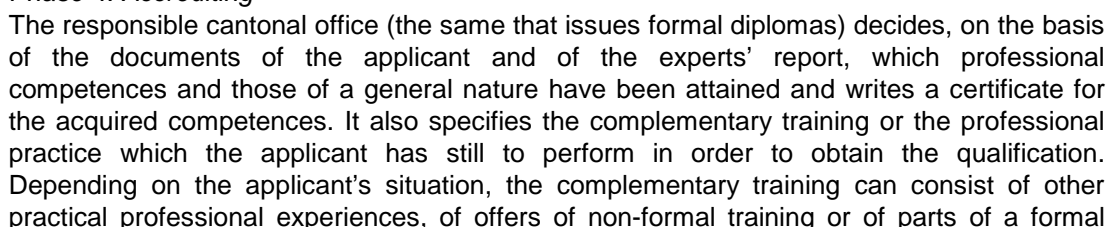
Phase 1: Information and advising
This phase informs adults about the possibilities of having access to validation procedures, as well as about the whole process (objectives, activities, conditions of admission, fees) and gives them the opportunity to ask personal questions regarding the procedure. It is possible to have recourse to the counselling service during the whole procedure. The cantons define the responsible service ("access portal to the service") referring to the document. This service is also the centre for inter-institutional cooperation between the stakeholders involved in the validation procedures. The guidelines for the cantons (SBBK/CSFP, 2007) specify the characteristics of the mission and of the organisation of these services.

Phase 2: Self-evaluation (Bilan)
In this phase, the applicants identify, analyse and document their skills and work out a validation dossier. This dossier is a collection of data and certificates concerning the qualification standards of a given profession, as well as of the requirements concerning "general culture" regarding the topics Language, Communication and Society (LCS) of the IVET programmes. The dossier attests the characteristics of the applicants' formal, non-formal and informal learning, and has to meet the minimal requirements from the formal standpoint as well as from the standpoint of the contents. It can be drawn up individually or through personalised counselling. The validation dossier allows access to the subsequent phase of the procedure, but it can also be used for an application or for admittance to a training course. The dossier contains the CV, evidence of accomplished formal education and training, a self-evaluation, several descriptions of the required professional skills and evidence of any additional competency (OFFT, 2010). The drawing-up of the dossier is usually made with personalised support or in a small group. The vocational training office in Zurich (Wöhler & Senn, 2015) also affords an online tool in order to identify one's competences and skills.

Figure 2.2   The five phases of a VNIL procedure in Switzerland in upper secondary VET

Phase 3: Assessment

Both experts (for professional and LCS fields), who are responsible for final exams of federal VET diploma, will also assess the dossier. They will verify the equivalence between the evidenced skills and the competency profile as recorded in the VET decree. This validation dossier is complemented by an interview (between experts and applicants). The aim of the interview is to clarify topics that have emerged from the dossier. The experts verify if the assertions made are important, reliable and significant (evaluation pertaining to the content of the dossier and credibility of the self-evaluation, analysis of eventual equivalence). The evaluation permits ascertaining the level of the professional competences as well as the LCS competences, and if those levels meet the criteria for obtaining a qualification. If there are uncertainties in the evaluation, other methods can be used.[13] Their use is explained and notified to the applicant. These methods can be: observation of the applicant on her/his place of work, tests in concrete situations or achievement of practical work, of a product, of an item, etc. Moreover, the professional organisations may require, for some professions, traditional check methods in accordance with the decrees concerning safety and health at work. The experts jointly write the evaluation report[14] for the attention of the evaluation body.

Phase 4: Accrediting

The responsible cantonal office (the same that issues formal diplomas) decides, on the basis of the documents of the applicant and of the experts' report, which professional competences and those of a general nature have been attained and writes a certificate for the acquired competences. It also specifies the complementary training or the professional practice which the applicant has still to perform in order to obtain the qualification. Depending on the applicant's situation, the complementary training can consist of other practical professional experiences, of offers of non-formal training or of parts of a formal

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[13] SEFRI, Informations concernant les méthodes de vérification supplémentaires: 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
[14] SEFRI, Informations concernant le rapport d'évaluation: 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

training. All the training complements must be achieved within five years after the date of issue of the certificate of the acquired competences and must be attested in the validation procedure.

Phase 5: Certification

Certification occurs in the customary fashion and is under the responsibility of the cantonal authorities, whereas the professional organisations are involved in the assessment phase. When all the required professional skills have been evidenced and accredited, the canton of the applicant issues a Federal Certificate for the related profession. There is no difference between this certificate and a certificate obtained through formal VET.

The phases described summarise, though with slight differences, the phases involved in the European framework for validation. Particular emphasis is given to the information phase, that is in fact the reference phase also for the coordination of the procedure. It is also worth noting that the phases Identification and Documentation are closely connected and are placed inside the phase named *Bilan* or Self-evaluation of the Swiss procedure. The phase of formal assessment can be separated from the previous phases, whereas the certification phase must be closely connected with the formal assessment phase (OFFT, 2010).

To access the 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. 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. Anyhow, the procedure can be started before completion of the five years' experience (OFFT, 2010; KEK-CDC, 2012).

At present, all the Swiss cantons have integrated articles of law into their regulations that legitimate the implementation of validation procedures. However, as the implementation of the validation procedures depends on the observance of a range of framework conditions, and particularly on the definition of the qualification standards and assessment criteria, which must be defined jointly with labour market organisations, it is not yet possible to access all the qualifications of VET through validation. To date, 20 IVET qualifications (3 more than in 2014) are accessible through validation in various Swiss cantons. Between those, 6 are in the field of mechanics, 4 in health and social care; 4 in the field of commerce, 3 in the construction field, 2 in manufacturing occupations, and 1 in information technology.

Finally, we point out, that at the IVET level, the first important national initiative on validation (now completed) was the ValiPoste project, which was launched in 2006 by Swiss Post in collaboration with the Confederation. This project integrated collective validation methods (based on an analysis of the job and on the comparison between qualifications internal to the enterprise and federal qualifications) with individual validation methods. The ValiPoste project introduces qualification procedures to validate the prior learning of sorting office staff (ValiTri) and postal delivery staff (ValiDist) (Voit et al., 2007). Upon completion of the qualification procedure, applicants are issued a Federal VET Diploma in Logistics Management. The ValiPoste project is the first national project involving all Swiss Cantons.

Framework for validation in Professional Education (PE)

The legislation establishing validation practices are the same as for the 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[15] concerning the minimal 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 and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education[16], promoted by FSEA/SVEB, the Swiss national Umbrella Organisation for Adult Education;

- Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for Community interpreters[17] promoted by INTERPRET, the Swiss Association for Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation;

- Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs[18] promoted by the Swiss Association of small and medium sized enterprises (SME), with organisations fostering women's careers; and,

- 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[19].

In this sector, the phases of validation are not differentiated and organised as precisely as in the IVET sector. For example, the 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:

- The VNIL for the qualification of health auxiliary certificate, of the Swiss Red Cross (SRC), constituting certification at the level below FCVET and FDVET. 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[20].

- Three proposals for the validation skills, which are offered by the Swiss Association of Managers (Association Suisse des cadres)[21] and do not focus on formal qualifications but on the granting of diplomas or certificates, validate experience and achievements in leadership and management for: a) Swiss army officers; b) municipal executive members; and, c) team leaders, managers, senior managers, etc., with experience of managing staff.

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[15] https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/20042470/index.html
[16] www.alice.ch
[17] www.inter-pret.ch
[18] http://www.potentialyse.ch/CMS/default.asp?ID=438
[19] http://edu.ge.ch/cfps/presentation/presentation-formation/ecole-superieure-deducateur-de-lenfance/candidats/espace-dinformation-au-candidats-a-la-formation-deducateurs-et-deducatrices-de-lenfance-es#rvae
[20] http://www.croixrougevaudoise.ch/nos-activites/formation/auxiliaire-de-sante-croix-rouge-suisse/auxiliaire-de-sante-validation-des-acquis.html
[21] http://www.cadres.ch/offres/carriere/validation-competences/

- DAS in Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Management. This project is proposed by the University of Geneva and University of Savoie (France) and was the subject of a recent study (Bachelet & de Jonckheere, 2013)[22]. This course combines validation of previous learning outcomes and a course for complementary continuous training, intended for validation beneficiaries. Since its implementation in 2004, it has met great interest on the part of professionals and of employers. To date, more than 400 professionals working in French-speaking Switzerland have been or are being trained. More than 200 students have graduated in Management Sciences from the University of Savoie and obtained the degree of continuing training (DAS) in Business Management from the University of Geneva.

- Swiss Register for engineers, technicians and architects (REG)[23]. This is the only private institution in Switzerland accredited to officially recognise the degrees of professionals in Engineering, Architecture, Industry and Environment, obtained in foreign schools 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 not disposing of a recognised qualification, but 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 obtaining an equivalence (it is not a validation) of the Advanced Federal Diploma of 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[24].

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 Swissuniversities conference[25] 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 (nqf.ch-HS, 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, particularly with regard to teaching; and, it facilitates the comparability of qualifications within Europe and enhances transparency.

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[22] http://www.unige.ch/formcont/index/VAE.pdf
[23] www.reg.ch
[24] http://www.vsaa.ch/service-de-la-formation/execution-laci
[25] www.swissuniversities.ch

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 or completely, 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.

In this sector, the phases of validation are not differentiated as precisely as for IVET. 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. As far as the eligibility of persons without a baccalaureate are concerned, the most widespread practices are the following: admission following the success in the Swiss baccalaureate exam (to which one may have access even without attending a formal training process); admission through 'bridge' courses for those who have a professional baccalaureate; and, the admission through a specific exam to specific disciplines. 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 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; and, the IT University Centre.

The legal bases of validation at Geneva University are:

■ Cantonal law on public education, State of Geneva (LIP-C110): art. 154 - Procedures of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

■ The regulation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (of 2014) 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.

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 203-2016 and 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 assigned the responsibility for their implementation. It is then these latter who take decisions on admission and on dossier, 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 ampler programmes aiming at making education more flexible, in order to facilitate the access to 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 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. Considering the amplitude 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 (five bachelors); economics and services (four bachelors); music and scenic arts (two bachelors); and, health (one bachelor).

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[26]. 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[27]. 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)[28] and regulations concerning the recognition of UTE qualifications at secondary I level (26 August 1999)[29]. These reforms provide for people without 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.

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

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[26] http://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/organisation/chambers/chamber-of-universities-of-teacher-education/
[27] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/27621.php
[28] http://edudoc.ch/record/29975/files/Regl_AK_VS_PS_d.pdf
[29] http://edudoc.ch/record/29978/files/Regl_SekI_d.pdf

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).

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) has developed a validation procedure for the federal diploma of teachers working in vocational schools. 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 having at least five years of experience in teaching and having 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, interviews and some visits during teaching activities.

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 an equivalent qualification for teaching in vocational training. Thanks to this additional qualification procedure, it is possible to have direct access to final examinations for the courses Certificate and Diploma 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 is 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.

Mandated by the SERI, the Swiss centre for VET and for occupational, educational and career guidance CSFO/SDBB[30] has established a validation procedure for the three categories of teachers and trainers for vocational training, specifically for the German-speaking part of Switzerland. This project is still in its pilot phase, which will be completed at the end of 2016.

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 acquirement of the title of "Occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor", awarded by SERI.[31]

2.3 Validation and the labour market

In Switzerland, labour market policies are coordinated by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)[32]. The division, Labour Market and Unemployment Insurance, 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[33] addressed to all the ICT professionals, who do not have the necessary qualifications or who want to improve their skills, including those who are unemployed. This

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[30] http://www.sdbb.ch
[31] http://www.sdbb.ch/dyn/179039.asp
[32] www.seco.admin.ch
[33] www.informa.modellf.ch/

project is recognised in the field of the labour market measures of Berne and Zurich. It can be implemented thanks to its modular structure, covering all the levels of ICT training in Switzerland, until the UAS level.[34] 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 labour market measures by regional employment centres.

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[35]) 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.

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 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 trainings 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 models concepts are particularly used: "competences bilan-portfolio" of the Association for the recognition of non-formal and informal leaning (ARRA)[36] and the CHQ Manual, of the Association CH-Q Swiss qualification programme for career development[37] (see CH Inventory 2014 for details). We would also draw attention to the proposal of the online skills audit proposed by the Swiss Association of Labour Offices (VSAA), as described in the list of validation offers in the CET sector.

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.

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[34] www.ict-berufsbildung.ch/
[35] http://www.seco.admin.ch/dokumentation/publikation/00008/00022/05686/index.html?lang=fr
[36] www.arra.ch
[37] www.ch-q.ch

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 volunteer 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;

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 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.[38]

For the youth sector, policies do not systematically consider validation as a tool for social inclusion and unemployment prevention. The strategies focus primarily on recognition practices, 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 yearly in order to detect imbalances between supply and demand early on and take the necessary measures. The most recent figures from the apprenticeship barometer are from April 2016. Right now, the offer of available apprenticeship places is higher than the demand of young people seeking such a position. The main reason for this is probably demographic change. Imbalances are particularly pronounced in certain sectors. In addition to the Apprenticeship Barometer, there are two important national-scale projects: *The Case management in VET*[39] (Egger, Dreher & Partner, 2008) 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). This initiative is intended to prevent the risk of exclusion from the labour market after completion of compulsory schooling. Started in 2011, it is aimed at young people leaving school, who show characteristics which might make it difficult for them to enter the labour

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[38] www.dossier-benevolat.ch; http://www.sajv.ch/fr/politique/domaines-de-travail/benevolat/dossier-benevolat/
[39] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/case-management--formation-professionnelle---cm-fp-/10-septembre-2015--seance-dinformation-et-echange-dexperiences--.html

market. It is aimed at secondary schools, throughout Switzerland. Although the project itself has been terminated by end of 2015, the corresponding tasks have been transferred as regular tasks to the cantonal authorities. Another project addressed to young people, since 2005, is *Apprendisti Ricerca Impiego ARI*[40], proposed in Canton Ticino. This project aims to promote the integration into the labour market of young people having just received the Federal VET Diploma, in order to increase their chance of finding a job (Salini, 2006). This is realised also by helping the young people to identify and to value their competences on the labour market through targeted skills audit.

In the area of enhancing young people's achievements, it is important to note the recent project developed as part of the voluntary activities of the Vaud Federation of Country Youths (*Fédération vaudoise des jeunesses campagnardes* - FVJC)[41]. 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 skills, available online.[42]

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[40] http://www4.ti.ch/decs/dfp/ari/ari/
[41] http://www.sfivet.swiss/project/recognitionof-prior-learning-acquired-volunteer-work-within-federation-vaudoise-des
[42] http://www.fvjc.ch/documents.php

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.

Switzerland has recently developed a national qualifications framework (NQF) and has started implementing it in 2015. This 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). The referencing of this qualifications framework (NQF Vocational and Professional Education and Training) to the EQF was established in 2015. The Swiss VET and PE qualifications are currently being integrated into the framework through a process where each qualification is assessed individually and assigned a level within the framework. This 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 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[43].

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 the use of ECVET connected with validation procedures (see CH Inventory 2014 for details). SERI has promoted working groups on this matter and the results (Fondation CH, 2013) specified the following elements:

- Switzerland is already applying one of ECVET's priority objectives and the Switzerland's approach to procedures for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning is very close to the principle of ECVET, defined according to learning outcome units.
- 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.

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[43] http://www.unige.ch/vae/conditions

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:[44]

- *The competency 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 owns 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 base for training standards is the Qualifications Framework for the Swiss Higher Education Area[45]. 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 cooperation with the specific services coordinating the processes in the different education and training sectors (see section 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

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[44] 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
[45] http://www.crus.ch/information-programme/qualifications-framework-nqfch-hs.html?no_cache=1&L=2

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 National validation Guidelines.

- CVET[46]: 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 of 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.[47] In 2014, an agreement was also drawn up between all the UTE regarding the validation procedures for teachers' training (CDIP/EDK, 2014a and b).

Information, promotion and raising awareness

This is a shared responsibility between various organisations (pertaining to professional organisations, to State, to educational providers, to some chambers of industry, commerce and skilled crafts, to 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

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) 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.

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[46] Considering both PE both Continuing Education
[47] http://www.edk.ch/dyn/27621.php

6   Information, advice and guidance

6.1   Awareness-raising and recruitment

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 issues guidelines about the setting up of such portals[48]. 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[49] refers to two other information portals: a) the portal of occupational, educational and careers guidance[50], 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[51]. The second one is the portal of Swiss VET[52] and it shows the validation procedures in a page which includes the VET qualifications for adults[53]. Again, for all organisations involved in validation procedures, the SERI's webpage, which covers validation instruments, gives all the information and supporting documents required[54].

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 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. In 2016, this will result in a revision of National Validation Guidelines, which dates back to 2010.

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.

In relation to validation in IVET, every canton had to set up a validation 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

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[48] 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
[49] www.validacquis.ch
[50] www.orientamento.ch
[51] www.orientamento.ch/dyn/52344.aspx
[52] www.fpa.formazioneprof.ch
[53] https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/diplome-professionnel-et-changement-de-profession-pour-les-adult.html
[54] 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

in the validation procedure. The missions and constraints of those services have been specified by the CSFP/SBBK in 2007.

This service has to: welcome adults that desire to obtain a VET diploma through one of the 'other qualification procedures'; inform them about the existing possibilities; counsel them about the relevance of the procedure; inform them about the necessary prerequisites and financing methods; inform them about what is expected from them to complete a validation procedure; organise the various phases of the procedure; and, ensure contact with the VET cantonal services and all the involved professional organisations.

The validation 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 phase can differ in duration from service to service and is based on the needs of the public. Generally, this phase is offered on an individual basis. However, sometimes it is possible for small groups that wish to achieve the same title, to conduct this phase in a group. The guidance in this phase 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 an online instrument to list their competencies. 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.

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

With variations at cantonal level, 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 (incl. advisors and interested adult educators) are invited[55]. However, there is no active measure at national level to improve awareness of validation amongst guidance practitioners. It has been acknowledged though that those who are involved with validation procedures generally have a higher level of acceptance towards them (Salini, Petrini, Voit, 2012).

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).

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[55] e.g. http://cb2.ehb-schweiz.ch/fr/actualites/evenements/Pages/Journ%C3%A9eRVAE_14mars2016.aspx

7.2 Qualification requirements

Qualification requirements only concern validation practitioners in the IVET sector[56]. 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.

Validation Guidelines 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.

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[57], 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[58]. The portfolio template is presented on the ARRA[59] website, while the method is explained in a publication available in French, German, Italian, and Spanish (EFFE, 1998).

Training as career advisors[60]

This training is offered in German by the CH-Q association to form career advisors based on the Competence Management Model. This training focuses on the production of a portfolio (also available in digital format[61]). This model includes 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.

Certificate of Advanced Studies in recognition and validation non-formal and informal learning [62]

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, 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, 2011).

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[56] 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
[57] www.effe.ch
[58] http://www.effe.ch/index2.php?page=pages/fab_1&id=131&sous_id=136&langue=1
[59] www.arra.ch
[60] www.ch-q.ch
[61] http://eportfolio.ch-q.ch/
[62] http://www.iffp.swiss/cas-rvae

The above-mentioned organisations and other stakeholders developed an organisation in 2014 in co-ordination with FSEA/SVEB with the aim of developing an Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education of Competence Management Specialist. Even though the SERI did not grant permission for the development of this diploma, the organisation continues to call for competence management modules to be developed and integrated in other well-established Advanced Federal Diplomas[63].

Training for assessors in the validation procedure at IVET level

This training, available in French, German, and Italian, is based on a study commissioned by the OPET based on the framework of the National Guidelines for validation (CBVA & EB, 2006). This study[64] identifies the competency profile for assessors, and proposes this training structure:

■ Group training paths of short duration (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[65].

This training is mainly managed by the SFIVET and it is compulsory for assessors.

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 and in the Adult Training Diploma at the University of Geneva.

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 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

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[63] http://www.alice.ch/fr/themes/professionnalisation/gestion-des-competences/vkm-suisse/

[64] http://www.sbfi.admin.ch/berufsbildung/01505/01506/index.html?lang=fr

[65] From Bednarz, 2013: *Synthesis of the educational paths of validation's practitioners.* Internal document project, ALLinHE, not published.

control, including the quality development paper[66] for the professional sector and the Swiss Agency for Accreditation and Quality Assurance AAQ of universities[67].

8.1 Quality assurance systems / procedures

Specific regulations for quality assurance of validation procedures for IVET[68] 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 in line with the validation national guidelines (OFFT, 2010) 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 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; 2010).

■ 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

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[66]https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/fr/home/themes/formation-professionnelle/developpement-de-la-qualite-dans-la-formation-professionnelle.html
[67] http://aaq.ch
[68] 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

■ 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. The national guidelines were regarded as having proven their value as a frame of reference and were already widely accepted as such by individuals responsible for managing validation procedures.

Other studies, on people with lower levels of education are mentioned in the document: "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 include a federal contribution of CHF 12 000 (c. EUR 11 000[69]) for the development of competence profiles and assessment criteria for IVET qualifications. This contribution is reduced to CHF 2 000 (c. EUR 1 840) for professions that are currently in review.

The same view 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).

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 CHF 7 000 (c. EUR 6 425). This cost is clearly lower than the cost of a person following a complete vocational education (CSFP/SBBK, 2007b). In 2010, a

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[69] Exchange rates of February 2016.

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, CH Inventory 2014). Based on those average costs, cantonal services established a maximum flat rate of subvention 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 this regard, the CSFP/SBBK suggests that cantons should bear the costs of the entire procedure (including potential additional training) when the candidate does not hold any qualification. In case validation is used to get an additional qualification, a part of the costs can be charged to the candidate (OFFT; 2010, CSFP/SBBK, 2007a & b). Currently, the majority of cantons follow these indications, but detailed statistics about the distribution of costs are currently not available.

Other levels

All the information about the distribution of cost, for each title accessible by VNIL (when the data are available), is summarised in Table 9.1

Table 9.1   distribution of costs according to qualification via VNIL[70]

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 6 425) but detailed statistics about the distribution of costs are currently not available.	The CSFP/SBBK suggests that cantons should bear the costs of the entire procedure (including potential additional training) when the candidate does not hold any qualification. In case validation is used to get an additional qualification, a part of the costs can be charged to the candidate.	Cantons
Federal diploma and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education	n/a	CHF 600 (c. EUR 550) for each module, CHF 1 350 (c. EUR 1 240) for five modules	Federal contributions. 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 735) for the two modules	n/a
Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs	CHF 8 000 (c. EUR 7 350) Alf of which covered support for creating the portfolio, and the other half for registration for the final assessment	During the pilot, candidates have taken half the cost, now they assume the total cost	Federal and other funding, during the pilot.
Faculties of Geneva University	n/a	CHF 1 000 (c. EUR 920)	n/a
Universities of applied sciences of Western Switzerland	n/a	CHF 1 000 (c. EUR 920)	n/a
Health auxiliary certificate	n/a	CHF 900 (EUR 825),	Sometimes covered by unemployment insurance or the candidate's institution of

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[70] When the data are available.

			origin.

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[71].

EU-funded initiatives

There is a great number of initiatives intended to implement practices of validation in various domains and at different levels that have recently been financed through European funds. The Swiss organisations currently involved in European projects are professional organisations, educational providers, trade unions, the Swiss federation for the adult learning SVEB, the SFIVET and some skills audit services.

■ *VALISKILLS*[72] (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).

■ *SECOND CHANCE*[73] (2013-2015)

This project will provide guidelines – and a tool box – to integrate workplace learning, informal experiences and recovery of basic knowledge, skills and competences, in order to facilitate access to lifelong learning and to a qualification for young adults giving them a "Second Chance". Swiss partners: Swiss Federation of Adult Learning (FSEA/SVEB), SFIVET.

■ *VALIDOSS*[74] *(2013-2015)*

This is a partnership project designed for participants to meet, reflect and share good practices. The objectives of the project are as follows: to compare different practices for implementing the "portfolio"; to highlight the characteristics and challenges of this approach; and, to produce a methodological guide outlining a typology of uses of the portfolio according to profession and audience. To produce the desired results, each partner will welcome the other partners and give a theoretical and practical presentation of how they use the assessment method for each portfolio. The reflections and comparisons will allow the final methodology guide to be established. Swiss partner: Teaching and research centre for teacher training at the secondary 1 and 2. University of Fribourg.

■ *WOMEN IN SMEs*[75] (2013-2015)

The validation of non-formal and informal learning of family SME managers is a European transfer of innovation project aimed at recognising and validating the expertise and skills of women who (co-)manage very small enterprises (VSEs) and small and

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[71] Interviews with stakeholders of various institutions that offer validation procedures in Switzerland, from the report Salini, Petrini, Voit, 2012.
[72] http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplus-project-details-page/?nodeRef=workspace://SpacesStore/41cf14ca-704b-458d-844e-cf9707292c6c; www.valiskills.eu
[73] http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=11742#.VtLDkU32YkI
[74] http://www.europeansharedtreasure.eu/detail.php?id_project_base=2013-1-BE2-LEO04-03849
[75] http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/project/view.htm?prj=10985#.VtLJIk32YkI

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Swiss Partners: Swiss Union of Arts and Crafts; Pillet & Partners, Potentialyse; SFIVET.

■ *EXCHANGE OF KNOW-HOW[76] (2014-2015)*

Mobility project, for the Job shadowing at Sea Teach in Cala d'Or (ES). The aim of this project is to develop a validation tool in the field of adult education, concerning the "accreditation of learning outcomes/competences". Swiss partner: Ariadne.

9.2 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.

Furthermore, a recent 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 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 CHF 18 000 per person per year*[77]. 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.

Other studies have been carried out at local level:

■ A doctoral research about the argumentative activity of assessors in interaction with the candidates was realised for the SFIVET validation procedure (Cortessis, 2010; 2013). This study focused on validation as a continuous process of discussion that is intended to establish the candidate's learning outcomes with certainty – from the candidate's self-assessment of his/her own experience through official validation by the training institution issuing the formal qualification. The study seeks to determine whether there are any discrepancies between the aspects that jury members considered important in their decision and the aspects that jury members actually mention when justifying their decision in public. The study also examines the strategies and discursive practices used by the parties (the candidates and the jury) as they seek to express the candidate's experience in terms of the referential and assessment criteria.

■ In the office of validation in Geneva, 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). This research identified: a) how validation counsellors operate; b) the problem of anticipation, which characterises the candidates' experience of validation procedures; and, c) the concordance or discordance of meanings/perceptions between counsellor and candidate. It underlined the semiotic implications of the validation dissemination, as well as the importance of explicit integration of a formative dimension in the information and guidance for validation.

■ Finally, in 2014, the SFIVET initiated a research that examines learning and skills development among young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who are involved in

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[76] www.ariadne.ch
[77] Message du 6 septembre 2000 relatif à la nouvelle loi sur la formation professionnelle, FF 2000, p. 5314.

voluntary work. One of the aims of this research is to identify the skills acquired by young people in voluntary activities[78].

9.3 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.3.1 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". However, a decrease in validation cases has been observed in VNIL projects for health care workers and community interpreters, due to the fact that most people working in these sectors have already completed their validation within the past few years.

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

9.3.2 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 referred to year 2014.
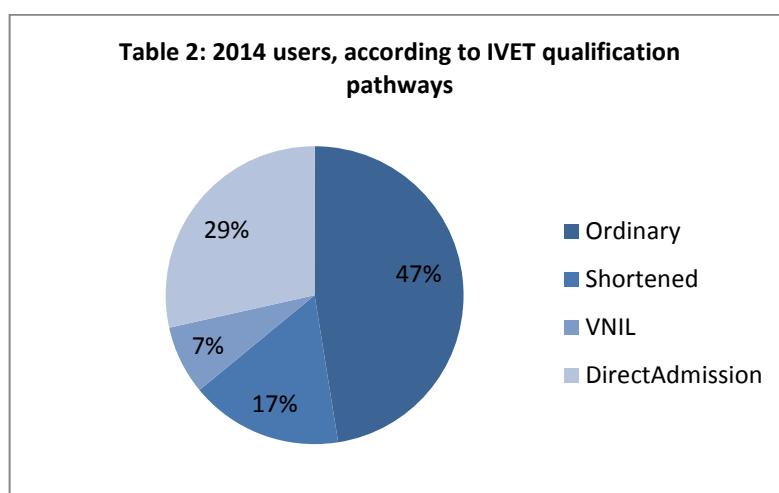
IVET

In 2014, 572 qualifications in IVET were awarded through validation procedures, i.e. more than 1 % of the total awarded in that year (67 400). This percentage is lower than in 2011 (by 19 %), but the difference seems justified by the notable implementation of pilot projects at the time, encouraging significant efforts to promote these practices. Moreover, taking into account all the qualification procedures specifically geared towards adults, it can be noted that out of four qualification pathways available to adults (direct admission to the final exam; validation of prior acquired learning; shortened initial vocational training; ordinary initial vocational training), 7 653 adults took a qualification in IVET, amounting to 12 % of the total number (7 % of these users opted for the validation procedure, as illustrated in Table 2) (OFS/BFS, 2016b).

Women account for 86 % of validation users, which is explained by the prevalence of validation in "female" professions, such as those in health and social care (constituting 38 % of total validation uses), as in the areas of commerce or sales (33 %). Of these qualifications, 53 % were obtained in German-speaking regions of Switzerland (especially in large cities), confirming the VNIL consolidation trend in this region. As for the age of users, the average is
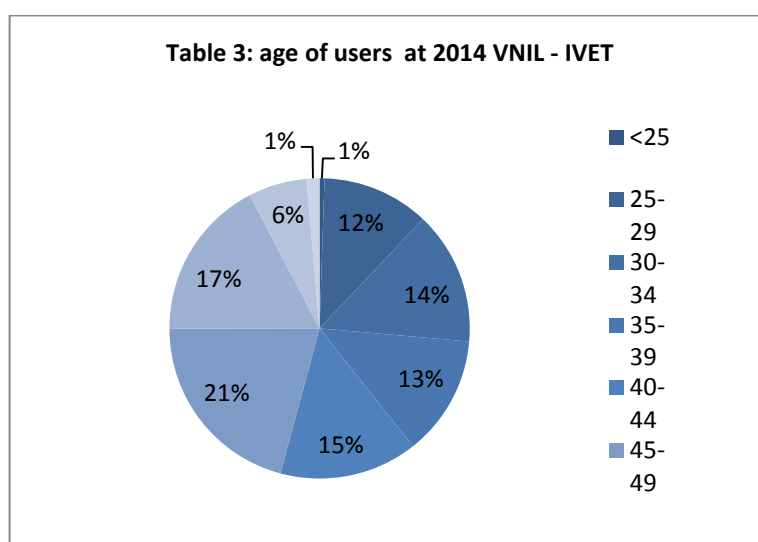
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around 47 years and the highest attendance rate concerns users between 35 and 54 years of age, as shown by Table 2 below.

Figure 9.2   Share of validation users in 2014 in IVET, by pathways to obtain the adults qualification

Table 2: 2014 users, according to IVET qualification pathways

- Ordinary
- Shortened
- VNIL
- DirectAdmission

47%
17%
7%
29%

Figure 9.3   Share of validation users in 2014 in IVET, by age groups

Table 3: age of users at 2014 VNIL - IVET

- <25
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49

1% 1%
12%
14%
13%
15%
21%
17%
6%

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 in 2014:

■ 323 of Federal Diploma and Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for trainers in adult education were awarded by VNIL (a 60 % increase compared to 2011) out of a total of 3 825 certificates and diplomas issued during the year (i.e. VNIL constituted 8.44 % of the total), of which 78 % were in German-speaking regions of Switzerland (a 20 % drop compared to 2011), 18 % in French-speaking regions of Switzerland (a 15 % increase compared to 2011) and 3.2 % in Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland (a 20 % increase compared to 2011). 96 % of candidatures were successful. Almost 70 % of candidates were aged 36 to 55 years old, while 60 % of the candidates were women.

■ 24 Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education for Community Interpreters were awarded (a 60 % decrease compared to 2011), of which 60 % were in the German-speaking regions and 40 % in the French- and Italian-speaking regions (i.e. the same rates as in 2011). The success rate was around 80 %. Women made up 90 % of participants and almost all candidates were aged between 35 and 55 years old. The reasons for such a significant decrease in the number of validation users cannot be explained, except by the fact that the number of people with low qualifications has dropped.

■ 22 Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education in Management of Family-Owned SMEs were awarded by VNIL between 2014 and 2015. Candidates were aged between 35 and 50 years old and the project was specifically targeted at women. In this project, significant selection work was carried out on admission for the procedure due to the demanding requirements. As such, the initial selection rate was 35 % while the success rate was 86 %.

Continuous VET (CVET)

Data is available for two types of qualifications:

■ The Vaud Red Cross issued 69 health auxiliary certificates in 2014 (compared to 180 in 2011, which means a 60 % decrease). 80 % of validation users were women (compared to 90 % in 2011). The most common age groups of users were 35 and 40 years and 50 and 54 years, with 12 % of candidates being under 25.

■ 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 %). No other information is known about the applicants.

Higher education

For most educational institutions in this sector, data on validation practices is not currently 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*. Although the admission through portfolio is not really a validation procedure (but a kind of experience recognition), 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 on the basis of an FDVET (a category not obtained for cantonal universities).

Swiss universities

In 2014, the percentage of entrants to all universities on the basis of academic records was 1 %, which was similar to 2011. Another 2 % consisted of those who were admitted to university courses after sitting a full entrance exam. Two-thirds of all applicants were admitted to UTEs and UASs.

In cantonal universities, women constituted 54 % of validation applicants and their average age was 36. In terms of subjects, in 2014, 60 % of applicants registered on the basis of a portfolio for humanities and social sciences while 21 % registered for law and the rest enrolled for economics, natural sciences and other interdisciplinary branches.

In UTEs and UASs, women represented 58 % of admissions based on a portfolio, while the average age was around 35. In terms of subjects, 41 % enrolled in health, social care and arts, 34 % in technical disciplines, economics and design and 25 % in teacher training.

As for UTEs, a closer analysis of the validation procedures and number of entrants to teacher training courses shows significant developments. In particular, since 2012 (i.e. since the new guidelines on career changes to teaching ("professional re-training in teaching"), which also implies recognition of prior learning) there were significant increases in the number of candidates admitted via validation of their prior learning. From 2010 to 2014, the number of candidates admitted without a baccalaureate increased from 7 to 81 (with a peak of 392 entrants in 2012). More generally, the percentage of candidates admitted with an FDVET increased by 47 %, the rate of entrants with non-grammar/selective school diplomas also increased by 47 %, while the percentage of entrants from grammar/selective schools increased by just 4 % (OFS/BFS, 2016c).

Certification in occupational, educational and career guidance counsellor[79]

Although there was a significant number of applications when the procedure was first launched (14 applications were accepted in 2011), only three applications per year were submitted on average to CSFO in subsequent years. The success rate of applicants over the last three years was around 98 %. The average age of participants was 37. Women made up 70 % of validation applicants. The previous experience considered for validation totalled, on average, around 4-5 years. 80 % of participants had a bachelor's degree in psychology. Participation in the procedure costs CHF 4 500 (EUR 4 125) 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, with the percentage of men and women varying in the given year: for example, in 2014, men constituted 48 % of participants, while in 2015 they represented 58 %.

For the Complementary qualification procedure in Zollikofen and Lugano, a total of 209 qualifications were awarded between 2005 and 2015. The overall success rate was 85 %. No other quantitative data on the participants is currently available. The cost of the procedure (the amount of which is unknown) was covered by special government funding.

9.3.3 Validation and migrants / refugees and other disadvantaged groups

Currently no validation projects are specifically targeted towards migrants or the unemployed, although the challenges of low-qualified people are given priority in the federal project already cited: "Professional degree and change of profession for adults" (SEFRI, 2016). Furthermore, the State Secretariat of Migration, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs and the Federal Social Insurance are represented in this project.

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[79] http://www.csfo.ch/dyn/197752.asp

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 (see CH-Inventory 2014 for details).

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 many validation applicants. In 2016, this canton therefore adopted a new strategy whereby new forms of skill checks are to be carried out. In addition to the usual ways of demonstrating skills, an oral version of the competences portfolio or a work project dossier are planned. 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 an increased number of visits on the ground and an oral presentation of the report. 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[80].

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 (SEFRI, 2010[81]) include guidelines to write the validation

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[80] http://www.panorama.ch/dyn/1026.aspx?id_article=1540
[81] 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

dossier (see CH Inventory 2014) 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 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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[82] All links have been verified in August 2016

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Voit, J., Weber Guisan, S., Cortessis, S., Petrini, B., Stoffel, B. (2007). Analyse de compétences du personnel de distribution de la Poste Suisse : Expertise servant de base à une procédure de validation collective d'acquis professionnels en vue de l'obtention du CFC de gestionnaire en logistique. Zollikofen : IFFP.

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Wolf, J.-P., Wilhelm, C.-E., Zuberbühler, J. (2009). Validation des acquis : mise en pratique. Évaluation globale 2007-2009. Rapport Final. Bienne: KEK |CDC Cons

11.2 Useful links

- **Federal and cantonal institutions**
- Cantonal centres for VNIL and Adult qualifications: http://berufsberatung.ch/dyn/51352.aspx
- Federal Authorities of the Swiss Confederation: www.admin.ch
- Federal Department of Home Affairs - FDHA: www.edi.admin.ch
- State Secretariat for Migration – ODM: https://www.sem.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
- 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 Guide and additional documents for VNIL:
  www.sbfi.admin.ch/berufsbildung/01505/01506/index.html?lang=fr
- Swiss Portal for VET, HE and career guidance: www.orientation.ch
- Swiss Vocational Education and Training documents in English:
  www.sbfi.admin.ch/dokumentation/00335/00400/index.html?lang=en
- Swissuniversities: portal of Swiss universities http://www.swissuniversities.ch

- **Others 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
- 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 the recognition and validation non-formal and informal learning - VALIDA: www.valida.ch
- 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
- Swiss vocational qualifications programme - CH-Q: www.ch-q.ch
- University of Geneva : www.unige.ch
- Volunteering dossier : www.dossier-benevolat.ch

11.3   Sources

2014 Sources:

- ch Foundation

- Conférence suisse des directeurs cantonaux de l'instruction publique (CDIP)/ Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education

- Conferenza della Svizzera italiana per la formazione continua degli adulti (CFC) / Conference of Italian Switzerland for the continuing education of adults

- CRUS - Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses/ Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities

- Office d'orientation scolaire et professionnelle du Valais romand/ Office of Educational and Vocational Guidance, Valais Romand

- Ufficio delle Misure Attive - Dipartimento delle finanze e dell'economia - Divisione dell'economia - Sezione del Lavoro - Repubblica e Cantone Ticino / Office of Active Measures - Department of Finance and Economy - Division of the economy - Section of Labor - Republic and Canton of Ticino

- Secrétariat d'État à l'économie SECO ; Secteur Pilotage et principes fondamentaux / State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO ; Steering sector.

- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation

- Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET

- Université de Genève/Geneva University

2016 Sources:

- Mr. Reto Trachsel, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation /VNIL projects

- Mrs. Sabina Giger, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation /Adults qualifications project

- Mr. Jérôme Hügli, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation / International Cooperation in Education and Professional Qualifications

- Mr. Furio Bednarz, Conference of Italian Switzerland for the continuing education of adults

- Mrs. Suzanne de Jonckheere, Swissuni

- Dr. Dominik Allenspach, Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK/CDIP).

- Mr. Marc Pochon, Geneva University

- Dr. Dominik Allenspach, Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK/CDIP).

- Ms Bianca Faragau, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI (International Cooperation in Education and Professional Qualifications)

11.4 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
LFPr	Loi fédérale sur la formation professionnelle 2002		VPETA	Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act
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	
SQUF	Réseau patronal pour la formation professionnelle	www.squf.ch		
Swissuniversities	Conférence des universités suisses	www.swissuniversities.ch	Swissuniversities	Swiss conference of University
Swissuni	Formation continue universitaire suisse	http://www.swissuni.ch/index	Swissuni	Swiss university continuing education
USAM	Union Suisse des arts et des métiers	http://www.sgv-usam.ch/fr.html		Swiss Union of Arts and Crafts

11.5 Sources

- **2014 Sources:**
- CFC - Conference of Italian Switzerland for the continuing education of adults
- ch Foundation
- CRUS- Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities
- Geneva University. VAE advisor
- Office of Educational and Vocational Guidance, Valais Romand
- Office of Active Measures - Department of Finance and Economy - Division of the economy - Section of Labour - Republic and Canton of Ticino
- State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO; Steering sector.
- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SEFRI
- Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education EDK/CDIP
- Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET

- **2016 Sources**

- CFC- Conference of Italian Switzerland for the continuing education of adults
- ch Foundation
- Federal Statistical Office (FSO)

- Office of Active Measures - Department of Finance and Economy - Division of the economy - Section of Labor - Republic and Canton of Ticino
- Red Cross Vaud
- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (3 people for different projects)
- Swiss Association for Community Interpreting and Intercultural Mediation – INTERPRET:
- Swiss Association of SME – USAM
- Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education EDK/CDIP
- Swiss Conference of VET/PE Agencies - CSFP/SBKK
- Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET
- Swiss Federation of Adult Learning - FSEA/SVEB
- Swissuni – Swiss university continuing education
- Université de Genève/Geneva University, VNIL service
- Some cantonal services for VNIL and Adult qualification

Country report Switzerland
2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 Council recommendation on validation encourages Member States to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018. These arrangements will enable individuals to increase the visibility and value of their knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home or in voluntary activities.

This country report is one of 36 that, together with a synthesis report and thematic reports, constitute the European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The inventory is a regularly updated overview of validation practices and arrangements in all Member States, EFTA countries and Turkey. It is a reference point for information on validation in Europe. It is organised around the principles defined in the 2012 Council Recommendation that were further elaborated in the European guidelines for validation. This is its sixth update (2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2016).