To date, there exists no comprehensive system (i.e. a system including all contexts of study) for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL) in Austria (cf. European Inventory – Country Report Austria 2014 [1]).

However, initiated by the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), work has already started on developing a holistic and coherent VNIL strategy (cf. European Inventory – Country Report Austria 2014 [1]).

The development of a national validation strategy is conducted in close coordination and cooperation with the processes to develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF, cf. chapter 8.2: Current Policy Priorities [3]) and to implement a lifelong learning strategy in Austria (LLL:2020). This national strategy pursues the objective of identifying the large number of already existing validation approaches and initiatives in Austria and making them visible and accessible in a coordinated manner in an overall strategy. The goal is to develop new validation models in a needs-oriented manner. Another goal is to raise awareness of the importance of competences acquired in different study contexts and promote their recognition.

The most recent outcome of these efforts is a document that is currently (2015 [4]) undergoing a national consultation process to obtain statements from all stakeholders involved to elaborate and implement a validation strategy for Austria.

Alongside these future scenarios, some practices and procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning are already in place. The most important development in adult education and training is, of course, validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences as part of the procedures of the Austrian Academy of Continuing Education (WBA) [5] to acquire the WBA certificate and the WBA diploma (cf. chapter 8.4: Possibilities where certification bodies are involved [6]). In addition, based on special agreements, holders of the WBA diploma have the possibility to be admitted to an HE study programme. This represents a major step towards achieving a higher degree of permeability of the education system and of access to tertiary qualifications.

Other examples of the practical recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences are the following [7]:

- exceptional admission to the apprenticeship-leave exam [8] (chapter 8.4: Possibilities where certification bodies are involved [6])
- exceptional admission to study programmes at universities of applied sciences [9] (cf. chapter 7.2: Universities of Applied Sciences [10])
- waiving of parts of the practical apprenticeship-leave exam [8]
- credits for the acquisition of certificates in second-chance education (such as of the compulsory school qualification [11])
recognition of relevant competences to shorten the training period (such as upon entering a post-secondary VET course, cf. chapter 8.4: Add-on courses and post-secondary VET courses [12]; or a school for people in employment, cf. chapter 8.4: Schools and colleges for people in employment (“evening schools” [13]).