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 (11)).

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 (11)).

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]).